

Earnings and Employment Trends ♦ May 2000

Internet Usage in BC

As an add-on to the Labour Force Survey, Statistics Canada is now conducting an annual survey on Internet usage. Questions cover the general use of computers for communication. The emphasis is on home use but the questions also address use at the office, school, library, etc. This article will look at what the situation was in October 1998. The reader should keep in mind the extent to which this technology has begun to permeate our lives over the last two years. Thus, many aspects of the profile presented here have probably already changed substantially.¹

In BC, approximately 28 per cent of households accessed the internet from their home on a regular basis. Among the 72 per cent of households that were not regular internet users, by far the majority did not have a computer in their home (75%). Among those who had computers at home², 61 per cent were internet users.

While the majority of internet users also used the internet regularly at either work or at school, 8 per cent of households used the internet exclusively from their homes.

Who Uses the Internet?

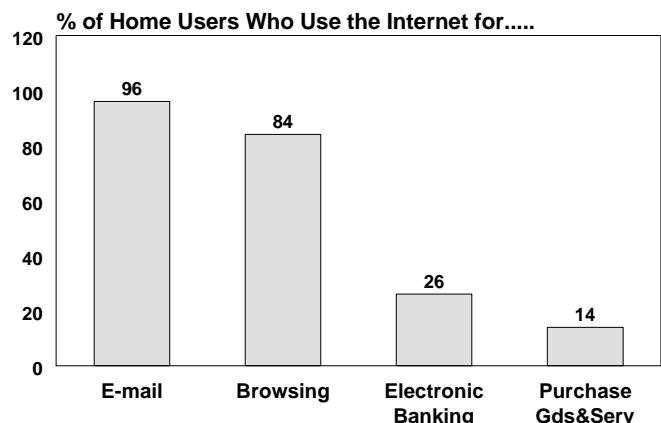
The profile of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of households that use the internet in the home is pretty much

as expected. For example, in households where the head is over the age of 65, only 8 per cent of homes use the internet compared to 37 per cent among heads age 35-54; families with kids are more inclined to use the internet than those without, etc.

Among those households that did not use the internet at home, not surprisingly, cost was the main deterrent³. In line with that, the higher the household income, the greater was the probability that the internet was accessed from the home – 45 per cent among those whose income exceeded \$60,000 compared to only 15 per cent for those who earned under \$36,000.

What We Use the Internet for....

The proportion of households using their home computers for purchasing goods and services was still very low in 1998.



The chart above shows that E-mail was the primary internet use, where virtually every household with internet access used this service. But as far as time spent on the

¹ The profile will be updated when the October 1999 data becomes available.

² In 1998, 46 per cent of households had computers in their home.

³ On the other side, complexity was cited by only 14 per cent.

internet, only about one-third of all internet users spent more than 25 per cent of their internet time on e-mail. Only 3 per cent of all users used the internet for e-mail exclusively.

Two years ago, there were limited opportunities to purchase goods over the internet and at that time, only 14 per cent were using the service. It was not until the latter part of 1999 that the general public adopted this method of purchasing. It will be interesting to monitor how much the practise has become mainstream over the last two years.

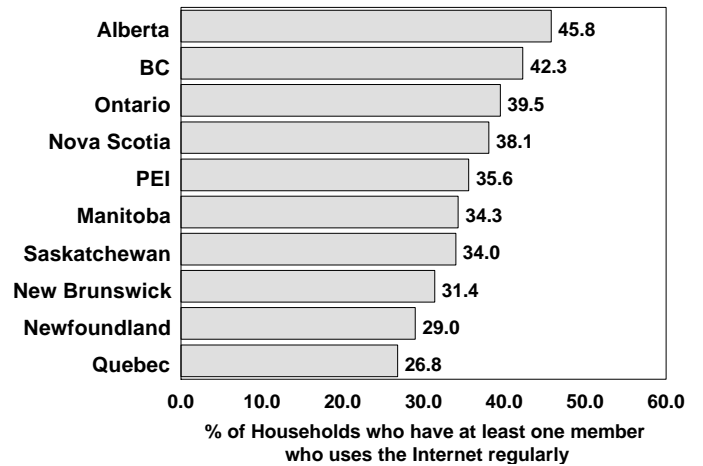
The unit costs of using the internet did not seem to be a deterrent to the amount of time spent on the internet, but rather the access to, and the reliability of the server were cited most often as the major drawback.

Internet Usage -- Cross Canada Comparisons

The next chart shows the proportion of households by province where at least one member uses the internet on a regular basis, be it from home or some other location.

While BC's internet usage is slightly lower than Alberta's, this is because Albertans are more inclined to use the internet at work – BC & Alberta's home use levels are the same. The relatively low numbers of Quebecers using the Internet is most noted in the workplace. Only 16 per cent of Quebecers use the internet at work, which is only one half the level of Albertans at 32 per cent.

In a typical month, members of households in Alberta and BC were most likely to use the Internet 1998



TITLES OF PREVIOUS ISSUES	ISSUE NUMBER
Teachers in BC – Are we facing a shortage?	00-04
Earnings of Men and Women	00-03
Education Levels of the Prime Age Workforce	00-02
Major Revisions to the Labour Force Survey	00-01
The Working Arrangements of Couples in the 90's	99-12
Absenteeism from Work	99-11
The Job Market in the Major Cities in Canada	99-10
Proposed Extension of EI Maternity Benefits	99-09
Changes to "Earnings and Employment Trends"	99-08
The EI Program – Regional Differences	99-05
The Impending Labour Shortage in BC	99-.04
Incidence of Low Income	99-03
BC Youth and the Minimum Wage	99-02
Minimum Wage Workers in BC	99-01
Economic Diversity in the Regions	98-12
Youth in BC – Their Job Prospects Are Improving	98-11
BC Men – Their Labour Market Participation Declines	98-10
BC Women – Strong Labour Market in 1998	98-09
Labour Market Comparisons – CMA's to rest of BC	98-08
BC's Recent Employment Growth	98-07
Changes in Earning Capacity: 1990 to 1995	98-06
Occupational Integration of Men & Women	98-05
Who Works Overtime – The Gender Gap	98-04