The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical role of fast and affordable internet service. With internet access, Americans across the country forced to stay home have been able to keep in touch with family and friends, schedule important virtual doctor’s appointments, work from home, and continue their education.

But the pandemic has also underscored how these opportunities are not available to everyone, with significant disparities based on geography and income. Tens of millions of people across the United States, especially those in rural and tribal areas, do not have access to broadband internet services because of where they live. Millions more simply can’t afford it, and go without internet service despite living in broadband network service areas. For these populations, the pandemic has been especially isolating, putting access to remote jobs and education even further out of reach.

This digital divide is increasingly harmful. Regardless of the pandemic, internet access will only continue to become more essential to American life, as crucial to a minimum standard of living as heat and running water. And those without it will be further left behind and excluded.

New polling from Data for Progress and The Justice Collaborative Institute finds overwhelming bipartisan support for universal broadband access. In a national survey of 1,074 likely voters, 69% of respondents, including 57% of Republicans, believe that the federal government should close the digital divide by investing in and providing universal broadband internet.

Further, 77% of voters (and 73% of Republican voters) believe a convincing reason to provide universal broadband is that populations in rural or tribal areas will otherwise be excluded from education and employment opportunities that require high-speed internet. Likewise, 73% of voters (and 65% of Republicans) found it convincing to ensure that broadband is universal because at least 100 million people live in areas that have broadband but are unable to afford access to it without government subsidies. In addition, 82% of voters agreed that a convincing reason to provide high-speed internet is that without it, students won’t have equal access to online learning, and 75% voters found it a convincing reason that universal broadband internet can ensure access to low-cost, high-quality healthcare via telehealth.
Thus far, the Federal Communications Commission and the U.S. Department of Agriculture have allocated more than $22 billion in federal subsidies to expand access to broadband internet in rural areas across the United States. But our polling shows that voters support further investments in broadband sufficient to provide every person in America access to high-speed internet. As the internet becomes increasingly essential, we must ensure that we also don’t leave low-income people behind.

**Polling Methodology**
From 8/7/2020 to 8/7/2020, Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,074 likely voters nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is +/- 3 percent.