

## Households with computers and Internet connectivity increase in Vermont while digital divide remains

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The proportion of Vermont households with computers has increased over the past decade from 43% in 1993 to 79% in 2003, according to the statewide *Vermont Poll* conducted by the Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont.

Despite the overall increase in computer ownership, there is still evidence of a digital divide. Households making more than \$20,000 annually are more likely to have a computer than those making less. 39% of households making less than \$20,000 annually have computers, compared to a 67% rate of home computer ownership in the \$20,000 - \$35,000 income bracket. The ownership rates in all income brackets above that are even higher, topping at 97% in those households making \$65,000 or more. Nevertheless, among all households with computers, there is no significant statistical relationship between income and Internet connectivity.

“The data shows that, regardless of income, once you get a computer into a household, that household has a high likelihood of acquiring a connection to the Internet,” says Jane Kolodinsky, Professor of Community Development and Applied Economics at UVM and Co-Director of the Center for Rural Studies.

92% of Vermont households with computers are connected to the Internet, up from 79% in 2002. 78% of connected households use a dial-up modem, versus 22% with some type of broadband connection. The ratio of dial-up connection to broadband has decreased slightly since 2001. This could be illustrative of a tendency for Vermont households to move to faster connection speeds.

Of those households with computers, 56% perform some sort of business function on their computer, down slightly from 59% in 2002. In terms of Internet use from home or any other location: 74% of Vermonters go online to access their email service, 50% to access websites related to state government, 49% to access news sites, 48% to shop online, 47% to access data and statistics online, 40% to access information on schools and colleges, and 25% to access information and services from municipal government.

No significant statistical relationship has been found between household computer ownership and location in the state. The three Vermont regions studied are Chittenden County, the Northeast Kingdom,

and the remainder of the state. These regions act as proxies for urban Vermont, rural Vermont, and the urban-rural-suburban mix that one can find throughout the state. Sample sizes by county alone are too small for a county-by-county analysis.

For a detailed report on the information technology questions from the 2003 *Vermont Poll*, please go to <http://crs.uvm.edu/vtrpoll/2003>.

The *Vermont Poll* is a statistically representative, statewide telephone poll conducted annually by the Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont. Responses are limited to Vermont households with telephones, not including cell phones. Households are selected randomly using a list of telephone numbers generated from Vermont telephone directories. The 2003 Vermont Poll was conducted over the first two weeks of March includes responses to questions on a wide range of topics from 674 Vermont households.

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