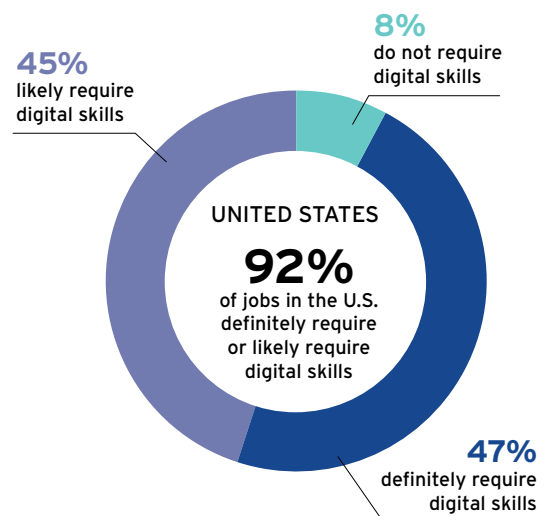
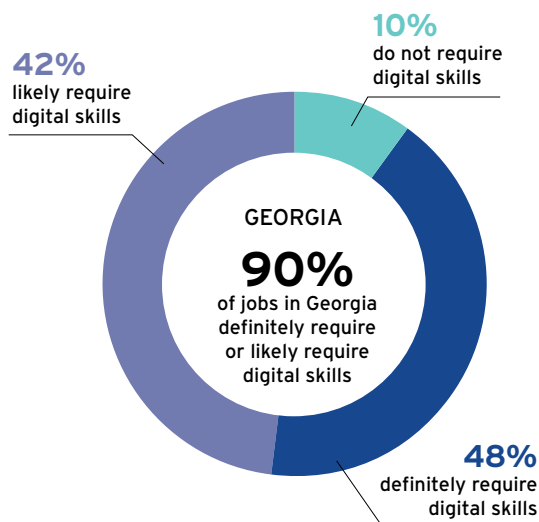


# CLOSING GEORGIA'S DIGITAL SKILL DIVIDE

The digital divide isn't just about access to broadband and computers and other hardware, it's also about access to *skills*. Massive investments made through the bipartisan infrastructure law will send billions of dollars to states and localities across the U.S. over the next five years to help close the digital divide. This includes \$1.3 billion that is slated to flow to Georgia through the Digital Equity Act and the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. New research demonstrates the urgency and the payoff if Georgia directs a significant portion of these resources to high-quality digital skills training programs.<sup>1</sup>

## 90% OF GEORGIA JOBS REQUIRE DIGITAL SKILLS, CONSISTENT WITH U.S. AVERAGE



### BUSINESSES OF EVERY SIZE & INDUSTRY HAVE HIGH DEMAND FOR DIGITAL SKILLS

Nationally, the demand for digital skills is significant for jobs posted by **small** (92%) and **large** (94%) businesses alike.<sup>2</sup> Demand is consistently high across industries, including priority sectors for Georgia, such as **manufacturing** (93%); **agriculture** (86%); and **transportation and warehousing** (77%).



### GEORGIA'S MOST IN-DEMAND FOUNDATIONAL DIGITAL SKILLS

- Computer literacy
- Data entry
- Microsoft Excel & Outlook
- Typing
- Social Media
- Word Processing

### EXAMPLES OF IN-DEMAND, INDUSTRY SPECIFIC SKILLS:

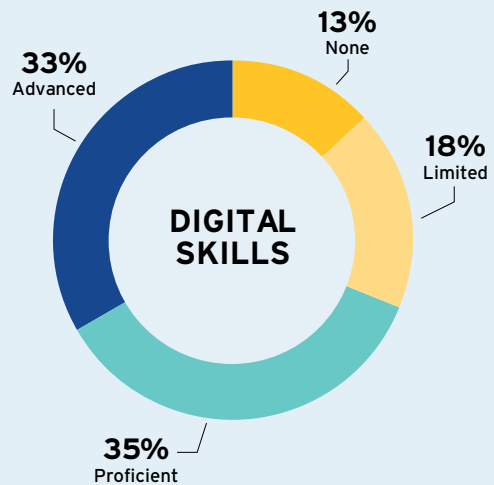
- **Healthcare:** Electronic medical record software
- **Manufacturing:** Computer Numeric Control (CNC)
- **Retail:** Robotics; SAS retail analytics software
- **Finance and insurance:** Nationwide Mortgage Licensing System

## BUT GEORGIA, LIKE THE NATION, FACES A DIGITAL SKILL DIVIDE

Nearly 48 million US workers – one-third of all US workers – do not have the foundational digital skills needed to secure in-demand jobs.<sup>3</sup> This points to a digital skill divide in Georgia and the nation – a divide between those who have access to digital skill building programs and those who do not.



## FOUNDATIONAL DIGITAL SKILLS AND THE US WORKFORCE



Currently employed US workers ages 16-64. Foundational digital skills refer to skills like email, simple spreadsheets, data entry, or timecard software. Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) 2012-14.

## CLOSING THE DIGITAL SKILL DIVIDE: THE PAYOFF

- **FOR EMPLOYERS:** Providing workers with upskilling opportunities can help retention and save businesses \$25,000-\$78,000 in turnover costs per employee.
- **FOR WORKERS:** Moving from a job that requires no digital skills to one that requires just one digital skill can yield a 23% increase in wages for workers.

## GEORGIANS STRONGLY SUPPORT INVESTING IN SKILLS TRAINING

Given the benefits of investing in skills training, it's no surprise that it's a popular topic with Georgia voters. More than nine out of ten (91%) of Georgia voters support increasing investment in skills and technical training, with a majority (57%) **strongly** supporting more investment. This high level of support cuts across party lines.<sup>4</sup>

## WHAT GEORGIA LEADERS CAN DO

Georgia can close the digital skill divide by ensuring that massive federal investments through the **Digital Equity Act** and the **BEAD program** expand access to high quality digital skills training. Georgia can deploy these resources to support skill building strategies that have demonstrated impact, including:

- **Industry sector partnerships** between education/workforce training providers and employers
- **Programs that teach digital skills** in the context of job-specific skills, often called contextualized or integrated learning
- **Training that yields credentials** that are valued and recognized across an industry, not just by a single employer. This allows public investments in training to simultaneously support career advancement and economic growth.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Unless otherwise cited, all national data in this brief is from *Closing the Digital Skills Divide* (National Skills Coalition, 2023). Unless otherwise cited, all Georgia-specific data is from an analysis by NSC of additional data that was not included in *Closing the Digital Skill Divide*.
- 2 Small businesses are those posting 1-50 job ads/year; large businesses are those posting 501-1,000 job ads/year
- 3 *The New Landscape of Digital Literacy* (National Skills Coalition, 2020.)
- 4 On behalf of National Skills Coalition, Impact Research conducted a statewide online survey in Georgia of 401 likely 2020 general election voters, January 30 - February 3, 2019.