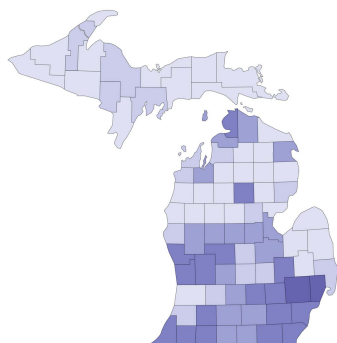
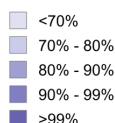


Bridging Divides for Better Health

Closing the Broadband Health Equity Gap



Locations with at least
100/20 Mbps Service



The relationship between broadband connectivity and health outcomes represents one of the most critical yet underappreciated public health challenges of our digital age. While traditional social drivers of health such as education, housing, social connectedness, and economic stability have long been recognized as influential factors in health outcomes, emerging research increasingly positions broadband internet access as a "super determinant of health". High-quality broadband access not only directly affects health but also amplifies or mitigates the impacts of other social determinants.

In Michigan, the lack of broadband access can be due to unavailable service, insufficient devices, or inadequate digital literacy. This has profound implications for the health outcomes of Michiganders. The "digital divide" disproportionately affects underserved communities, like rural areas and low-income households. It also exacerbates existing health disparities by limiting access to telehealth services, online health education, and digital tools essential for modern healthcare delivery.

Data From the FCC's Connect2Health Program

Almost half of U.S. counties have high burdens of chronic disease (e.g., diabetes) as well as a need for greater broadband connectivity. That translates to over 36 million people who live in counties with a "double burden" of need — an increase of 1 million between 2014 and 2015.

Over 60% of rural Americans (an increase of 8% between 2014 and 2015) live in "double burden" counties, while less than 5% of urban America falls into the same category.

Rural counties are 10 times as likely as urban areas to have low broadband access (below 50%) and high diabetes rates (above 10%). These digitally isolated counties also experience physician shortages that are more than double the national average.

Additional Resources

FCC Connect2Health

<http://www.fcc.gov/health/maps>

Digital Access: A Super Determinant of Health

<https://www.samhsa.gov/blog/digital-access-super-determinant-health>

State of Michigan Digital Equity Plan

<https://www.michigan.gov/leo/-/media/Project/Websites/leo/Documents/MIHI/MIHI-Digital-Equity-Plan.pdf>



**CMU RURAL
HEALTH EQUITY
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CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

<https://med.cmich.edu/RHEI>

Bridging Divides for Better Health: Closing the Broadband Health Equity Gap

A. Arnold, J. Jervinsky, A. Beatty

A Rural Michigan Resident Perspective



"We all have health issues... **we're so remote, the doctors and specialists are so far away...**for me to go to see a rheumatologist...is two and a half hours away and **150 miles to get to a specialist...**in Northern Michigan, **a lot of times it's not safe to travel.** This is the best time for us to be able to have the telehealth options."

A Rural Michigan Provider Perspective

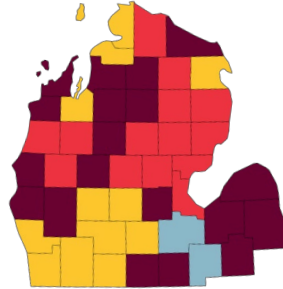


Some areas **don't have public transportation.** It can be a challenge for patients to get to our clinics. **We rely heavily on telehealth** to see patients. A lot of people living in these **rural communities don't have access to good internet...**Lack of reliable internet is a big frustration for our patients and our practice.

References

- Michigan High-Speed Internet Office. (2024, February 7). Michigan Broadband Map. Retrieved March 20, 2025, from <https://www.michiganbroadbandmap.com>
- Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity. (2023). MIHI digital equity plan. Retrieved March 20, 2025, from <https://www.michigan.gov/leo/-/media/Project/Websites/leo/Documents/MIHI/MIHI-Digital-Equity-Plan.pdf>
- National Skills Coalition. (2024, January 22). New data shows nearly 90% of Michigan jobs require digital skills, one-third of workers currently have low or no digital skills [Press release]. Retrieved March 20, 2025, from <https://nationalskillscoalition.org/news/press-releases/new-data-shows-nearly-90-of-michigan-jobs-require-digital-skills-one-third-of-workers-currently-have-low-or-no-digital-skills/>

Premature Deaths/100,000 and Broadband Access



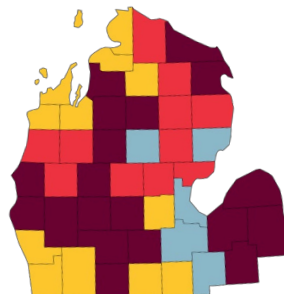
Premature deaths¹: Years of potential life lost before age 75 per 100,000 persons (age-adjusted).
Broadband Access²: Percentage of population with access to fixed terrestrial broadband service $\geq 100/20$ Mbps.

417,151 Locations in Michigan are either unserved or underserved as found by the MIHI office¹

Approximately 30% of Michigan households struggle with some form of the digital divide²

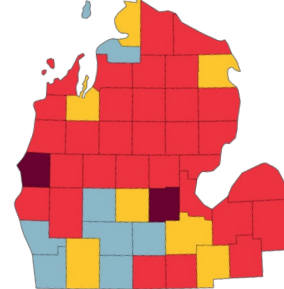
89% of jobs required digital skills while 33% of Michigan's workforces lacked the necessary foundational digital skills as found by the National Skills Coalition³

Premature Deaths/100,000 and Internet Adoption



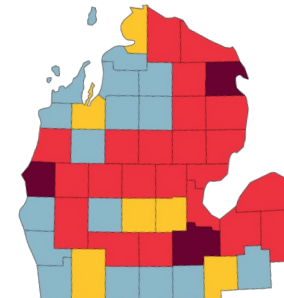
Premature deaths⁴: Years of potential life lost before age 75 per 100,000 persons (age-adjusted).
Internet Adoption⁴: Self-reported percentage of households with a high-speed Internet connection through subscription including cable, DSL, fiber-optic.

Mental Health Provider Ratio and Broadband Access



Mental Health Providers¹: Ratio of population to mental health providers.
Broadband Access²: Percentage of population with access to fixed terrestrial broadband service $\geq 100/20$ Mbps.

Mental Health Provider Ratio and No Device Households

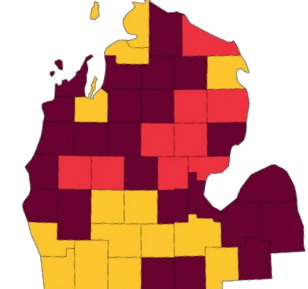


Mental Health Providers¹: Ratio of population to mental health providers.
No Device Households⁴: Percentage of households without a computing device (e.g., smartphone, desktop or laptop, tablet or other portable wireless computer).

Data Sources

- County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. (2024). How healthy is your county? [Data platform]. Retrieved March 20, 2025, from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org>
- Federal Communications Commission. (2024). 2024 Section 706 Report [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-24-27A1.pdf>
- March of Dimes. (2023). Where you live matters: Maternity care access in Michigan [Data report]. Retrieved March 20, 2025, from <https://www.marchofdimes.org/peristats/reports/michigan/maternal-care-deserts>
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. (2020). Social Determinants of Health Database [Data set]. Retrieved March 20, 2025, from <https://www.ahrq.gov/sdoh/data-analytics/sdoh-data.html>

Maternity Care Deserts and Broadband Access

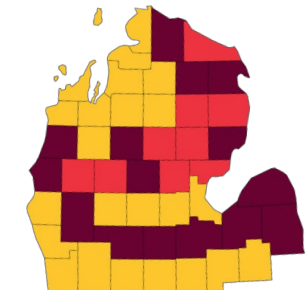


Maternity Care Deserts³: Counties without a hospital, birth center, or provider offering obstetric care.
Broadband Access²: Percentage of population with access to fixed terrestrial broadband service $\geq 100/20$ Mbps.

Map Legend

- Better Connectivity/Better Outcomes
- Better Connectivity/Worse Outcomes
- Worse Connectivity/Better Outcomes
- Worse Connectivity/Worse Outcomes

Maternity Care Deserts and No Device Households



Maternity Care Deserts³: Counties without a hospital, birth center, or provider offering obstetric care.
No Device Households⁴: Percentage of households without a computing device (e.g., smartphone, desktop or laptop, tablet or other portable wireless computer).