

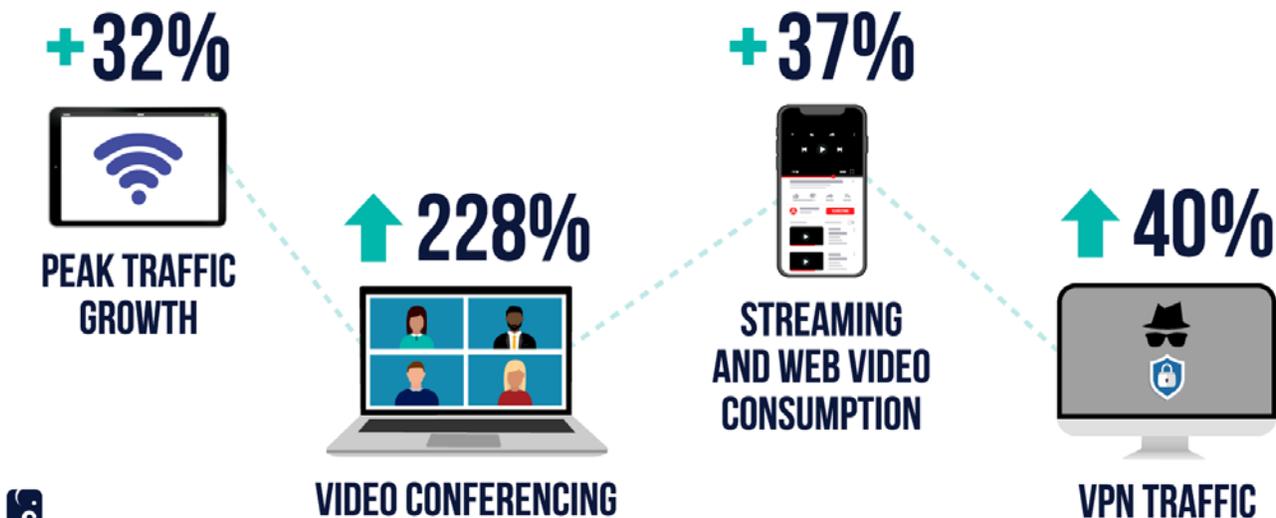
# CORONAVIRUS AND THE INTERNET

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- On March 13, President Trump declared the coronavirus pandemic to be a national emergency. By the end of March, over half of the states had issued orders for residents to stay at home to reduce the spread of the disease.
- The internet's built-in resilience and redundancy have helped keep it functioning as American life has moved online during the coronavirus pandemic. The internet has kept Americans connected to friends and family; delivered entertainment, fitness, and educational content; and enabled important telehealth services.
- The private sector companies that provide internet service in America have helped ensure Americans stay connected.

**A**s states have instructed people to stay home to help stop the spread of the coronavirus, much of American life has moved online. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how much harder our economy would have been hit if we did not have the ability to shift so many people's work, shopping, and other activities onto the web.

### Network Usage since March 1



Source: [Comcast](#)

The internet was designed from the beginning with resiliency and redundancy as core concepts. That design, plus continued investment in the network and the ability of cloud computing to scale up quickly



to meet demand, have [kept](#) the internet functioning as demands on the network have increased. Private sector companies that provide internet service to millions of Americans are doing their part to keep people connected when they must be apart.

## INTERNET USAGE

Comcast, one of the country's largest providers of high-speed, residential internet service, [reports](#) that since March 1 it has seen a 32% increase in uploads at peak use times and an 18% increase in downloads. Peak hours have shifted from the evenings, when people are typically streaming video for entertainment, to daytime work hours, when people are now teleworking and videoconferencing.

Netflix and YouTube have both seen significant [increases](#) in usage during the pandemic. Usage of videochat apps like Houseparty and Zoom has soared as people look to connect through more than email and text.

Other countries have not had as seamless of a transition during the coronavirus pandemic. In Europe, the internet is heavily regulated and suffers from a lack of investment and innovation. Regulators there have [pressured](#) Netflix and YouTube to throttle speed and reduce the quality of videos, which account for a large share of internet traffic, in an effort to ensure the internet continues to function for all users.

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

**Digital Divide.** The FCC has [estimated](#) that millions of Americans do not have high-speed broadband connections at home. During the pandemic shutdown, as services like schooling move online, people who have slower connections may find it difficult to use all of the services available to them. With multiple family members at home together, they may also lack enough equipment to work simultaneously. In some places, schools, charities, and businesses have [worked](#) to narrow the divide by setting up mobile hotspots and purchasing unlimited data plans, laptops, and other equipment for people who lack them.

**Cybersecurity.** As more activity moves online, the opportunities for cybercriminals and hackers increase. Many people who are now working from home do not have the same level of network security and IT support they had at the office. Small and medium sized businesses may have conducted little to no cybersecurity training for their employees and may not have the technology in place for workers to log in to the company network securely. Zoom, a videoconferencing app that has become popular, in particular has faced [scrutiny](#) of its privacy and cybersecurity practices.

The Department of Defense, which estimates it has up to 4 million employees [teleworking](#), has seen a [surge](#) of spear-phishing attacks related to coronavirus. The Government Accountability Office released a [report](#) this week warning that the Pentagon has not fully implemented a set of practices for managing common cybersecurity risks.



**Fraud.** While cybersecurity can involve attacks by governments and other organizations, it also relates to the threat of fraudsters and scam artists who prey on people’s fear and confusion. Fake coronavirus tests and cures have [shown](#) up for sale on the internet, and Amazon reportedly [barred](#) one million products for inaccurately claiming to cure or defend against the coronavirus. The Federal Trade Commission [says](#) it has received 10,000 complaints of coronavirus related frauds, with more than \$13 million in losses. One United Nations official has gone so far as to [call](#) on cybercriminals to observe a “digital ceasefire” in response to the pandemic.

## PRIVATE SECTOR STEPS UP

**Keep Americans Connected Pledge.** The Federal Communications Commission has asked internet providers and associations to help “ensure that Americans do not lose their broadband or telephone connectivity as a result of these exceptional circumstances.” More than 700 companies and associations have [signed](#) the regulator’s “Keep Americans Connected Pledge,” including AT&T, Charter, Comcast, Cox Communications, Missouri Valley Communications, T-Mobile, and Verizon.

### FCC Keep Americans Connected Pledge

#### GIVEN THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT ON AMERICAN SOCIETY, [[COMPANY NAME]] PLEDGES FOR THE NEXT 60 DAYS TO:

1. Not terminate service to any residential or small business customers because of their inability to pay their bills due to the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic;
2. Waive any late fees that any residential or small business customers incur because of their economic circumstances related to the coronavirus pandemic; and
3. Open its Wi-Fi hotspots to any American who needs them.



**Additional Efforts.** A number of internet service providers have announced additional [initiatives](#) to keep Americans connected. Companies are suspending data usage limits, suspending overage fees, and providing internet service to the U.S. Naval hospital ship Mercy.

## CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

**Access to Telehealth Services.** [Telemedicine](#) can deliver care in a much more efficient and convenient manner for millions of patients. The Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental



Appropriations [Act](#) ensures that Medicare enrollees can access health care services from their home, rather than risk contracting the virus when leaving home to seek medical care.

**CARES Act.** The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act [includes](#) a \$31 billion “education stabilization [fund](#)” to help states address educational needs related to the coronavirus. States, school districts, and institutions of higher education can use funding for a range of activities, including to cover the cost of technology and other expenses related to moving to virtual classrooms. The law [also](#) includes \$200 million to help [provide](#) telehealth services to patients in their homes or mobile locations, and \$100 million to help [build](#) out broadband in rural America.