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## Press Release

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### NEW PHOENIX CENTER ANALYSIS SHOWS HOUSEHOLDS EXPERIENCE BROADBAND SPEEDS CONSISTENT WITH FCC'S FORM 477 DATA

*Speed-Test Data Shows that About 95% of Americans Live in Census Block Groups with Average Speeds Satisfying the FCC's Broadband Definition Of 25/3 Mbps*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Twice each year the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) releases data on the availability of broadband Internet services across the United States, eponymously referred to as “Form 477 data.” Looking at the *fastest* available service tiers of Internet providers at the census block level—the smallest geographic area defined by the Census Bureau—the FCC uses these data to measure the share of persons with access to “broadband” service, which is now defined to be a service with a minimum of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds. In its latest *Broadband Deployment Report*, the Commission concluded that 95.6% of Americans had access to “broadband” service as of December-2019.

Analysts and advocates criticize the Form 477 data by pointing out that consumers are not always receiving the maximum reported service speeds or even speeds meeting the 25/3 Mbps standard, a discrepancy resulting, in part, from the FCC’s assumption that if one customer has access to broadband within a census block, then all customers in that block do so. Data from speed-tests are often used to assess user’s broadband experience.

In a new analysis released today entitled *Form 477, Speed-Tests, and the American Broadband User's Experience*, Phoenix Center Chief Economist Dr. George S. Ford uses data from Ookla’s Open Data Initiative to assess the broadband experience of consumers in the United States in 2020. Dr. Ford finds that about 95% of persons live in census block groups with average speeds satisfying the FCC’s broadband definition of 25/3 Mbps, matching closely the 95.6% availability rate of the same population from the Form 477 data.

“While the Form 477 data likely overstates the availability of broadband services as defined by the FCC, the large amounts of data available from Ookla’s Open Data Initiative suggest the error may be small,” says study author Phoenix Center Chief Economist Dr. George S. Ford. “Speed-tests have several limitations as a measure user experience, however, so additional evidence is welcome.”

A full copy of PHOENIX CENTER POLICY PERSPECTIVE NO. 21-03, *Form 477, Speed-Tests, and the American Broadband User's Experience*, may be downloaded free from the Phoenix Center’s web page at: <http://www.phoenix-center.org/perspectives/Perspective21-03Final.pdf>.

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*The Phoenix Center is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that studies broad public-policy issues related to governance, social and economic conditions, with a particular emphasis on the law and economics of the digital age.*