

status of US broadband

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Where in the United States you can actually get a fast, symmetric, reliable connection — as opposed to where a coverage map claims you can.

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The finding that surprises people

Rural does not predict bad. North Dakota — one of the emptiest states in the country — has the best home internet in the United States, scoring 94.1 out of 100, with roughly **99.2% of homes reachable by high-speed service and almost no gap between town and countryside**. It got there by building consistently everywhere rather than by having cities.

The states at the bottom are also rural, which is the point: rurality is not the cause. Policy and cooperative build-out are.

The bottom

State	Position	Fiber availability	Average download
Alaska	Last in the nation	~13%	~105 Mbps
Wyoming	Second from last	~22%	~112 Mbps
Montana	Bottom five	—	~115 Mbps
New Mexico	Bottom five	—	—
Idaho	Bottom five	—	—

Alaska is the only state that ranks worst on every metric measured. Hawaii, Wyoming and Alaska all average below 160 Mbps.

Wyoming is at least moving: it posted the largest single-year gain in fiber availability in the country, up 13 percentage points.

South Dakota — the disputed case

Sources conflict and it is worth knowing why before quoting a number.

- Statewide fiber availability is reported at **19.6% of population**, or **40.6%** on a looser "fiber is an option" measure.
- Sioux Falls has roughly **50% fiber coverage**, with about **72% of residents able to buy a gigabit plan**.
- But the state's rural cooperatives — Venture Communications, James Valley — deliver genuine gigabit service, and an independent assessment found South Dakota's rural networks **above average** for rural deployments.

Both stories are true. The cooperative-served areas are good; the statewide average is dragged down by everything else. **Which side of that line a specific address falls on is not knowable from a state-level number** — check the address.

The cost gap explains the pattern: deploying fiber runs about **\$3,571 per resident** in the rural areas served

by South Dakota Telecommunications Association members, against roughly **\$26 per resident** in Sioux Falls. A 137-fold difference is why co-ops and public money, rather than incumbents, built whatever rural fiber exists.

How to read any of this

State-level broadband rankings are close to useless for choosing a place to live. Availability is decided street by street, the FCC's own maps have historically overstated coverage, and "high-speed" thresholds differ between sources. Every figure here is a state aggregate.

Check the actual address, against more than one provider's own serviceability tool, before treating connectivity as solved.

Sources: [Compare Internet — best and worst states for home internet 2026](#) · [Reviews.org — fiber availability, rural vs urban](#) · [BroadbandNow — best and worst states for broadband](#) · [MuniNetworks — South Dakota's rural networks above average](#)