

Home broadband users up 40 percent

May 30 2006

More Americans are adopting broadband in their homes, according to a report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project, finding that the adoption rate grew by 40 percent from March 2005 to 2006.

This doubles the 20-percent rate reported from March 2004 to March 2005.

The report, "Home Broadband Adoption 2006," released over the weekend, is based on the Project's March 2006 survey of 4,001 Americans, of whom 1,562 were home broadband users, and explained the increase from 60 million in March 2005 to 84 million in March 2006 is due in part to Internet newcomers who have bypassed dial-up connections for high-speed Internet.

Included in the study is data on user-generated content, monthly cost of service and Voice over Internet Protocol, taken from a December 2005 survey of 3,011 Americans, in which 1,014 were home high-speed users.

"The early adoption phase of broadband-to-the-home is behind us," remarked John B. Horrigan, associate director for research and principal author of the report. "As broadband moves beyond the elite, so does an online activity once largely the province of early adopters -- posting content to the Internet."

Among those making the leap to home broadband, the report found that it was "very strong" in middle-income households, especially among African-Americans and those with low levels of education.

The report found that the adoption rate grew by 68 percent among those whose incomes were between \$40,000 and \$50,000 per year, while the adoption rate among African-Americans increased by 121 percent, and the percentage for those with less than a high-school education and senior citizens also grew by 70 percent and 63 percent respectively, which were initially at an adoption level of 8 percent and 10 percent.

Moreover, it found that adoption rates for rural areas were at 39 percent but still lagged behind suburban and urban areas, it said.

Also reported were that digital-subscriber-line services had overtaken cables companies for broadband, finding that DSL connections made up half of all home broadband connections vs. the 41-percent share by cable modems. The increase in these services, it explained, could be attributed in part to price differences due to the growth of DSL subscriptions, the report said.

This marked a reversal from 2005, when cable modems took a 50-percent share compared to DSL with 41 percent.

However, it also noted that fixed wireless was beginning to make a presence with 6 million American adults who had a wireless broadband connection.

And when asked the reason for getting broadband at home, the Project said that nearly three in five broadband users did so for speed, while only 4 percent mentioned price.

Moreover, of those with dial-up, 60 percent said they would not change to broadband due to already having broadband at work or were older and had lower incomes than those dial-up users who were interested in making the switch.

Additionally, the Project's report also found that of the 48 million Internet users who have posted content to the Internet, a majority of them were home broadband users, signaling that these users were "shaping the environment of cyberspace."

"The mainstreaming of high-speed, in combination with user-generated content being a widespread phenomenon, suggests that individuals will continue to shape the Internet," Horrigan also said. "This means that an Internet that permits open access to lawful content is of great value to the tens of millions of Americans who post their creative work online."

The Project found that about 31 million home broadband users have posted content to the Internet, accounting for 73 percent of home Internet users who were the source of online content, it said.

This is compared to only about 13 million adults with dial-up who have placed content online.

It also found that of the 36 million Internet users or 26 percent who have "shared their own artwork, photos, stories, or videos online," about two-thirds of that was home broadband users.

Meanwhile, user-generated content was also driven by young home broadband users with 51 percent "under 30" posting content compared with those "older than 30" at 36 percent.

Furthermore, while it attributed the increase of broadband with the emergence of phone services over the Internet, it reported that VoIP services were still in the early stage of acceptance with a mere 3 percent of Americans who used a VoIP service at home, but awareness was up by 86 percent since early 2004, the report found.

The full report can be found at www.pewinternet.org

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