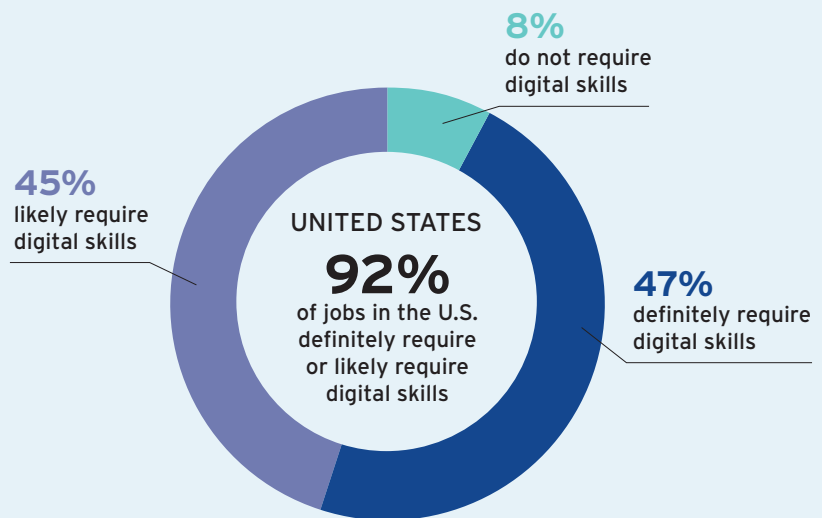


CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN THE UNITED STATES

The digital divide isn't just about access to broadband, 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 few years to help close the digital divide. This includes more than \$45 billion that is slated to flow to the nation through the Digital Equity Act and the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. New research demonstrates the urgency and the economic opportunity if the nation directs a significant portion of these resources to workforce and digital skills training programs.¹

92% OF U.S. JOBS REQUIRE DIGITAL SKILLS



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 key sectors such as:

- **Finance and insurance** (99%)
- **Healthcare** (95%)
- **Retail trade** (95%)
- **Manufacturing** (93%)
- **Construction** (91%)
- **Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting** (86%)
- **Accommodation and food services** (85%)



THE MOST IN-DEMAND FOUNDATIONAL DIGITAL SKILLS:

- Computer literacy
- Data entry
- Typing
- Microsoft Office
- Word Processing
- Point-of-sale systems

EXAMPLES OF IN-DEMAND, INDUSTRY SPECIFIC SKILLS:

Healthcare: Electronic medical records; telehealth

Retail: SAS retail analytics and consumer goods software

Manufacturing: Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software; Programmable Logic Controller (PLC); robotics

Real estate & rental and leasing: Yardi property management software

Professional, scientific, and technical services: Systems administration; system analysis

Information: Fiserv financial services technology

Finance and insurance: Mobile banking; electronic wire transfer; Nationwide Mortgage Licensing System

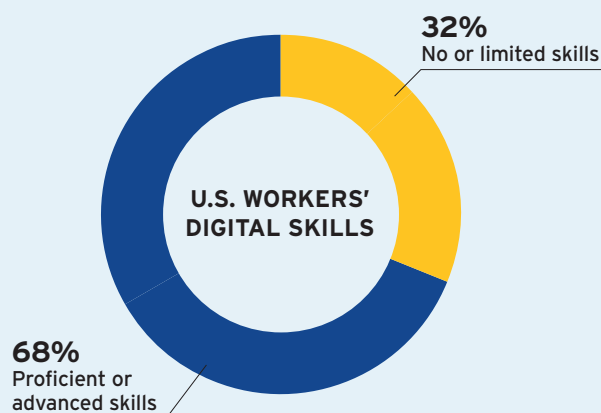
THE NATION FACES A **DIGITAL SKILL DIVIDE** – AND A CALL FOR EXPANDED TRAINING

Nearly 48 million U.S. workers – one-third of all U.S. workers – do not have the foundational digital skills needed to secure in-demand jobs.³ This highlights a digital skill divide – a divide between those who have access to digital skill building programs and those who do not.

Americans understand the problem: three out of four Americans (73%) believe expanding skills training is an important way to improve the economy⁵.



NEARLY 1/3 OF WORKERS LACK FOUNDATIONAL DIGITAL SKILLS



Currently employed U.S. 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.

VOTERS 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



Scan here to view the full report

WHAT LEADERS CAN DO

The U.S. 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. The nation 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 support career advancement and economic growth.

nationalskillscoalition.org

ENDNOTES

- 1 Unless otherwise cited, all national data in this brief is from *Closing the Digital Skills Divide* (National Skills Coalition, 2023).
- 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.
- 5 Ibid.