

# Computer and Internet Access in King County

Report Date: October, 2020

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Economic, Social and Overall Health Impacts in King County, Washington

[www.kingcounty.gov/covid/impacts](http://www.kingcounty.gov/covid/impacts)

**Public Health**  
Seattle & King County 

# Key findings



- Overall, access to adequate internet coverage is high (96%)
- But not all King County households have equal access to computers or high-speed internet that allow employees to work at home or children to participate in remote schooling
  - About **6,700 children** do not have access to a computer in their home; another **14,600** have no internet access or only a dial-up connection
  - Almost 1 out of every 5 households with incomes under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level lack internet access.<sup>1</sup>



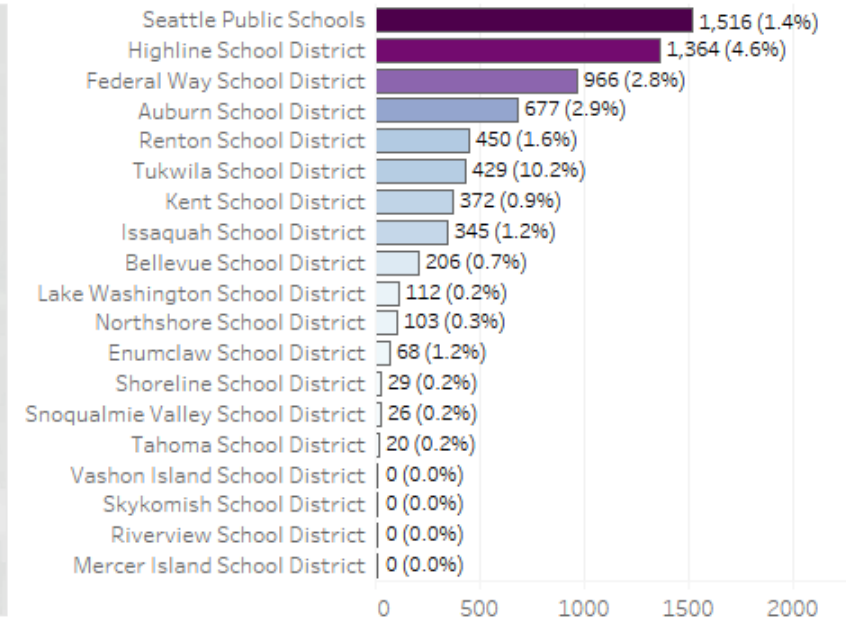
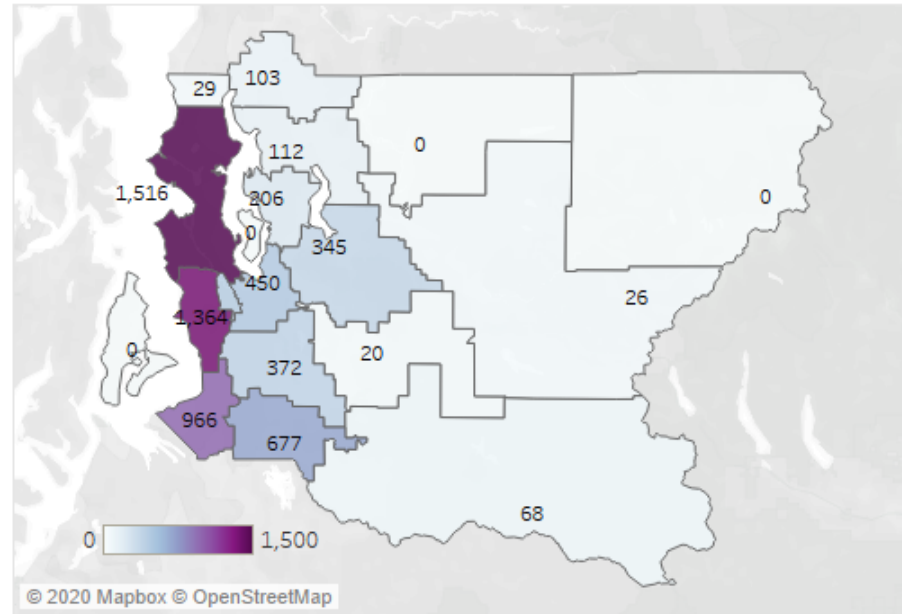
- In addition to limited access, almost 500,000 people are digitally insecure in King County. Another 300,000 are limited by cost concerns.
- Technology, training, and resources could assist in closing the gap

1. In 2020, 200% of the FPL is \$39,660 for a family of 2.

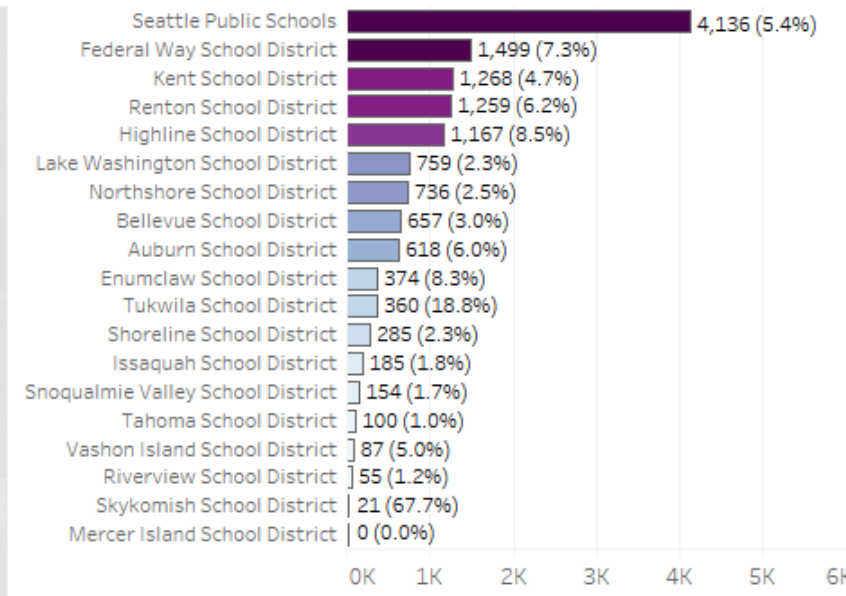
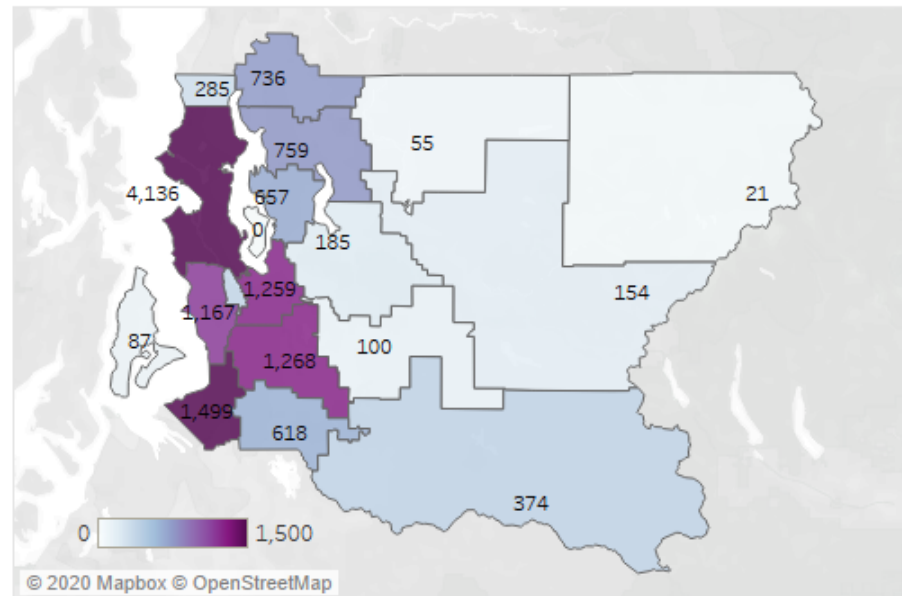
# Access differs across school districts

- About 6,700 children do not have access to a computer in their home
- Another 14,600 have no internet access (13,700 children) or have a dial-up connection (840 children).

### Number of children with no computer

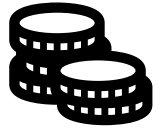


### Number of children with computer but no internet





# 23% of adults in King County have internet access barriers



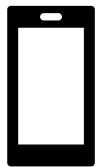
Internet access too expensive



Slow internet (25 Mbps or less)



No broadband service available



No internet service at home or only have access through a smartphone/cellular plan



No device to access the internet

# Access to technology covers a range of services and abilities – this report focuses on the Access Limited to Access Stressed

Spectrum of Digital Connectedness: Segment Descriptions

Less Technologically Inclined and Connected

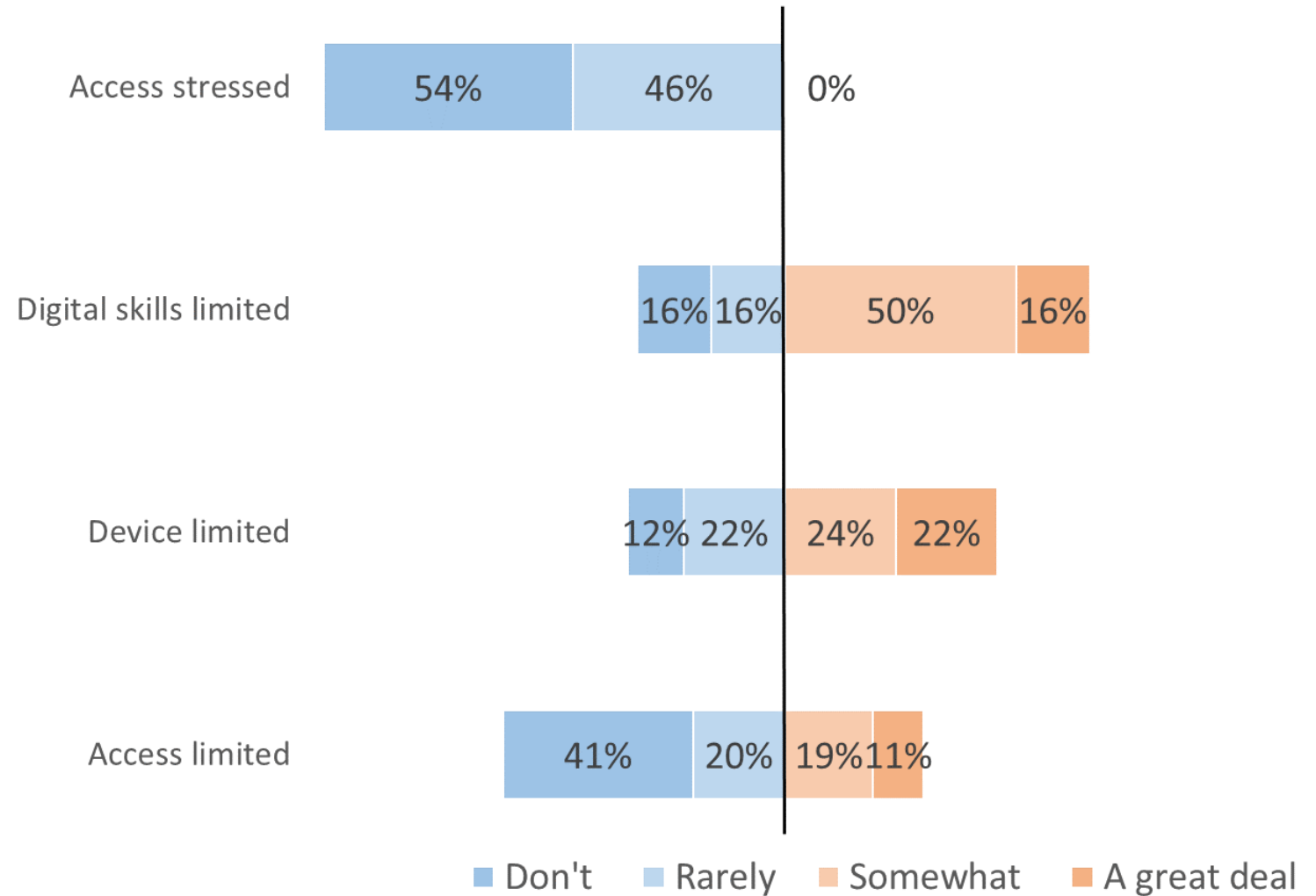
More Technologically Inclined and Connected

Purposefully Disconnected	Access Limited	Device Limited	Digital Skills Limited	Access Stressed	Digitally Cautious	Digitally Connected	Hyper Connected
2% 30,555 residents	5% 79,230 residents	6% 95,515 residents	16% 273,476 residents	17% 290,184 residents	26% 428,973 residents	13% 216,450 residents	16% 264,668 residents
Lack internet at home because they "don't need or want the internet," "don't trust the internet," or "don't believe it is important or useful."	Believe the internet is important but do not have access where they live or rely on limited access including limited cellular data plans or free/public internet only.	Have access to the internet where they live, but use borrowed devices or may only own one device in the household. Technology/the internet is not central to their lives.	Lack necessary skills to access and use the internet independently and confidently.	Have access and the skills needed, but are frustrated by the speed and cost of their connection, as well as the service from their provider.	Technologically savvy and adept, with adequate connections, but affected by worry about privacy/data security and lack of trust of internet companies.	Have adequate access and the skills needed to actively utilize the internet. They also have all the devices and appropriate connections to reliably use the internet every day.	Use the internet independently. Technology is "extremely important" to them. They have faster connections, unlimited data plans, and use a variety of devices throughout their daily lives.
448,221 are limited by barriers related to access, devices, or skills				290,184 are limited by cost concerns	428,973 are impacted by data security concerns		

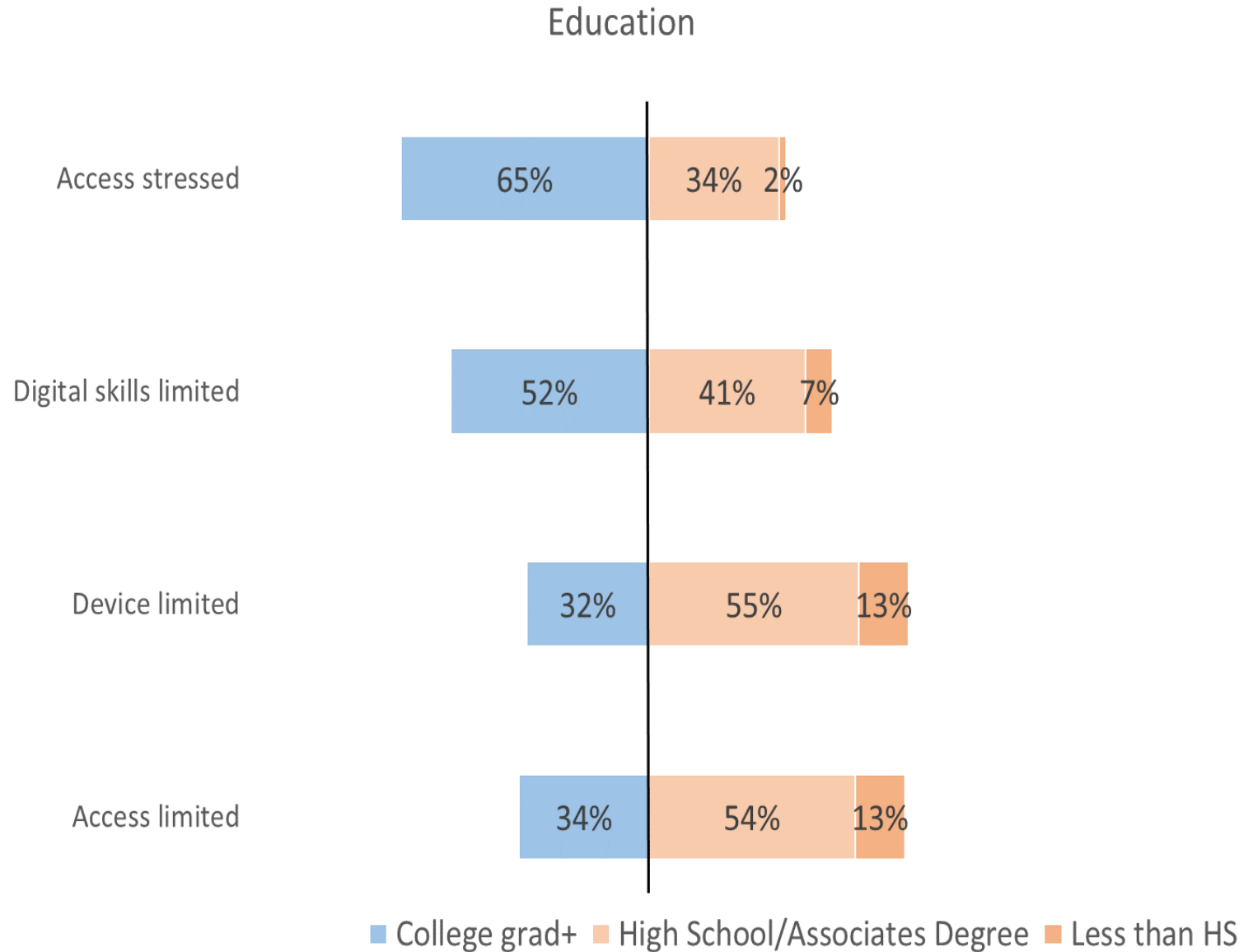
General Population figures based on 2017 ACS 5-Year Projections.  
Base: King County Residents age 18 and older (1,679,051). Individual Weight.

Two-thirds of residents in the Digital Skills Limited segment rely on others for assistance. Nearly half in the Device Limited segment also face digital literacy barriers.

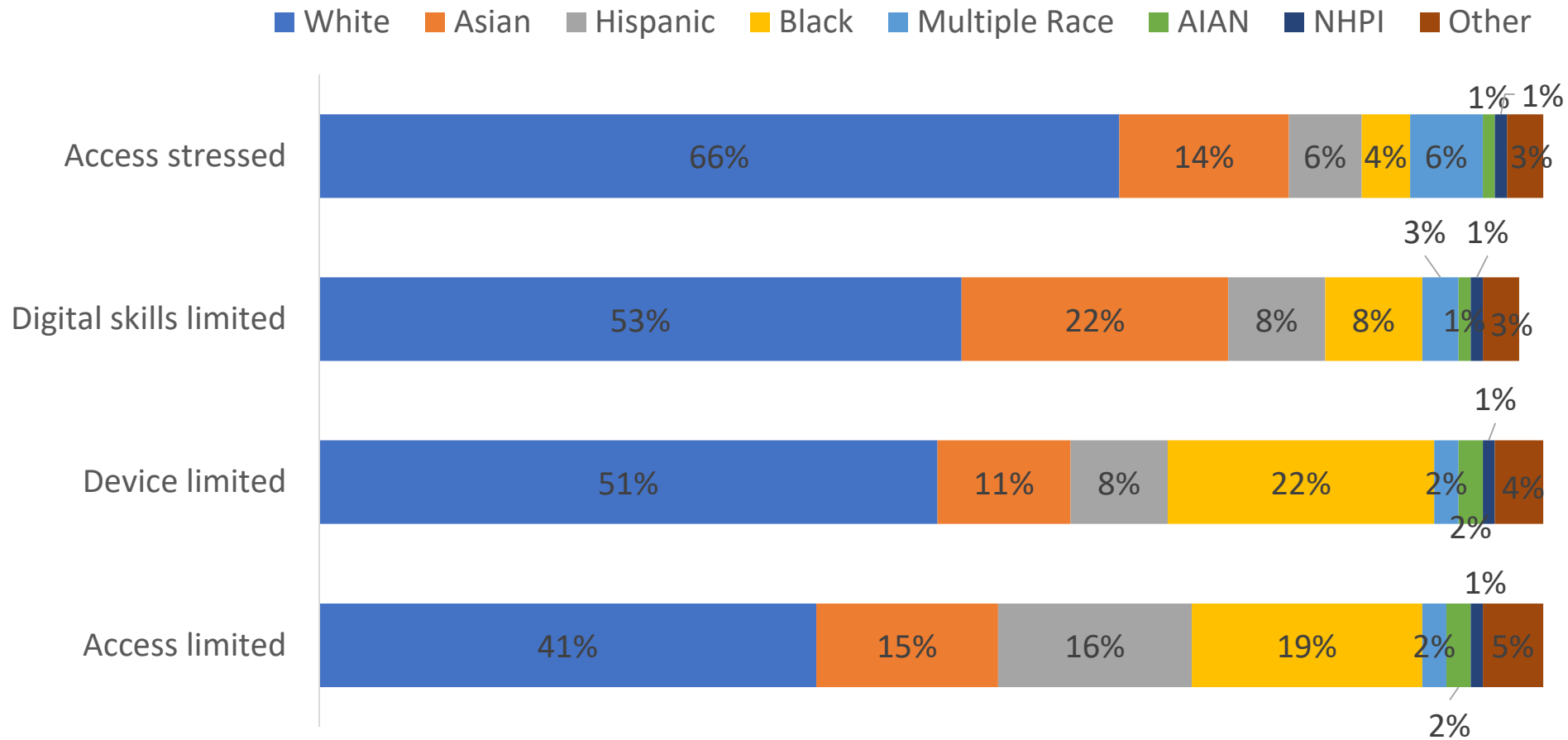
Reliance on others to solve technology issues



Residents without a Bachelor's Degree or more education are more likely to be in the Digital Skills Limited, Device Limited or Access Limited segments.



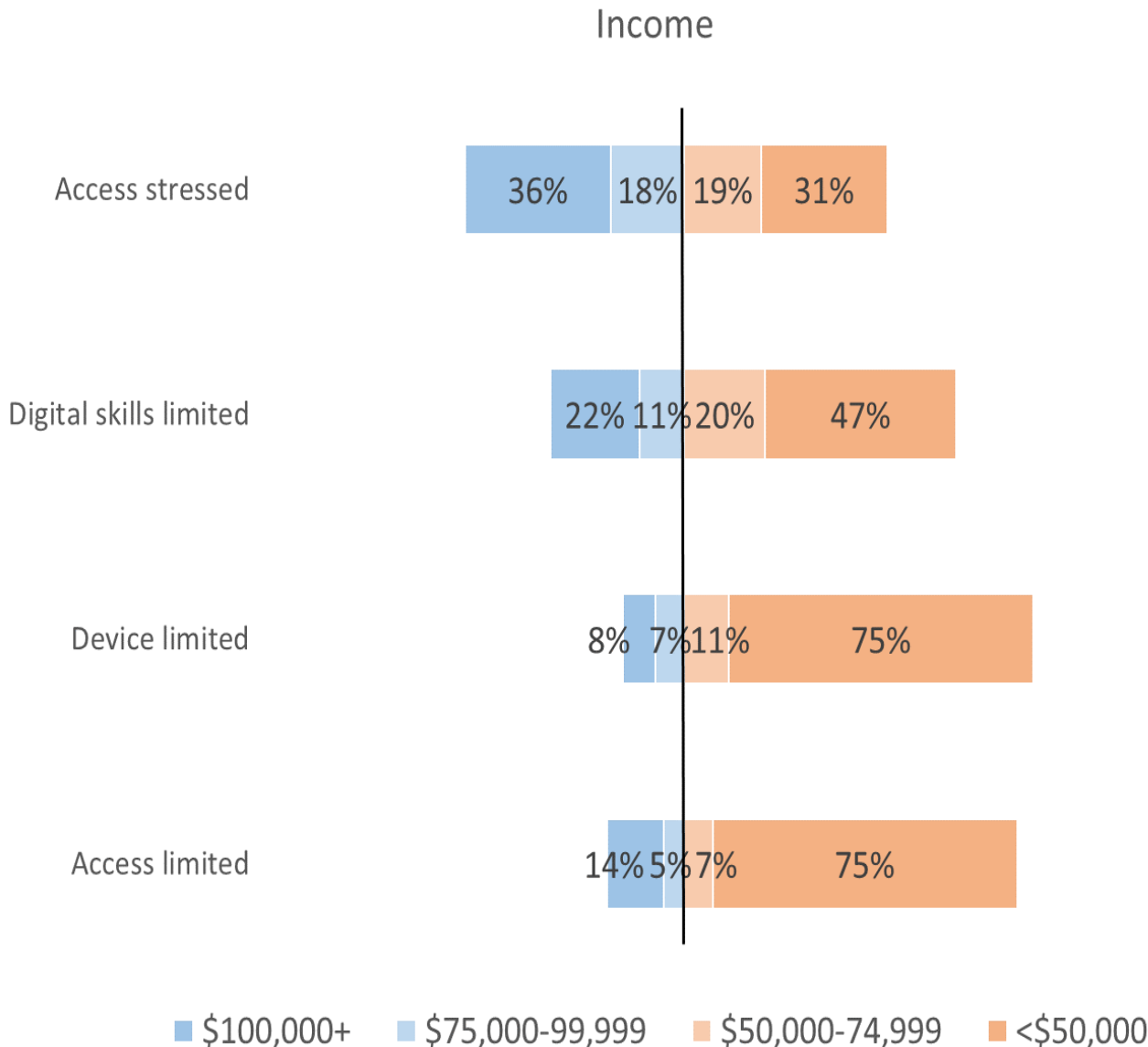
Relative to their size in the population, a high number of Access Limited and Device Limited are Black and Hispanic, Asians are over-represented among the Digital Skills Limited segment



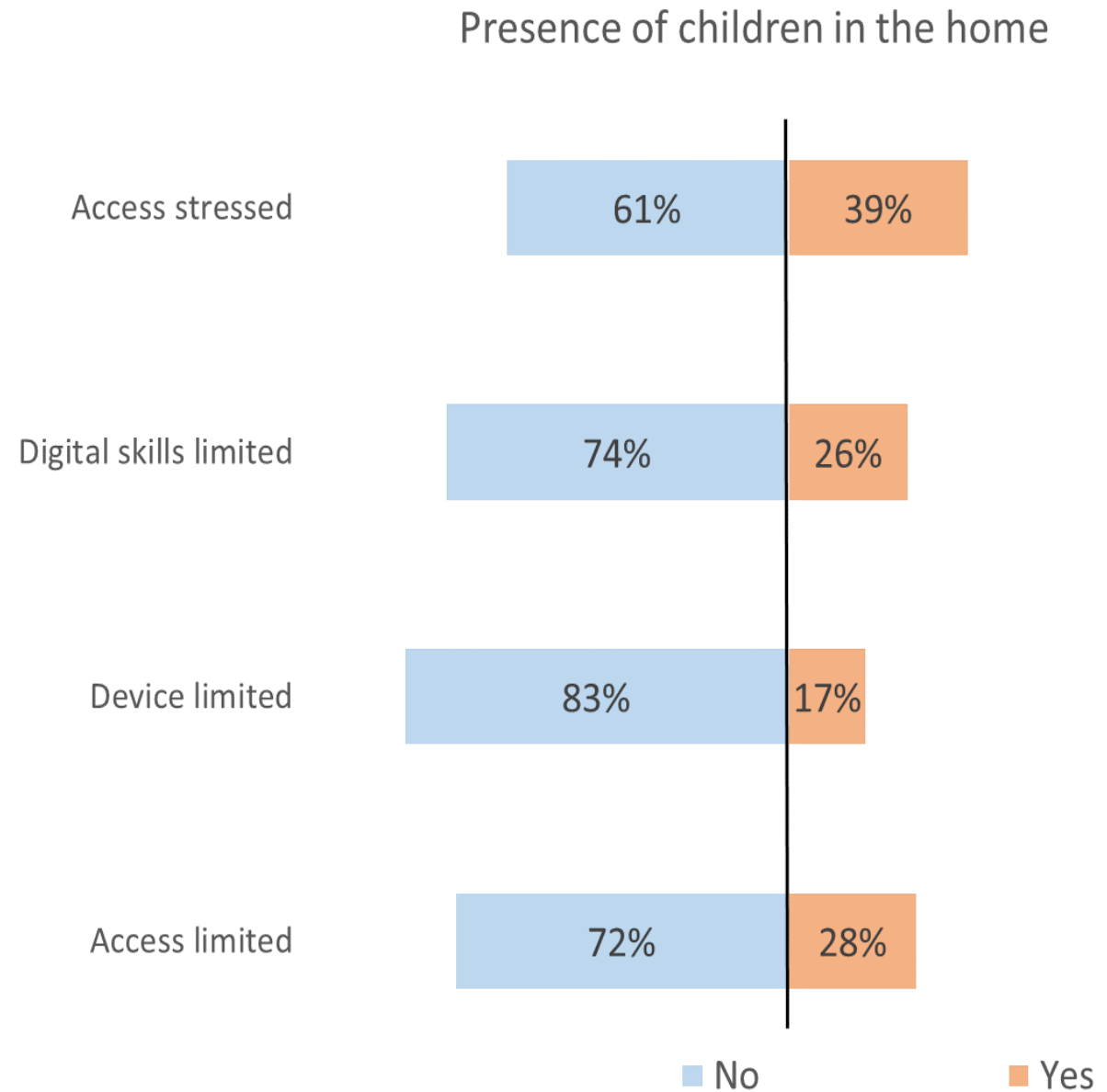
Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding. AIAN=American Indian/Alaska Native, NHPI=Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.



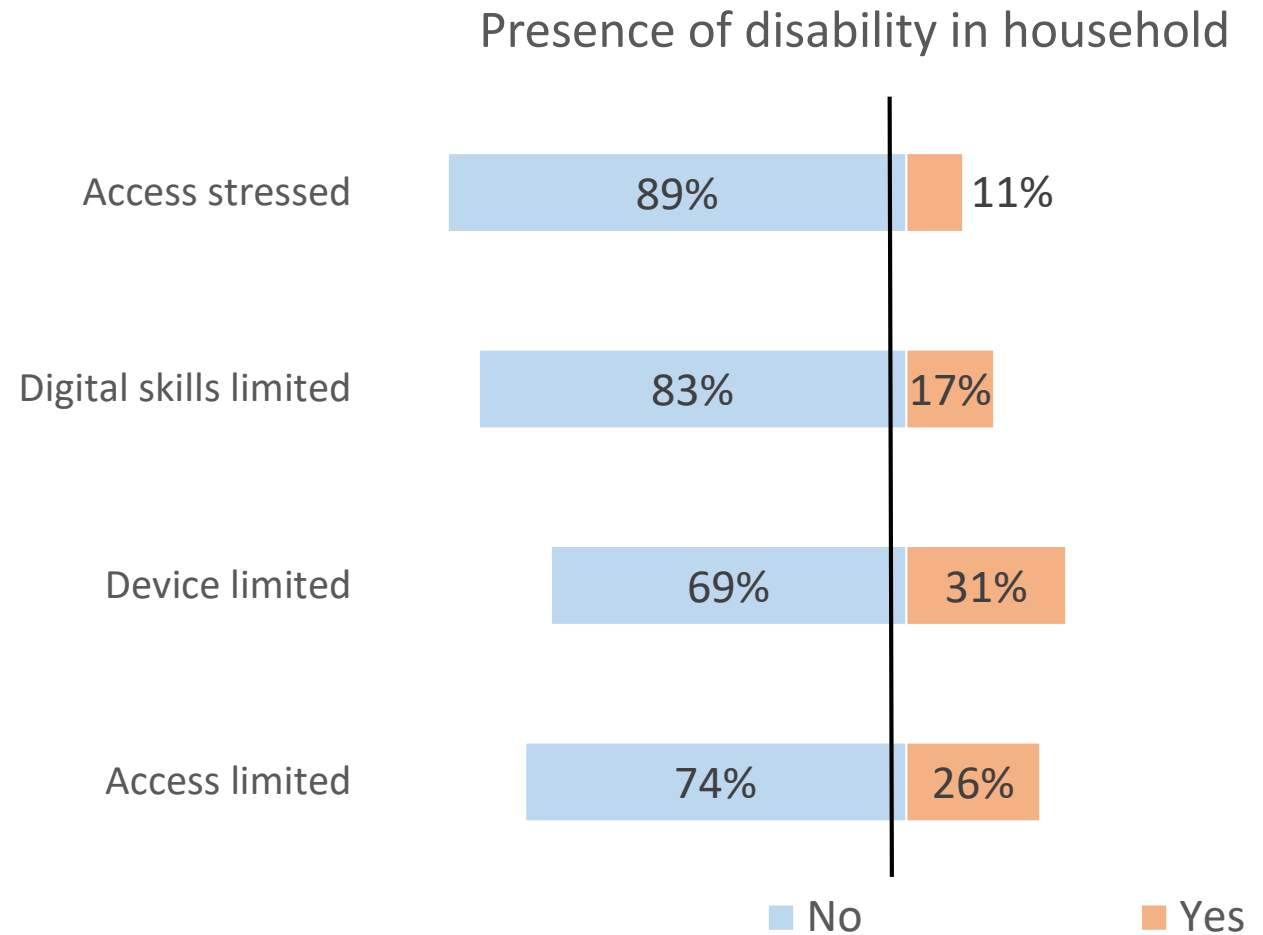
Households making less than \$75,000 a year have significantly more technology access barriers.



2 of 5 families with children are Access Stressed and 1 in 4 have Digital Skills and Access limitations.



Households reporting a member with a disability had higher rates of technology barriers.

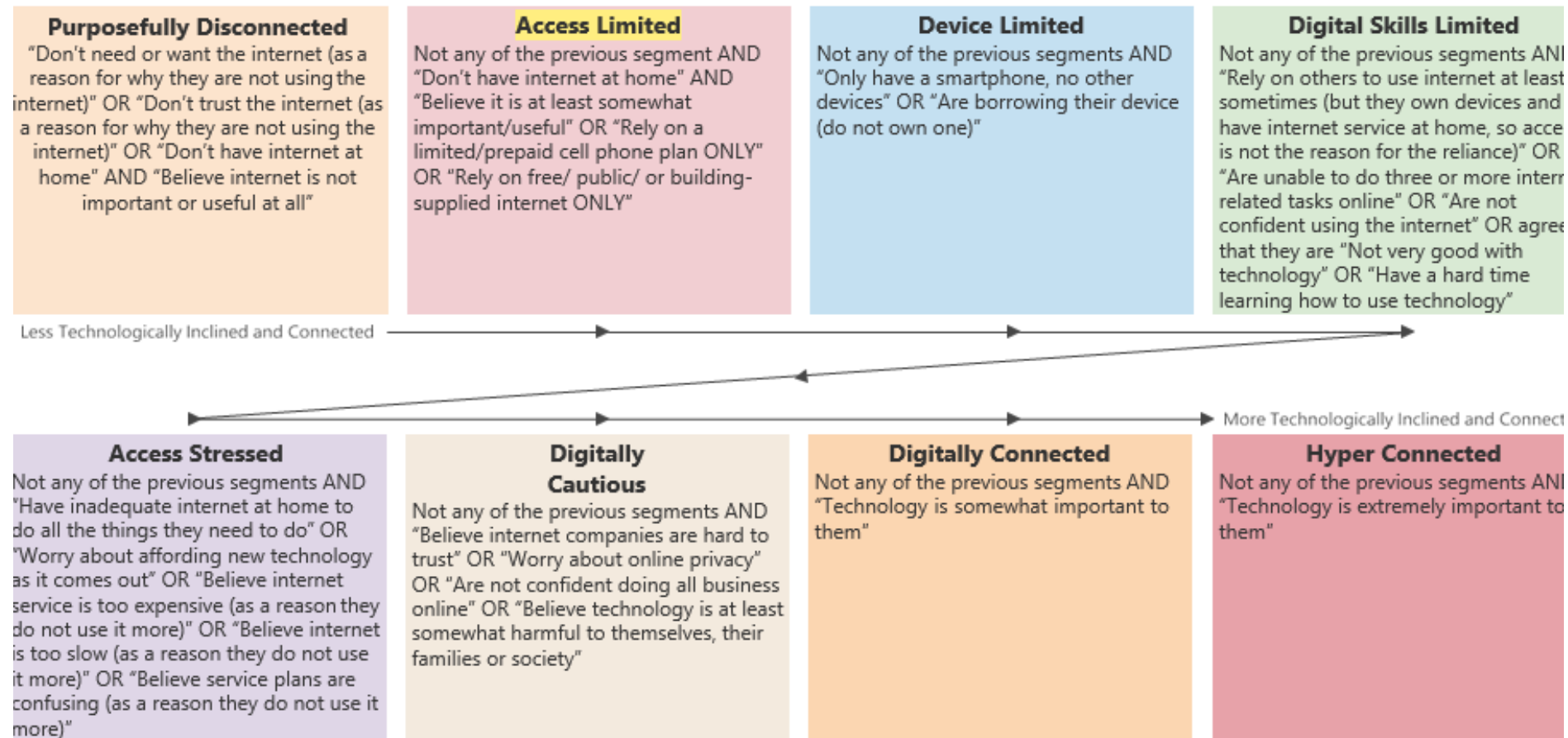


# Background

- Policy strategies to slow the spread of COVID-19 include:
  - March 9, 2020: All area colleges/universities switch to online classes
  - March 23, 2020: Washington State “Stay Home – Stay Health” order
  - March 17, 2020: All K-12 schools closed for in-person schooling
  - Summer 2020: King County K-12 school districts and all area colleges/universities to begin school year with remote learning
- Telecommuting mandated by many large employers in March 2020 and continuing in Summer/Fall 2020

# Background, continued

## Segment Classification Criteria (Survey Questions Applied to Determine Segments)



# Background, continued

- Data come from the King County Broadband Survey and the American Community Survey
  - U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014-2018 5-year data.
  - King County Broadband Access Study, February 2020. The King County Broadband survey looks at access and ability and creates different profiles. Thank you to KCIT for their review.
    - [Summary](#)
    - [Full Report: https://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/depts/it/services/cable/202002-Broadband-Access-Study.ashx?la=en](https://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/depts/it/services/cable/202002-Broadband-Access-Study.ashx?la=en)
- Suggested citation: Computer and internet access in King County. Report date October 2020. Abigail Schachter, Amy Laurent, Eva Wong. Public Health Seattle & King County; Assessment Policy Development and Evaluation Unit.
- This work is funded by Public Health — Seattle & King County, the Washington State Department of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) Cooperative Agreement (CK19-1904).
- For questions, please contact us at [Data.Request@kingcounty.gov](mailto:Data.Request@kingcounty.gov)
- For information on other key Economic, Social and Overall Health Indicators related to strategies to slow the spread of COVID-19, see [www.kingcounty.gov/covid/impacts](http://www.kingcounty.gov/covid/impacts)