



Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

July 16, 2013

Computer and Internet Usage in Pennsylvania and the United States

PENN STATE HARRISBURG – The number of Pennsylvanians living in a household with internet access increased 12.0 percent between 2007 and 2011, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The Current Population Survey's 2011 Computer and Internet Use Supplement revealed that nearly a million (970,000) more Pennsylvanians had access to the internet in the comfort of their own homes.

In 2007, over two-thirds (68.7 percent) of Pennsylvanians 3 years and over had internet access in their home. The figure increased to three-quarters (75.4 percent) in Pennsylvania by 2011, ranking the commonwealth 33rd nationally. In total, just over nine million of the 12 million plus Pennsylvanians 3 years and over lived in a household with internet access in 2011.

New Hampshire led all states in the United States with 87.1 percent of its residents 3 years and over reporting in-home internet use in 2011, followed by Washington (86.1 percent), Utah (84.7 percent) and Connecticut (84.4 percent). Minnesota (83.9 percent) rounded out the top five in terms of percent of population with internet access at home. Mississippi (61.4 percent), New Mexico (65.8 percent) and Arkansas (68.5 percent) were among the states with the lowest reported percentages of in-home internet access. Nationally, 76.5 percent of the population lived in a household with internet access.

Regionally, the Northeast had the largest percent of the population living in a household with internet access in 2011, with 79.6 percent. The West and Midwest followed closely with near identical figures of 77.7 percent and 77.5 percent, respectively. The South had the lowest among the four U.S. Regions, with 72.9 percent having in-home access.

The Northeast region also reported the largest numeric and percent gain in the population 3 years and over with home internet access. Between 2007 and 2011, more than 10.4 million more residents gained access; a 28.1 percent increase over the time period. Table 1 shows the numeric and percent increase of in-home internet access among U.S. regions.

Individuals Living in Households with In-Home Internet Access, 2007-2011 (In thousands)									
Rank	State	2011			2007			Change 2007-2011	
		Total	Living in Households with Internet Access		Total	Living in Households with Internet Access		Number	Percent
			Number	Percent		Number	Percent		
-	United States	293,414	224,349	76.5%	285,410	191,520	67.1%	32,829	17.1%
1	Northeast	59,628	47,461	79.6%	52,135	37,057	71.1%	10,404	28.1%
2	West	72,551	56,401	77.7%	66,395	46,073	69.4%	10,328	22.4%
3	Midwest	63,575	49,269	77.5%	62,851	42,553	67.7%	6,716	15.8%
4	South	97,661	71,218	72.9%	104,030	65,840	63.3%	5,378	8.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey

Characteristics of Internet Usage in the United States

Computer and Internet use at the household level has changed dramatically over the past twenty years. In 2011, 75.6 percent of households nationwide reported having a computer, compared with only 8.2 percent in 1984. Similar shifts occurred for household Internet use, as 71.7 percent of households reported accessing the Internet in 2011, up from 18.0 percent in 1997 (the first year the Census Bureau asked about Internet use) and 54.7 percent in 2003 (the first year that more than 50 percent of households reported accessing the Internet).

Disparities in internet use exist across race and ethnic groups. In 2011, 76.2 percent of non-Hispanic White households and 82.7 percent of Asian households reported Internet use at home, compared with 58.3 percent of Hispanic households and 56.9 percent of Black households.

Young adults, those 18 to 34 years of age, were more likely to report both living in households with a computer and accessing the Internet from some location than those 65 years and over: 82.8 percent of individuals 18 to 34 years of age reported living in a home with a computer and accessing the internet 82.0 percent of the time. At the other end of the spectrum, Americans 65 years of age and older reported living in homes with computers only about 61.8 percent of the time and accessing the internet about 45.5 percent of the time. This means that nearly four in ten older Americans did not have a computer in their home, and less than half were accessing the Internet at all.

More about Computer and Internet Usage Data

The data presented in this brief is based on the Current Population Survey statistics from July 2011. The Computer and Internet Access data provides household and individual level analysis of computer use and Internet access.

Data relating to computer and internet use has been collected sporadically since 1984 in the Current Population Survey. In 1984, 1989, and 1993, only questions about computers were asked in the survey. In 1997, the CPS asked questions about internet access for the first time. In 2000, 2001, 2003, 2007 and 2010, questions were asked about both items; however, the universe of the data tables changed from total households to the population 3 years and over in households,

making it difficult to calculate the change of computer and internet access over time for U.S. states.

In January, the American Community Survey (ACS) began asking questions about computer and internet use. Data users can expect the first data on this topic to be available for geographic areas with populations greater than 65,000 with the release of the 2013 ACS in 2014. Because five years of data collection are necessary for the ACS to produce estimate for geographic areas below 20,000 in population, those interested in computer and internet use data for all Pennsylvania counties and municipalities will need to wait until 2018 when the 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates are release.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey

The Pennsylvania State Data Center is the commonwealth's official source for population and economic statistics. It is based at Penn State Harrisburg's Institute of State and Regional Affairs.

Editors: For additional data, contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center's State Capital Office at 717.772.2710. For faculty comment on this topic, please contact Penn State Harrisburg's Public Information Office at 717.948.6029.