

I. INTRODUCTION

Consumers Union,¹ the policy and mobilization division of Consumer Reports, welcomes the opportunity in these reply comments to reiterate our support for the FCC's *2015 Open Internet Order*. The order contains strong, enforceable net neutrality rules to ensure an open internet for consumers, free of interference by their internet service providers (ISPs). As an initial matter, we observe the staggering the number of comments already filed in this proceeding, some portion of which may be duplicates or otherwise suspect.² Potential comment irregularities aside, the sheer volume of participation in the open comment period confirms the importance of the issues at stake—issues that have gripped policymakers, consumers, the federal judiciary, and all affected industries for more than a decade.

The FCC's net neutrality rules protect consumers' interests online, ensuring they can access any and all lawful content online and use apps of their choosing, without concern that their ISP will block certain services or slow down others. Consumers have become accustomed to a free and open internet that is a level playing field, where how they use and access the internet is treated the same way without favoritism or discrimination. As

¹ Consumers Union works for a fair, just, and safe marketplace for all consumers and to empower consumers to protect themselves, focusing on the areas of telecommunications, health care, food and product safety, energy, and financial services, among others. Consumer Reports is the world's largest independent product-testing organization. Using its more than 50 labs, auto test center, and survey research center, the nonprofit organization rates thousands of products and services annually. Founded in 1936, Consumers Reports has over eight million subscribers to its magazine, website, and other publications.

² Li Zhu, *Controversy Grows Around Net Neutrality Comments*, Politico (August 10, 2017) <http://www.politico.com/tipsheets/morning-tech/2017/08/10/controversy-grows-around-net-neutrality-comments-221810>.

discussed further below, our recent survey of consumer attitudes about net neutrality and the practices of ISPs confirms that consumers favor strong net neutrality rules.

Nonetheless, rather than accept the *2015 Open Internet Order* as a settled matter twice approved by the DC Court of Appeals, the Commission's *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*³ seeks to revisit the open internet fight, barely more than two years after the order's net neutrality rules went into effect. Within this context, Consumers Union agrees with comments that suggest the motivation to rollback these rules might be more political than substantive, and the Commission's work to undo the *2015 Open Internet Order* may run afoul of the Administrative Procedures Act.⁴ Consumers are not served when rules they support and that were approved by both the Commission and the courts are overturned simply because of a change in Administration.

To no one's surprise, ISPs offered their overwhelming support for the *NPRM*'s proposals to reverse the Title II classification of broadband internet service.⁵ Though many

³ *In the Matter of Restoring Internet Freedom*, WC Docket No. 17-108, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (May 23, 2017) (*NPRM*).

⁴ Comments of Mozilla, *Restoring Internet Freedom*, WC Docket No. 17-108, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (May 23, 2017) (filed July 17, 2017) *See* p. 6: "The Commission's process is based on the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) which places basic requirements on how notice and comment rulemaking processes (of which the NPRM process is one) can issue legislative rules. That process that was used in the 2010 and 2015 orders. While this proceeding has any number of flaws, it is important to consider the bar for rulemaking action under the APA and court authority to overturn orders... The baseline requirements for a rule change require that they be supported by evidence. Under the APA, a standard around 'arbitrary or capricious' agency actions or conclusions, or those that lack 'substantial evidence,' may be overturned by the courts."

⁵ *See generally*: Comments of AT&T Services Inc. (Filed July 17, 2017), Comcast Corporation (Filed July 17, 2017), Verizon (Filed July 17, 2017), Charter Communications Inc. (Filed July 17, 2017), Cox Communications Inc. (Filed July 17, 2017), CenturyLink (Filed July 17, 2017), Sprint Corporation (Filed July 17, 2017), T-Mobile USA, Inc. (Filed July 17, 2017), US Telecom Association (Filed July 17, 2017), NCTA -- The Internet & Television Association (Filed July 17, 2017), and American Cable Association (Filed July 17, 2017), *Restoring Internet Freedom*, WC Docket No. 17-108, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (May 23, 2017).

pages of comments attempt to justify this repeal, we do not believe the Commission can maintain the important consumer protections established by the *2015 Open Internet Order* without retaining the classification of internet service as a telecommunication service under Title II of the Communications Act. As we stated in our original comments, Consumers Union believes:

- nothing in the *NPRM* persuasively demonstrates that the five net neutrality rules in the *2015 Open Internet Order* should be repealed, or that broadband service was inappropriately reclassified as a telecommunications service regulated under Title II of the Communications Act;
- the justification (investment by ISPs has declined) for Title II repeal is not borne out by the facts when, indeed, surveys of ISPs' capital expenditures, media reports, and announcements of better product offerings made by the ISPs themselves suggest a thriving broadband market with increased investments and new services—all despite the adoption of net neutrality rules and Title II reclassification in 2015; and
- there is nothing wrong with the current rules that needs to be fixed when, in fact, the *2015 Open Internet Order*'s net neutrality rules and the Title II reclassification upon which they stand were upheld in federal court, balanced the concerns of businesses—both large and small, and ISPs and edge providers alike, and serve consumers well.

The ISPs primary argument for repealing Title II classification and net neutrality rules is that this classification has stymied investment in broadband infrastructure and expansion—even though in the time since initial comments were filed, one of the leading ISP trade associations, the USTelecom Association, released a report indicating “substantial capital investment”⁶ in broadband despite so-called “challenging circumstances”⁷

⁶ Patrick Brogan, *U.S. Broadband Availability Mid-2016*, USTelecom Research Brief (August 25, 2017) <https://www.ustelecom.org/sites/default/files/BB%20Availability%202016%201H%20RB%20Final%207.pdf>.

supposedly caused by Title II. ISPs also claim that repealing Title II classification and net neutrality rules will ultimately benefit consumers, but provide few, if any, examples of how this will happen. Instead, some ISP comments suggest that the *2015 Open Internet Order* has prevented them from pursuing data usage caps⁸—but we struggle to fathom why consumers would consider data usage caps in the fixed broadband market (still prevalent in the wireless market, but highly unpopular) as a benefit denied to them by the FCC’s net neutrality rules.

Consumers Union recognizes that fewer rules and regulations could certainly aid the business plans of ISPs, large and small. But, what might maximize profits for ISPs does not necessarily translate into increased consumer benefit, and some commenters purport to speak to what consumers want, like, and love without documenting consumer views or perceptions. Therefore, in partnership with our publication, Consumer Reports, we asked Americans in late July to share their views on net neutrality and broadband internet service.⁹

Though the average consumer may not have an opinion or care whether internet service is better classified as an “information” or a “telecommunications” service—to be fair, we did not ask—they do have strong feelings about net neutrality and the practices that the *2015 Open Internet Order* prohibit. Equally important and relevant to this proceeding are the survey results of how consumers use and perceive internet access in 2017. For

⁷ Steve Overly, *USTelecom Touts Broadband Investment Despite Net Neutrality Concerns*, Politico (August 28, 2017) <https://www.politicopro.com/tech/whiteboard/2017/08/ustelecom-touts-broadband-investment-despite-net-neutrality-concerns-092116>.

⁸ Comments of American Cable Association at p. 19.

⁹ See **Appendix: Net Neutrality, 2017 Nationally-Representative Phone Survey**, Prepared by the Survey Research Department of Consumer Reports (August 11, 2017) (CR Survey)

example, while the *NPRM* derides the *2015 Open Internet Order* as “utility-style” regulation,¹⁰ a majority of 61 percent of Americans equate internet access as important as water or electricity service.¹¹ Though we disagree with the characterization of the net neutrality rules and their legal basis in Title II classification as “utility-style regulation,” the FCC cannot ignore that many Americans already view internet service as a daily essential, much like a utility.

Consumers Union believes the opinions and views of American consumers are vitally important and must be included in this proceeding’s record. Thus, our survey asked more than a thousand consumers about the role of the internet in their everyday lives, and whether they supported the FCC’s current net neutrality rules. The survey results confirm Consumers Union’s policy positions as detailed in our original comments. Based on our earlier reasoning, now strengthened by these survey results, Consumers Union strongly opposes any repeal of the FCC’s net neutrality rules, or any change in legal authority that would threaten their viability to withstand court challenge.

II. INTERNET ACCESS IS VITAL TO THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF MOST AMERICANS, AND A MAJORITY OF CONSUMERS SUPPORT THE FCC’S NET NEUTRALITY RULES

In late July of 2017, Consumer Reports conducted a nationally-representative phone survey of 1,005 adults to gauge consumer attitudes towards the FCC’s net neutrality rules and ISP practices prohibited by those rules. Consumers were also asked how they perceive

¹⁰ *NPRM* at ¶ 3.

¹¹ CR Survey at p. 2, 4.

internet access and its importance in their everyday lives. A survey report produced by Consumer Reports is attached to these comments as an appendix.

A. The Overwhelming Importance of Internet Access

First and foremost, when consumers were asked how often it is necessary for them to access the internet or use other services provided by their ISP without disruption to carry out their daily activities, 79 percent of those with an ISP responded that they rely on the internet five or more days a week and more than two-third need access to the internet every day.¹² When further asked what is the most important feature offered by their ISP, an overwhelming 74 percent of consumers responded that high speed access to the internet was the most important, versus 12 percent for an ISP-provided email address and six percent for ISP-provided web-hosting services.¹³ Moreover, more than 60 percent of American consumers equate the importance of internet service to that of water or electricity service.¹⁴ When also considering these results, there is no doubt how important access to the internet has become in our everyday lives.

Therefore, given how vital broadband service is to consumers, with nearly three-quarters of consumers valuing that service primarily as high speed internet access, we are confident in concluding that consumers perceive broadband service akin to a telecommunications service. The Commission was correct to conclude the same in the 2015

¹² CR Survey at p. 2-3.

¹³ CR Survey at p. 4.

¹⁴ *Id.*

Open Internet Order and was well within its authority to reclassify broadband service under Title II as a telecommunications service.

These results contradict many of the arguments set forth in the *NPRM* and comments submitted by ISPs, both of which tee up a case for reclassifying internet service as an information service, thus ridding it of its Title II telecommunications service classification. In a literal case of *deja-vu*, the ISP commenters rely heavily upon arguments for an information services classification that were soundly rejected by the court in the *USTelecom* case decided in 2016.¹⁵

Curiously absent is a serious mention of the controlling law articulated in the Supreme Court's *Brand X* case holding that the FCC may base classification of services offered—including broadband internet service—upon consumer perception.¹⁶ Indeed, this is exactly what the FCC did in the *2015 Open Internet Order* when it appropriately found that consumers perceive internet service as a telecommunications service. And this, too, is essentially what our survey results confirm—that consumers perceive broadband service as high speed internet access and a telecommunications service that connects them to the internet without interference from their ISP.

¹⁵ *United States Telecom Ass'n v. FCC*, 825 F.3d 674 (D.C. Cir 2016) (*USTelecom*).

¹⁶ See *USTelecom* at 700 (citing *Brand X*): “In *Brand X*, the Supreme Court explained that classification under the Communications Act turns on “what the consumer perceives to be the ... finished product.” 545 U.S. at 990, 125 S.Ct. 2688.

B. Majority Support for the FCC's Net Neutrality Rules

As we stated in our earlier comments, Consumers Union does not believe consumers are clamoring for the repeal of net neutrality rules. To test this assertion, our survey asked consumers whether or not they supported the FCC's net neutrality rules. We specifically used the FCC's description of those rules.¹⁷ More than half of consumers—57 percent—responded that they supported the FCC's net neutrality rules.¹⁸ Only 16 percent said they either strongly opposed or somewhat opposed the rules.¹⁹ These results demonstrate that consumer opposition to net neutrality is small—fewer than two in 10. And neither is net neutrality a terribly partisan issue, with 61 percent of consumers identifying themselves as Democrats supporting the rules, and 48 percent of Republicans also responding in support, compared to only 13 percent of Democrats and 21 percent of Republicans opposed.²⁰

Even more revealing were consumer responses to whether they agreed or disagreed with ISP practices that are currently prohibited by the *2015 Open Internet Order*. For example, 67 percent of all respondents believed that ISPs should not be allowed to choose which websites, apps, or streaming content consumers can access.²¹ Not surprisingly, among those consumers who strongly support the FCC's net neutrality rules, 82 percent disagreed

¹⁷ CR Survey at p. 4: “The Federal Communications Commission, or FCC, has rules for an Open Internet, sometimes referred to as ‘net neutrality’. These rules prohibit certain practices by internet service providers, to protect your ability to go where you want when you want online. The current net neutrality regulations prohibit internet service providers from blocking or discriminating against lawful content on the internet.”

¹⁸ *Id.* at p. 5.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.* at p. 6-7.

with allowing ISPs to choose or curate content.²² But even among those who said they strongly oppose or somewhat oppose net neutrality rules, 57 percent of those consumers also disagreed with allowing ISPs to restrict content.²³

Similar results were found when we asked consumers if ISPs should be allowed to modify or edit (tantamount to throttling) content, or outright censor content. More than half of consumers responded that ISPs should not be allowed to engage in these practices, with 63 percent disagreeing that an ISP should be allowed to “modify or edit content on the internet that customers try to access” and 57 percent opposed to allowing an ISP to censor content.²⁴ Only 16 percent and 21 percent of consumers, respectively, agreed that ISPs should be allowed to conduct editing activities or censoring.²⁵

Overall, our survey demonstrates that consumers support the current rules, and would be unlikely to support their repeal or agree that the rules have somehow “denied” them important benefits, as suggested by the *NPRM* and supported by the ISPs. And because Title II reclassification is an essential legal basis for these rules, it is vital to consumers’ interests and consistent with their stated views as well. Consumers Union encourages the Commission to give strong consideration to these survey results when contemplating whether or not to repeal or rewrite its net neutrality rules.

²² *Id.* at p. 7.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

III. CONCLUSION

We conclude by reiterating what we stated in our earlier comments. Maintaining an open internet with strong net neutrality rules is vital to consumers' everyday experience. Consumers benefit when the internet is a level playing field and not a place where ISPs can pick winners and losers by blocking or throttling competitors, or charging websites and services extra for access with those costs likely passed onto consumers in the form of higher prices. For these reasons, which are supported by the consumers we surveyed, Consumers Union strongly opposes any repeal of the FCC's net neutrality rules, or any change in legal authority that would threaten their viability to withstand a court challenge.

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APPENDIX

CONSUMER REPORTS

NET NEUTRALITY

2017 Nationally-Representative Phone Survey

Prepared by Survey Research Department
August 11, 2017

CONSUMER REPORTS®

NET NEUTRALITY

2017 Nationally-Representative Phone Survey

Prepared by Survey Research Department

August 11, 2017

INTRODUCTION

In July 2017, Consumer Reports conducted a nationally-representative phone survey to assess attitudes towards the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations on internet service provider (ISP) practices, referred to as net neutrality or open internet. Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) of Princeton, New Jersey administered the survey to a nationally-representative sample of 1,005 U.S. adult residents through its CARAVAN Omnibus Survey. Respondents were selected by means of random-digit dialing and were interviewed via landline or cell phone. The data were statistically weighted so that respondents in the survey are demographically and geographically representative of the U.S. population.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

44%

HIGHLY SATISFIED WITH
THEIR INTERNET
SERVICE PROVIDER

Forty-four percent of those individuals with an internet service provider are highly satisfied with the overall quality of service they receive (15% completely satisfied and 29% very satisfied). A small number report that they are completely dissatisfied (4%). Thirteen percent of respondents indicate that they do not have an ISP.

79%

RELY ON THE INTERNET
5-7 DAYS PER WEEK

Americans are dependent on the internet on a daily basis. Almost 80% say it is necessary five or more days per week to access the internet or use other services provided by their ISP without disruption to carry out their daily activities. The largest group of respondents say they rely on the internet every day (68%).

61%

INTERNET IS AS IMPORTANT
AS ELECTRICITY OR WATER

Americans believe that their internet service is a crucial part of their lives. More than half agree with the statement "internet service is as important as electricity or water service in today's world."

74%

HIGH-SPEED ACCESS IS
THE MOST IMPORTANT
FEATURE PROVIDED BY ISP

Of those with an ISP, nearly three-quarters feel that high-speed access to the internet is the most important feature of having an ISP. Receiving an email address through the ISP or web-hosting services was selected as the most important feature far less frequently (12% and 6%, respectively).

57%

SUPPORT
NET NEUTRALITY
REGULATIONS

Over half of Americans say that they support the current net neutrality regulations that prohibit ISPs from blocking or discriminating against lawful content on the internet (31% strongly support; 26% somewhat support). Sixteen percent oppose these regulations, and about a quarter did not express an opinion.

67%

DISAGREE THAT ISPs
SHOULD BE ALLOWED
TO CHOOSE CONTENT

More than half of Americans feel that ISPs should not be allowed to restrict the content consumers receive when accessing the internet. More than two-thirds disagree that ISPs should choose which websites, apps, or streaming services customers can access, while 48% disagree that they should adjust quality and/or speed based on prioritization fees.

FINDINGS

INTERNET USAGE

Respondents were asked to answer a series of questions about their internet service providers, and their use of the internet. They were told to think about the company that provides them with access to the internet and other related services, which may also give them access to cable TV, wireless, or telephone services. If they use more than one provider for these services, respondents were instructed to answer regarding the one that they use most often for internet service.

44%
HIGHLY SATISFIED WITH
THEIR INTERNET
SERVICE PROVIDER

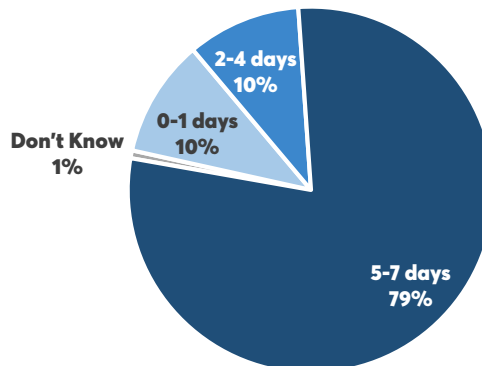
Forty-four percent of Americans with an ISP are highly satisfied with the overall quality of service they receive (15% completely satisfied and 29% very satisfied). A small number report that they are completely dissatisfied (4%). Thirteen percent of respondents indicate that they do not have an ISP.

Among those with an ISP, Americans are dependent on the internet on a daily basis. Americans were asked how often it is necessary for them to access the internet or use other services provided by their ISP without disruption to carry out their daily activities, and almost 80% said five or more days per week. The largest group of respondents say they rely on the internet every day (68%).

Baby Boomers are less likely than Millennials and Gen Xers to say they rely on the internet most days. Even among this group of older adults, 74% say they need internet access five or more days per week, compared to 84% in the younger age groups.

DAYS PER WEEK PEOPLE RELY ON THE INTERNET

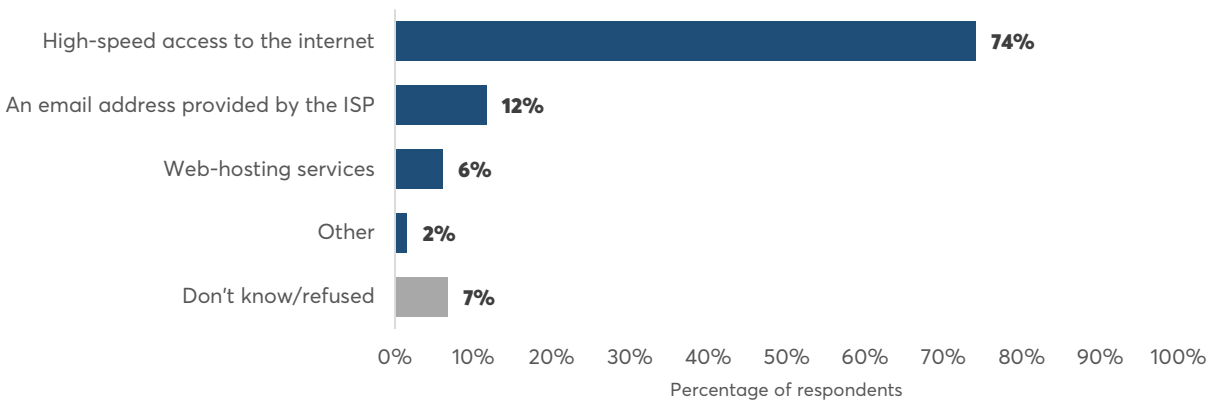
for those respondents with an ISP



Furthermore, many Americans believe that their internet service is a crucial part of their lives. In fact, 61% of Americans agree that "Internet service is as important as electricity or water service in today's world."

Among those Americans with an ISP, we asked which feature they see as the most important offering from their ISPs: High-speed access to the internet, an email address, and web-hosting services. Not surprisingly, nearly three-quarters of individuals feel high-speed internet is the most important feature of having an ISP. Receiving an email address through the ISP (not through a service such as Gmail) or web-hosting services (for example, for a personal or business website), was selected as the most important feature far less frequently (12% and 6%, respectively).

MOST IMPORTANT FEATURE PROVIDED BY YOUR ISP



OPINIONS ON REGULATIONS

Respondents heard the following, based on language from the *Federal Communications Commission* website defining net neutrality, and were asked whether they support or oppose the rules and regulations described:

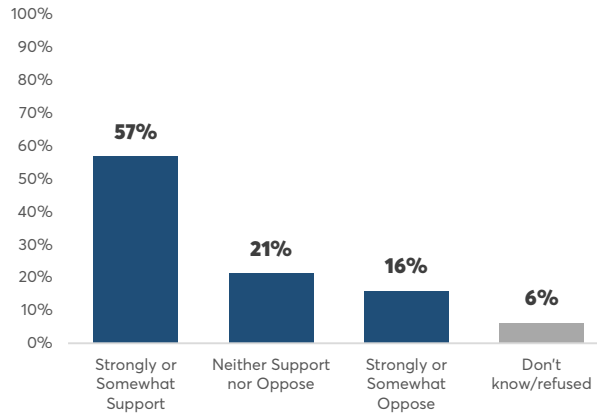
The Federal Communications Commission, or FCC, has rules for an Open Internet, sometimes referred to as 'net neutrality'. These rules prohibit certain practices by internet service providers, to protect your ability to go where you want when you want online. The current net neutrality regulations prohibit internet service providers from blocking or discriminating against lawful content on the internet.

57%

**SUPPORT
NET NEUTRALITY
REGULATIONS**

Over half of Americans say that they support the current net neutrality regulations that prohibit ISPs from blocking or discriminating against lawful content on the internet (31% strongly support; 26% somewhat support). 16% oppose these regulations, and about a quarter did not express an opinion.

**SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION TO
NET NEUTRALITY REGULATIONS**



The table below shows the percentage of Americans who support or oppose these regulations by gender, age group, and political party affiliation. Men are significantly more likely to support these rules than women, and Republicans tend to be less likely to support them than Democrats. There are not significant differences in level of support based on age.

SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION TO CURRENT FCC NET NEUTRALITY REGULATIONS							
	<i>Base: All respondents</i>	Percentage of Respondents					
		Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Neither Support nor Oppose	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Don't know/refused
Total	1,005	31	26	21	7	9	6
GENDER							
Male	485	39	28	18	5	7	3
Female	520	24	23	24	9	10	9
AGE							
Millennials	316	35	25	25	4	8	3
Gen X	236	31	26	21	7	10	5
Baby Boomers	287	33	26	20	7	10	5
POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION							
Democrat	305	38	23	18	7	6	7
Independent, lean Democrat	152	35	29	23	7	6	1
Republican	210	24	24	24	7	14	7
Independent, lean Republican	123	36	25	18	8	9	4
Independent, non-leaning	123	28	22	19	7	17	7

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDER PRACTICES

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements about what an ISP should be allowed to do. Over half of Americans feel that ISPs should not be allowed to restrict the content consumers receive when accessing the internet. Paid prioritization practices are viewed as permissible by a larger percentage of people than blocking practices. For the four statements provided to respondents, below are the percentages of Americans who do not think ISPs should conduct business in this way:

67% of Americans **DISAGREE** that *An ISP should be allowed to...*

CHOOSE WHICH WEBSITES, APPS, OR STREAMING SERVICES CUSTOMERS CAN ACCESS.

Only 16% of Americans think ISPs should do this, and 17% did not provide an opinion.

63% of Americans **DISAGREE** that *An ISP should be allowed to...*

MODIFY OR EDIT CONTENT ON THE INTERNET THAT CUSTOMERS TRY TO ACCESS.

Only 16% of Americans think ISPs should do this, and 21% did not provide an opinion.

57% of Americans **DISAGREE** that *An ISP should be allowed to...*

CENSOR CONTENT ON THE INTERNET THAT CUSTOMERS TRY TO ACCESS.

Only 21% of Americans think ISPs should do this, and 22% did not provide an opinion.

48% of Americans **DISAGREE** that *An ISP should be allowed to...*

ADJUST QUALITY AND/OR SPEED OF INTERNET CONTENT BASED ON FEES CHARGED TO COMPANIES FOR PRIORITY.

Only 26% of Americans think ISPs should do this, and 26% did not provide an opinion.

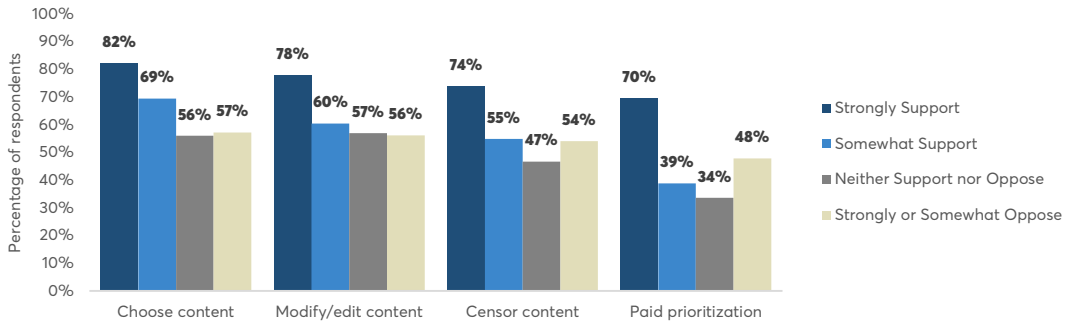
OVERALL, ISP BLOCKING PRACTICES ARE OPPOSED

by more than half of Americans, even those who say they are against net neutrality

Here, individuals are presented with the statements shown above—components of net neutrality regulations—compared to asking them if they support or oppose net neutrality regulations by name, as in the previous section. The graph that follows shows that 82% of people who strongly support net neutrality do not believe that ISPs should be allowed to choose the content it displays. Furthermore, 57% of Americans who say they oppose net neutrality also don't think that ISPs should be able to choose what content it displays. Interesting to note, there is not a significant difference between Republicans and Democrats in their level of disagreement with these four statements.

VIEWPOINTS THAT ISPs SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO DO CERTAIN PRACTICES

among respondents who support or oppose net neutrality regulations



Note: Strongly Oppose and Somewhat Oppose combined due to small sample sizes.

The table below shows the percentage of Americans who agree or disagree with ISP practices by gender, age group, and political party affiliation.

VIEWPOINTS ON WHAT INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DO											
An ISP should be allowed to...	Total %	Gender		Age			Political Party Affiliation				
		Male %	Female %	Millennials %	Gen X %	Baby Boomers %	Dem. %	Ind., lean Dem. %	Rep. %	Ind., lean Rep. %	Ind., non-lean. %
CHOOSE WHICH WEBSITES, APPS, OR STREAMING SERVICES CUSTOMERS CAN ACCESS											
Agree	16	12	20	15	19	15	16	16	19	14	17
No Opinion	15	14	17	7	11	17	14	13	18	11	19
Disagree	67	74	61	78	70	67	68	70	61	75	64
Don't know/refused	2	0	3	0	0	1	2	1	2	0	1
ADJUST QUALITY AND/OR SPEED OF INTERNET CONTENT BASED ON FEES CHARGED TO COMPANIES FOR PRIORITY											
Agree	26	25	27	28	24	26	23	26	30	18	33
No Opinion	24	20	26	19	20	24	25	18	26	18	19
Disagree	48	54	43	52	53	48	50	55	40	64	43
Don't know/refused	2	1	4	0	3	3	2	1	3	0	5
MODIFY OR EDIT CONTENT ON THE INTERNET THAT CUSTOMERS TRY TO ACCESS											
Agree	16	15	16	10	18	18	16	11	20	8	14
No Opinion	19	15	23	16	9	22	22	14	22	11	23
Disagree	63	70	57	74	69	58	60	75	57	81	56
Don't know/refused	2	0	4	1	3	1	2	1	1	0	7
CENSOR CONTENT ON THE INTERNET THAT CUSTOMERS TRY TO ACCESS											
Agree	21	18	23	18	24	23	22	18	21	16	22
No Opinion	21	16	24	14	16	22	20	17	25	14	21
Disagree	57	64	50	68	60	53	56	65	51	70	56
Don't know/refused	1	1	2	0	0	2	2	0	3	0	1
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	1,005	<i>485</i>	<i>520</i>	<i>316</i>	<i>236</i>	<i>287</i>	<i>305</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>123</i>

SUMMARY

More than half of Americans believe that internet service is “as important as electricity or water in today’s world.” Individuals are dependent daily on their ISP, which gives them access to the internet and other related services, and may even offer them access to cable TV, cellular, or telephone services.

When it comes to what individuals believe should go into policies regulating ISPs, more than half of Americans support the current Federal Communications Commission ruling that prohibits ISPs from blocking or discriminating against lawful content on the internet—referred to as net neutrality. About a quarter of individuals have no opinion on the topic, and a smaller percentage of Americans oppose these regulations. Men are significantly more likely to support these rules than women, and Republicans tend to be less likely to support them than Democrats. There are not significant differences in level of support based on age.

We wanted to know how Americans felt about specific elements of net neutrality, such as allowing ISPs to choose which websites, apps, or streaming services customers can access, to modify or edit content on the internet, to censor content on the internet, or to adjust quality and/or speed of internet content based on fees charged to companies for priority. Paid prioritization practices are viewed as permissible by a larger percentage of people than blocking practices, and generally Americans disagree that their ISPs should participate in blocking activities. Just under half of Americans believe that ISPs should not be allowed to adjust quality or speed for prioritization fees, and more than two-thirds are against them choosing content customers can access.

The topic of net neutrality is complex, and the implications for the consumer of policies regulating ISPs may not be fully understood by all Americans. This is apparent in the finding that more than half of Americans are opposed to ISP blocking practices, even among those who say they are against net neutrality.

With a service that so permeates our lives, it is vital to understand the rules and regulations placed on internet service providers, and the viewpoints of the Americans affected by them.

METHODOLOGY

This phone survey was fielded by ORC using a nationally-representative sample. The survey was conducted from July 20-23, 2017.

The study was conducted using two probability samples: randomly selected landline telephone numbers and randomly selected mobile (cell) telephone numbers. The combined sample consists of 1,005 adults (18 years old and older) living in the continental United States. Of the 1,005 interviews, 504 were from the landline sample and 501 from the cell phone sample. The margin of error for the sample of 1,005 is +/- 3.1% at the 95% confidence level. Smaller subgroups will have larger error margins.

Surveys were collected by trained and supervised U.S. based interviewers using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing system. Where appropriate, response answer choices were randomized. Scale answer choices (for example, strongly agree to strongly disagree) were randomly rotated such that half the sample was always offered positive options first and the other half negative options first. Final data is weighted by age, gender, region, race/ethnicity and education to be proportionally

representative of the U.S. adult population.

Key demographic characteristics (after weighting is applied) are presented below:

- 52% female
- Median age of 46
- 61% White, non-Hispanic
- 32% 4-year college graduates
- 38% have a household income of \$50,000 or more
- 30% Democrat; 21% Republican; 40% Independent (12% *non-leaning*, 15% *lean Democrat*, 12% *lean Republican*)