

The Fastest ISPs of 2017

What happens when PCMag readers test their internet providers' bandwidth? We find the fastest.



By Eric Griffith June 2, 2017 12:32PM EST June 2, 2017

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Internet connectivity in the US is a hot-button issue in 2017, thanks to the new FCC chairman performing an about-face on issues like net neutrality, subsidizing access for the poor, and permitting internet service providers (ISPs) to do what they please with your data. None of it bodes well.

This comes as the speeds in our tests remain relatively stagnant. Despite cable companies—the major broadband providers in the US—rolling out more and more of the latest high-end modems to customers to increase speeds, and the advent

of more and more fiber-to-the-home (or to-the-premises) coverage in select areas, it's not having much impact, on average. On the world stage, the US isn't even close to the top 10 countries when it comes to average broadband speed.

Maybe it's because there is far too much happening on the mergers and acquisitions end of things for domestic ISPs to even pretend to be competitive in ways that matter; you know, the little things, like speed and customer service. They'd rather grow by turning into super-mega-corporations to please stockholders.

The prime example: Charter buying out Time Warner Cable and Bright House Networks to make an uber-ISP (and now the third-largest cable TV provider in the US) called Spectrum. That's been two years in the making, and delayed/prevented automatic speed increases that customers expected months ago. But Spectrum is not alone. The parent company of RCN bought Grande Communications and Wave Broadband to make a similar play, though for now, they still have separate networks. (Remember when Ma Bell was broken into separate companies? Ha, how quaint.)

Note: If you are a Spectrum customer who used to have Time Warner Cable, like me, call them and say you want the same high-speed new customers get. They'll generally provide it, and maybe even drop the price a little, too.

That said, with the needle not moving much on the ISP speeds in our tests, the mega-ISPs don't stand out as much as they once did. Even Google Fiber, which made a huge splash in select communities. Unfortunately, parent company Alphabet realized that installing fiber to homes, offices, and schools is very expensive and halted plans for expansion last October. If you thought you'd be scoring incredible gigabit internet speeds for low prices via Google in your hometown, consider those hopes dashed. (However, you may still see *wireless* gigabit speeds via Webpass—which is owned, of course, by Google Fiber.)

To determine the "speed" (the technical term is throughput) of ISPs in the US, PCMag relies on readers like you. Meaning, we only use data collected from the Speed Test tool here at PCMag.com. Whenever you take the test, you become part of the story.

COULD NOT CONNECT

Unable to connect to a server at this time. Please try again later.

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Deactivate your [VPN](#) temporarily for the best results.

[Click here for full-screen test.](#)

The results we get are download and upload speeds measured in Kilobits per second, which we convert to Megabits per second, or Mbps (divide by 1,000—thank you Excel!). We use those numbers to calculate a **PCMag Speed Index**. That's a weighted score that uses 80 percent of the download speed and 20 percent of the upload speed (because downloads are at least 80 percent important to your using the web, we have arbitrarily decided). The index number acts as an easy-to-understand ranking so we can quickly ID which ISP is the fastest (has the best throughput). Read the [full methodology](#).

We rank the top 10 (or less, depending on how many ISPs or locations qualify) in various categories, as you'll find below. In general, the spoils go to the ISPs using the fastest wired internet connection technologies: fiber optics and/or cable systems. In general, the copper lines for DSL providers can't compete. Wireless carriers, providing the backbone for your smartphone connections, also aren't there yet—for those, consult the [Fastest Mobile Networks](#). Satellite internet systems are convenient for the ability to be installed almost anywhere but are notoriously weak with throughput.

Naturally, you'll want to see where your own ISPs ranks, that's part of the fun of these articles. If you're not using a major ISP, don't be shocked: your provider probably didn't make the cut. That's because we require a minimum number of tests before we will include an ISP or location in the results. It's the best way to ensure that the results are statistically valid enough to include; we don't want to pit an ISP with thousands of tests versus one with a just a handful. It's entirely possible your local internet is the absolutely the swiftest imaginable; if so, share your [Speed Test results](#) in the comments to help others find the same service.

The Fastest Internet Providers in the US

We used to be able to say that year to year the ISPs in the US typically got a throughput increase in our tests. The averages this year, however, just don't show it. Hopefully, 2018 will be nicer to the users who need the speed.

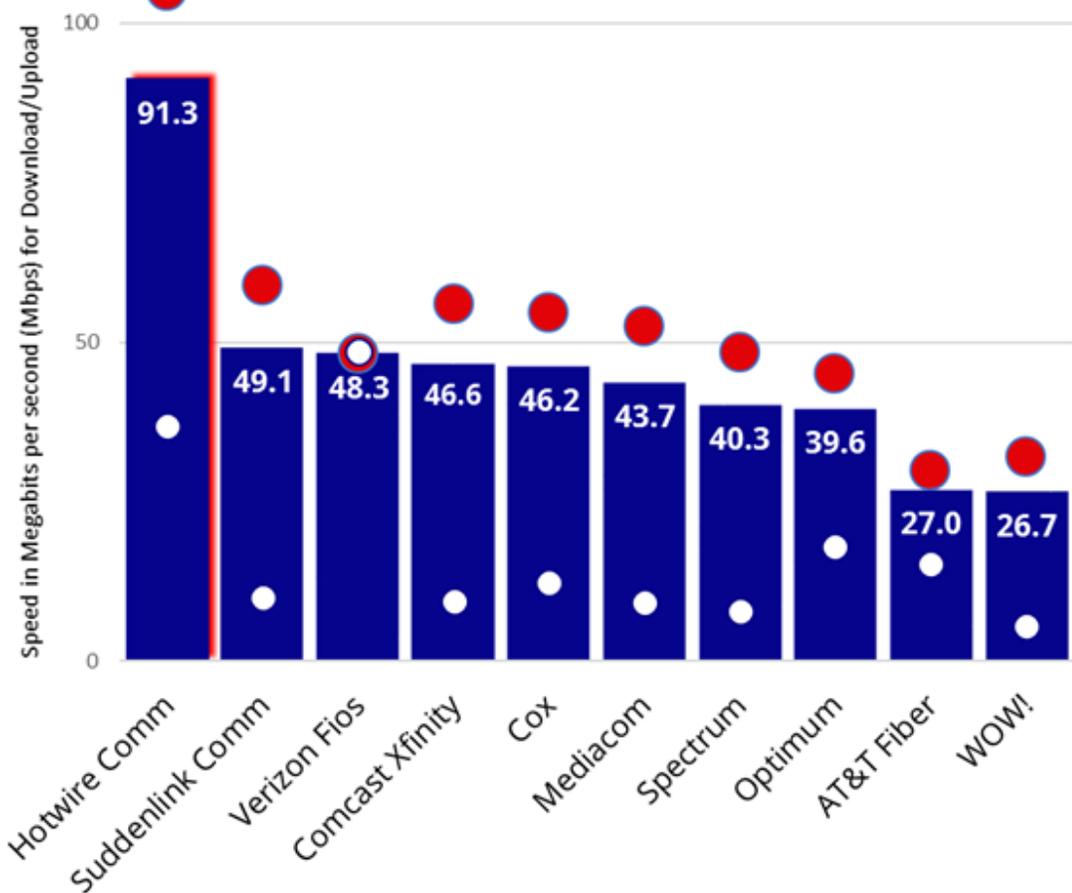
Let's start with the "major" ISPs, those with the largest customer base by virtue of having the biggest reach, almost all of them providing service in multiple states in the union. We include any vendor in this list that has 1,000 or more tests nationwide *and* had service in multiple states.

It's truly an upset this year, because for the first time in seven years of calculating the Fastest ISPs, we're not giving an award to that old stalwart of fiber-to-the-home (FttH) services, **Verizon Fios**. While Fios did okay, with a PCMag Speed Index rating of 48.3 (down slightly from last year's 49.6), it was only enough for third place, albeit head of last year's leader, **Comcast Xfinity**. The largest cable provider and ISP in America with [over 23.3 million internet subscribers](#), Xfinity dropped from a first place with 49.6 last year to fourth places with 46.6 this year. Tekken 7

Instead, the top two slots go to a couple of other worthy providers. In second place is **Suddenlink Communications**, operating in 16 states. It is a division of Altice USA, same as Optimum (the major ISP in the No. 8 slot with a 39.6 score), but Altice keeps its kids in separate playpens. At least for now. Last year, Suddenlink managed third place with a respectable 47.8, but this year bested that number to 49.1. Even that wasn't enough for a first place finish among the majors.

That title is going to an ISP new to our list because in the past it didn't get enough tests in to make the list. But **Hotwire Communications** users up and down the eastern seaboard went out of their way to test their connections with PCMag this year. It feels more like showing off than simple testing when the average among users leads to a stunning PCMag Speed Index score of 91.3. Hotwire is a unique provider: it offers a 10 gigabit service called Hotwire Fision via fiber to the premises—and those premises are residential communities, be they for families, seniors, students, and some businesses.

Fastest ISPs 2017—United States (Major ISPs)



- PCMAG SPEED INDEX
- DOWNLOAD SPEED (MBPS)
- UPLOAD SPEED (MBPS)

PCMag Speed Index represents 80 percent of Download Speed + 20 Percent of Upload Speed

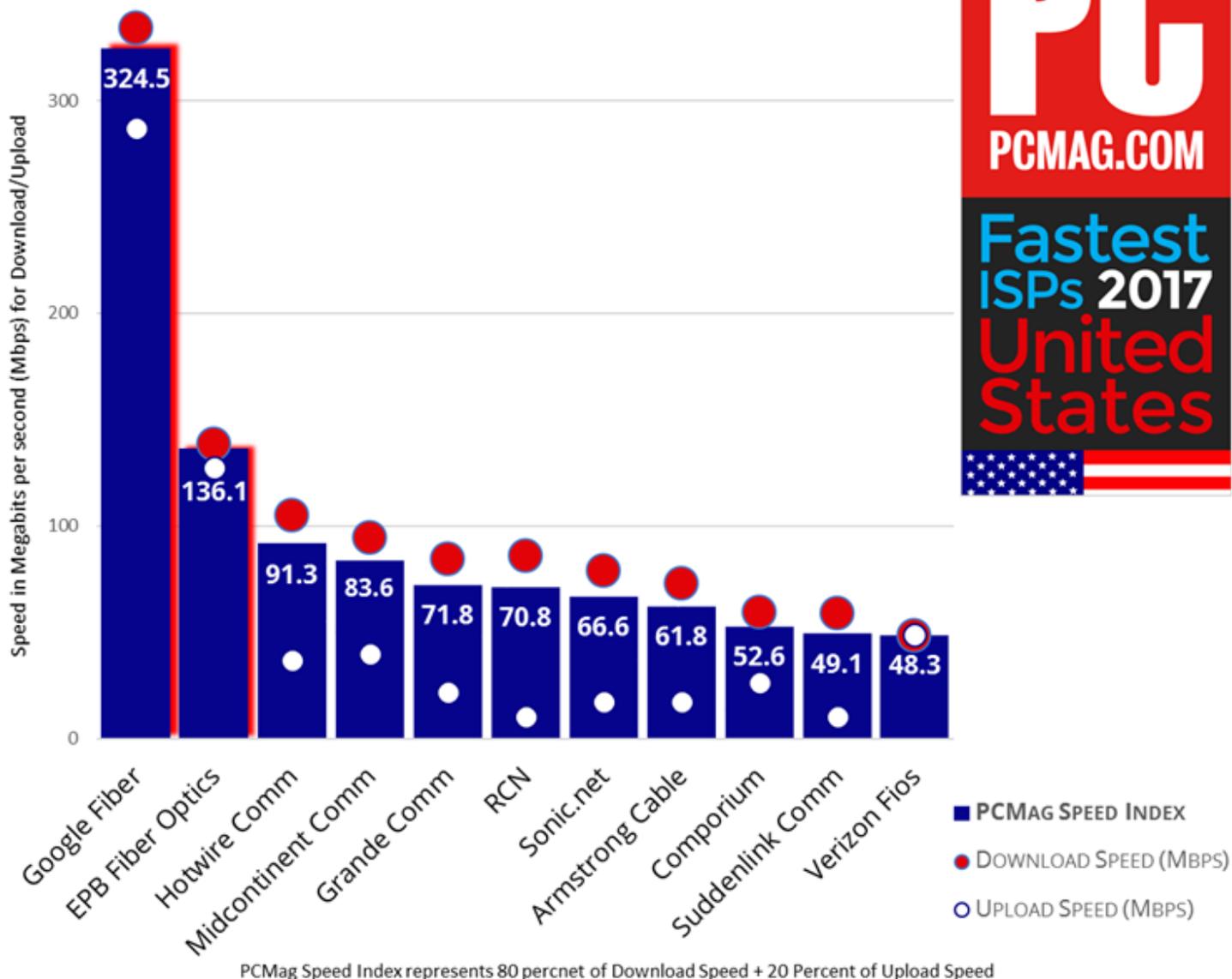
The majors list also looks a little different with the disappearance of Time Warner Cable, Charter, and Bright House, which are all now merged under **Spectrum**. Its score of 40.3 was about where Bright House was last year, lower than TWC and higher than Charter, so it all averaged out.

That left some room in the top 10; a slot went to **AT&T's** fiber-to-the-premises service, which last year only earned a speed index of 19.1. Shooting to a 27.0 might be the biggest improvement of the year for a major ISP. Continued expansion of AT&T gigabit fiber (it's no longer branded as AT&T U-verse or Gigapower) is great, and in direct contrast to how Verizon and Google currently feel about FttH.

There are more than just big-reach ISPs out there, so we also consider separately a list of all ISPs—or at least those that had at least 100 Speed Tests in our results. This opens the floor to lesser-known providers and those splashy locals with a limited footprint. These are the coveted services, the one you wish were in your backyard providing access. The overlap between this list and our above list of "major" providers is limited to three: only Hotwire, Suddenlink, and Verizon Fios make each list.

Last year's big winner in this slot remains the same. **Google Fiber** is the kind of ISP every competitor should strive to be—at least speed-wise. That whole "not expanding its customer base" anymore part sucks (we didn't like it when Verizon Fios did the same thing in 2010, either). Google Fiber was hurt by costs, lawsuits from competitors like AT&T and Charter to prevent utility poles use in certain locations, and being part of a company willing to give up on anything that's not making cash-money. That said: look at those speeds! Its PCMag Speed Index of 324.7 is actually down from 353.7 last year, but who would notice?

Fastest ISPs 2017—United States (All ISPs)



Last year, **EPB Fiber Optics** in Chattanooga, Tenn., and **Grande Communications** in Texas (it will soon be part of RCN) cornered slots two and three. Both are down a bit from 2016, so only EPB stayed in the same rank. Crowding ahead of Grande are the previously mentioned Hotwire and also **Midcontinent Communications**. Midco, as it's better known, is back in fighting trim after last year dropping to a (still respectable in any other context) 50.9; this year it's at 83.6, well ahead of Grande's 71.8.

Interestingly, Grande's soon to be sibling—or whatever you call a company eating another like a twin in the womb—**RCN**, is also in this top 10. It had a pretty spectacular bump in speed, from last year's 47.1 to 70.8 for 2017. **Wave**

Broadband, also part of that mega-merger, only earned a 36.3 index number this year. It'll be interesting to see how they average out next year, assuming they get the ducks lined up enough to make it happen in a year.

RCN, we should note, is also the big winner of PCMag's Readers' Choice Award survey for ISPs for the third year straight, earning kudos for its overall service and support. It shares the award with Verizon Fios, which has won it 12 years in a row—that's a record.

WINNERS: The Fastest Internet Providers in the United States



Hotwire Communications

We welcome Hotwire Communications, provider of fiber lines to many residential communities in several states, to the winners circle of high-throughput ISPs. With a PCMag Speed Index not quite double that of the next-best major ISP competitor, it's clearly a provider you'd be lucky to have in your own area.



Google Fiber

If you weren't sad before about Google Fiber not expanding its footprint much beyond where it's currently located, you probably are when you see the chart above. With average download speeds of 333.9 Mbps and uploads almost as good at 285.9 Mbps, users of Google Fiber have connections few others in the US can dream of. You'd have to move to Asia to get close.

Fastest Internet Providers by Region

There is no such thing as a truly nationwide ISP—the closest may be a satellite provider like HughesNet 4G, but it's not suitable for speed, just access where you can't get a wire. The same could be said for wireless providers like Verizon, AT&T, Sprint, and T-Mobile—but at least they're steadily improving speeds all the time. Comcast Xfinity comes closest to nationwide, servicing 40 states—but it's far from available in every municipality.

That's why we provide a snapshot of the six major regions of the domestic US, providing an idea of just what's best in your area.

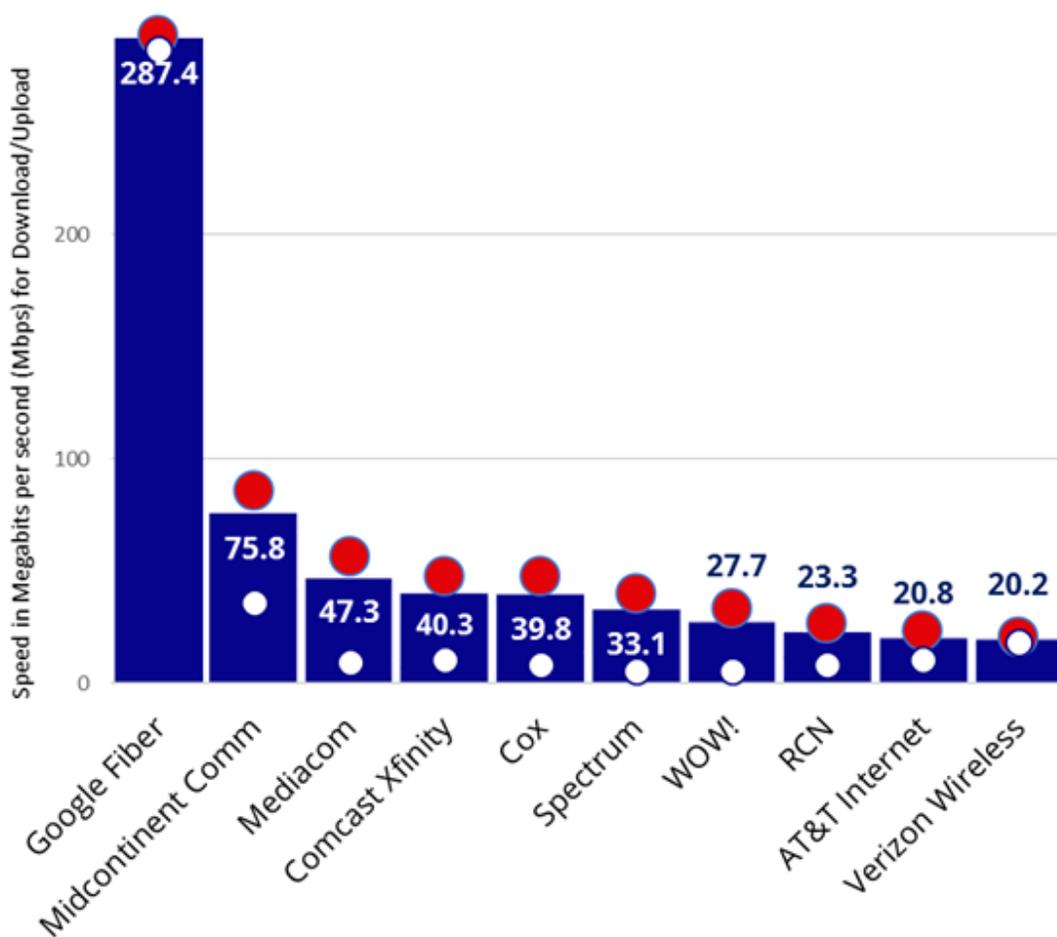
North Central

Includes: IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, and WI

Thanks to its presence in Kansas City (Missouri and Kansas), the north central area of the US can only claim one truly fast ISP, as it did last year: **Google Fiber**. However, its PCMag Speed Index rating of 287.4 is well down from last year's 350.1—hopefully that's not a sign of the times at Google Fiber.

In second place, **Midco** enjoys the same spot it had last year, bolstered by an actual increase from 50.9 to 75.8 (but even that's not as good as it showed back in 2015). The rest of the north central top 10 jumps around with major ISPs getting okay numbers, but only one other showed major improvement: **Mediacom** went from 34.2 up to 47.3, earning the third-place slot.

Fastest ISPs 2017—North Central US



- PCMAG SPEED INDEX
- DOWNLOAD SPEED (MBPS)
- UPLOAD SPEED (MBPS)

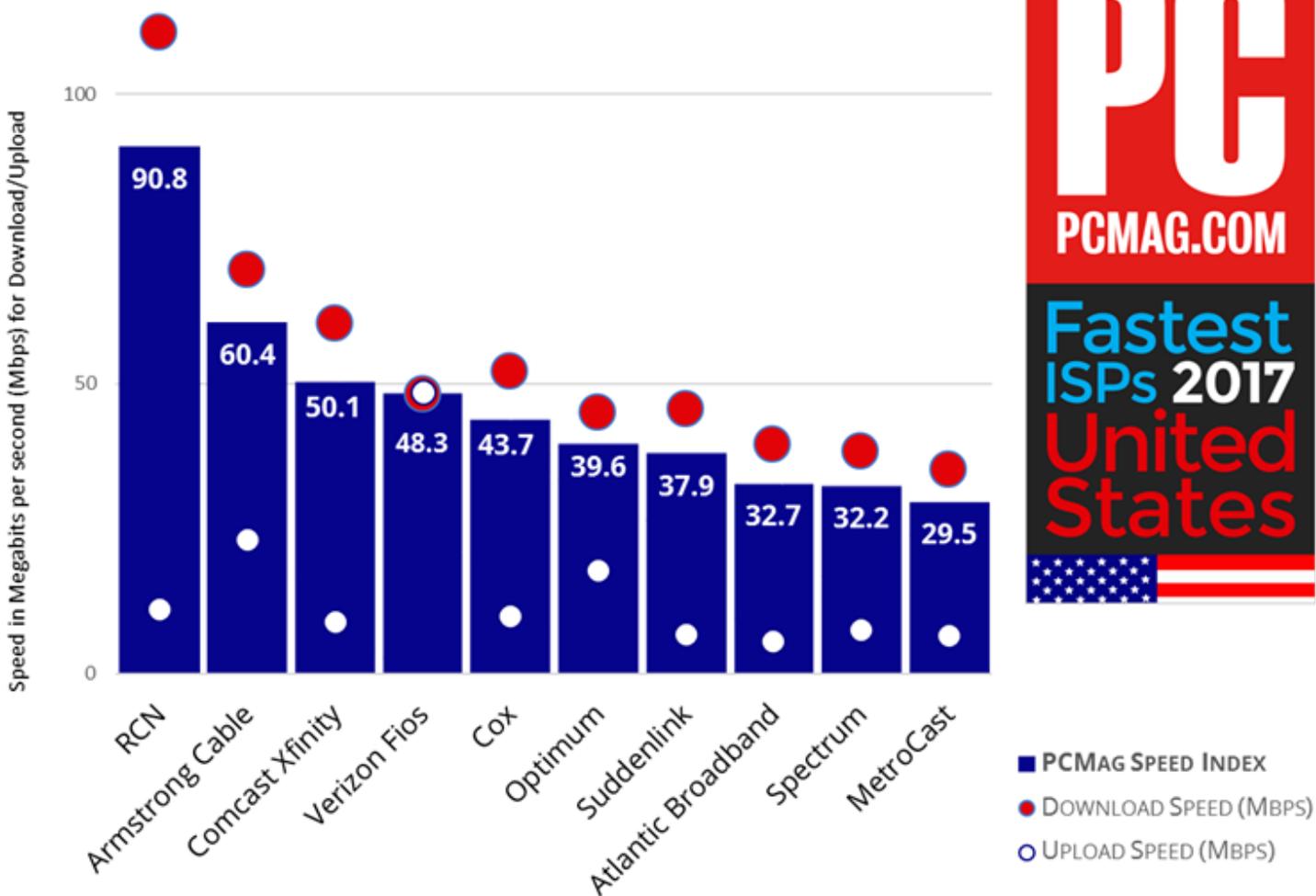
PCMag Speed Index represents 80 percent of Download Speed + 20 Percent of Upload Speed

Northeast

Includes: CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VA, VT, and WV

Another drop in its speed slotted **Verizon Fios** into fourth place this year. That left it to last year's first and second-place winners to return, but with **RCN** now in the top spot, with an amazing PCMag Speed Index of 90.8. Last year's Northeast leader, **Comcast Xfinity**, fell back to third place. So who's in second, you asked like Lou Costello? That's **Armstrong Cable Services**, which provides services in New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland (as well as some others outside the northeast). It earned a 60.4.

Fastest ISPs 2017—Northeast US



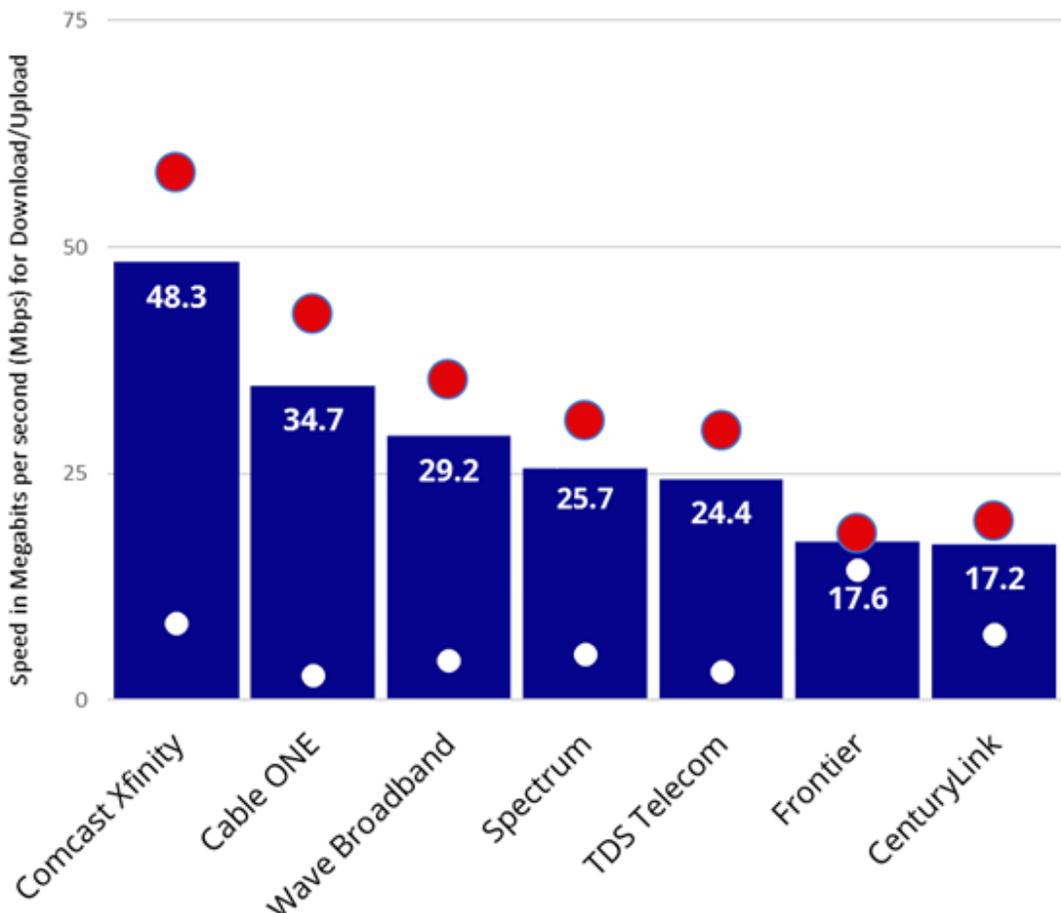
PCMag Speed Index represents 80 percent of Download Speed + 20 Percent of Upload Speed

Northwest

Includes: CO, ID, MT, OR, UT, WA, and WY

For years now, **Comcast Xfinity** has consistently shown itself to be the fastest ISP in the northwestern US. This year is the same, despite an almost unchanged PCMag Speed Index (48.2 going to 48.3). Its runner-up is also the same, **Cable One**. The No. 3 spot last year went to Charter; but as Spectrum in 2017, it could only manage fourth place. Instead, third this year is fiber optic provider **Wave Broadband**, soon to be part of RCN. It jumped from fifth place with 27.1 last year to a 29.2 now.

Fastest ISPs 2017—Northwest US



- PCMAG SPEED INDEX
- DOWNLOAD SPEED (MBPS)
- UPLOAD SPEED (MBPS)

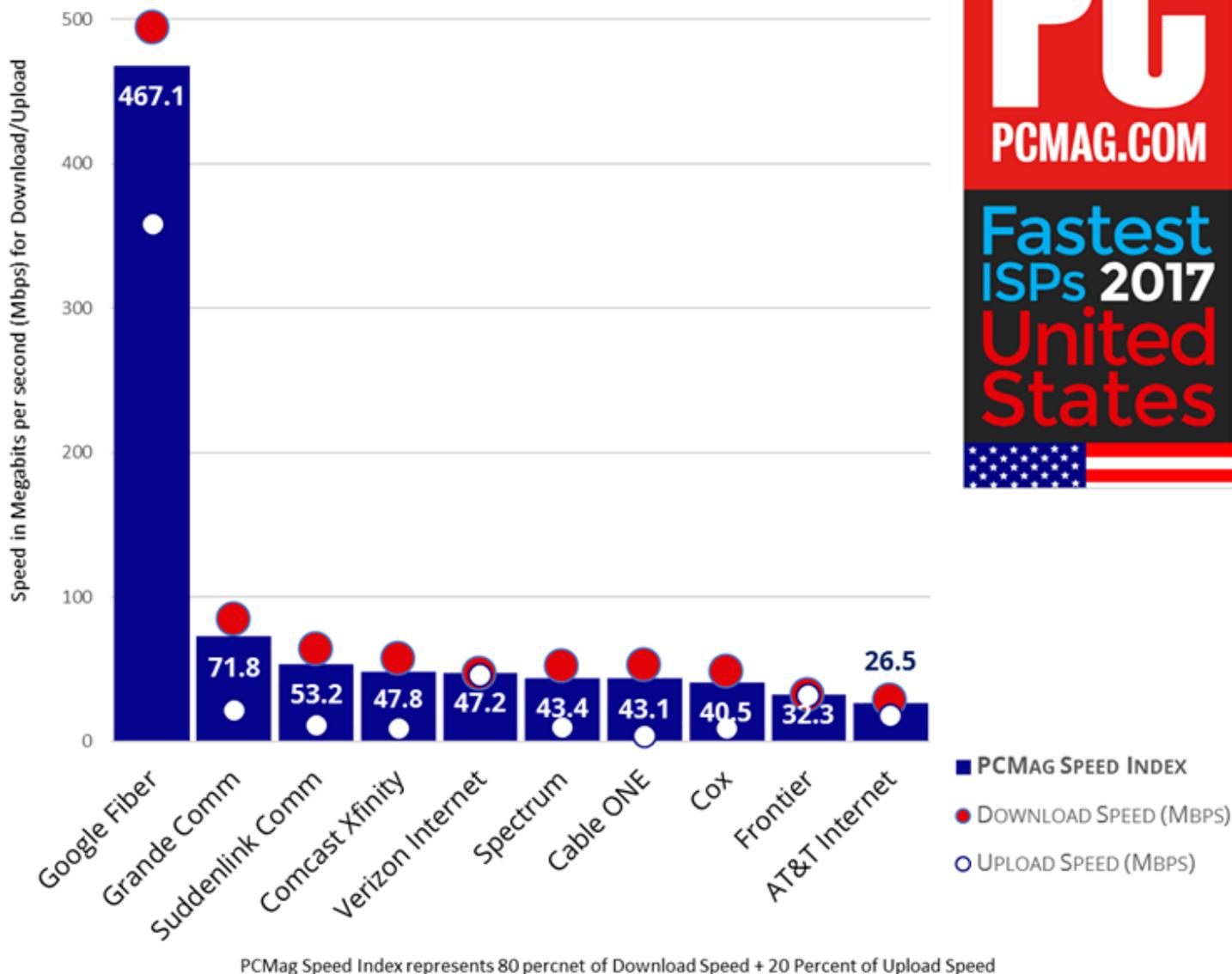
PCMag Speed Index represents 80 percent of Download Speed + 20 Percent of Upload Speed

South Central Includes: AR, LA, MS, OK, and TX

Deep in the heart of Texas is a fiber provider named **Grande**, and while it has limited reach, its speed has been great. It slipped a little this year to a 71.8, but it wouldn't have mattered if it doubled last year's PCMag Speed Index score. There is no way it would beat **Google Fiber's** unprecedented 467.1 average. That's

almost half a gigabit of throughput on average—its *upload* speed alone is 358.0 Mbps. Of course, that reach is even more limited to only the city of Austin. The fastest major ISPs in the south-central states—those other people might be able to sign up to use—are **Suddenlink** (53.2) and **Comcast Xfinity** (47.8).

Fastest ISPs 2017—South Central US

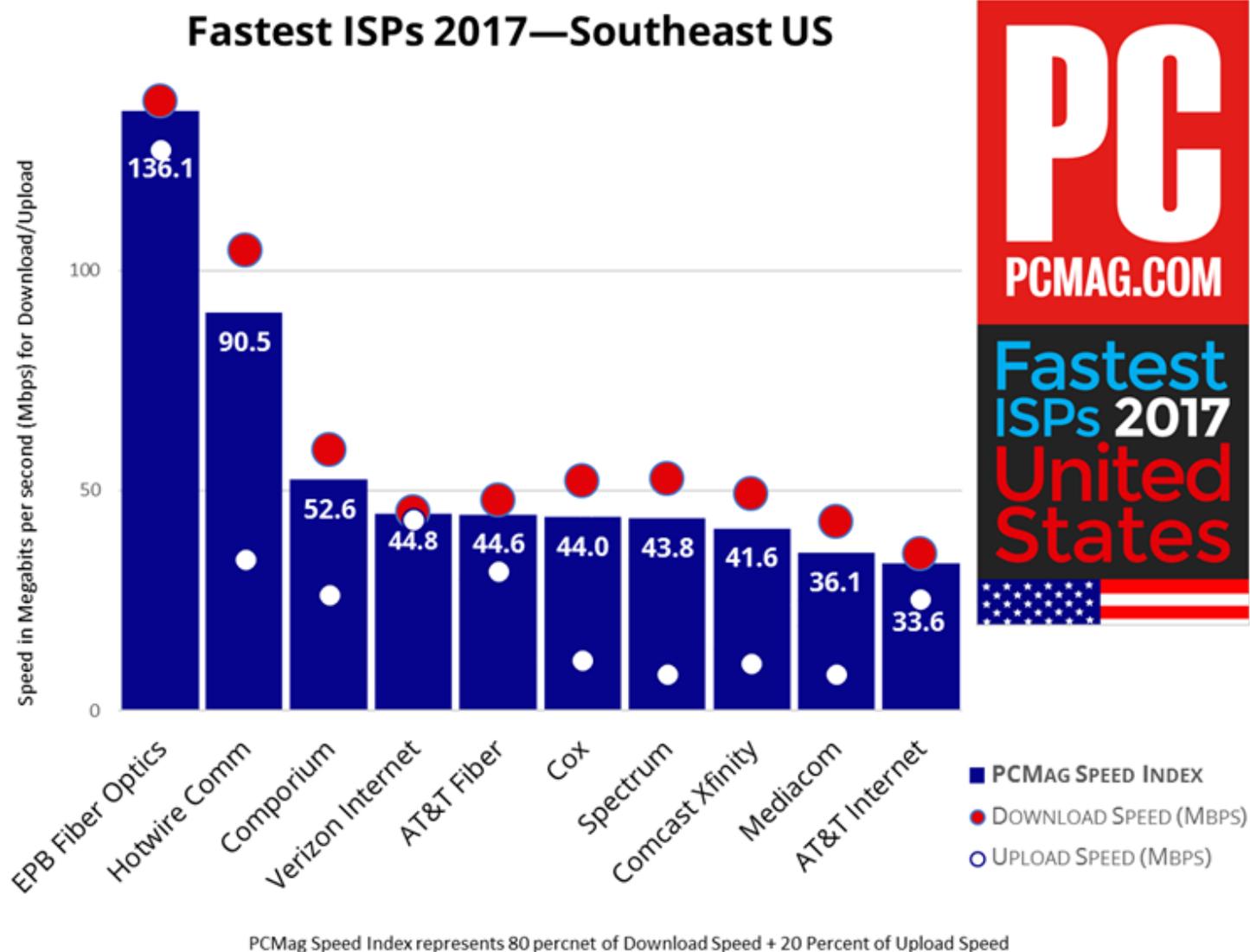


Southeast Includes: AL, FL, GA, NC, SC, and TN

Google Fiber always has speed, but not always the number of tests needed to show up in our results. That's why it's not here. But **EPB Fiber Optics** is. It's a local ISP owned by the Electric Power Board of Chattanooga—exactly the kind of ISP we all want, that major ISPs hate, and that major ISPs lobby (read: pay)

politicians to hate, so they're hard to come by. EPB's PCMag Speed Index number dropped this year from 156.4 to 136.1, but that was still plenty to be the fastest in those six states.

Second place goes to our new big winner, **Hotwire Communications**, which has fiber installations in all six states except Alabama. Excellent showing here also from **Comporium** in the Carolinas, which jumped from No. 9 with a 29.0 to third place with a 52.6.

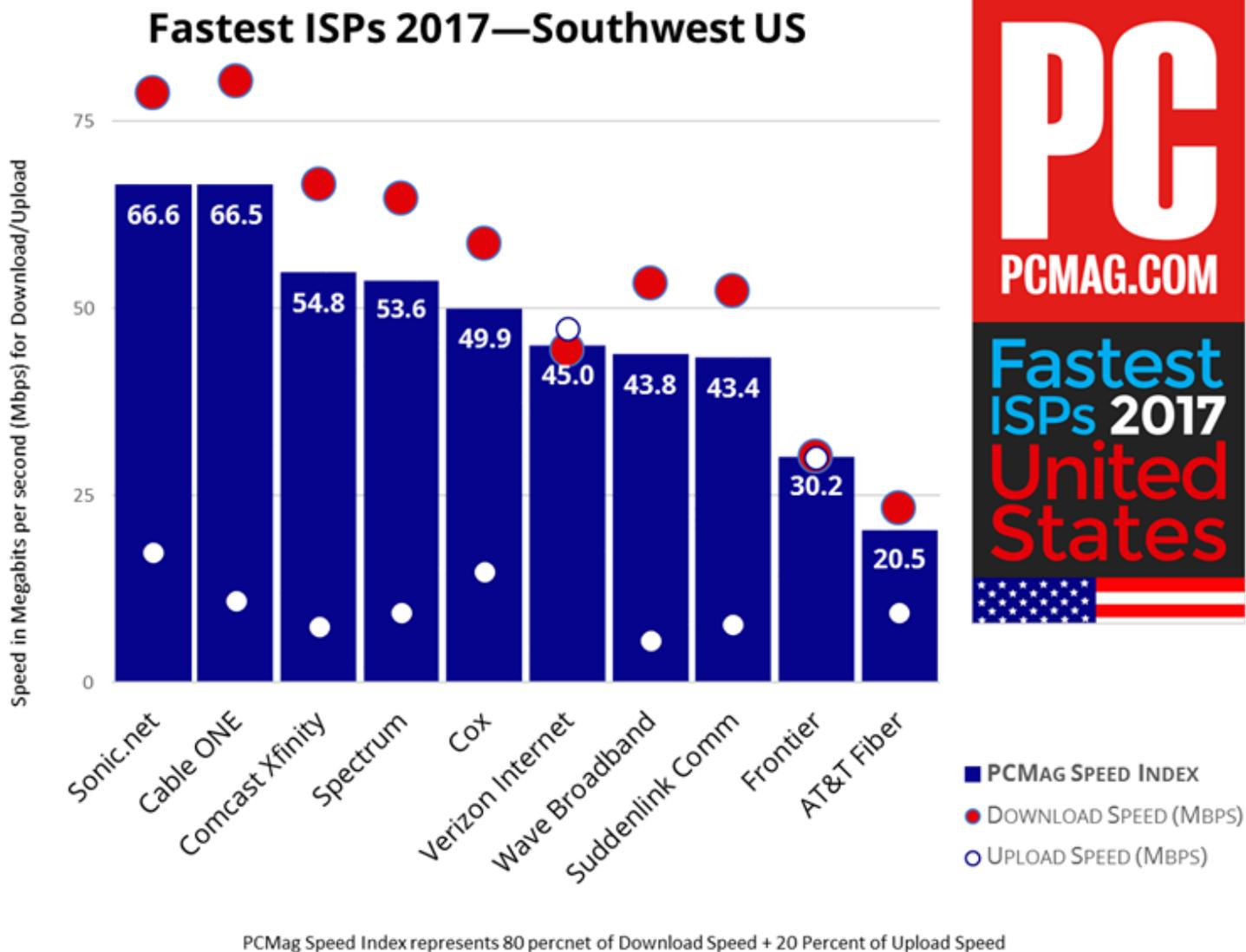


Southwest Includes: AZ, NM, NV, and CA

Last year's leader in the southwestern US was Time Warner Cable, but that whole **Spectrum** merger dropped the combined entity down to fourth place with a 53.6. The top three consists instead of **Comcast Xfinity** in third with 54.8

(down from second place with 61.7 in 2016), and **Cable One** jumping up to second place with a 10-point improvement to 66.5.

The winner of the Southwest is a slight surprise: California's **Sonic**, which started working with AT&T in 2015 to provide fiber-to-the-node services; it has gigabit fiber services in San Francisco, Brentwood, and Sebastopol to date. That makes all the difference in going from an okay 35.5 to an excellent (and devilish) 66.6.



If you're curious about other non-domestic states of the US:

- Alaska's top ISP is the only one that had enough response for use to measure: **GCI Communications** with a very respectable PCMag Speed Index of 47.8.
 - In Hawaii, two ISPs made the cut. The major one also turned out to be the fastest: **Spectrum** (formerly TWC on the islands) got a 39.0, compared to **Hawaiian Telecom's** 11.5. Spectrum's score was down a point, while HT's is up almost three.
 - We also took a quick peek at Puerto Rico, which should be the 51st state already, c'mon... the leader there is **San Juan Cable** with a 26.3, followed closely by **Liberty Cablevision** at 21.7.
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US States With the Fastest Internet

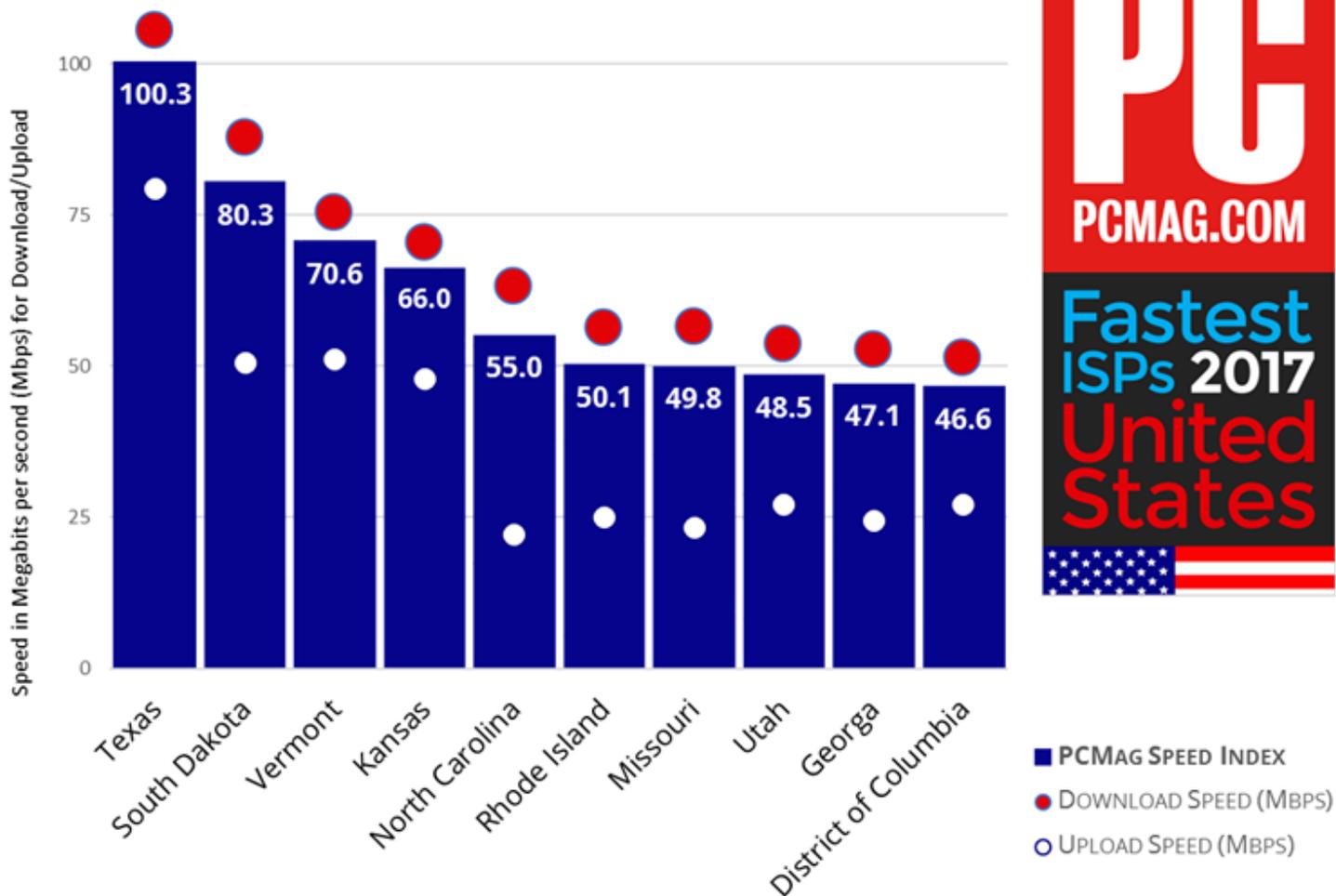
Do you ever sit back and wonder, "Just how much better do those people in that next state over have it than I do?" In regards to internet speed, of course. Here's your chance to find out.

For 2014 and 2015, the state averaging the fastest speed was **South Dakota**, due to the presence of Midco and its fiber optic installs. Last year, **Kansas** took the No. 1 spot, with a 67.0 PCMag Speed Index.

This year, while South Dakota is back up there thanks to Midco's bounce-back in our tests, the state only got to No. 2 with an 80.3. The No. 1 slot belongs to the Lone Star State. **Texas's** 100.3—the highest we've seen for any state alone—is likely pushed way up thanks to fiber connections galore from Google Fiber in Austin, and the select cities serviced by Grande Communications (soon to be RCN).

Staying consistent: **Vermont** slid from second to third place, despite a speed increase, going to a 70.6 from 65.3—its No. 1 ISP is Comcast Xfinity. Former leader Kansas is in fourth with a one-point decline to 66.0; its top ISP is, no surprise, Google Fiber, followed by Spectrum.

Fastest ISPs 2017—Fastest US States



PCMag Speed Index represents 80 percent of Download Speed + 20 Percent of Upload Speed

The vast majority of states average an index between 25 to 45. The states at the bottom of the throughput heap: Idaho (21.4), Maine (15.7), and Montana (13.4).

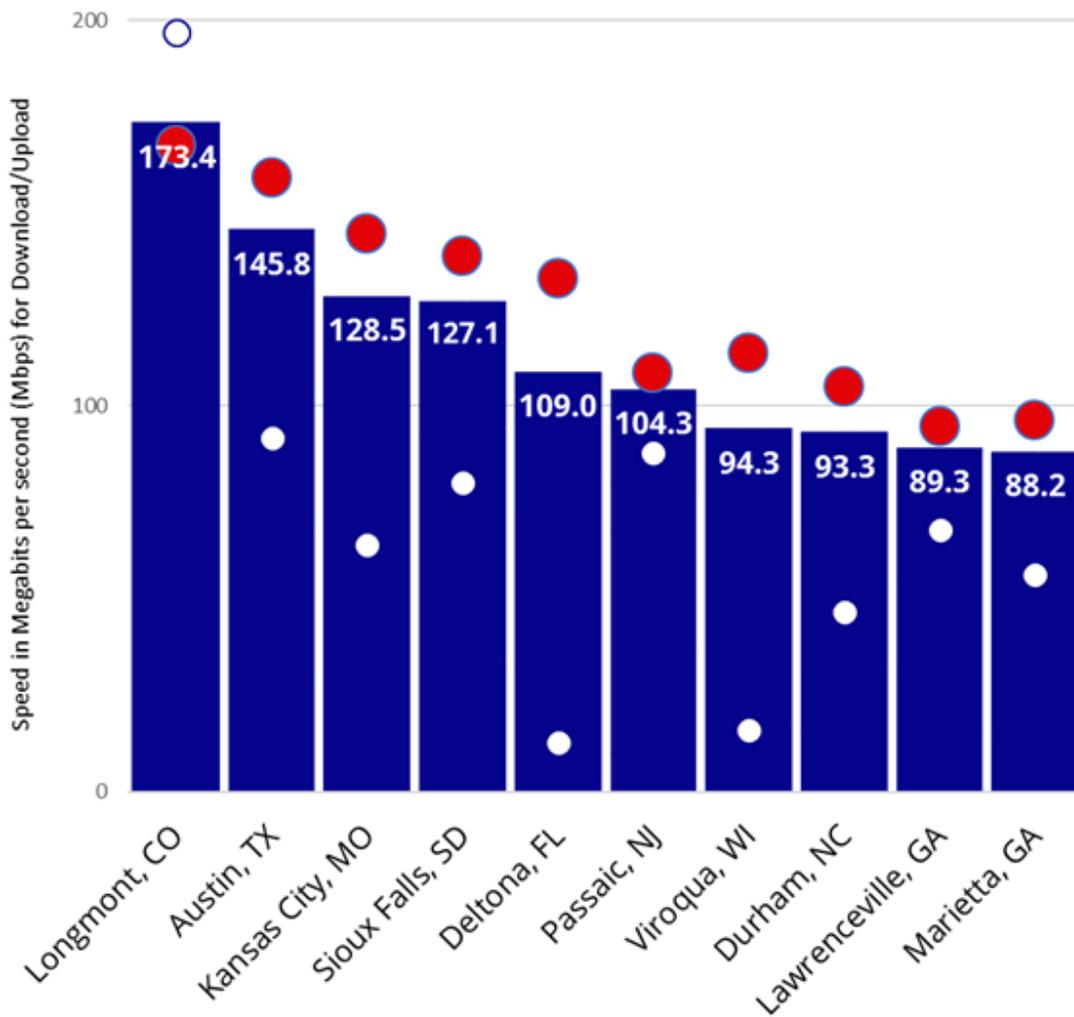
US Cities with the Fastest Internet

Generally, we can see pretty clearly the ISPs that drive certain cities to great broadband achievement—the city you might want to move to if internet speed is what matters to you. For example, last year it was easy to see that Kansas City, MO, was on top because it's got Google Fiber.

So where the heck did Longmont, CO come from? Actually, it's been around—it was No. 3 on this list last year. With a PCMag Speed Index score of 173.4, it's outperformed both KC and Austin, TX, each a Google Fiber stronghold. We dove a little deeper into the data and found a bit of a power struggle for internet supremacy between not only Comcast Xfinity and CenturyLink, but also local

utility Longmont Power & Communications, which provides the local gigabit ISP named **Nextlight**. You may see the obvious theme here: local utilities like this and **EPB** in Chattanooga (which is only No. 22 on the city list this year) are the best hope we've got for mega-fast internet service in this country.

Fastest ISPs 2017—Fastest US Cities



PCMag Speed Index represents 80 percent of Download Speed + 20 Percent of Upload Speed

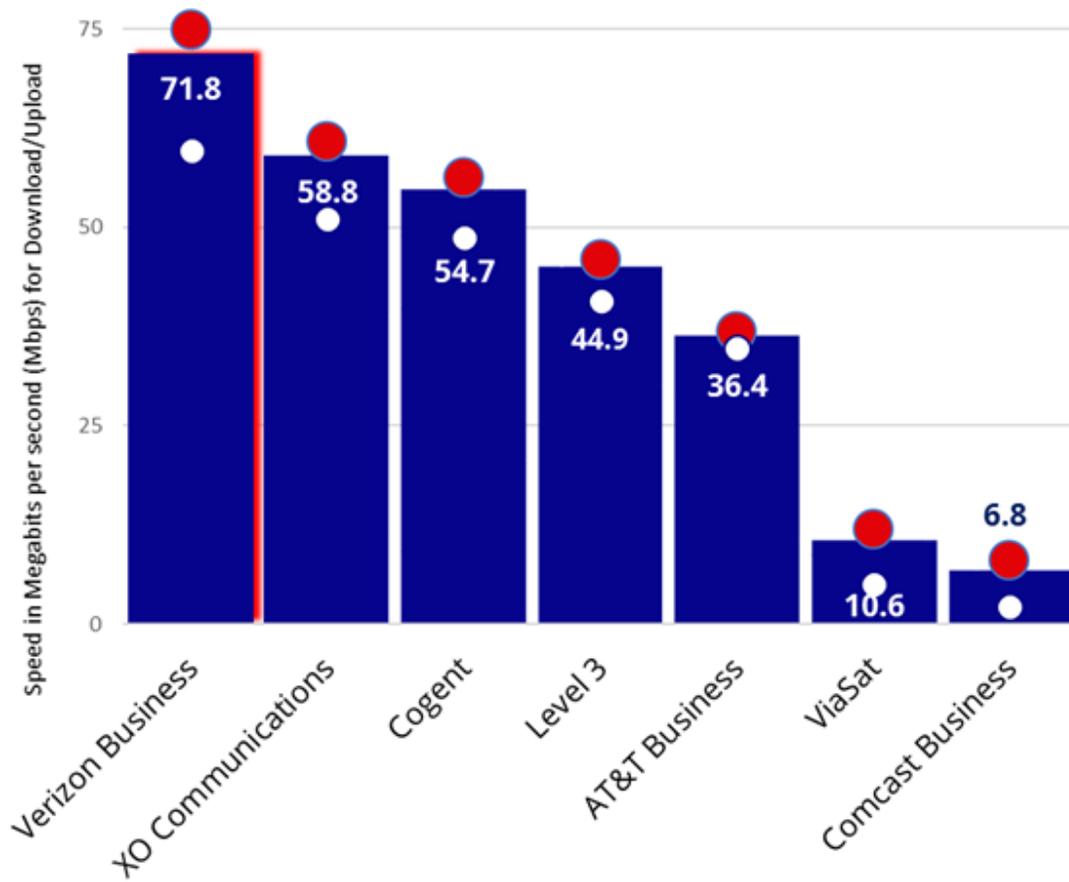
Metropolitan areas are not always the best served, despite what should be a profusion of competition. Looking at major cities, you'll find New York at No. 12, Atlanta at 17, San Francisco at 30, Dallas at 48, Los Angeles at 99, Chicago at 165, and Denver at 176. It's inexcusable in some cases. Here's a snapshot of our top scoring ISP in the big cities (remember, we need a minimum number of tests per city to include).

- **Austin (TX):** Google Fiber—516.8
 - **Chicago:** Comcast Xfinity—41.2
 - **Dallas:** Spectrum—58.8
 - **Denver:** Comcast Xfinity—53.4
 - **Houston:** Comcast Xfinity—43.7
 - **Los Angeles:** Spectrum—59.5
 - **New York City:** RCN—253.3
 - **Philadelphia:** Comcast Xfinity—47.2
 - **Phoenix:** Verizon Fios—51.5
 - **San Antonio:** Spectrum—81.1
 - **San Diego:** Spectrum—64.3
 - **San Francisco:** Comcast Xfinity—56.5
 - **San Jose:** Comcast Xfinity—51.6
 - **Washington, DC:** Verizon Fios—53.4
-

Fastest Business Internet Provider

Change is the defining factor in the speed of business-specific ISPs. In previous years this category has been led by companies like Level 3; last year it was **XO Communications**. XO's PCMag Speed Index slipped almost 11 points this year, so it went into second place. The leader on our boards this time around is **Verizon**. Its 71.8 is the highest speed we've seen yet in a business ISP. And maybe that's helped by the fact that Verizon actually bought XO and is still in the process of integrating it. Third place Cogent fell from second place after dropping from a 63.4 to a 54.7.

Fastest US Business ISPs 2017



- PCMAG SPEED INDEX
- DOWNLOAD SPEED (MBPS)
- UPLOAD SPEED (MBPS)

PCMag Speed Index represents 80 percent of Download Speed + 20 Percent of Upload Speed

WINNER: Fastest Business ISP



Verizon Business

Perhaps bolstered by buying out last year's winner, XO Communications, Verizon's divisions targeting internet access for big business showed a marked speed improvement, enough to push it into an arena where any office should consider it first for access.

Methodology

The results in this article were taken from 123,962 individual tests completed by US residents from July 1, 2016, to May 22, 2017, using the PCMag Speed Test embedded on the site. Speed Test collected download and upload speeds for each test, measured in Megabits per second (Mbps). We used those results to

calculate an index score for a better one-to-one comparison, where downloads count for 80 percent and uploads 20 percent. For an ISP or location to be included in results, we required a minimum of 100 tests.

On the back end, Speed Test performs a "fill the pipe" test. Rather than testing the upload and download speed of a single file, it uses multiple broadband threads (the broadband applications that can be used by a browser) to measure the total capacity of the "pipe." This leads to numbers higher than some other Internet speed tests out there, sometimes even higher than the rate of broadband speed you are paying for.

Previous iterations of the [Speed Test](#) required a Web browser running Adobe Flash and JavaScript to work. The latest version, implemented on PCMag.com in April 2017, supports HTML 5 and thus works on mobile browsers. As such, some results for wireless carriers do appear in this story, but speed-wise they are generally outclassed today by modern wired connections like cable and fiber. For more advanced testing of the nation's major wireless carriers, we do our own city-to-city driving tests for the [Fastest Mobile Networks](#).

[Test your own Internet speed](#) and you'll be contributing to next year's Fastest ISPs results.

COULD NOT CONNECT

Unable to connect to a server at this time. Please try again later.

Cancel

Retry

Deactivate your VPN temporarily for the best results.

[Click here for full-screen test.](#)