

MISSISSIPPI BROADBAND

BRIEF NO. 6, MARCH 2012

QUICK FACTS

INTERNET USE: DO KIDS IN THE HOME MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

A November 2011 National Telecommunications and Information Administration report found that 80.4 percent of households with school-age children use the Internet compared to 67.9 percent of households without school-age children – a 12 percentage point gap. In other words, households with school-age children are more likely to use the Internet.

Does this difference exist in Mississippi as well? According to Mississippi State University's recent statewide broadband survey, nearly 30 percent of household respondents in the state use the Internet to check their child's grades and assignments. The Internet is also a valuable tool for homework, educational enrichment activities, and gaming for youth, so similar findings would not be unexpected.

Homes with children are more likely to use the Internet

As shown in Figure 1, the share of Mississippi households using Internet, with children under 18, was higher (91.5 percent) compared to the share of households with no children under 18 (78.9 percent). The 12 percentage point difference lines up with the national findings.

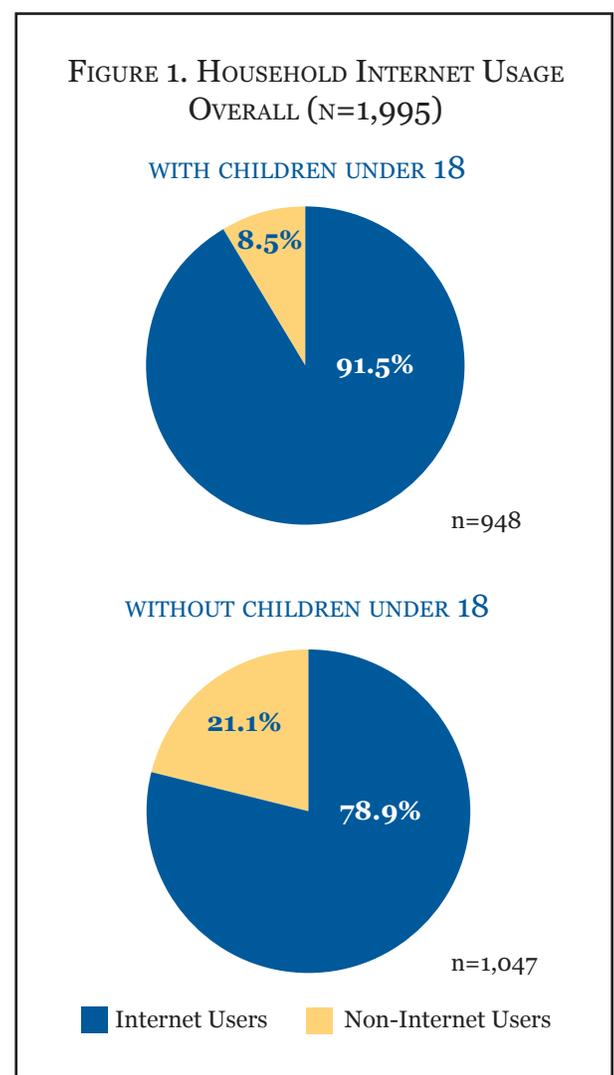
Research has pointed out that lower Internet adoption rates, in comparison to other demographic groups, are reported by individuals who are older, part of a minority group, less educated, or low-income. Do children in the household change these trends?

Indeed, children make a difference in Internet adoption rates when controlling for specific demographic characteristics. For example, as Table 1 shows, the share of older households using the Internet was higher (68.8 percent) when children under 18 were present, compared to those with no children under 18 (54.7 percent).

The largest impact of kids on Internet adoption occurs in Mississippi households where the respondents have less than a high school education. The Internet use rates differ by nearly 27 percentage points, with an Internet use rate of 71.4 percent in low-educated households with children under 18, compared to only 44.5 percent in these households with no children under 18.

CONCLUSIONS

The Internet is a valuable resource for searching and obtaining information that would otherwise be hard to find. According to a Pew Internet study conducted in May 2011, 92 percent of adults utilize the Internet to “use a search engine to find information.” Because this tool plays an important part in a child's education, it makes sense for the Internet adoption rates to be higher in



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households with children under 18. In addition, the Internet can help keep track of children's grades and assignments.

It becomes clear that educational efforts to increase Internet adoption should be focused on households that have no intrinsic incentive to adopt Internet, such as having children under 18 in the home. More importantly, data from this brief highlights that the fact that, when provided with a powerful incentive, demographic groups that traditionally have lower Internet adoption rates are more likely to use the Internet after all. Educational outreach can provide information for these groups about other important benefits that result from using the Internet, including online learning, telehealth, and using government services, such as applying for Social Security.

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

TABLE 1. HOUSEHOLD INTERNET USAGE BY DEMOGRAPHICS

	Households with children under 18	
<i>Age 65 or older (n=248)</i>	Yes (n=16)	No (n=232)
Internet Users: Yes	68.8	54.7
Internet Users: No	31.3	45.3
<i>Black (n=764)</i>	Yes (n=413)	No (n=351)
Internet Users: Yes	89.3	71.2
Internet Users: No	10.7	28.8
<i>Less than high school education (n=375)</i>	Yes (n=175)	No (n=200)
Internet Users: Yes	71.4	44.5
Internet Users: No	28.6	55.5
<i>Less than \$30,000 income (n=622)</i>	Yes (n=317)	No (n=305)
Internet Users: Yes	81.4	66.9
Internet Users: No	18.6	33.1

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.

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