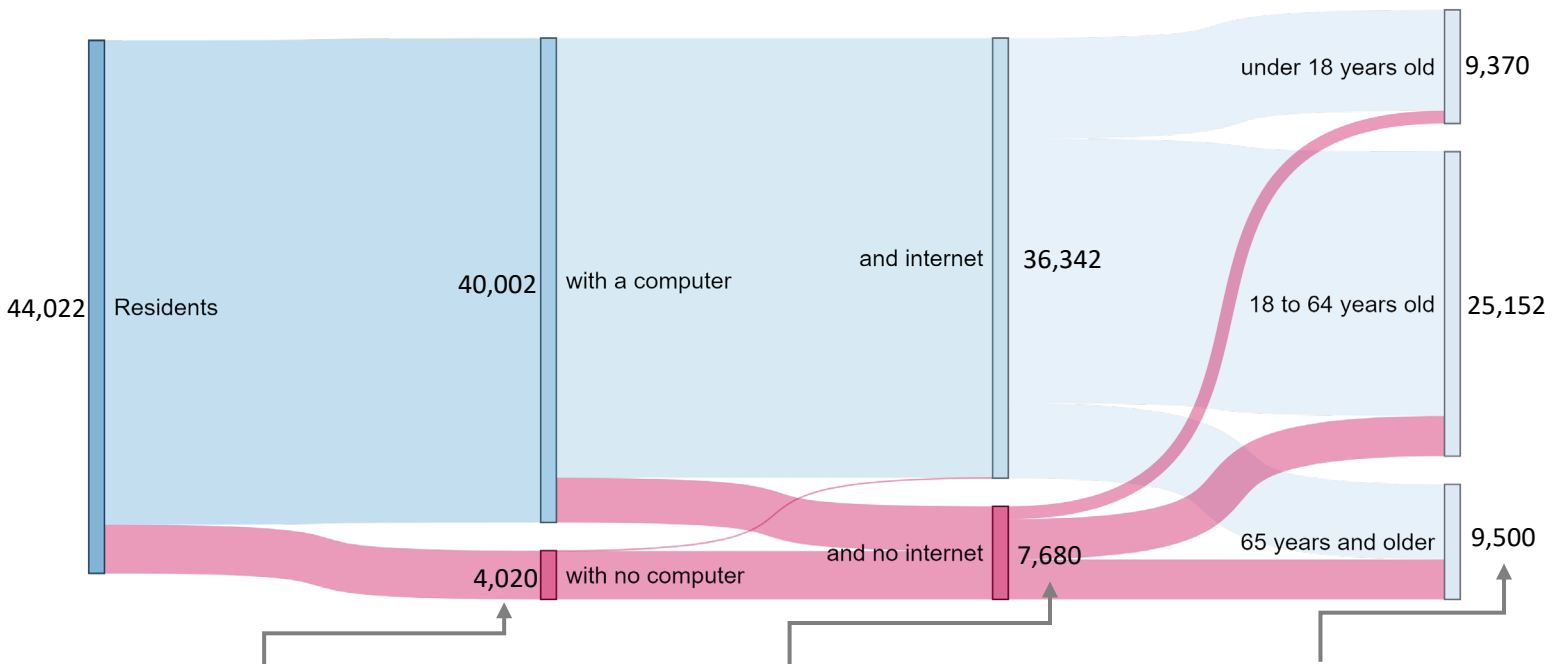


The Digital Divide in Itasca County

Before COVID-19



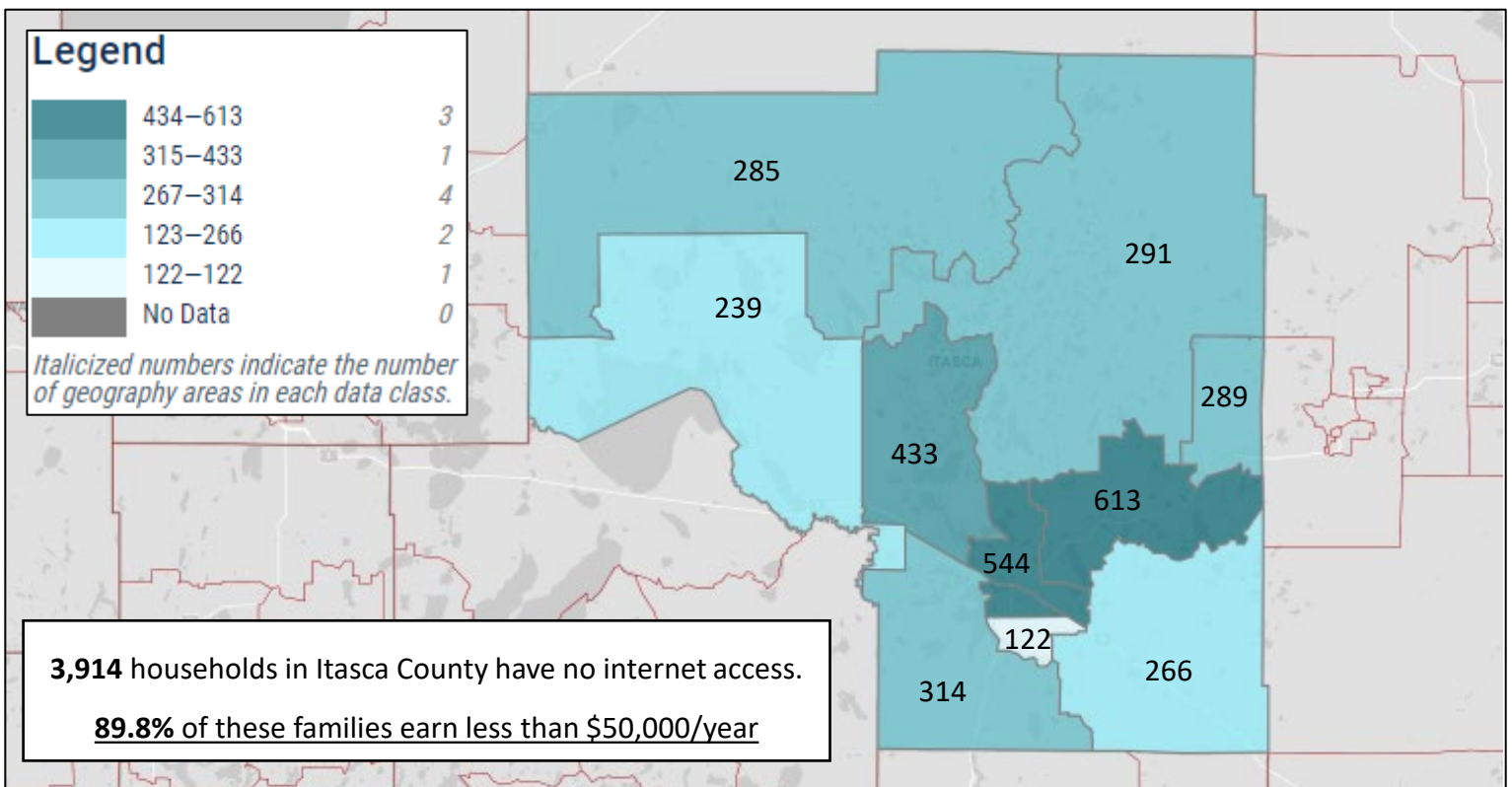
9% of residents had no computer in their home, not even a smartphone

17% of residents had no internet at home, not even a smartphone

35% of seniors, **8%** of adults age 18-64, and **11%** of children have no internet at home, not even a smartphone

Where do these families live?

Households in Itasca County without Internet Access



The Digital Divide in Itasca County

Today – October 13, 2020



The pandemic has only exacerbated the digital divide in Itasca County illustrated on the previous page.

KOOTASCA has deployed nearly **70 hotspots** alone since the beginning of the pandemic and the 4 local school districts have deployed **well over 200**. More than **97% of those devices have gone to families with children of all ages**; however, whether it is low-income seniors and individuals in high risk populations, those now unemployed or underemployed, families with school age children, or families with children to young to go to school, **the need to support working class Itascans of all backgrounds remains.**

According to the rough estimates and survey information provided by the Itasca County School Districts, between **15-30% of students** have needed home Internet access due to the pandemic. This is almost double pre-pandemic needs for children under age 18 (11%). The number of adults and seniors, for all community members, similarly positioned has almost certainly grown as well.

For those fortunate enough to have meaningful connectivity, it has long been clear that internet service is a key to many resources and opportunities. Now more than ever, though, it is critical to success and daily life.

The Itasca County Connected Community proposal provides an opportunity to address this tangible need with internet service and computer devices needed by Itascans, today.

KOOTASCA is ready to undertake this with our local government, school district, and community partners, as soon as possible, if approved.