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## Australia online: How Australians are using computers and the internet

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### Abstract

This paper examines the socio-economic and regional characteristics of users of home computers and the Internet using data from the ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing, the first to collect such information. It examines patterns of use for a range of socio-economic variables. It looks in detail at the distribution of home computer and Internet users across geographic regions, comparing differences in metropolitan and non-metropolitan Australia. A multivariate regression analyses the separate effects of socio-demographic and regional factors impacting on Internet and home computer use.

The study found that rural residents are more likely to use the Internet and computers than those in small to medium sized towns. Even once the different socio-economic profiles of regional areas were accounted for, the study showed a significant difference in rates of Internet use between the metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. However, while metropolitan areas generally had high rates of use, even within cities there were postal areas that had low rates of use.

Use of technology tends to increase with income and educational qualifications, and decrease with age. People from Indigenous or non-English speaking backgrounds, the elderly, and those not in the labour force were more likely to be unconnected.

The study highlighted the need for access to the Internet in places other than the home or at work. Disadvantaged groups often accessed the Internet in 'other' places like public libraries and schools.

The report is one of eight studies commissioned by the ABS under its Australian Census Analytic Program (ACAP).

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