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# OMG: 2.1 million people still use AOL dial-up



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By Jose Pagliery @Jose\_



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It sounds crazy, but 2.1 million people in the United States still use AOL dial-up to connect to the Internet.

*Beep-beep-beep. Chck. Eeeerrrhrr. Bhrrr. Hccccchhh-ZZzzZZzz.* That. They hear that.

That number was in [AOL's quarterly earnings report](#) Friday.

It's shocking, given that 70% of Americans connect to the Internet over much faster broadband. The average U.S. broadband speed is 11.4 Megabits per second. That's 200 times faster than dial-up's 56 Kilobits per second.

Even smartphones are more than 100 times faster than that.

That 56k modem connection essentially means 2.1 million people experience the Web like it's 1995, with simple pictures slowly downloading top-to-bottom. Remember that?

Except it's actually worse. Nowadays, the most popular websites are layered with data-gobbling software add-ons that slow down your experience.

Facebook ([FB](#), [Tech30](#)) has videos that automatically play themselves. YouTube displays interactive advertisements with buttons. Twitter ([TWTR](#), [Tech30](#)) is full of GIFs -- moving images that are a few seconds long and repeat endlessly.

On broadband, these extra lines of computer code add to the data we download.

And get ready for this. Some of these AOL customers are still paying for this. The average AOL dial-up user is paying \$20 a month -- a dollar more than last year.

AOL ([AOL](#), [Tech30](#)) says its 2.1 million dial-up customers include some subscribers who are paying "reduced monthly fees." There are some who aren't paying at all, because they threatened to leave AOL, so the company gave them a discount. (This is an old trick to reducing your bill.) It also includes people on free trials. (Who just joined this club?).

But if you crunch the numbers, that means some people are actually paying more than \$20 a month to get dial-up Internet from AOL. And it would take these people about four minutes to download [this popular GIF of an old man dancing at a party](#).

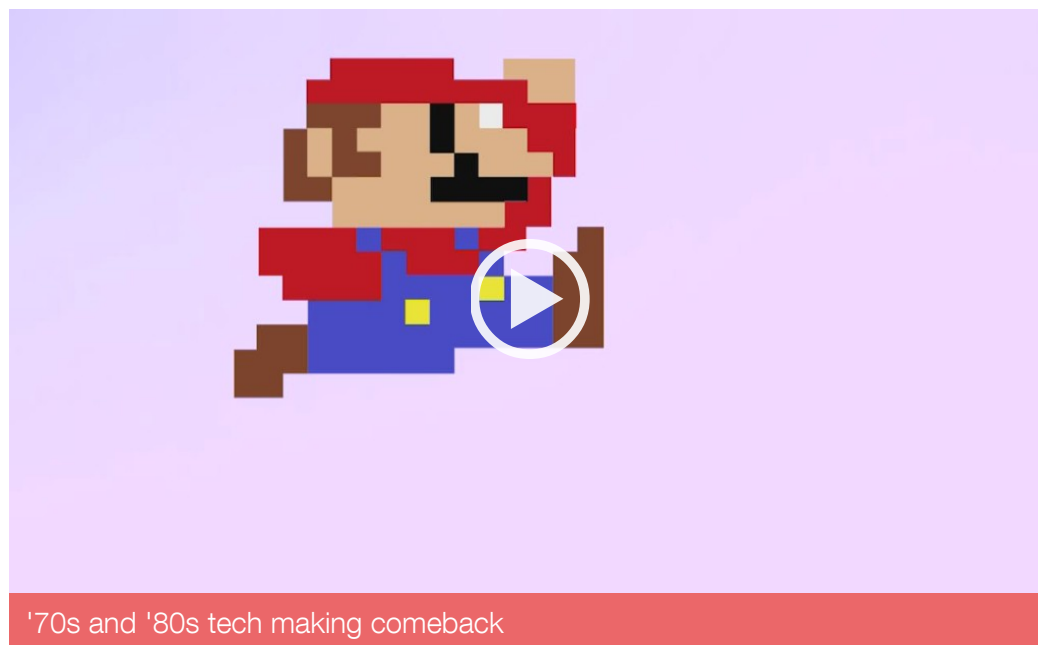
So, who are these people? [A 2009 study](#) from the Pew Research Center sheds some insight: 32% of dial-up users said they couldn't afford to upgrade. Most of the rest said broadband either wasn't available -- or they just didn't care to change.

The numbers from AOL show these people are stubborn. The number of dial-up subscribers plummeted in the mid-2000s, but since then the decline has been pretty slow. AOL counted 4.6 million dial-up users in 2010, and only 500,000 people or so leave every year.

At this rate, there will still be dial-up users out there in 2019.

Keep in mind, this comes at a time when the Federal Communications Commission says staying connected is so important, it's [regulating high-speed Internet as a public utility](#). That's why [the FCC adopted historic Internet rules](#) in February.

But if you're reading this on AOL dial-up, don't bother to click that last link. There's an autoplaying video. We at CNNMoney don't want to blow up your desktop computer.



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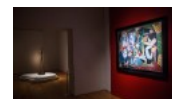
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**1962gwatkins** 4 days ago

We live in a rural area and have only had access to broadband for a glorious 15 months. Before that we had trouble even getting companies to offer dialup service, EarthLink pulled out 14 months before our phone company laid the lines so we could get broadband. The telecom companies kept saying we will have high speed lines in your area in the next 6 months - this went on for at least 5 years. The EarthLink reps. couldn't understand that it was a physical impossibility for us to switch to high speed internet although it was fun to tell them Ok sign me up with all the extras only to have them fumble around for 5 minutes only to learn that according to their records we didn't have high speed lines or cable in our area. Once I told one of them that we were going into town in a couple of months after the crops came in. .

So before you start think that all of the people who only have dialup are just stubborn ask them if they have access to affordable high speed internet. Even the 6mpbs that is all we can get at the moment is blindingly fast compared to what we were stuck with just a short time ago.

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Using or Paying for? I think my parents were still paying for dial up as of last month even after having cable for 10 years (sarcasm). I'm sure so many people on auto payment never canceled or think they have to pay to keep their AOL service (email/web) ... Also a 2009 study? Little old, no?

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Most of the people refusing to upgrade are tightwad conservative republicans. Everyone knows how those people love to keep things in the past.

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[@Wayne Thomas](#) You are probably referring to Dick Nixon. I wish people would stop bashing him.

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The new CNN website must take three weeks to download on dial up. It's slow enough with high speed.

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The internet should just be over LTE. If verizon would stop charging so much for LTE (say, 60 per month for 250 GB), people would use it for their home internet and verizon would make a mint.

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Of course Verizon would be bankrupt not too far in that future. Network costs are the highest expense on the mobile carriers books, and the more data used the more network expense there would be. Either the charges for the service would have to greatly increase, performance would get exceptionally worse, or investors would see their stock prices plummet.

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Where we live (only about 20 minutes past Tacoma, WA) our area still have no cable (tv or internet) or dsl. If you want internet its a minimum of 80\$ per month satellite or wireless like verizon. Both have small bandwidth limits, you get cut off for 24 hours, disconnected altogether or charged large overage fees for watching too many youtube video or downloading windows or ios updates.

This problem effects millions of households, do you want to pay a little for slow internet, or pay alot for faster but severally limited internet.

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I especially like the part where CNNMoney makes fun of people who still use AOL, namely, senior citizens. Check out that last sentence.

Stay classy...

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#) [Reply](#)**alogicalisT** 6 days ago[@Quintin Scott](#)

It is classy.

Upgrade to our century... Already.

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It is amazing how quickly web applications became clogged with intrusive video feeds and advertising once broadband access became widespread. I remember reading about and anticipating how ubiquitous Internet commerce was going to be back in the 90's and making a decision to gain skills and credentials and transition into that field, but the rate of change and growth was still quite phenomenal to witness as it occurred.

I think there would be a market in more remote rural areas for reliable, economical broadband service if the tech can be implemented.

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**Joseph Boy** 7 days ago

So there is alot more to this than you know. I work in the computer industry and I have seen so many clients that are senior citizens that are paying \$20 a month to AOL for just email. They are paying bighthouse or comcast for high speed internet, but to be able to keep their email address they have been paying and paying some for over 20 years. There are thousands of senior citizens hit with this. When you call AOL about it they will reduce their fees to \$5 a month and after three month raise it again to \$10. Now you can get a new email for free but you can't have your old one. So these numbers assuming that people are paying \$20 a month for dial up are not actually true. Many are people that are just paying to keep their email address, because they don't know any better. I get as many as possible to switch from AOL desktop and their mail to yahoo or gmail. I have their AOL forward for three more month (which the client pays for) and then get them off of AOL. If you are a computer tech and find clients with an AOL account, find out if they are paying for it.

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**Christian Volet** 7 days ago

"Facebook has videos that automatically play themselves. YouTube displays interactive advertisements with buttons. Twitter is full of GIFs -- moving images that are a few seconds long and repeat endlessly"

Everything you said in this paragraph makes me miss 1995 internet.

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**Thadeus Buttons** 7 days ago

My parents only option for Internet service is dialup or overpriced satellite.

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**shumanhuman** 7 days ago

Many rural residents simply don't have the broadband option. They live too far from any municipality for cable or DSL service, and cellular service is low quality or nonexistent.

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**Amegioa** 7 days ago

I'd wager most of their 'subscribers' dont' even know they're still paying AOL.

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**Christian Volet** 7 days ago

[@Amegioa](#) I wager many of them think AOL is the internet.

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**Eric Hurwitz** 7 days ago

i remember in december 98 i was told ill never nee more than a 4gb hard drive. now im looking for 10 petabyte ssds the size of a stamp

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"10 petabyte ssds the size of a stamp"

Good luck with that, considering there aren't any pins for that to connect it to your computer, nor any sort of technology, let alone on the consumer level, to allow that to exist.

One Petabyte is a thousand Terabytes.

A Terabyte is a Thousand Gigabytes.

A Gigabyte is a thousand Megabytes.

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[@TheJnick22](#) .

A Megabyte is a thousand Kilobytes.

A Kilobyte is a thousand Bytes.

A Byte is eight Bits.

A Bit is one of two Values.

A Value is an expression that can't be evaluated further.

An evaluation is... Ugh, we can go on forever.

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[@maythe8th](#) [@TheJnick22](#) . A bit of information.

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I bet the 1% don't use aol. clearly this is another cnn click-bait story.

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"It sounds crazy, but 2.1 million people in the United States still use AOL dial-up to connect to the Internet."

It sounds crazy, but in a first world nation like the US, millions still have to use modems if they want to connect to the internet.

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[@creaker](#) Huh? Your post makes absolutely no sense whatsoever.

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They all live in Baltimore.

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Remember how great it was to upgrade from 110 to 300 baud modems?

[Flag](#) [Share](#)2 [Like](#) [Reply](#)**edwardsmarkf** 7 days ago[@staunchy](#) ummm some of us go back a little further than that.[Flag](#) [Share](#)1 [Like](#) [Reply](#)**Andy Hilton** 7 days ago[@staunchy](#) Remember how great it was to crank your telephone? Pepperidge Farm remembers.[Flag](#) [Share](#)3 [Like](#) [Reply](#)**Broncos2014** 7 days ago[@staunchy](#) I remember when it went from 14,400 to 28,800 and the exact words from my ISP said it will never get faster because that is the fastest it can travel in a phone line.[Flag](#) [Share](#)1 [Like](#) [Reply](#)**Mough Dyver** 6 days ago[@Broncos2014](#) [@staunchy](#) It probably was at the time. Until they upgraded the phone lines. Still, the fastest analog phone connection is only 56k.[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#) [Reply](#)**iceload9** 6 days ago[@Broncos2014](#) [@staunchy](#) ISP's still lie. Some things don't change.[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#) [Reply](#)**sobrietyAA** 7 days ago[@staunchy](#) on my 1st computer, you dialed on a regular phone, listened for the tones, then put the handset into these suction-cup things to make the physical connection between the phone and computer. that was around 1977!



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[@sobrietyAA](#) [@staunchy](#) My first device when I started working in 1981 was this "thing" that used a roll of thermal paper for the display and had those suction cups in the back so we could connect a phone handset and connect to the computers at my work in another state at a lightning fast 300 baud.

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[@creaker](#) [@sobrietyAA](#) [@staunchy](#) yours sounds much more high tech. I stored my programs on paper strips with holes punched in it.

good times. not: [http://www.rickcrandall.net/images/32\\_Apple2d.jpg](http://www.rickcrandall.net/images/32_Apple2d.jpg)

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[@sobrietyAA](#) [@creaker](#) [@staunchy](#) Ya, I was still using paper tape in 1992...in the USAF.

[Flag](#) [Share](#)[Like](#) [Reply](#)**shumanhuman** 7 days ago

[@staunchy](#)

I remember when you could keep up reading text as it downloaded and appeared on the monochrome screen.

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[@staunchy](#)

The old Commodore 64 remembers

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Do you remember those AOL CDs you'd get in the mail every few weeks? Then took them directly to the trash bin with two fingers and a squinchy face?

I remember when AOL's marketing ploy was to leave those CDs on every seat in major stadiums for sports events.

But some people made artwork from them. They weren't totally useless.

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[@Spotcheck](#) Made fantastic targets.

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Major ISP's refuse to give service to area's with fewer than 12 homes per mile.

major ISP's charge \$50-\$100 a month for their most basic service depending on local competition. I am currently paying \$80 a month for the same service from Comcast that others pay \$30 a month for.

My area doesn't have ISP competition. they do. Competition lowers pricing and that is why republicans are against net neutrality. Anything that hurts corroborate profits is bad.

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[@peragrín](#) The government's "net neutrality" puts ISP's in the same position the telephone companies were before deregulation; a giant step backward in upgrading and expanding infrastructure.

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[@DaveIL](#) [@peragrín](#) Yep, and your internet connection is going to slow down. The next popular word will be "buffering"

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[@DaveIL](#) [@peragrín](#) net neutrality won't take effect for several years - after the lawsuits are settled.

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[@DaveIL](#) [@peragrín](#) Nonsense, complete and utter nonsense.

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[@DaveIL](#) [@peragrín](#) That's just silly. They aren't upgrading now because they

have a psuedo monopoly. Which is why we are years behind Europe in speed and cost.

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**sobrietyAA** 7 days ago

[@peragrin](#) if you WANT to live in the country, fine. just don't expect all the services city dwellers get.

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**Dick Collier** 7 days ago

[@peragrin](#) I suggest you call Hughes (satellite). Ain't as fast as broadband but sure beats dial-up.

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