

Newsletter | January 2026 | Edition 31

## New Mexico's Digital Divide: Recent Trends

### What the Latest Data Shows

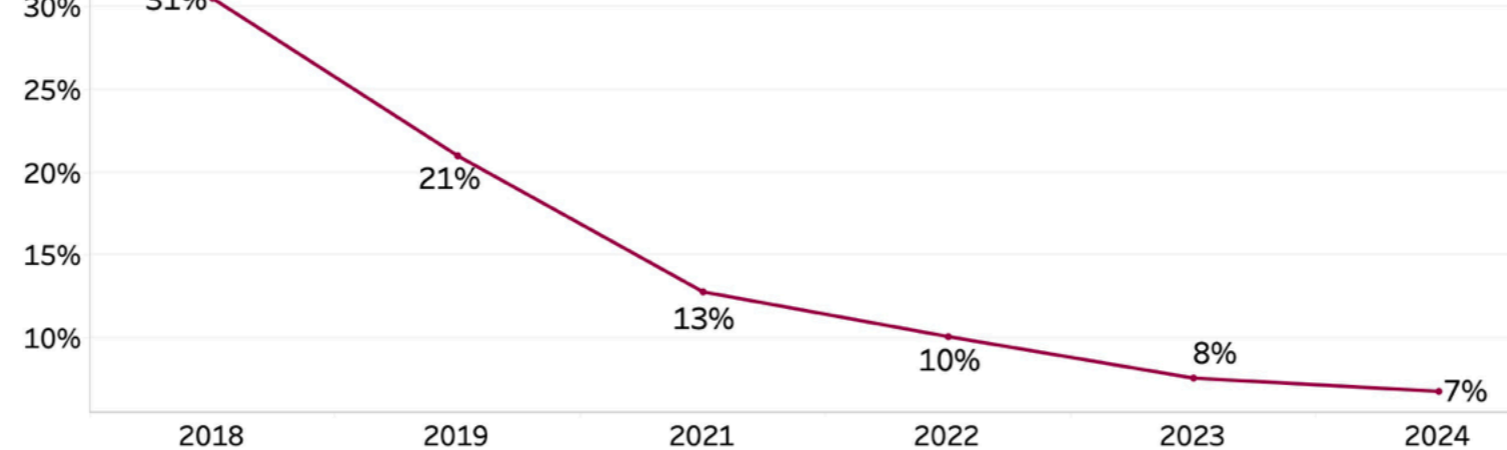
When schools shifted online in 2020, the digital divide became one of the most pressing education issues in New Mexico. Many students lacked reliable internet, dedicated devices, or the digital skills needed to navigate school platforms. The Yazzie–Martínez ruling underscored this reality, finding that when students lack high-speed internet and suitable technology, they are not receiving an education that adequately prepares them for college or career (1). In the years since, statewide and local partners have invested heavily in closing these gaps. With our newly updated dashboards, we can examine how these investments have reshaped digital access across communities.

### Changes in Digital Access Across Communities

Our latest dashboards tell a clear story: **digital access has improved significantly across New Mexico**, and many of the deepest disparities are beginning to narrow.

The [Digital Divide by District and County](#) dashboard shows that most New Mexico communities have made substantial progress since 2018. Doña Ana County stands out in particular. In 2018, nearly a third of households (31%) did not have an internet subscription. By 2024, that number had fallen to 7%.

Percentage of Households in Doña Ana County Without an Internet Subscription, (2018-2024)

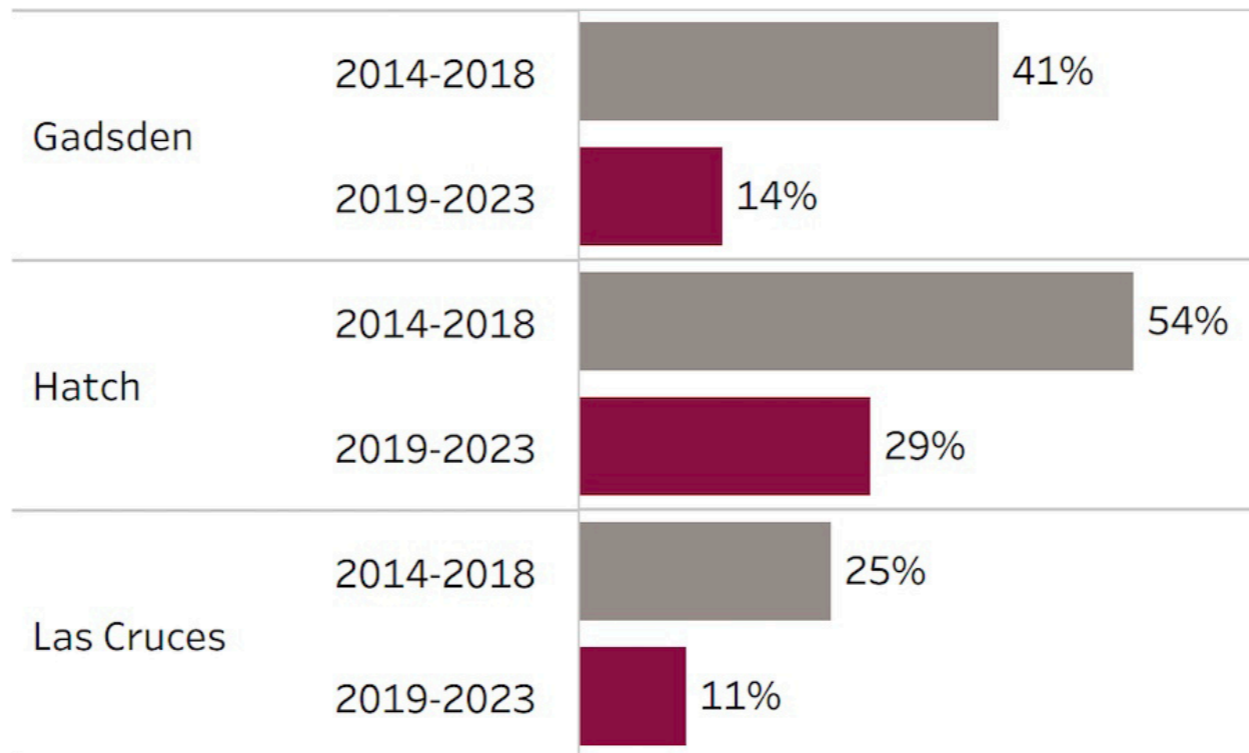


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates. 2020 data were not released.

[Click here to see the Digital Divide Dashboard by District/County/State](#)

Similar improvements are observed across local school districts when comparing American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year periods. From 2014–2018 to 2019–2023, the share of households without an internet subscription or a computer declined sharply in Gadsden (41% to 14%), Hatch Valley (54% to 29%), and Las Cruces (25% to 11%). These gains coincide with investments in broadband infrastructure, affordability supports, and community-based outreach, highlighting the tangible impact of sustained efforts to expand home internet access for students and families.

Percentage of Households in Doña Ana County School Districts Without an Internet Subscription or a Computer, (2018-2024)



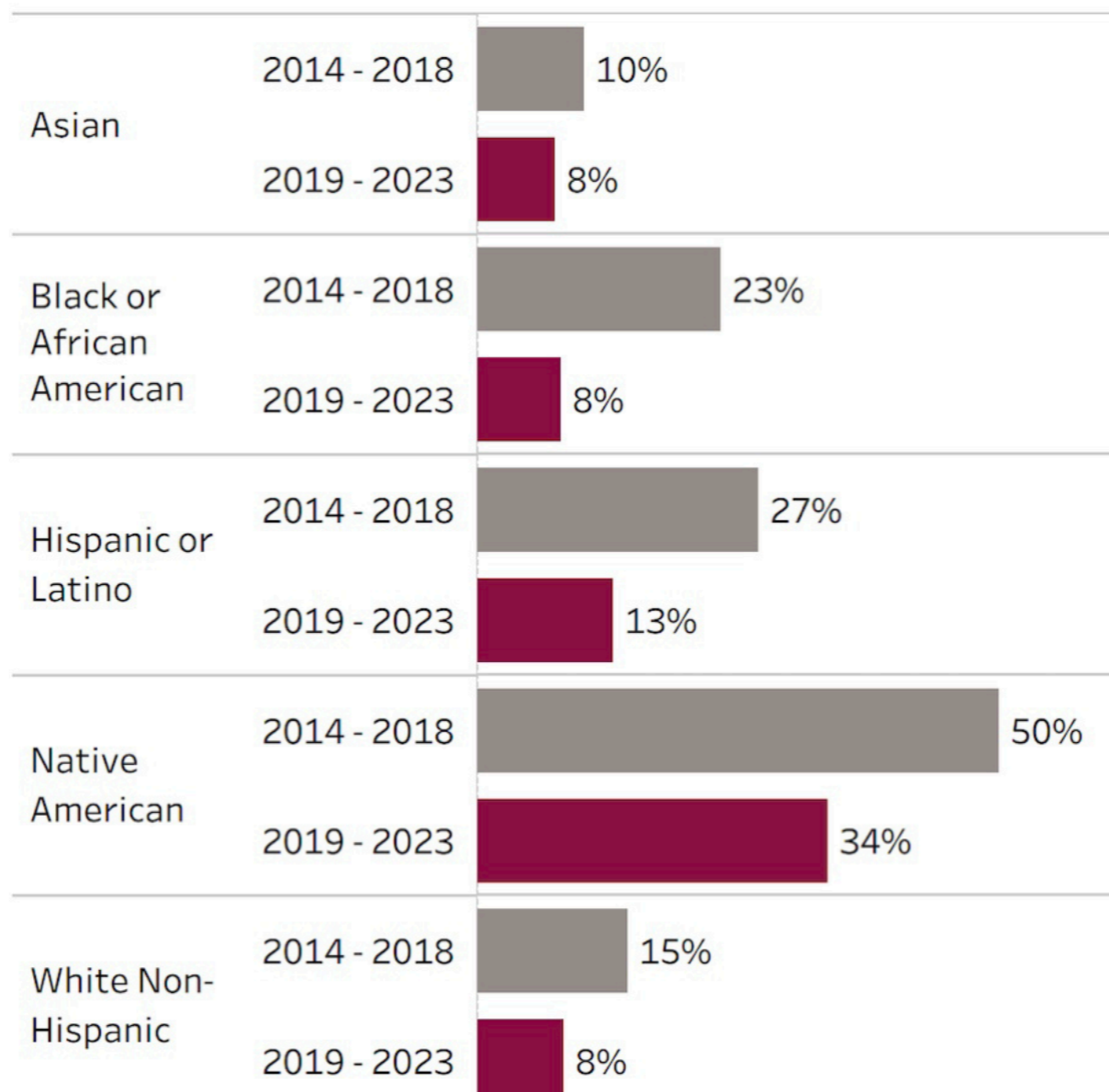
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates.

### Trends in Digital Access and Equity

Our second dashboard, [Digital Access by Race, Ethnicity, and Income](#), shows steady improvement across all racial and ethnic groups. Native American households, who have historically faced some of the largest barriers to connectivity, barriers shaped by geographic remoteness in many Tribal areas and longstanding underinvestment in infrastructure (2) (3), have seen notable gains.

According to ACS 5-year estimates, the share of Native American households in New Mexico without an internet subscription or a computer fell from **50% in 2014–2018 to 34% in 2019–2023**. This represents substantial progress, yet equity gaps remain: Native American households continue to face the highest barriers, and sustained investment is needed to further narrow the gap.

Percentage of Households in New Mexico Without an Internet Subscription or a Computer, by Race and Ethnicity, (2014-2023)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates.

Other racial and ethnic groups have also seen improvements. In the most recent estimates, 8% of Asian, Black, and White non-Hispanic households lack a computer or internet at home, and 13% of Hispanic/Latino households face the same barrier, all lower than in the previous ACS cycle. Access has also increased across income levels. Although disparities persist, the overall trend is encouraging: communities that have historically faced the greatest barriers are seeing consistent gains.

**Why it matters:** Digital access has become inseparable from educational participation. Assignments, teacher engagement, tutoring, grade monitoring, college and career exploration, and school communication now depend on reliable internet and a dedicated device. As access improves, especially for students of color and in low-income households, so does their ability to fully participate in learning.

[Click here to see the Digital Divide Dashboard by Race, Ethnicity, and Income](#)

### The Role of Investment and Collaboration

New Mexico's progress has not happened by accident. State, federal, Tribal, and community partners have worked together to expand high-speed broadband and improve digital equity. Statewide efforts, such as the Digital Equity in Education Act (4), the allocation of \$675 million through the U.S. Broadband Equity Access and Development (BEAD) program, the expansion of the Connect New Mexico Fund, and the continued work of the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion, have all strengthened digital infrastructure across the state (5). Tribal Nations and local communities have led their own broadband development, securing federal grants and building systems designed by and for their communities (6).

Community organizations have also played a major role. Device distribution programs, run by Goodwill Industries of New Mexico and the University of New Mexico Foundation, have led to hotspot lending and mobile outreach, and digital skills training has helped families in rural and underserved areas get connected and stay connected (7). These combined efforts are reflected directly in the improvements shown across our dashboards.

### Remaining Gaps and Ongoing Needs

Nearly every school in New Mexico now has broadband access, and more families than ever are connected at home (8). Yet access alone is not enough. To ensure long-term digital equity, we must continue investing in affordability, device refresh cycles, family-centered digital skills support, and community partnerships, especially in areas where gaps persist by race, ethnicity, and income.

While recent progress is evident, there is still room for improvement. As education becomes increasingly digital, sustained investments will be needed to address persistent gaps by race, ethnicity, and income. These dashboards can help track progress over time and inform local and statewide efforts to ensure that every student in New Mexico has the tools they need to thrive.

Sources:

- (1)(5)(8) [ALESC Wired for Success: An Update on New Mexico's Statewide Education Network and Broadband](#)
- (2) [Congressional Research Service, Tribal Broadband Deployment: Federal Funding and Considerations for Congress](#)
- (3) [FCC Native Nations Communications Task Force, Improving and Increasing Broadband Deployment on Tribal Lands](#)
- (4) [NMPED, Educational Technology](#)
- (6) [Tribes, Cooperatives, and Counties Nab \\$1.4 Million In New Mexico Grants](#)
- (7) [Supporting digital connectivity in New Mexico](#)



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