

COMPUTER USE IN 2003

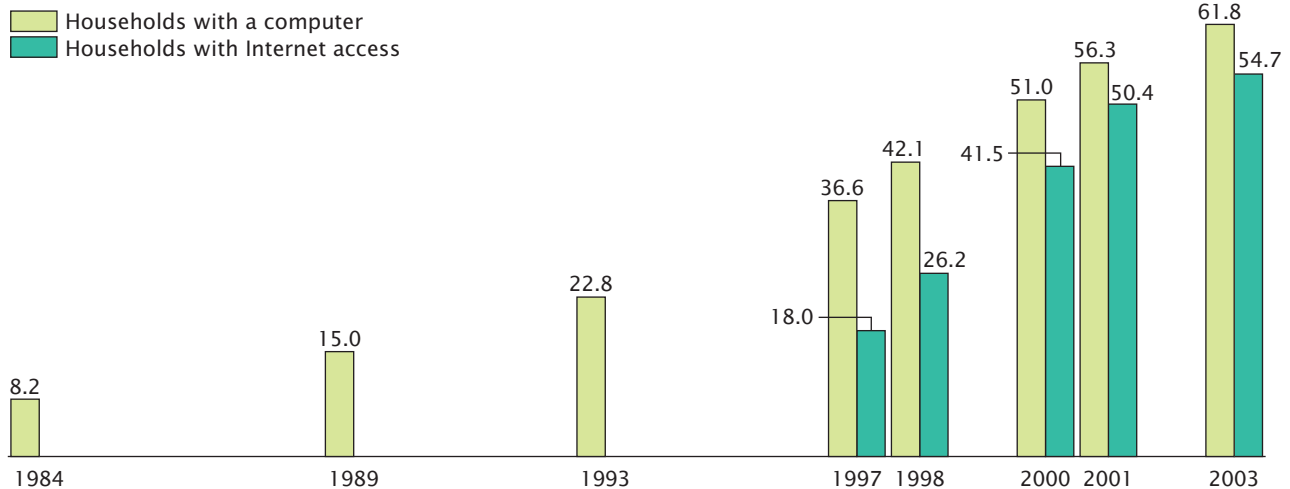
The U.S. Census Bureau has been collecting data on computers since 1984, providing valuable insights into evolving computer usage among adults and children. Decision makers in a broad array of professions use these data to determine how the general population receives information and communicates with others.

Sixty-two percent of households had access to a computer in 2003, compared with 56 percent in 2001, according to the October Current Population Survey (CPS).¹ The proportion of households with Internet

access more than tripled between 1997 (the first year data were collected on this topic) and 2003—growing from 18 percent to 55 percent, as shown in Figure 1.

While computer ownership and home Internet access have been adopted widely, use of this technology is not uniform among all groups. For instance, computers could be found in 35 percent of households with a householder aged 65 and older, 45 percent with a Black or Hispanic householder, and 28 percent with a householder who was not a high school graduate.²

Figure 1.
Households With a Computer and Internet Access: 1984 to 2003
(In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1984, 1989, 1993, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, and 2003.

¹ The estimates in this report (which may be shown in text, figures, and tables) are based on responses from a sample of the population and may differ from actual values because of sampling variability or other factors. As a result, apparent differences between the estimates for two or more groups may not be statistically significant. All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

² Federal surveys now give respondents the option of reporting more than one race. Therefore, two basic ways of defining a race group are possible. A group such as Asian may be defined as those who reported Asian and no other race (the race-alone or single-race concept) or as those who reported Asian regardless of whether they also reported another race (the race-alone-or-in-combination concept). The body of this report (text, figures, and tables) shows data using the first approach (race alone). Use of the single-race population in this report does not imply that this is the preferred method of presenting data. The Census Bureau uses both approaches.

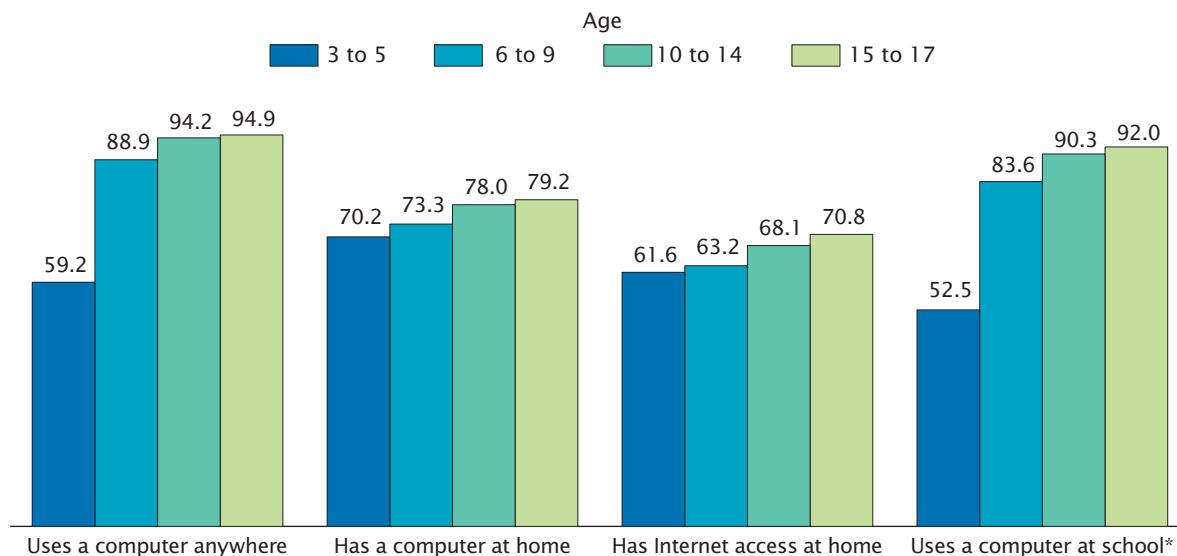
For 2003 and beyond, this chapter uses the term “non-Hispanic White” to refer to people who are not Hispanic and who reported White

and no other race. The Census Bureau uses non-Hispanic Whites as the comparison group for other race groups and the Hispanic population.

Data users should exercise caution when interpreting aggregate results for the Hispanic population or for race groups because these populations consist of many distinct groups that differ in socioeconomic characteristics, culture, and recency of immigration. In addition, the CPS does not use separate population controls for weighting the Asian sample to national totals. Data were first collected for Hispanics in 1972 and for Asians and Pacific Islanders in 1987. For further information, see <www.bls.census.gov/cps/ads/adsmain.htm>.

Because Hispanics may be any race, data for Hispanics overlap slightly with data for the Black and Asian and Pacific Islander populations. Based on the population aged 25 and older surveyed in the October CPS, 3.7 percent of the single-race Black population and 4.3 percent of the single-race Asian population were also Hispanic. Data for the American Indian and Alaska Native population, the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population, and the Two-or-More-Races population are not shown here based on their small sample size in the CPS.

Figure 2.
Computer Access for Children by Type of Access and Age of Child: 2003
 (Percent of all children in each age group except where noted)



*Percent of children enrolled in school.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2003.

In addition, 41 percent of one-person households and 46 percent of nonfamily households owned a computer.³ Differences among households in Internet access in 2003 mirrored those for computer ownership.

Among family households with an income of \$100,000 or more during the 12 months prior to the survey, 95 percent had at least one computer and 92 percent of them had at least one household member who used Internet access at home. Forty-one percent of households with an annual income less than \$25,000 had access to a computer and 31 percent of them had Internet access.

The presence of a school-age child (6 to 17 years) was related to whether a household had a computer or Internet access. More than three-quarters of households with a school-age child had a computer and 67 percent had Internet access. In comparison, 57 percent of households without a school-age child had a computer and 50 percent had Internet access.

³ The percent of households with computers with either Black or Hispanic householders is not significantly different from the percentage of nonfamily households with computers.

Computer Usage Among Children

School influences a child's access to computers. In 2003, 76 percent of all children aged 3 to 17 lived in a household with a computer and 83 percent of the 57 million enrolled children used a computer at school. Ten years earlier, 32 percent of children had a computer at home and 61 percent used a computer at school.

In 2003, older children were more likely to have a computer at home than younger ones—70 percent of children aged 3 to 5 and 79 percent of those aged 15 to 17 had a computer at home (Figure 2). Older children who had a computer in their home were more likely to use it than younger children living in a household with a computer—95 percent compared with 67 percent.

In 2003, computer access varied by a child's race and Hispanic origin. About 85 percent of non-Hispanic White or Asian children had a computer at home, compared with about 54 percent of Black or Hispanic children.

Educational attainment of the householder is related to a child's access to computers. Forty-seven percent of children living with a householder with less than a high school education had a computer. For those in households where the householder had at least a bachelor's degree, 94 percent had a computer at home.

Family income was associated with whether or not a child had a computer at home. Forty-seven percent of children with a family income under \$25,000 lived in a household with a computer, compared with 97 percent of those with a family income of \$100,000 or more.

Computer Usage Among Adults

Over the past two decades, the proportion of adults (people aged 18 and older) using a computer anywhere grew from 18 percent in 1984, to 36 percent in 1993, to 64 percent in 2003. From 1997 to 2003, use of the Internet among adults jumped from 22 percent to 60 percent.

Among adults in 2003, 66 percent had a computer at home, and among those with a computer at home, 83 percent used it. Fifty-nine percent of adults had Internet access at home and 82 percent of them used this technology. More than half of working adults used a computer at work (56 percent) and 42 percent used the Internet on the job. Among adult students, 85 percent said they used a computer at school and 66 percent used the Internet there.

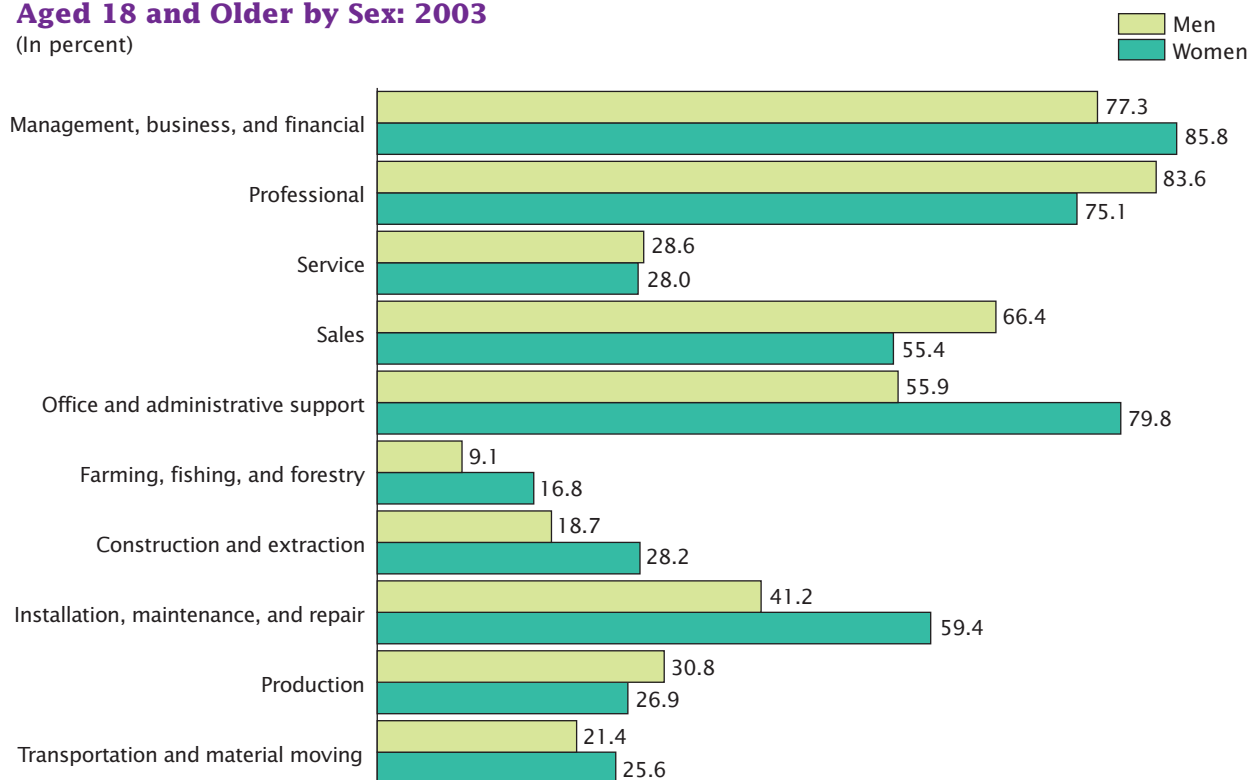
Computer use was less widespread among adults than children. Sixty-four percent of adults used a computer at some location (home, school, or work) in 2003, compared with 86 percent of children. A larger proportion of adults than children used the Internet at some location (60 percent compared with 56 percent).

As was the case for children, adults' use of these technologies varied with socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. Adults with an advanced degree, for example, had the highest rates of computer use anywhere. About 69 percent of both Asian adults and non-Hispanic White adults used a computer, compared with about 51 percent of Black adults and 41 percent of Hispanic adults.

In 2003, more women than men used a computer at home, reversing a differential by sex that existed during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1984, men's home computer use was 20 percentage points higher than that of women. This disparity decreased to 3 percentage points in 1997 and reversed in 2001, favoring women by 2 percentage points. Similarly, women's Internet use at home exceeded that of men in 2003.

Figure 3.
Computer Use at Work for the Employed Population Aged 18 and Older by Sex: 2003

(In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2003.

At work, women have had higher rates of computer use than men since the CPS first collected data on this topic in 1984. At that time, 29 percent of working women used a computer on the job, compared with 21 percent of working men. In 2003, 63 percent of women and 51 percent of men used a computer at work. Forty-seven percent of women and 39 percent of men used the Internet on the job in 2003.

The percentages of women and men who use computers at work differ by occupational group. Among men, the group with the highest percentage of workers using a computer was professional occupations, as shown in Figure 3. For women, the most computer users were in the management, business, and financial occupations.

The Census Bureau Can Tell You More

For more detailed information, consult the following U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Report: *Computers and Internet Use in the United States: 2003* (P23-208) by Jennifer Cheeseman Day, Alex Janus, and Jessica Davis.

Look for complete reports and detailed tables on the Census Bureau's Web site <www.census.gov>. Click on "Subjects A to Z." Click on "C" and select "Computer Use and Ownership Data."

Contact the Education and Social Stratification Branch of the Census Bureau at 301-457-2464 or e-mail <pop@census.gov>.

For information on the accuracy of the estimates, see Appendix A.