

# THE FIELD POLL

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## **DIGITAL DIVIDE PERSISTS IN CALIFORNIA Wide Differences in Internet Use and Broadband Connectivity Across Demographic Subgroups of the State's Adult Population**

According to a *Field Poll* conducted on behalf of the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF), 86% of adult Californians use the Internet at least occasionally. This proportion is unchanged from a similar CETF survey completed last year.

However, Internet use varies significantly across different segments of the state's population. While greater than 95% of Californians age 18 -29, college graduates and those with annual household incomes of \$60,000 or more report being an Internet user, significantly smaller proportions of other California adults do so. Shown below are the subgroups reporting the lowest levels of Internet use:

- Adults who have not graduated from high school (51%)
- Spanish-speaking Latinos (60%)
- Seniors age 65 or older (67%)
- Non-citizens (70%)
- Residents with annual household incomes of less than \$20,000 (71%)
- Disabled adults (73%)
- Naturalized citizens (76%)

When Californians who do not use the Internet at home are asked their reasons for not doing so, 36% say they are not interested or feel they do not need it. However, 60% offer reasons other than a lack of interest or need. This includes 21% who say they don't know how to use it, 12% reporting that computers are too expensive, 10% saying that Internet connectivity is too expensive, 3% volunteering that service is not available in the area where they live and 22% offering a wide assortment of other reasons.

The survey also finds that three in four California adults (75%) live in households with broadband Internet connectivity. The largest component are adults accessing broadband Internet through DSL, cable, satellite or fiber optic connections to a home desktop, laptop or tablet computer (67%). However, a small but significant segment of other adults (8%) are now connecting to broadband Internet at home solely through a smart phone.

The overall proportion of adults with broadband Internet connectivity at home is unchanged from 2013. Prior to this, broadband connectivity at home had been increasing steadily in California, from 55% in 2008 to 62% in 2009, to 70% in 2010 and to 73% in 2012.

There are wide variations in access to broadband Internet at home across different segments of the state's population. While greater than nine in ten Californians age 18-29, college graduates and those with annual household incomes of \$100,000 or more have broadband Internet access at home, significantly smaller proportions of the following populations report this:

- Adults who have not graduated from high school (32%)
- Spanish-speaking Latinos (46%)
- Seniors age 65 or older (47%)
- Residents with annual household incomes of less than \$20,000 (53%)
- Disabled adults (59%)
- Non-citizens (60%)
- Naturalized citizens (63%)

The 8% of California adults using a smart phone as their sole means of connecting to the Internet at home include many of the same subgroups reporting lower than average access to broadband Internet connectivity at home. These include Spanish-speaking Latinos, non-citizens, adults who have not graduated from high school, and residents whose annual household income is less than \$40,000.

This is significant because there are big differences between how Californians with access to broadband through a home computer are using the Internet versus those solely accessing it at home through a smart phone. The following are Internet uses where the differences are particularly large.

- Visiting government or community web sites (74% vs. 57%)
- Banking online or transferring funds to family members (69% vs. 41%)
- Getting health or medical information or communicating with their doctor (61% vs. 41%)
- Taking a class or a training course online (40% vs. 27%)

In addition, the survey finds that large majorities of parents with access to broadband Internet through a home computer use their computer to help their child learn (84%) and obtain information about homework and grades from their child's school website (75%).

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## **Information About The Survey**

### **Methodological Details**

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* completed June 5-22, 2014 on behalf of the California Emerging Technology Fund, a non-profit foundation set up by the California Public Utilities Commission. The survey was conducted among a random sample of 2,013 California adults. To capture the diversity of the California adult population, the survey was administered in six languages and dialects – English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Korean, depending on the preference of the respondent.

The sample was developed using dual frame random digit dial landline and cell phone listings covering the state of California. For this survey, a total of 1,402 interviews were conducted with respondents on their cell phone and 611 were conducted on a landline or other type of phone. The combined landline and cell phone sample was weighted to match demographic, geographic and voter registration estimates of the adult population in California. The weighting process also takes into account the higher probability of reaching respondents who receive calls on both a landline and cell phone.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size and the percentage distributions being examined. The maximum sampling error for results from the overall adult sample is +/- 2.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

The maximum sampling error estimates are based on survey findings in the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., results at or near 50%). Percentages at either tail of the distributions (i.e., results closer to 10% or 90%) have somewhat smaller margins of error. There are other sources of error in surveys of public opinion besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of this survey sought to minimize these other possible errors.

*The Field Poll* was established in 1947 as *The California Poll* by Mervin Field, who is still an active advisor. The Poll has operated continuously since then as an independent, non-partisan survey of California public opinion. The Poll receives funding from media subscribers, from California foundations and independent not-for-profit organizations, and from the University of California and California State University systems, who receive the data files from each *Field Poll* survey shortly after its completion for teaching and secondary research purposes.

### **Questions Asked**

Do you use the Internet, at least occasionally?

Do you send or receive email, at least occasionally?

Do you or do others in your household use a device that is not a cell phone to access the Internet from home, like a desktop, laptop or tablet computer?

(IF INTERNET USED WITH DEVICE OTHER THAN CELL PHONE): What kind of Internet connection do you have at home? Is it a dial-up telephone line or a high speed Internet connection, such as D-S-L, cable, satellite or fiber optic connections?

(IF INTERNET USER): When you use the Internet at home, do you do that only using a cell phone, mostly using a cell phone, mostly using some other device like a desktop, laptop or tablet computer, only using a desktop, laptop, or tablet computer or other device, or don't you use the Internet at home?

(IF INTERNET USER AT HOME): Do you use the Internet at home, at least occasionally, to (ITEM)?

- a. to visit a government or community web site to obtain information or use public services
- b. to search for jobs
- c. to apply for a job
- d. to take a class or training course online
- e. to get health or medical information or communicate with your doctor
- f. to visit social networking sites, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter or Instagram
- g. (IF PARENT:) to help your child learn
- h. (IF PARENT:) to obtain information from the web site of your child's school about homework and grades
- i. to bank online or transfer funds to family members
- j. for entertainment, such as listening to music, watching or downloading TV shows or movies, or playing games

(IF DOES NOT USE INTERNET AT HOME): What is the main reason you don't use the Internet at home?