

combined with high costs of service provision—may lead to a dearth of competition.

Conclusion

The Internet can have a dramatic impact on our productivity and quality of life. Internet users have vast amounts of information literally at their fingertips, and an Internet connection allows individuals to communicate, collaborate, and transact on a global scale in ways that were unimaginable only a few years ago. One [study](#) by a former Chairman of CEA uses data on the amount of time Internet users spend online to estimate that Internet access produces thousands of dollars of consumer surplus per user each year.

Closing the gap—between those who experience these social and economic benefits from Internet use, and those who do not—will require further efforts to reduce barriers in affordability, relevance, and computer literacy. The President’s broadband agenda tackles each of these challenges in turn, including infrastructure investments and robust competition policy to ensure widespread access to affordable high-quality Internet; spectrum policy to ensure that the dramatic growth in wireless broadband continues; and investments in education and training, especially for children, to remove computer literacy barriers that impede universal access.

The digital divide is likely both a [cause](#) and a [consequence](#) of other demographic disparities, and sorting out the precise impact of closing the divide is more difficult than characterizing the current disparities, as we have done here. Policies that aim to close the divide are pursued in recognition of the fact that the opportunities afforded by Internet access should be accessible to every American, much like other universally available utilities such as water and electricity. Expanding broadband access is an important part of a larger middle-class economic policy agenda, both to support economic growth and to extend access to opportunity to more Americans.

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