

Survey Results

Workforce Development Digital Equity Survey

Access to reliable, high-speed internet, a computer, and digital skills are basic necessities needed to pursue education, employment, and economic mobility. This survey is part of a collective effort among all 12 local workforce development boards to identify and understand the digital skill needs in our regions. The results will help develop recommendations, and inform policymakers about needed workforce investments that incorporate digital equity goals.

Definitions (From the National Digital Inclusion Alliance)

Digital Equity: is a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy. Digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.

It is important to note here the use of "equity" vs. "equality." When we use the word equity, we accurately acknowledge the systemic barriers that must be dismantled before achieving equality for all.

Digital Literacy: Digital Literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this 5-minute survey. If you have any questions or would like to provide more in-depth information, please email us back at mtapiahopper@seakingwdc.org or amy.martinez@co.yakima.wa.us

Thank you,

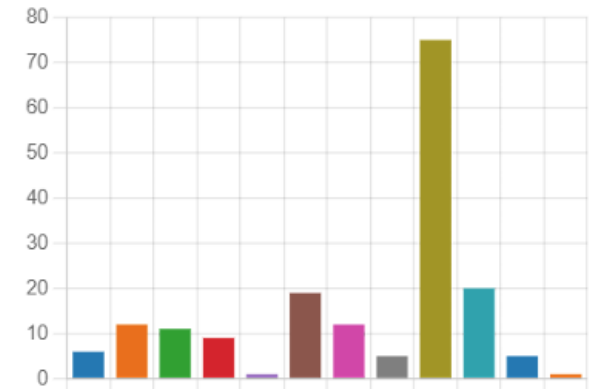
Amy Martinez & Marisol Tapia Hopper

176 frontline staff across Washington State responded to the survey

In what workforce development area is your organization located at?



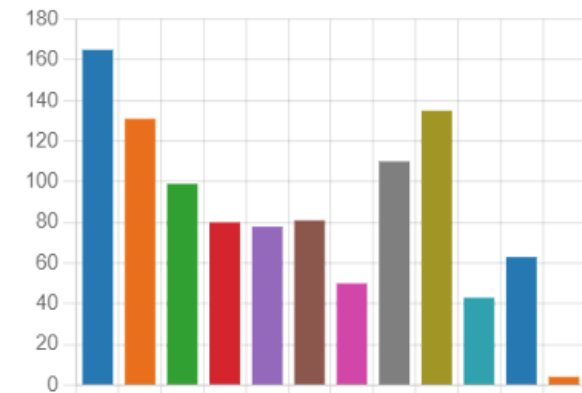
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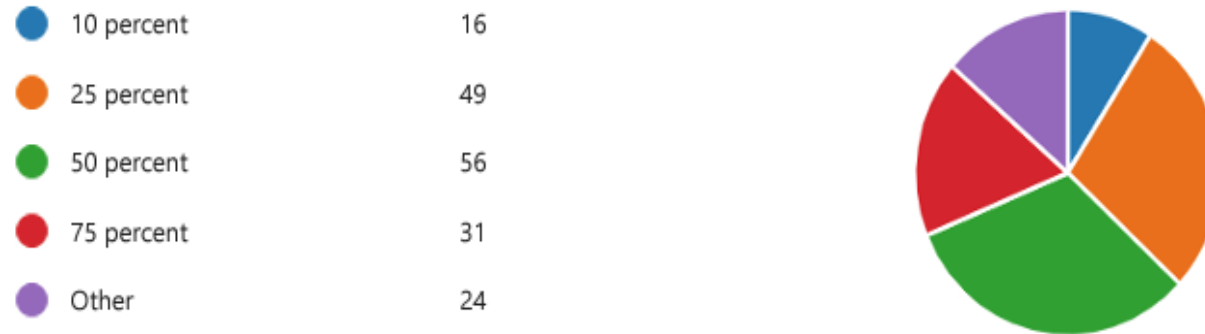
Low-income individuals, people experiencing homelessness, immigrants and refugees, and individuals with limited English have been disproportionately impacted by the digital divide

Based on your area, what populations have been the most impacted by the digital divide, including lack of access to reliable internet, internet-enabled devices, and digital skills?

Low income individuals	165
Individuals with limited English	131
Immigrants and refugees	99
Individuals living in rural areas	80
Individuals with disabilities	78
BLACK, Indigenous, People of C...	81
Youth	50
Older individuals	110
Individuals experiencing homele...	135
Veterans	43
Individuals with legal system inv...	63
Other	4

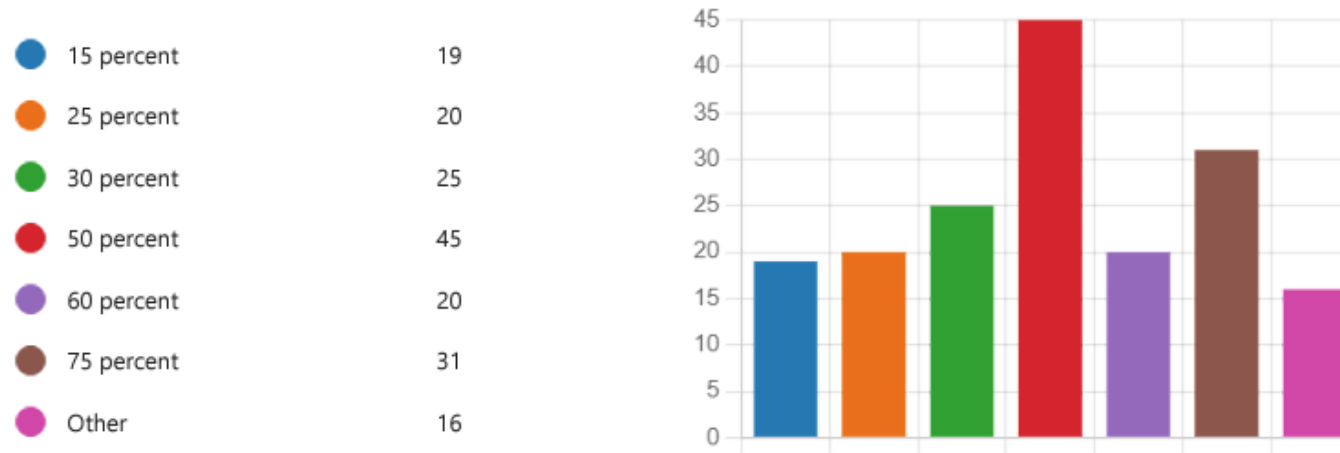


Nearly half of frontline staff reported that between 50% to 75% of customers have been impacted by the digital divide



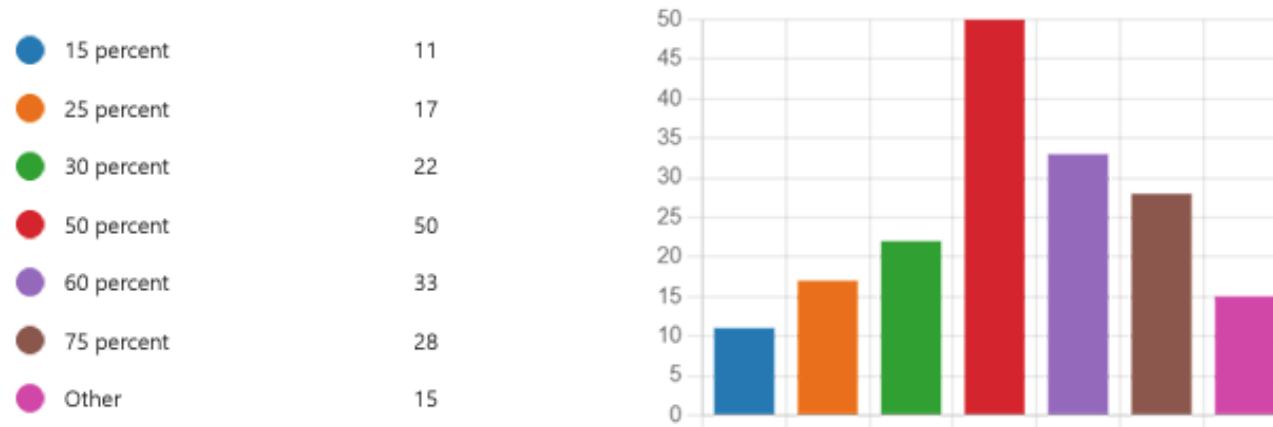
Since the start of the pandemic, please estimate the percentage of customers served by your organization that have been impacted by the digital divide, including lack of access to reliable internet, internet-enabled devices, and digital skills?

Over a third of frontline staff reported that 30% (or less) of customers have access to devices.



Based on your interactions with customers, what do you estimate is the percentage of customers that have access to a laptop or desktop computer in their household (not counting their children's school laptop/Chromebook?)

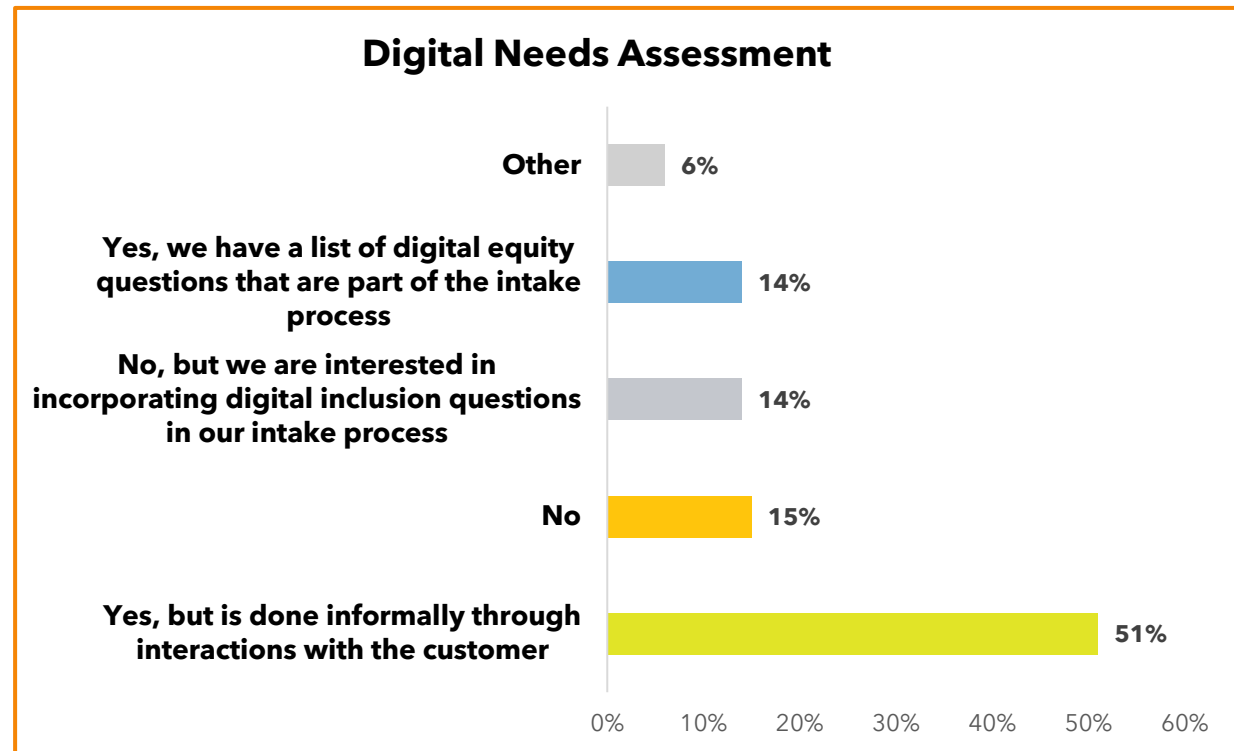
Nearly a third of frontline staff reported that 30% (or less) of customers have access to home broadband in their household



Based on your interactions with customers, what do you estimate is the percentage of customers that have access to Home Broadband/Internet in their household (not counting their children's school provided hotspot)?

14 percent of frontline staff reported having a list of digital equity questions as part of their intake process

Based on your area, what populations have been the most impacted by the digital divide, including lack of access to reliable internet, internet-enabled devices, and digital skills?



Highlights

What are you hearing from employers in terms of digital skills needs in the workforce?

“Lack of data to support this. Job seekers generally apply to positions which highlight skills. That stated, employers in construction, warehousing, and transportation are requiring digital skills as equipment and work processes are increasing technology. Technology such as a smart phones and the ability to use apps is impacting workers.” **Olympic Consortium Workforce Council region.**

“We have had some that have asked if we offer digital literacy classes to help some of their future hires.” **Spokane Workforce Council region.**

*“Digital Skills needed - **understanding the wayfinding and logic of touchscreen systems** (e.g., clock in/out systems, other record keeping systems such as patient care record updating, accessing and competently using audio/video training resources with surveys), typing skills (people need to be able to input basic messages using a keyboard and mouse for any literacy intensive work, using links and bookmarks to access institutional materials (e.g., accessing online schedules or announcements from employers, benefits webpages, paystubs, etc.)”* **Seattle-King region.**

“More people are able to use mobile devices but there is a decline in actual computer skills. i.e., email, word processing, spreadsheets, and such.” **North Central Workforce Development Council region.**

“Employers have expressed that lack of computer skills is a problem in the hiring process. Working in the Dislocated Worker program, I would say 60% of our clients lack computer skills and need hands on training. There are not a lot of options to learn computer skills in our area, making it hard to assist clients to find employment.” **South Central Workforce Council region.**

Highlights

What are gaps in funding that if addressed could make an impact in closing the digital divide in your area?

25 percent answered access to laptops to this question.

“Support services for devices (computers), broadband subscriptions, and training.” **Benton Franklin Workforce Development Council region.**

“Funding for internet, hot spot connectors w/ yearly contract paid, Chromebook or equivalent.” **Workforce Central region.**

“I believe that there are multiple agencies and organizations looking at this same need. Perhaps the most impactful funding would be for staff dedicated to convening, aggregating information from all active agents, and providing cohesive area-specific reports and recommendations that the interested agencies could utilize.” **Eastern Washington Partnership region.**

“Unrestricted funds to have the ability to help in a broader way.” **Workforce Snohomish region.**

“Funding for students and community members to have access to Microsoft Office on their home laptops/computers and laptops for the community members (students can get loaner laptops on campus).” **Workforce SW Washington region.**

“Gaps include money for instructors, devices, software, and incentives for participation. WorkSource offers resources to people who can come on site and the colleges have some equipment for students, but training is difficult to obtain and help obtaining resources is extremely limited.” **Northwest Workforce Council region.**

Highlights

How can your local workforce development board help support a regional digital literacy strategy?

“Put purchasing of laptops and internet in with the books and tuition on the admin bulletin to encourage case managers to utilize that resource.” **South Central Workforce Council region.**

“Promote more funding opportunities locally and statewide to access digital literacy classes for free, as well as staff to provide training. \$\$ for devices to loan as well.” **Spokane Workforce Council region.**

“Doing more to integrate a survey into customer service delivery in order to gather actual feedback from walk-in customers about what they would find helpful in terms of computer training and gather feedback from employers in a wide variety of industries about what computer skills they hope their ideal candidates have...” **Workforce Snohomish region.**

“Have loner laptops while in WorkFirst program. Many people on my caseload complete their work on a smartphone. I offer use of a computer in our resource room, and a few take me up on the offer, but most prefer the convenience of using their phone even though it makes the process my cumbersome.” **Seattle-King region.**

“Messaging is critical. We see workers who are coming out of long-term jobs with limited digital skills who have no idea how to obtain those skills. We need to be pro-active and a leader in this and that takes leadership.” **Eastern WA Partnership region.**

“Help rural areas get further access to internet high speed internet at home or help areas get more WIFI spots in town that community members can utilize.” **North Central Workforce Development Council region.**

“Provide more computer literacy classes and have more affordable technology.” **Benton Franklin region.**