



Region's Internet speeds along

Survey: Compared to most of state, southcentral Kentucky's Web connections moving at brisk pace

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A recent study reveals that although Kentucky - like most of the United States - lags behind the Internet speeds of other countries, many counties in southcentral Kentucky outpace both state and national figures.

In a time where people are doing more over the Internet than ever before - downloading music and movies, transferring medical reports, and even conducting distance learning programs - speed matters.

For instance, at the Federal Communication Commission's standard of 200 kilobits per second, it would take someone 17 hours to download a two-hour movie. But in Japan, which has a median download speed of 61 megabits, that same movie would only take two minutes.

"It's a big difference," said Candice Johnson, spokeswoman for the Communication Workers of America, which performed the study. Johnson doesn't claim the study is scientific, but said it's the first such effort, since the government doesn't collect data on Internet speed.

Johnson said true high-speed Internet would allow someone to download at 10 megabits per second and upload at one megabit per second.

Many of the counties in southcentral Kentucky actually have faster Internet speeds than the national and state median speeds, according to the CWA's data at speedtest.org. All but Logan and Monroe counties did better than the state median download speed of 1.61 megabits per second. Meanwhile, Todd, Butler, Hart and Muhlenberg Counties had faster average download speeds than Warren County. Warren had faster download speeds than Barren, Edmonson, Simpson, Allen, Metcalfe, Logan and Monroe Counties.

As far as median upload speeds, Simpson County outpaced all the counties in southcentral Kentucky, followed by Logan, Warren and Hart counties. All of those, as well as Allen County, outpaced the state's median upload speed of 363 kilobits per second.

Nationally, Kentucky is ranked 32nd in the nation at 1.607 mbps - below the national median of 1.973 mbps.

Kentucky also sits behind four of its neighboring states, like 20th-ranked Tennessee, which had 2.035 mbps, 24th-ranked Indiana, which had 1.955 mbps, 17th-ranked Illinois, which had 2.184 mbps, and 11th-ranked Virginia, which had 2.394 mbps.

Johnson did recognize Kentucky as a model state in regards to efforts to increase access to high-speed Internet, while noting affordability is an important part of the puzzle.

Bowling Green-based ConnectKentucky, a nonprofit aimed at getting Kentucky to 100 percent broadband Internet availability, has garnered attention from lawmakers in Washington and organizations like the CWA.

"We think that's really a model on how (the U.S.) should look at rolling out high-speed Internet access," Johnson said. "One of the benefits of ConnectKentucky is that they're showing that people want access."

Mark McElroy, senior vice president of operations and communications for ConnectKentucky, said while Kentucky may not be leading the country in Internet speed, it is leading the nation in overall access to broadband.

"The speed of broadband is an important indication in that it identifies the capacity for downloading more media-rich files," McElroy said. "As more people transition to digital photography, video and more advanced technology, they'll need better connections. The speed of broadband allows for the usage of that technology easier."

He also noted that Kentucky's rate of job growth in the information technology sector is 31 times the national average.

"Some 14,500 jobs ... have been added to the Kentucky economy in the last couple of years because of the state's collaborative effort to spread broadband to every community," McElroy said. "These are the types of things that aren't recounted in studies like this."

McElroy said to also keep in mind that faster speeds will follow as more people adopt broadband technology.

Meanwhile, two of the area's Internet providers seem to be responding to the need for faster connections.

According to readers of PC World magazine, Insight Communication's high-speed Internet outranks AT&T and Verizon's DSL in a list of "Best and Worst ISPs."

Based on a recent survey of 6,400 readers, Insight's Broadband 10.0 outranks its Kentucky competitors in overall satisfaction, as well as both downstream and upstream speeds.

"The PC World survey echoes what our customers now tell us all the time," said Paul Meltzer, senior vice president of product management at Insight, in a news release. "We've worked hard to make the choice really simple by being the fastest and hands down best Internet service in our markets. It's nice to see that confirmed by an independent source."

Insight rolled out its Insight Broadband 10.0 service last year to all of its Kentucky customers, offering them download speeds up to 10 mbps, 1 gigabyte of e-mail storage per e-mail account and a free Internet security package.

By the numbers: Internet speeds

Nations: Median download speed (megabits per second)

Japan: 61.00

South Korea: 45.60

Finland: 21.70

Sweden: 18.20

Canada: 7.60

United States: 1.97

Kentucky: 1.61

Kentucky counties: Median download speeds (mbps)

Todd County: 3.771

Butler County: 2.742

Hart County: 2.607

Muhlenberg County: 2.586

Fayette County: 2.530

Jefferson County: 2.389

Warren County: 2.487

Barren County: 2.135

Edmonson County: 2.112

Simpson County: 2.027

Allen County: 1.997

Metcalfe County: 1.892

Logan County: 1.435

Monroe County: 585 kbps

Kentucky counties: Median upload speed

Simpson County: 1.241 mbps

Logan County: 977 kbps

Warren County: 859 kbps

Hart County: 838 kbps

Jefferson County: 587 kbps

Fayette County: 499 kbps

Allen County: 416 kbps

Barren County: 349 kbps

Metcalfe County: 279 kbps

Butler County: 245 kbps

Edmonson County: 244 kbps

Muhlenberg County: 236 kbps

Todd County: 233 kbps

Monroe County: 213 kbps

- Speed tests results for Sept. 2006 through May 2007; most participants had DSL or cable modem connections. Courtesy CWA Communications.

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