

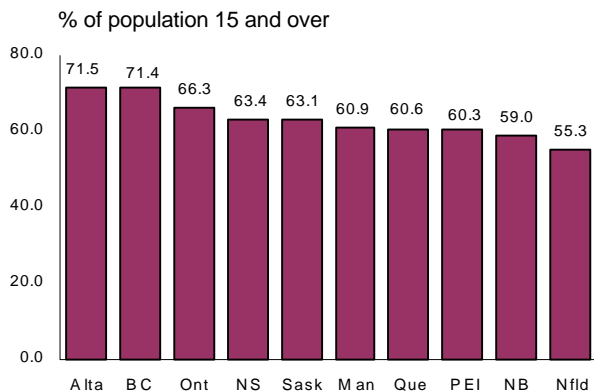
Earnings and Employment Trends ♦ July 2001

Computers in Our Lives

When Statistics Canada first surveyed home computer ownership in 1985¹, 10.0% of BC households replied “yes”. The 2000 General Social Survey (GSS) on *Access To and Use of Information Communication Technology* reported that 66.3% of BC households had a home computer and close to a third of those had more than one. This article will look at computer use as reported by the 2000 GSS survey while future issues will explore some of the results relating to communications technology.

BC led the country in home computer ownership and was tied with Alberta in the rate of computer use².

Albertans and British Columbians are most likely to be computer users



This included using a computer at home, work, school and other locations.

Today's youth are virtually all computer literate and the survey showed little dif-

ference between the sexes – 98.0% of young men 15 to 24 years and 97.3% of young women had used a computer within the previous 12 months. Not only was use high in this age group but they also had confidence in their ability. More than three-quarters of younger respondents described their computer ability as good, very good or excellent.

School or study was given by more than half of young adults as their reason for first using a computer. The most popular tasks performed by young people on computers were using the Internet, e-mailing, word processing, reading educational CD's, playing games, and working with spreadsheets, in that order.

Among older adults between the ages of 25 to 44, about four fifths of both men and women had used a computer within the year. Men up to age 54 were also in this range. Rates for older women were somewhat less, but of women between 45 and 54 years of age, fully 70% had used a computer in the recent past. After 54, there were significant drops in computer use for both men and women – men to 45% and women to 32%.

Computer users of all ages reported a similar rate of formal training with about two-thirds indicating that they had taken courses. However, as age increased, respondents were less likely to describe their computer ability as good or better.

Twenty-five to thirty-four year olds, like their younger counterparts, were most

¹ Survey of Household Facilities and Equipment

² The survey was staggered throughout 2000 and “use” was defined as having used a computer in the 12 months prior to the month surveyed.

likely to have first been introduced to computers for school or study. Past thirty-four, however, school was a far less likely reason for first using a computer – no doubt because computers in the education environment were far less common for those not enrolled in related disciplines.

Work was the leading reason to begin using computers for individuals 35 to 54 years and over. More than a third of all individuals with jobs used a computer in their job in the past year, and, when those under 25 and over 54 years of age were excluded, that proportion jumped to one-half.

Employers' continually upgrade their systems and employees find that they must upgrade their skills. Older employees more often reported that keeping up with new skills caused them excess worry or stress.

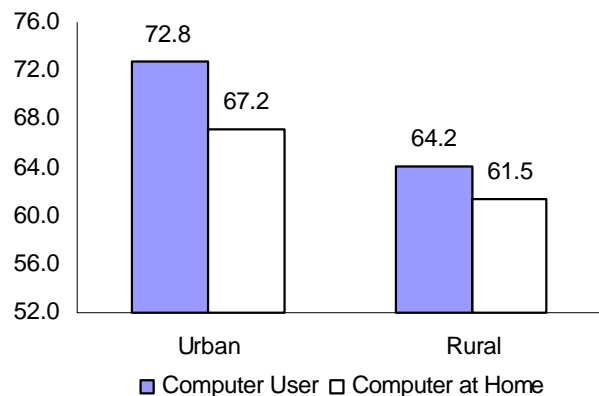
Among all ages, more than a third of individuals were drawn to computer use by personal interest and for those 55 and over, that figure was closer to 50%.

Where a person lives appears to have an impact on their ownership and use of computers.

Although overall, urban residents were more likely to have a computer at home than were rural residents, young adults 15 to 24 years and those 55 and over living in rural areas are slightly more likely to have a computer at home than are their urban counterparts. A similar pattern exists for computer users – individuals who used a computer in the past 12 months, whether at home, work, school or other places. Rates of use for

young and older rural users were only marginally less than for urban users.

Urban dwellers appear ahead in technology - however, youth and older individuals show no differences..



For those in their middle years, it is likely that differences in jobs and family commitments played a role in the lower rates for rural residents in having and using computers.

Note: Totals exclude "Not Stated".

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, Cycle 14

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