

Broadband Consumer Labels

Presented by Megan Li | Work in collaboration with Chris Choy, Ellie Young, Lorrie Cranor, and Jon Peha

Background

2021 US Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act requires Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to write regulations by November 2022 requiring internet service providers to adopt and provide **Broadband Consumer Labels** to help consumers choose internet service plans

FCC proposed labels and asked for public comment

We're conducting studies to [evaluate the FCC's proposed labels and suggest improvements](#)

Research Question

How can we best help consumers make **informed decisions** on which broadband service plans to purchase?

FCC's proposed label

Broadband Facts	
Fixed broadband consumer disclosure	
Choose Your Service Data Plan for 50Mbps Service Tier	
Monthly charge for month-to-month plan	\$60.00
Monthly charge for 2 year contract plan	\$55.00
Click here for other pricing options including promotions and options bundled with other services, like cable television and wireless services.	
Other Charges and Terms	
Data included with monthly charge	300GB
Charges for additional data usage -- each additional 50GB	\$10.00
Optional modem or gateway lease -- Customers may use their own modem or gateway; click here for our policy.	\$10.00/month
Other monthly fees	Not Applicable
One-time fees	
Activation fee	\$50.00
Deposit	\$50.00
Installation fee	\$25.00
Early termination fee	\$240.00
Government Taxes and Other Government-Related Fees May Apply: Varies by location	
Other services on network	
Performance - Individual experience may vary	
Typical speed downstream	53 Mbps
Typical speed upstream	6 Mbps
Typical latency	35 milliseconds
Typical packet loss	0.08%
Network Management	
Application-specific network management practices?	Yes
Subscriber-triggered network management practices?	Yes
More details on network management	
Privacy	
Complaints or Inquiries	To contact us: online/123456-7890 ; To submit complaints to the FCC: online/888225-5322 ;
Learn more about the terms used on this form and other relevant information at the FCC's website.	

Our current draft of an improved label

Broadband Facts	
Fixed broadband consumer disclosure available to residents of 15213	
Some internet caps - Choose Your Service Data Plan 300GB @ 50Mbps - Last updated July 27, 2022	
Includes 300GB of data per month plus provider fees and government taxes.	
Base monthly cost	During 2 year promotional contract period: \$45.00 Month-to-month (no contract or after contract expiration): \$50.00
Optional monthly charges	
Equipment lease + tax	Included \$10.00
Bundled streaming services: Hulu, Spotify	\$15.00
Activation fees	With 2-year contract: \$75.00 No contract: \$125.00
Other fees	
Fee for additional data usage: each 50GB over 300GB limit	\$25.00
Early termination fee	\$240.00
Performance	
Individual experience may vary. Government Performance Ratings: What do these mean? fcc.gov/broadband	
Web browsing	Good
Streaming video	Good
Videoconferencing	Acceptable
Online backups	Marginal
At 10% performance	
Speed (downstream)	4 Mbps
Speed (upstream)	0.4 Mbps
Typical latency	250 ms
Typical packet loss	3.98%
Reliability	
Individual experience may vary. What do these mean? fcc.gov/broadband	
Average monthly downtime per customer	2 hours 4 minutes
Total number of outages, last 3 years	160
Network management practices	
When triggered: What do these mean? fcc.gov/broadband	
video throttling	video downloads and video streaming: download speed limited to 1.5 Mbps
lower priority than Super Internet plan	always: decreased speed during congestion
heavy data user	used more than 300 GB in a month: decreased speed during congestion
Privacy	
Complaints or Inquiries	To contact us: online/123456-7890 ; To submit complaints to the FCC: online/888225-5322 ;
Learn more about the terms used on this form and other relevant information at the FCC's website.	

Study Design

We designed three surveys to understand participants':

Comprehension of concepts and terms associated with broadband plans (e.g. 'packet loss')

Utility of different facts and criteria (e.g. speed measurements) when shopping for a broadband plan

Opinion on existing designs for broadband consumer labels proposed in 2016

In collaboration with Consumer Reports (CR), a nonprofit organization dedicated to consumer advocacy, we recruited existing CR subscribers to participate in our surveys.

Results

Total number of completed surveys	1245
Factors respondents care about most when shopping for broadband	Cost, speed, and reliability
Most misunderstood broadband terms	Latency, packet loss, network management practices
Area where more information is needed	Specifics of a provider's network management practices
Need for total cost numbers and more clarity regarding fees	Many participants were unable to identify which of two plans was less expensive over 1, 2, and 3 years
Participants' preferred performance metrics	Average (mean), 10th percentile

Next Steps

We are currently drafting improved versions of broadband consumer labels based on data from our surveys

We are also drafting **new surveys** to understand how our 'improved' labels compare to existing designs

We will recruit participants from a pool of CR subscribers excluding previous survey participants

Finally, we are writing a report to the FCC to provide label design recommendations based on our results