

# FCC survey shows need to teach broadband basics

February 23 2010, By JOELLE TESSLER , AP Technology Writer

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(AP) -- The government's plan to provide fast Internet connections to all Americans will have to include some basic instruction in Web 101, according to a new survey of Internet users and non-users.

The Federal Communications Commission's first-ever survey on [Internet usage](#) and attitudes concludes that those who aren't connected today need to be taught how to navigate the Web, find online information that is valuable to them and avoid hazards such as Internet scams.

The study, being released Tuesday, comes less than a month before the FCC is due to hand Congress policy recommendations on how to make affordable, [high-speed Internet](#) access a reality for everyone. The findings are certain to shape the policy recommendations in that plan, which was mandated by last year's stimulus bill.

The Obama administration has identified universal broadband as critical to driving economic development, producing jobs and expanding the reach of cutting-edge medicine and educational opportunities.

Part of the FCC broadband plan will focus on building networks in parts of the country that lack high-speed access - particularly rural America. Among other things, the plan will propose using the fund that subsidizes telephone service in poor and rural communities to pay for Internet connections and finding more airwaves for [wireless broadband services](#).

But the survey findings show that the FCC plan must also focus on

teaching people how to use the Internet and convincing them that it is relevant to their lives, said John Horrigan, FCC consumer research director and author of the survey.

The survey found that 35 percent of Americans do not use broadband at home, including 22 percent of adults who do not use the Internet at all. Of that 35 percent, 36 percent say it is too expensive, while 19 percent do not see the Internet as relevant to their lives. Another 22 percent lack what the FCC calls "digital literacy" skills. They fall into a category that includes people who are not comfortable with computers or who are scared of "bad things" on the Internet.

Among people who do not use broadband, 65 percent say there is too much pornography and offensive material on the Internet, 57 percent say it is too easy for personal information to be stolen online and 46 percent say the Internet is too dangerous for children.

The FCC's findings were based on telephone surveys of more than 5,000 adult Americans conducted in October and November of last year. The survey found that 78 percent of American adults use the Internet, including 6 percent who don't have a connection at home but get access at work or somewhere else, and 74 percent have Internet access at home, including 6 percent who use a dial-up connection.

Other findings include:

- Americans on average pay nearly \$41 a month for broadband, and 70 percent of users pay for broadband as part of a bundle of telecommunications services.
- Among those who do not subscribe to broadband because it is too expensive, more than half said they would be willing to pay an average of \$25 a month for the service.

- Only half of all rural Americans have broadband and one in 10 rural Americans who do not have broadband say it is not available where they live.

For questions asked of the larger group of 5,005 adult Americans, the margin of error was plus or minus 1.6 percentage points.

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