

MISSISSIPPI BROADBAND

BRIEF NO. 3, DECEMBER 2011

QUICK FACTS

INTERNET SERVICES IN MISSISSIPPI: CABLE & DSL TECHNOLOGIES DOMINATE

More than seven out of 10 U.S. households (71 percent) have Internet service at their home, according to recent U.S. Department of Commerce report, “Exploring the Digital Nation.” A recent statewide survey of more than 2,400 Mississippi households reveals that Internet adoption by households in this state falls short of the national figure, as less than 66 percent have some type of Internet service in their homes.

This brief examines the types of services Mississippi households use to access to the Internet from home. It also explores how the adoption of various types of Internet technologies might vary by specific features of the households or the household member that took part in the statewide broadband study.

TECHNOLOGIES ADAPTED BY HOME USERS

Among the 66 percent of Mississippi households that access the Internet at home, it is important to consider the specific technology they use for residential Internet services. Figure 1 shows that a sizable portion of households utilize high-speed Internet services from cable (34.5 percent) or DSL providers (31.4 percent). Much smaller percentages rely on cellular telephone (11.8 percent) or satellite service companies (8.8 percent) for home Internet access.

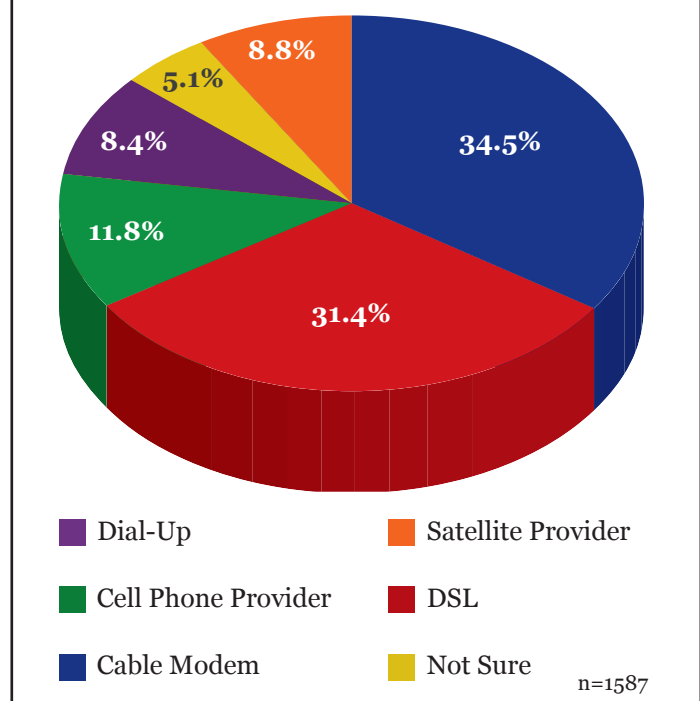
Despite expanded broadband services in the state, more than eight percent of households with Internet access still use dial-up service, the slowest technology available to gain access to the Internet. In fact, the reliance on dial-up service in Mississippi for home access to the Internet is twice that of households across the nation (8.4 percent versus 3.9 percent).

HOUSEHOLD USE OF INTERNET SERVICES: DO DEMOGRAPHICS MATTER?

Figures 2 and 3 outline how Internet services vary by major characteristics of survey respondents or their households, focusing on five key variables: total household income in 2010; race, age, and educational status of study respondents; and metropolitan status of the household.

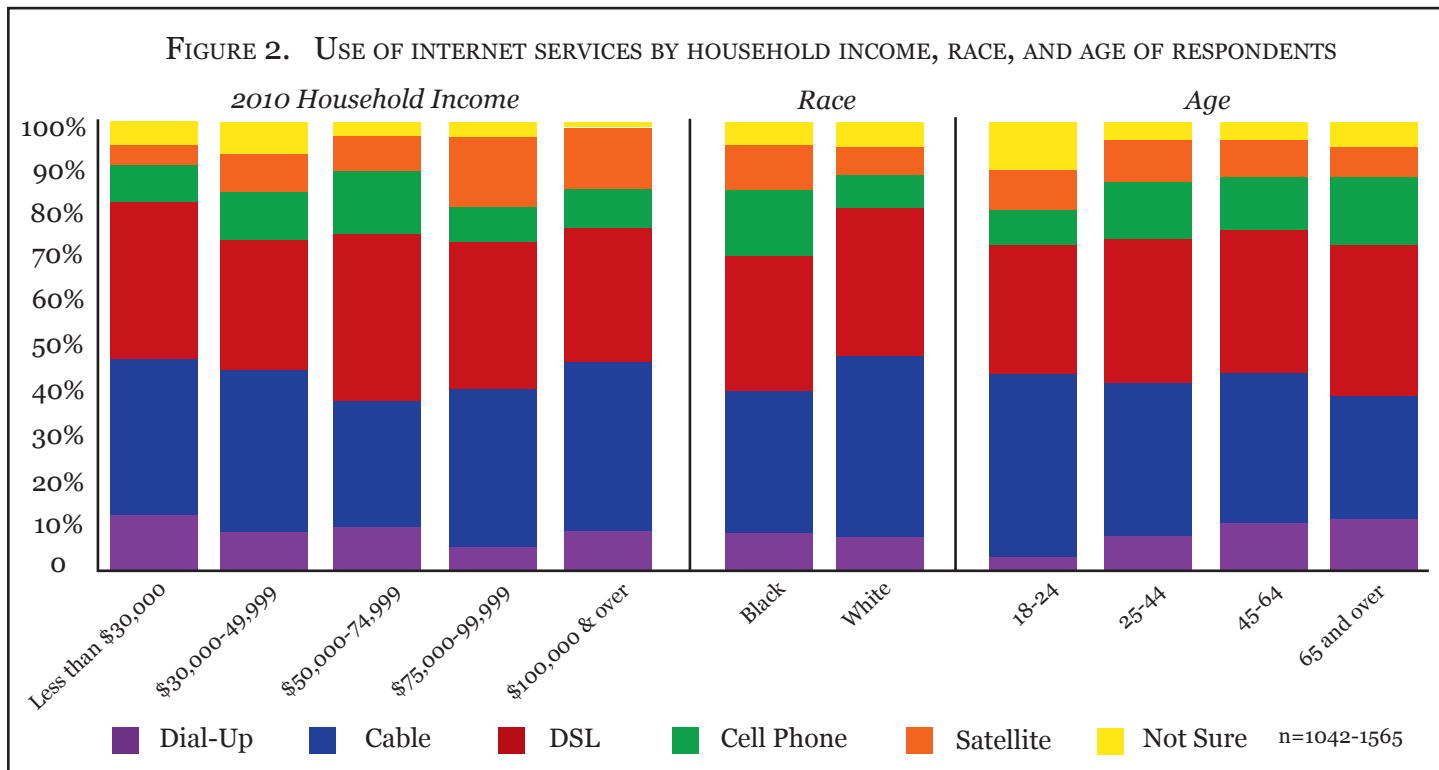
Household Income: Cable and DSL are the most common Internet services utilized by Mississippi households across all income levels. However, higher income households are far more likely to access the Internet via satellite than lower income households. For example, about 15 percent of households with incomes at or above \$75,000 are tapping satellite services to access the Internet. However, less than five percent of households with incomes under \$30,000 are using this technology. Dependence on dial-up services is highest among the lowest income households (12.3 percent), a major contrast to the one percent of households with incomes at or above \$100,000 that rely on dial-up.

FIGURE 1. SERVICES USED BY MS HOUSEHOLDS TO ACCESS INTERNET AT HOME



Race: Approximately three out of four Black respondents said their households depend on cable or DSL providers for their home Internet services, compared to about 62 percent of White respondents. Conversely, White respondents are two times more likely than Blacks to use cellular phone services to access the Internet at home (14.6 percent vs. 7.5 percent).

Age: Sixty-one percent of respondents 65 and older secure Internet at home via cable or DSL. This figure increases to more than 66 percent among all other age cohorts. It is interesting to note that senior citizens are the most likely age group to depend on cell phones for Internet access (15.1 percent); for those in the youngest adult age category (18-24 years old), the figure dips to eight percent. Furthermore, nearly 12 percent of respondents 65 and older use dial-up service compared to only about 3 percent of 18-24-year-olds.

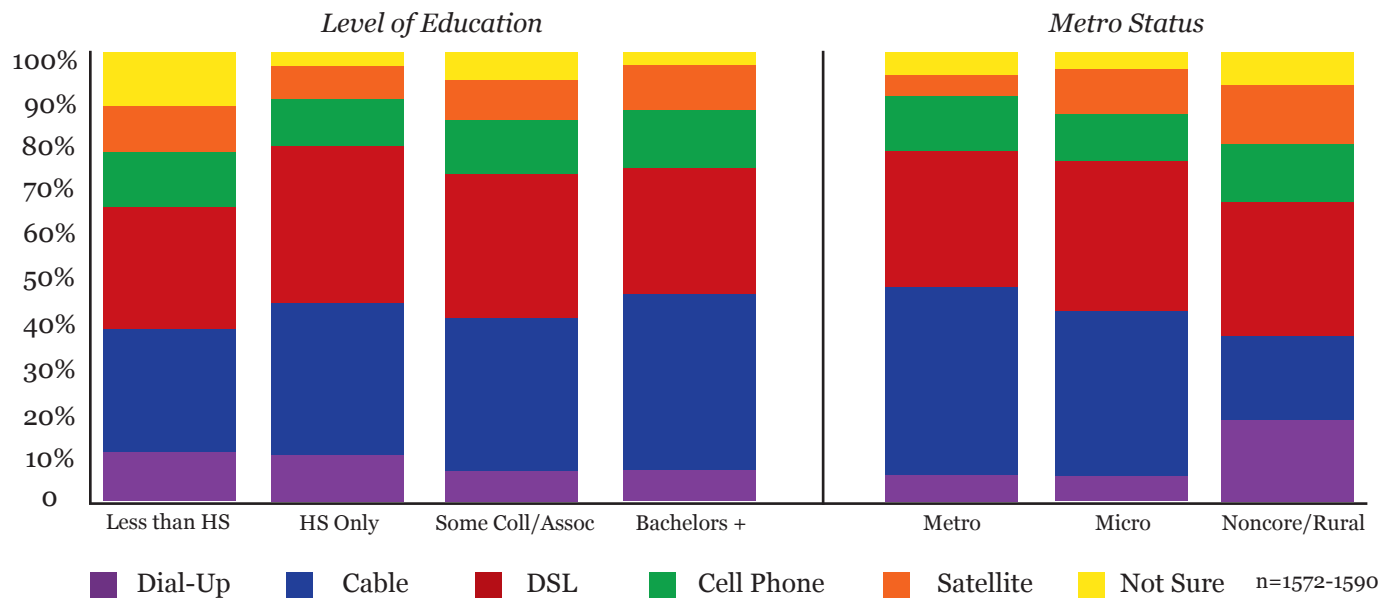


Level of Education: At least two-thirds of respondents with a high school education or better rely on cable or DSL to gain access to the Internet. The figure is considerably lower (54.6 percent) for those with less than a high school education. Those who have not completed a high school degree are far more likely to use dial-up services for their home use of the Internet (10.9 percent) or to be unsure of what type of Internet services they have at home (12.1 percent).

Metro Status: The most significant differences with regard to the adoption of Internet service can be uncovered by the geographic location of the household. Metropolitan-based households (those located in counties with large urban populations) are the most likely to depend on cable or DSL for home access to the Internet (72 percent), followed closely by households embedded in micropolitan counties (those with cities of 10,000-49,999 population). Specifically, more than 70 percent of households in micropolitan counties that use Internet at home do so via cable or DSL technologies. For those living in noncore counties – the most rural counties of the state – the use of cable or DSL for home Internet use plummets to less than 49 percent.

Three additional observations worth noting: (1) more than 18 percent of noncore/rural-based households that are home users of the Internet do so through dial-up services, a rate three times higher than that found in metro or micropolitan-based households in the state; (2) noncore/rural households are the most likely to adopt satellite technologies to gain access to the Internet at home; and (3) the use of cellular phone services to access the Internet at home is highest among households in noncore/rural areas (12.8 percent), followed closely by households in metro counties (12.4 percent).

FIGURE 3. USE OF INTERNET SERVICES BY EDUCATION OF RESPONDENT AND LOCATION OF THE HOUSEHOLD BY METRO STATUS



CONCLUSIONS

A major push is now underway to accelerate the adoption and use of the Internet by individuals, households, local governments, community anchor institutions, businesses and others across the United States. The recent establishment of the “Connect America Fund” by the Federal Communications Commission is intended to facilitate nationwide distribution of high-speed broadband services. The fund will devote special attention to people, businesses and places most likely to lack access to broadband.

The results of our analysis suggest special efforts should be made to increase broadband access to households that already use the Internet at home but have not adopted, due to cost or lack of access, high-speed Internet services. They include:

- Households with incomes below \$30,000 whose dependence on dial-up services exceeds 12 percent;
- Senior citizens (65 and over) whose use of dial-up technologies now stands at 11.6 percent;
- Persons with less than a high school education, with 11 percent of Internet users employing dial-up;
- Noncore/rural households where more than 18 percent of home Internet users have dial-up.

Certainly, other households and their members would benefit from the expanded presence of high-speed Internet services, but our intent is to give special attention

to households that face the greatest obstacles when it comes to adopting these technologies.

In reality, these represent sizable segments of Mississippi’s population. Specifically, 13 percent of the state’s 2.9 million residents are at least 65 years old, one-fourth have less than a high school education and approximately 636,000 Mississippians live in noncore/rural counties of the state. Facilitating access to quality broadband services for all Mississippians can positively impact the entire state.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The Mississippi Broadband Survey was conducted by telephone with adults 18 and older in Mississippi using a Random-Digit-Dialing (RDD) sampling methodology. Data were collected May-July 2011. A dual-frame sample was employed, with 75 percent of the sample selected from telephone landlines and 25 percent from cell phones. Telephone numbers were dialed a maximum of eight times.

For a 50 percent response distribution, the sampling error for the statewide dataset is +/-2 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. The total size of the sample is 2,420. To more accurately report the results of the survey, the responses were weighted by age groups and educational attainment using data from the five-year (2005-09) American Community Survey. For more information on the technical aspects of the survey, please contact Roberto Gallardo at 662-325-3207 or robertog@srdc.msstate.edu.

APPENDIX: FIGURES 2 AND 3: DETAILED DATA (IN PERCENT)

Variable	Type of Technology Used to Access the Internet					
	Dial-Up	Cable	DSL	Cell	Satellite	Not Sure
Household Income						
LT \$30,000	12.3	34.9	34.9	8.3	4.5	5.2
\$30,000-49,999	8.5	36.2	29.0	10.7	8.5	7.1
\$50,000-74,999	9.8	28.0	37.2	14.0	7.9	3.0
\$75,000-99,999	5.2	35.3	32.8	7.8	15.5	3.4
\$100,000 & over	8.8	37.7	29.8	8.8	14.0	0.9
<i>n=1042</i>						
Race						
White	8.4	31.6	30.2	14.6	10.2	5.0
Black/African American	7.6	40.3	32.8	7.5	6.3	5.4
<i>n=1514</i>						
Age						
18-24	3.1	40.8	28.6	8.0	8.8	10.7
25-44	7.8	34.0	32.1	12.7	9.5	4.0
45-64	10.5	33.6	31.8	11.9	8.2	3.9
65 & over	11.6	27.4	33.6	15.1	6.8	5.5
<i>n=1565</i>						
Education						
LT High School	10.9	27.3	27.3	12.1	10.3	12.1
High School Only	10.3	33.8	35.0	10.5	7.2	3.2
Some Coll./Assoc.	6.7	34.1	31.9	12.1	9.0	6.2
Bachelor's or more	6.8	39.4	27.9	13.0	9.9	3.1
<i>n=1042</i>						
Metro Status						
Metropolitan	5.8	41.9	30.1	12.4	4.6	5.3
Micropolitan	5.5	36.9	33.2	10.6	10.0	3.8
Noncore/Rural	18.1	18.6	30.0	12.8	13.1	7.5
<i>n=1590</i>						

AUTHORS AND SPONSORSHIP

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