



elevate digital equity



COABE 2023 Digital Equity Challenges: Key Survey Findings

In January 2023, COABE conducted an online survey of its adult education members to understand their digital equity challenges in the classroom. Of the **558** program responses, representing minimally **462,000** adult learners annually, **61%** were federally funded, while **23%** received CARES Act Funding.

Respondents were comprised of school districts (**38%**), community colleges (**27%**), community-based organizations (**21%**), prisons (**3%**), and the remainder a mix of multi-service providers, libraries, workplaces, and others (**11%**). Of this mix, approximately **71%** of all respondents offer digital literacy classes.

CHALLENGES



23%

Only 23% serve as a digital hub for WIFI and device dissemination due to a lack of resources and funding.



26%

About 26% do not have the WIFI and devices needed in the class; 58% reflected those organizations in rural/suburban areas.



39%

Only 39% of respondents indicated that their learners had devices and access to WIFI but had to share the device(s) at home.



67%

67% of respondents reported that the lack of WIFI and devices have negatively impacted adult learners' completing assignments and/or attending class.



89,671

In just this small snapshot of COABE's members, 89,671 adult learners have been affected by the lack of WIFI and devices.

COABE continues to gather data from the field on this important topic. If your organization has not yet participated in the survey, go to <https://www.tfaforms.com/5019713> and take it now!

SOLUTIONS

COABE has engaged Google and IBM to help provide solutions to adult educators facing these digital equity issues in the field. However, without adult education having the capacity to become digital hubs, students cannot access resources.

Doesn't it seem logical that adult education programs can be the hub to expand these services if there was funding to **#ElevateDigitalEquity**? Adult education programs must receive funding commitments that invest in digital literacy skills training.

Now is the time for policymakers and funders to invest in digital equity and literacy to ensure a competitive workforce now and in the future, so adult learners are not left behind.



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elevate digital equity



As an organization that represents **79K+** adult education providers, COABE is committed to elevating digital equity for adult learners so they can succeed and thrive in our increasingly digital world.

Digital equity is a necessity for adult learners to participate in modern life.

Without reliable access to devices and the internet, learning the skills that can lead to sustainable wages is a non-starter. The reality is that **28.2 million** households in the United States do not have high-speed broadband and **18 million** households **cannot afford to connect to the internet**. The digital divide limits opportunity and creates barriers for adult learners to achieve their personal and professional goals.



It's not just about digital access—adult learners need digital literacy too. If we are going to close the digital divide, digital literacy is essential because adult learners must be digitally proficient to participate in the digital economy.

Millions of adult learners want to be connected and have the digital skills they need to get an education, turn in homework, find jobs, earn credentials to start or advance their careers, access telehealth services, communicate with teachers, family, and friends, and participate in online banking and other financial tasks.



COABE recently conducted a Digital Equity Survey to which **558** program partners responded, representing **462,000+** adult learners. More than **376** responses indicated that one of the biggest challenges for adult learners was that **WIFI and device issues hindered their learners from attending class or completing assignments**.

129 responders indicated that their programs serve as a digital hub for WIFI and device dissemination for adult learners. And **397** partners responded that they **offer digital literacy classes to their learners in spite of funding restrictions** because the need is so great.



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Now is the time for policymakers and funders to invest in digital equity and literacy to ensure a competitive workforce now and in the future, so adult learners are not left behind.

SCAN ME



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elevate digital equity

28.2 million

28.2 million Households in the U.S. that do not have high-speed broadband

18.1 million

18.1 million Households with available broadband infrastructure that cannot afford to connect

47 million

Population in the U.S. with available broadband infrastructure that cannot afford to connect

7.1 million

Households without access to any broadband network

Source: [Education Superhighway](#)

+32 million

Over 32 million adults lack basic digital literacy skills

28 million

28 million adults lack the basic digital skills needed to use a computer, yet most are using computers every day on the job

1 in 3

Nearly one in three workers lack foundational digital skills

38%

38% of workers with no digital skills have jobs that require either moderate or complex computer skills.

half of americans

Half of all Americans say they are not confident using technology to learn computer skills.

Sources: [Office of Educational Technology](#) • [COABE](#) • [National Skills Coalition](#) • [NCES](#)



impact on adult education

23%

In COABE's 2023 member survey of adult education providers, only 23% serve as a digital hub for WIFI and device dissemination.

26%

About 26% do not have the WIFI and devices needed in the class; 58% reflected those organizations in rural/suburban areas.

39%

Only 39% of respondents indicated that their learners had devices and access to WIFI but had to share the device(s) at home.

67%

Close to 67% of respondents reported that the lack of WIFI and devices have negatively impacted adult learners' completing assignments and/or attending class.

89,671

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Sources: [COABE Member Survey 2023](#)



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