



# Emergency Broadband Benefit Program:

## 2021 Enrollment Summary

### Program Overview

In December 2020, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 was passed into law. This act allocated \$3.2 billion to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for assisting low-income households with paying for broadband services and devices such as computers and tablets. The FCC established the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Program for this purpose on February 25, 2021, and applications for enrollment in the Program opened on May 12, 2021. On December 31, 2021, after less than a year of operation, the EBB Program ended and was replaced by the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). This report summarizes data released by the EBB Program on its reach and utilization.

While it was in effect, the EBB Program provided a discount on internet services of up to \$50 per month for eligible households that are not on Tribal lands, and up to \$75 per month for eligible households on qualifying Tribal lands. The Program also offered eligible households a one-time discount of up to \$100 to use toward a device such as a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet. In order to be eligible for this discount, the consumer had to provide a co-payment of at least \$10 but no more than \$50 toward the device. Eligible EBB Program participants were limited to receive one monthly discount and one device discount per household.



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## PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

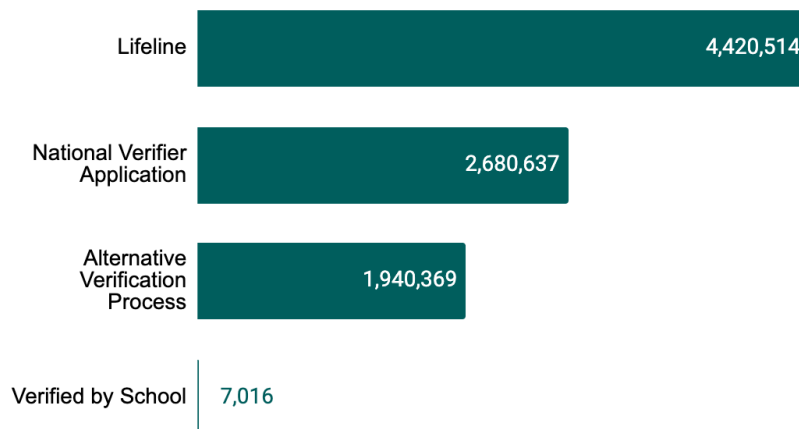
To qualify for the EBB Program, at least one household member had to meet one or more of the following criteria at the time of applying for the Program:

- Had an income at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines
- Was a recipient of certain assistance programs (for example, SNAP, Medicaid, Lifeline program)
- Was eligible for the free and reduced-price school lunch or school breakfast program during or after the 2019-20 school year
- Was awarded a Federal Pell Grant during the current school year
- Is eligible for a participating internet provider's low-income or COVID-19 program
- Had a job loss or furlough since February 29, 2020 that resulted in substantially reduced income, and the household's total income for 2020 was \$99,000 or less for single filers or \$198,000 or less for joint filers

## PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION

People who were eligible for and participated in the FCC's Lifeline program were automatically eligible for the EBB Program. Most EBB Program participants (4.4 million households) were verified for eligibility via their participation in the Lifeline program (**Figure 1**). Nearly 2.7 million EBB Program participants did not participate in the Lifeline program and were able to have their eligibility verified via the National Verifier instead. About 7,000 households were verified by schools via their participation in the free and reduced-price school lunch or school breakfast program. Lastly, about 1.9 million households were verified through an FCC-approved alternative verification process.

The people who applied for the EBB Program using the National Verifier Application were asked to indicate all relevant EBB Program eligibility categories—from a list of 13—that applied to their household (**Figure 2**). Over 3.1 million applicants indicated they were enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP),



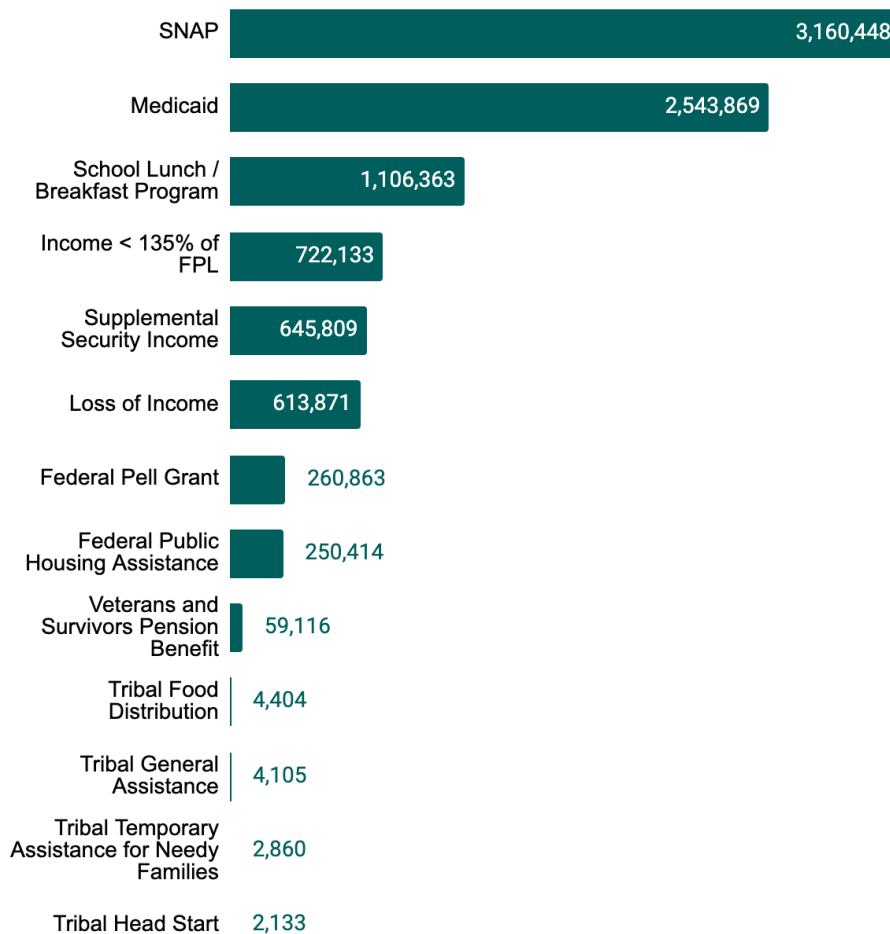
**Figure 1.** Total EBB Program participants by method of verification.

over 2.5 million indicated they were on Medicaid, and over 1.1 million indicated they were eligible for the free and reduced-price school lunch or school breakfast program.

The next most commonly selected eligibility categories were having an income at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines (722,000 applicants), getting supplemental security income (646,000 applicants), having a substantial loss of income (614,000 applicants),

being awarded a federal Pell Grant (261,000 applicants), getting federal public housing assistance (250,000 applicants), and receiving the Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit (59,000 applicants).

The remaining four eligibility categories (Tribal Food Distribution, Tribal General Assistance, Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and Tribal Head Start) were selected by fewer than 5,000 applicants per category.



**Figure 2.** Applicant-selected eligibility categories on National Verifier Applications.

## SIDE NOTE

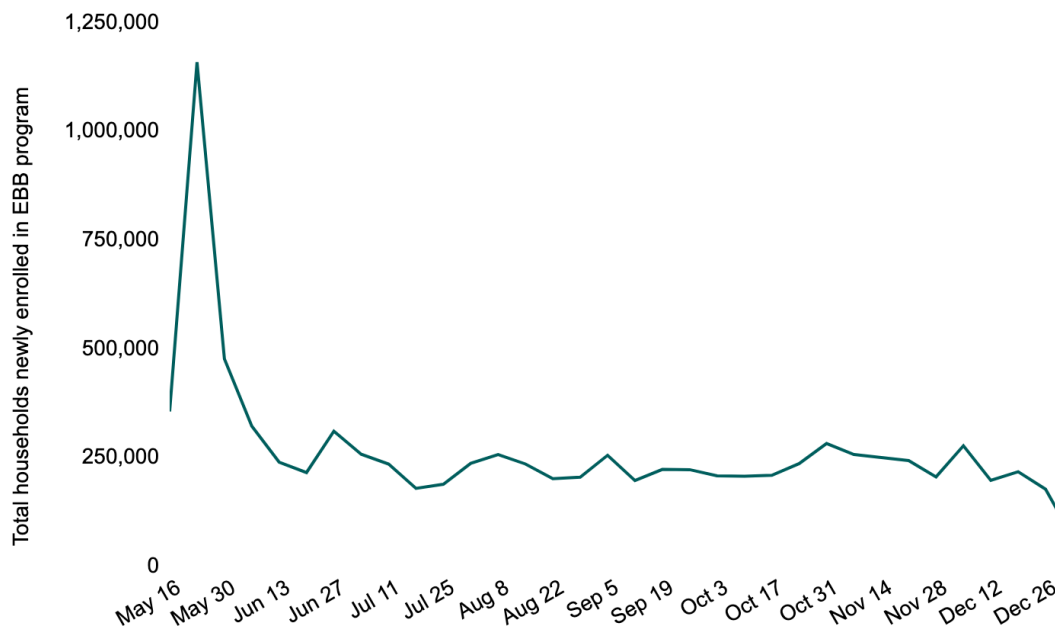
**Figure 2** shows all of the eligibility categories that were selected on all National Verifier Applications for the EBB Program, so the total number of selected categories is greater than the total number of National Verifier Applications that were received. Despite this, it is unclear why over 3.1 million applicants who used the National Verifier indicated they are enrolled in SNAP, when only 2.7 million applicants verified their eligibility via the National Verifier. It is possible that **Figure 2** shows data for everyone who submitted a National Verifier Application for the EBB Program, even if they did not end up becoming enrolled in the EBB Program, whereas **Figure 1** shows data only for those who were enrolled in the EBB Program. This distinction is unclear from the [Universal Service Administrative Company's \(USAC\) website](#), where these data were obtained.

## Enrollment Summary

All of the statistics presented in this summary reflect EBB Program enrollment during the entire duration of the Program, from May 12, 2021 to December 31, 2021.

There was a large spike in enrollment during the first four weeks of the EBB Program, with nearly 1.2 million

households being enrolled during the second week alone (**Figure 3**). After these initial four weeks, an average of about 224,500 households were enrolled into the Program each week. During its entirety, a total of over 139,000 tribal households and over 8.9 million non-tribal households (over 9 million total households) were enrolled in the EBB Program.

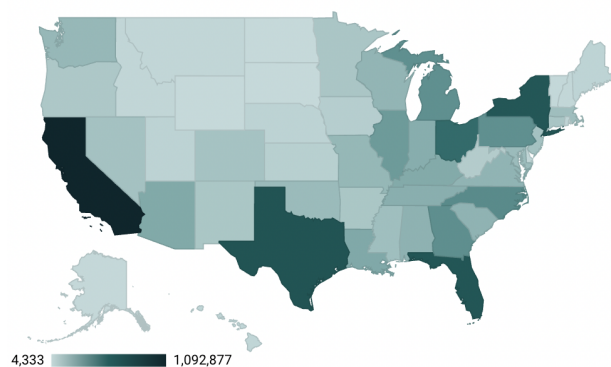


**Figure 3.** Total households newly enrolled in the EBB Program per week, May - December 2021.

## ENROLLMENT BY STATE

EBB Program enrollment varied widely by state, with California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Ohio having the highest enrollment at roughly 1.1 million; 642,000; 615,000; 610,000; and 481,000 enrolled households, respectively (**Figure 4**). South Dakota, North Dakota, Wyoming, Alaska, and Vermont had the lowest enrollment at approximately 4,000; 4,000; 5,000; 7,000; and 10,000 enrolled households, respectively.

There is much less variation in EBB Program enrollment when controlling for the size of each state's population.



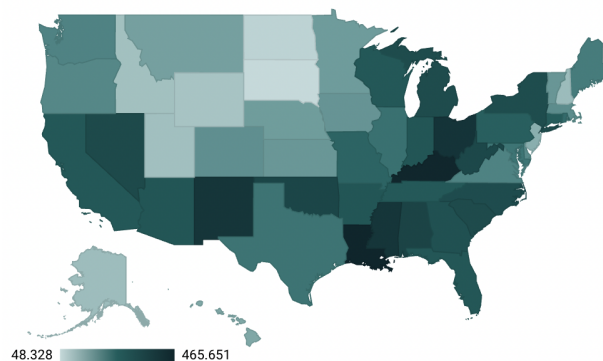
**Figure 4.** EBB Program enrollment by state, 2021.

## CLAIMED SUPPORT

From May through December 2021, the EBB Program provided over \$1.8 billion in discounts to low-income households, with nearly \$1.7 billion going toward monthly internet services (\$210 million per month on average) (**Figure 6**). Over \$160 million of the total \$1.8 billion went toward one-time connected devices (\$20 million per month on average). This funding provided

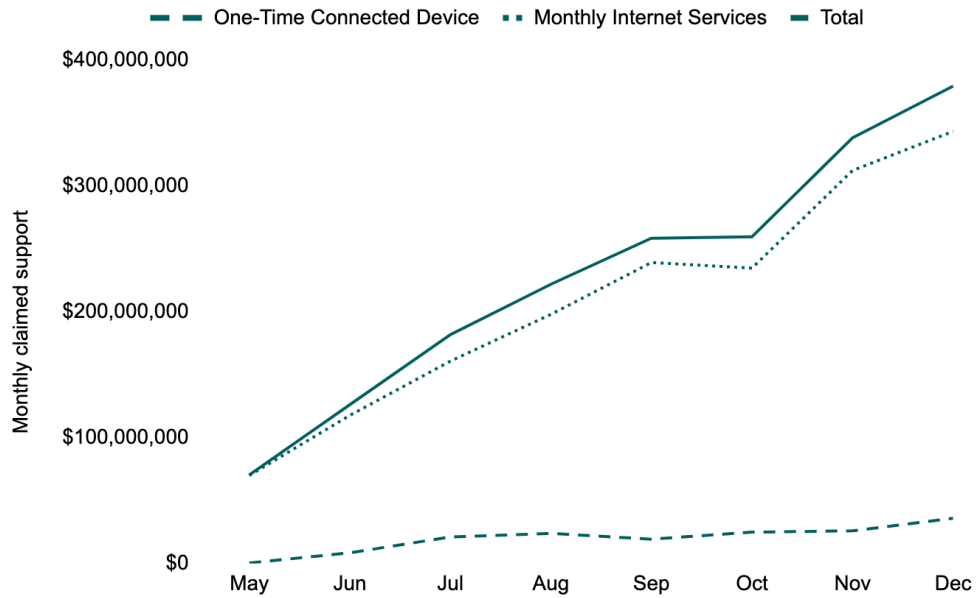
Louisiana, Kentucky, Washington DC, Ohio, New Mexico, and Mississippi had the highest EBB Program enrollment per 10,000 state population, with about 470, 460, 410, 410, 410, and 410 enrolled households per 10,000 state population, respectively (**Figure 5**). The states with the lowest EBB Program enrollment per 10,000 state population were South Dakota, North Dakota, Wyoming, Idaho, and Utah, with roughly 50, 60, 80, 90, and 90 enrolled households per 10,000 state population, respectively.

Visit [this link](#) to view an interactive data tool showing EBB Program enrollment by state and county.



**Figure 5.** EBB Program enrollment per 10,000 state population, 2021.

discounts for over 1.5 million one-time connected devices, 98% of which were for tablets, 1% for laptops, and 1% for desktop computers. As more households became enrolled, the discounts for one-time connected devices and monthly internet services increased each month throughout the duration of the EBB Program, with the exception of a brief decrease in September 2021 for devices and in October 2021 for internet services.

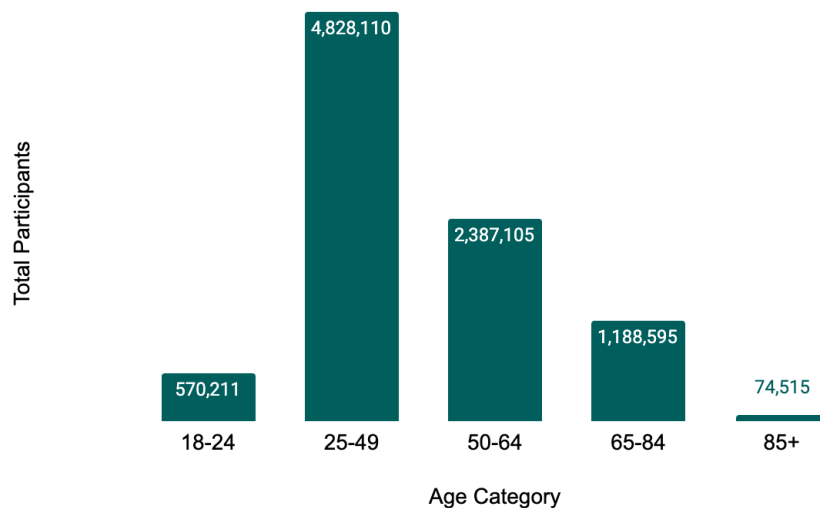


**Figure 6.** EBB Program monthly claimed support, May - December 2021.

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

The EBB Program had over 9 million participating households. The majority of the named applicants who participated in the Program were between the ages of 25 and 49 (4.8 million), between 50 and 64 (2.4 million),

and between 65 and 84 (1.2 million) (**Figure 7**). The age groups with the lowest representation in the EBB Program were people aged 85 and older (75,000) and those between the ages of 18 and 24 (570,000).



**Figure 7.** Total enrolled EBB Program participants by age of named applicant.

## Transition to the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

On December 31, 2021, the EBB Program ended and was replaced by a long-term, \$14 billion program called the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). Households that were enrolled in the EBB Program automatically continued receiving their benefits during a 60-day transition period that ended March 1, 2022.

After this transition period, eligible households that are not on Tribal lands began receiving up to \$30 per month for internet services rather than up to \$50 per month. The benefit for households on Tribal lands continues to be up to \$75 per month. Similar to the EBB Program, the ACP also offers eligible households a one-time discount of up to \$100 to use toward a device such as a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet. To be eligible for this discount, the consumer has to provide a co-payment of at least \$10 but no more than \$50 toward the device. Eligible ACP participants are limited to receive one monthly discount and one device discount per household.

Additionally, the ACP expanded the eligibility criteria to include those who receive WIC benefits and those with

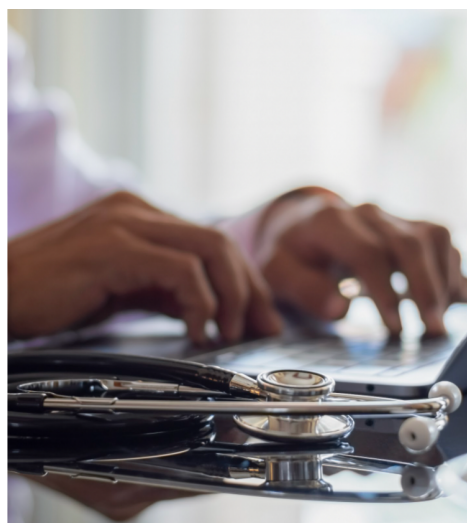
incomes at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (increased from the EBB Program's limit of 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines).

Most EBB Program participants were automatically transferred to the ACP after the transition period. The planned exceptions were households that were only eligible for the EBB Program due to meeting one or both of the criteria listed below. These households have to reapply and requalify for the ACP, even though they continued to receive their EBB Program benefit through the transition period that ended on March 1, 2022.

- Had a job loss or furlough since February 29, 2020 that resulted in substantially reduced income, and the household's total income for 2020 was \$99,000 or less for single filers or \$198,000 or less for joint filers
- Were eligible for a participating internet provider's low-income or COVID-19 program

As of the writing of this report (March 2022), the ACP is in effect with no stated end date.

To access this report and other tools for telehealth and broadband, visit [gptrac.org/resources](https://gptrac.org/resources).



## Key Takeaways

The FCC established the EBB Program to assist low-income households with paying for broadband services and devices.

- The Program was in effect from May 12 to December 31, 2021, when it was replaced by the Affordable Connectivity Program.
- Over 9 million households were enrolled in the EBB Program.
- The EBB Program provided over \$1.8 billion in discounts: \$1.7 billion for monthly internet services and over \$160 million for one-time connected devices.