Broadband Adoption Slowed Dramatically in 2010 Except with African-Americans

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Broadband adoption by African-Americans now stands at 56%, up from 46% at a similar point in 2009.

Washington, DC (RPRN) 08/13/10 — After several years of double digit growth, broadband adoption slowed dramatically in 2010.

African-Americans experienced broadband adoption growth in 2010 well above the national average

After several consecutive years of modest but consistent growth, broadband adoption slowed dramatically in 2010. Two-thirds of American adults (66%) currently use a high-speed internet connection at home, a figure that is not statistically different from what The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project found at a similar point in 2009, when 63% of Americans were broadband adopters.

The lack of growth in broadband adoption at the national level was mirrored across a range of demographic groups, with African-Americans being a major exception. Broadband adoption by African-Americans now stands at 56%, up from 46% at a similar point in 2009. That works out to a 22% year-over-year growth rate, well above the national average and by far the highest growth rate of any major demographic group. Over the last year, the broadband adoption gap between blacks and whites has been cut nearly in half:

In 2009 65% of whites and 46% of African-Americans were broadband users (a 19-point gap)
In 2010 67% of whites and 56% of African-Americans are broadband users (an 11-point gap)

By a 53%-41% margin, Americans say they do not believe that the spread of affordable broadband should be a major government priority. Contrary to what some might suspect, non-internet users are *less likely than* current users to say the government should place a high priority on the spread of high-speed connections.

In this survey, Americans were asked: "Do you think that expanding affordable high-speed internet access to everyone in the country should be a top priority for the federal government, important but a lower priority, not too important, or should it not be done?" The majority chose the last two options:

26% of Americans say that expansion of affordable broadband access should not be attempted by government.
27% said it was "not too important" a priority
30% said it was an important priority.
11% said it should be a top priority.

Those who are not currently online are especially resistant to government efforts to expand broadband access. Fully 45% of non-users say government should not attempt to make affordable broadband available to everyone, while just 5% of those who don't use the internet say broadband access should be a top federal government priority. Younger users (those under age 30) and African-Americans were the most likely to favor expanded government efforts towards broadband access, while older Americans were among the least likely to back the expansion of affordable broadband access as a government priority.

Americans have decidedly mixed views about the problems non-broadband users suffer due to their lack of a high-speed connection. There is no major issue on which a majority of Americans think that lack of broadband access is a major disadvantage.

Job opportunities and career skills: 43% of Americans believe that lack of broadband is a "major disadvantage" when it comes to finding out about job opportunities or gaining new career skills. Some 23% think lack of access is a "minor disadvantage" and 28% think it is "not a disadvantage."
Health information: 34% of Americans believe that lack of broadband is a "major disadvantage" when it comes to getting health information. Some 28% think

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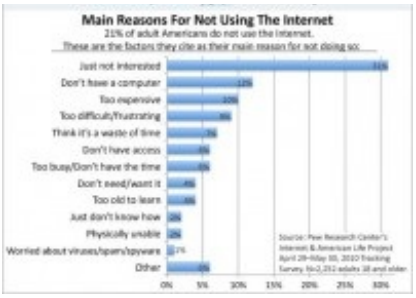
lack of access is a “minor disadvantage” and 35% think it is “not a disadvantage.”



Learning new things to improve and enrich life: 31% of Americans believe that lack of broadband is a “major disadvantage” when it comes to learning new things that might enrich or improve their lives. Some 31% think lack of access is a “minor disadvantage” and 32% think it is “not a disadvantage.”

Government services: 29% of Americans believe that lack of broadband is a “major disadvantage” when it comes to using government services. Some 27% think lack of access is a “minor disadvantage” and 37% think it is “not a disadvantage.”

Keeping up with news and information: 23% of Americans believe that lack of broadband is a “major disadvantage” when it comes to keeping up with news and information. Some 27% think lack of access is a “minor disadvantage” and 47% think it is “not a disadvantage.”

Keeping up with what is happening in their communities: 19% of Americans believe that lack of broadband is a “major disadvantage” when it comes to finding out about their local community. Some 32% think lack of access is a “minor disadvantage” and 45% think it is “not a disadvantage.”

A fifth of American adults (21%) do not use the internet. Many non-users think online content is not relevant to their lives and they are not confident they could use computers and navigate the web on their own.

In the latest Pew Internet survey, 21% of adults said they did not use the internet. A third of non-users (34%) have some connection to the online world, either because they live in a household with a connection that other family members use or because they have gone online in the past. The remaining two-thirds of non-users are not tied in any obvious way to online life and many express little interest in using the internet.

They do not find online content relevant to their lives. Half (48%) of non-users cite issues relating to the relevance of online content as the main reason they do not go online.

They are largely not interested in going online. Just one in ten non-users say would like to start using the internet in the future.

They are not comfortable using computers or the internet on their own. Six in ten non-users would need assistance getting online. Just one in five know enough about computers and technology to start using the internet on their own.

About the Survey

This report is based on the findings of a daily tracking survey on Americans' use of the Internet. The results in this report are based on data from telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International between April 29 and May 30, 2010, among a sample of 2,252 adults ages 18 and older, including 744 reached on a cell phone. Interviews were conducted in English. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points. For results based on cell phone owners (n=1,917), the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.7 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting telephone surveys may introduce some error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

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