

# Digital inclusion

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## What professionals can do

Digital inclusion is a rapidly evolving issue, and this can present a challenge for professionals in working to support consumers and communities. Health and social service professionals are well placed to support digital inclusion by identifying people who may be experiencing digital exclusion, and offering information, support, and/or direction towards other available supports.

### Recognise and identify reasons for digital exclusion

For people to be digitally included, the following four domains need to be satisfied:

1. Access to a device
2. Access to an internet connection, with sufficient data
3. The skills, knowledge, confidence and resilience to be online
4. Digital platforms, content and devices that are accessible

To gain an accurate understanding of a person's digital exclusion, enquiring about each of these four domains is a good starting point. Routine screening questions can be developed and incorporated into intake procedures.

### Offer digital inclusion supports and resources

Once the reasons for an individual's digital exclusion have been understood, health and social service professionals may be able to offer supports and resources. **See the *Digital inclusion: Supports and resources* fact sheet.**

### Raise awareness and literacy through conversations

Having conversations about going online and internet data may help to raise individual and community awareness and skills.

#### Promote the benefits of being online

Many people are not aware of the [benefits of being online](#) or the support available to help them get online and improve their digital skills. Here are some [tips to help get people online](#).

#### Conversations about internet data

Talking to people about internet data may help to raise awareness of:

- How much data is included in mobile or home internet plans
- How to check usage and avoid extra costs
- Which activities use the most data and how to reduce data usage
- How to get good value for money

Raising financial and digital literacy about internet data usage empowers people to make informed choices that support digital inclusion and may help avoid or reduce financial stress.

If a consumer mentions running out of data, this may be an opportunity to have a conversation about internet data. Some key questions to ask include:

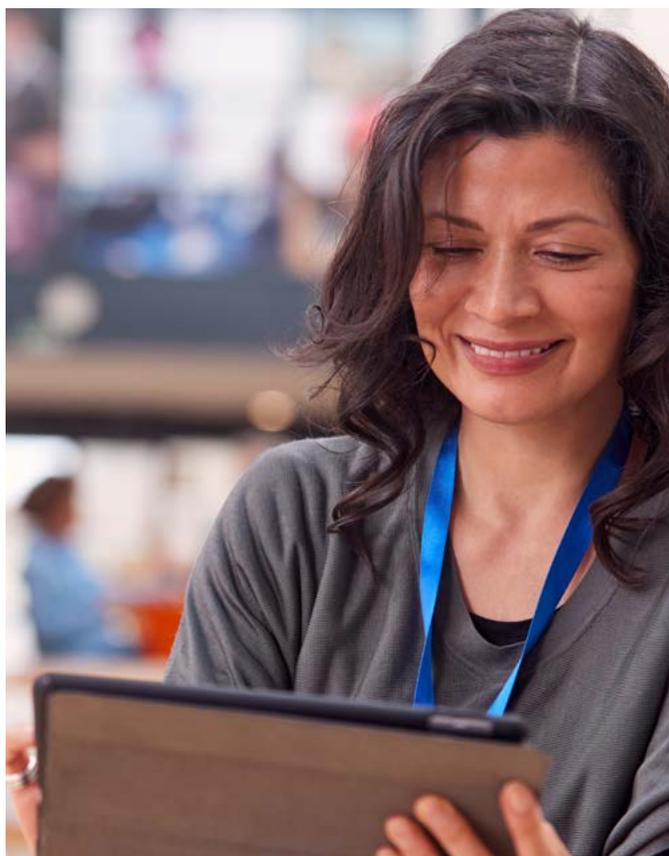
- Do you know how much data you have?

- Do you know how to check how much data you have used or have left?
- Do you know what online activities might be using most of your data?

Where someone is experiencing financial stress, referral to a local [financial counsellor](#) might also be considered.

For more information about internet data:

- [All about data](#) online learning resource and printable guides in multiple languages, Be Connected.
- [How to use less data on your smartphone](#) printable brochure, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
- [Mobile data usage information](#), Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
- [How much data do I need?](#) WhatPhone
- [WhistleOut](#), [WhatPhone](#) comparison websites



## Build your own digital skills

It's not uncommon for health and social service professionals to lack confidence in using digital technology. Making it a priority to build digital skills can have benefits for professionals, consumers and organisations. This might be done through formal and informal professional development.

A suite of online short courses specifically targeting health professionals are available through the [Digital Health Cooperative Research Centre](#) and the [Australian Digital Health Agency](#).

Health and social service professionals can also use the resources available to consumers. **See the *Digital inclusion: Supports and resources* fact sheet.**

## Understand local levels of digital exclusion

Digital inclusion is measured and reported annually by region in the [Australian Digital Inclusion Index](#)<sup>1</sup>. Data showing internet access by suburb is available from the [Census of Population and Housing](#)<sup>2</sup>.

Health and social service professionals may also collect data on digital inclusion from consumers and the local community.

### References

1. Thomas J, Barraket J, Wilson CK, Rennie E, Ewing S, MacDonald T. *Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2019*. RMIT University and Swinburne University of Technology for Telstra; 2019. <https://doi.org/10.25916/5d6478f373869>
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Census of Population and Housing: Dwelling Internet Connection*. Published 2016. Accessed August 25, 2020. [https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/036?opendocument](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/036?opendocument)