

Computer Use, 2000

In the majority of U.S. homes, computers are part of the décor.

In an environment of rapidly changing technology, information about computer use can seem as outdated as last year's models. But because the Census Bureau has been collecting data on computers since 1984, it can provide valuable insights into changing computer usage.

The majority of households (51 percent) had access to a computer, up from 42 percent in 1998, according to the August 2000 Current Population Survey (CPS).¹ The proportion of households with Internet access more than doubled between 1997 (the first year data were collected on this topic) and 2000 — growing from 18 percent to 42 percent.

Among family households with incomes of \$75,000 or more during the 12 months prior to the survey, 88 percent had at least one computer, and 79 percent had at least one household member who used the Internet at home. Only 28 percent of family households with incomes less than \$25,000 had access to a computer, and just 19 percent had Internet access.

Households with two or more people were more likely to have a computer (58 percent) than one-person households (30 percent). Twenty-four percent of one-person households had Internet access versus 48 percent of households with two or more people.

Sixty-four percent of married-couple households had access to a computer, and 53 percent had Internet access. Fewer than half of all other households had a computer, and less than one-third had Internet access. Households with children age 6 to 17 years old were more likely to have a computer (67 percent) than households without children this age (45 percent).

¹ Estimates in this chapter are calculated using sample data from the Current Population Survey, weighted by population controls based on the 1990 decennial census. The population universe for the CPS is the civilian noninstitutional population. As a result, these estimates will differ from population estimates computed from either the intercensal estimates program, or the 2000 decennial census.

More school-age children use computers at school than have access to them at home.

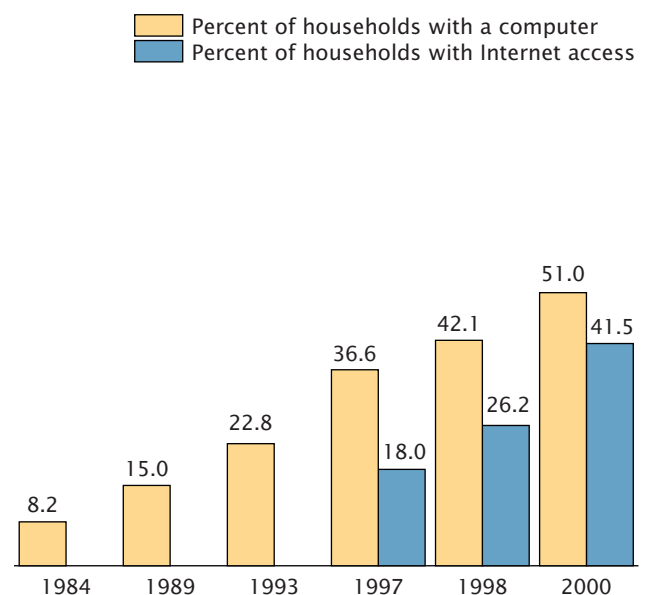
School is a major influence on children's access to computers. Fifty-seven percent of school-age children (6 to 17 years old) had access to a computer both at home and at school in 2000. Twenty-three percent of children had computer access only at school, while 10 percent had access only at home. The remaining 10 percent had no access.

School is an important provider of computer access for children in families with lower incomes. Only 35 percent of school-age children in families with income less than \$25,000 had access to a computer at

Figure 10-1.

Computers and Internet Access in the Home: 1984 to 2000

(Percent of households)



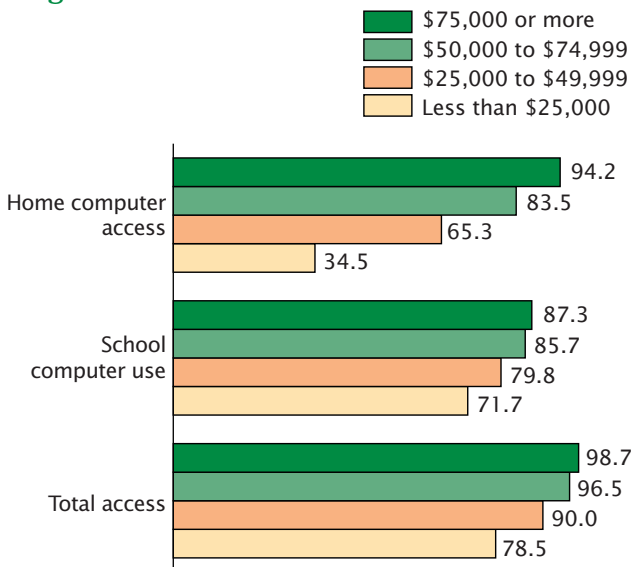
Note: Data on Internet access were not collected before 1997.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, various years.

home, whereas 72 percent of these children had computer access at school. Seventy-nine percent of school-age children in families with incomes less than \$25,000 had access to a computer either at home or at school. For children in families with incomes more than \$75,000, computer access was ubiquitous. Ninety-nine percent of school-age children in families with incomes more than \$75,000 had access to a computer either at home or at school, 94 percent of these children had computer access at home, and 87 percent had access at school.

Internet use is influencing how society manages information.

The Internet has become a major venue for the dissemination of news. Among adults, nearly one in five used the Internet at home to check on news, weather, or sports. Nearly one in four adults used the Internet for other sorts of information searches, such as information about businesses, health practices, or government services. The Internet also affects interpersonal communication. About one in three adults used e-mail from home. More than one in five children (22 percent) used home e-mail.

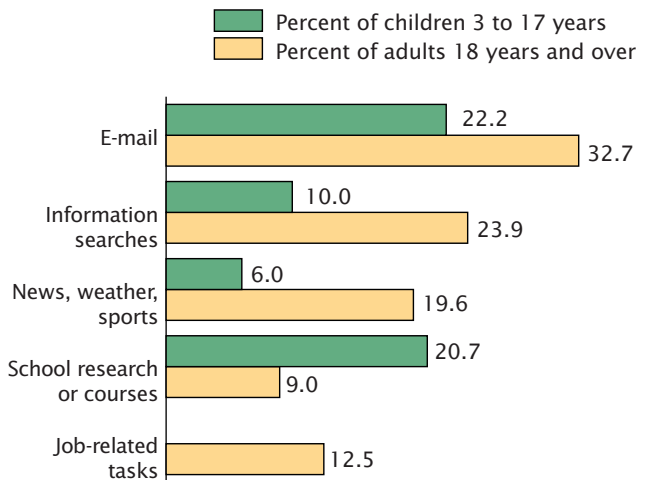
Figure 10-2.
Percent of Children Aged 6 to 17* Who Have Computer Access at Home and School by Annual Family Income: August 2000



*Among children in families.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, August 2000.

Finally, the Internet acts as a venue for work and school to enter the home. One adult in eight used the Internet to perform job-related tasks using a home Internet connection. Twenty-one percent of children used the Internet to perform school-related tasks, such as research for assignments, or taking courses online.

Figure 10-3.
Adults and Children Using the Internet for a Specific Task: August 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, August 2000.

The Census Bureau Can Tell You More

- For more detailed information, consult the following U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Report: *Home Computers and Internet Use in the United States: August 2000* by Eric C. Newburger.
- Look for complete reports and detailed tables on the Census Bureau's World Wide Web site (www.census.gov). Click on "C" and select "Computer Use and Ownership."
- Contact the Education and Social Stratification Branch of the U.S. Census Bureau at 301-457-2464 or e-mail pop@census.gov.
- For information on publications and other resources, see Appendix A.