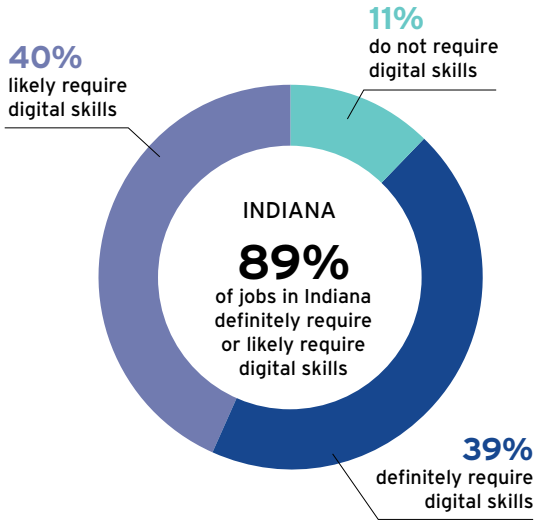
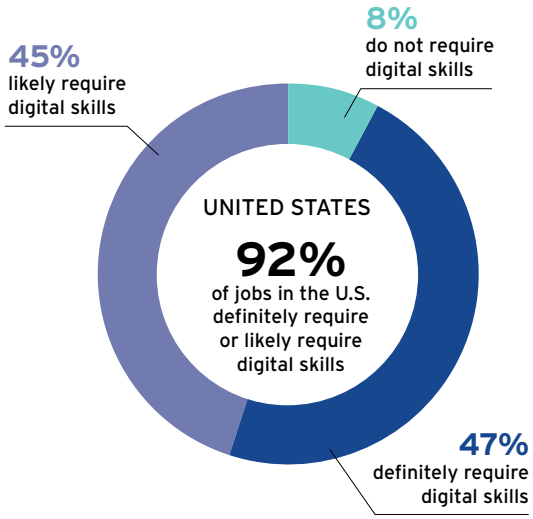
CLOSING INDIANA'S DIGITAL *SKILL* DIVIDE

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 $883 million that is slated to flow to Indiana through the Digital Equity Act and the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. New research demonstrates the urgency and the payoff if Indiana directs a significant portion of these resources to high-quality digital skills training programs.[1]

89% OF INDIANA JOBS REQUIRE DIGITAL SKILLS, CLOSE TO THE 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** (90%) and **large** (94%) businesses alike.[2] Demand is consistently high across industries, including priority sectors for Indiana,such as **manufacturing** (93%); **agriculture** (86%); and **transportation and warehousing** (77%).

INDIANA'S MOST IN-DEMAND FOUNDATIONAL DIGITAL SKILLS

- Computer literacy
- Data entry
- Microsoft Excel & PowerPoint
- Typing
- Word Processing

EXAMPLES OF IN-DEMAND, INDUSTRY SPECIFIC SKILLS:

- **Healthcare:** Electronic medical record software; radiologic technology.
- **Manufacturing:** Computer Numeric Control (CNC); AutoCAD; Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software.
- **Retail:** Robotics; SAS retail analytics software

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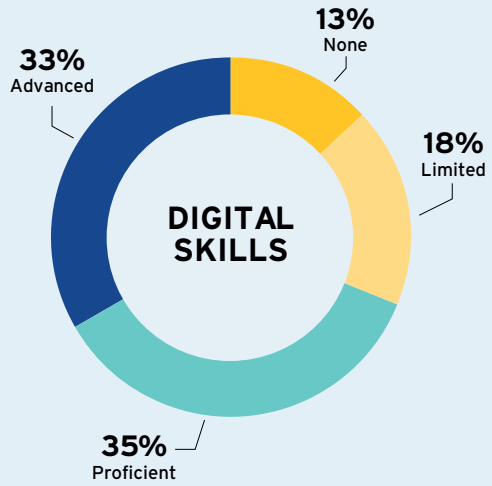
BUT INDIANA, LIKE THE NATION, FACES A DIGITAL *SKILL* DIVIDE

Nearly 48 million US workers – one-third of all US workers – do not have the foundational digital *skills* needed to secure in-demand jobs.[3] This points to a digital skill divide in Indiana 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



Currenly 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.

HOOSIERS 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 voters. **90% want to provide access to digital skills training** for workers throughout their careers so they can adapt to new technologies at work.[4]

WHAT INDIANA LEADERS CAN DO

Indiana 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. Indiana 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 Indiana-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 National Skills Coalition commissioned a nationwide online poll of 1000 registered voters. Impact Research conducted the poll between March 11-17, 2024. The margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence.