



Survey: Internet access lags among Calif. Hispanics

Survey: Internet access lags among California Hispanics, low-income residents

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NEW YORK (Associated Press) - California's Hispanics and low-income residents are lagging far behind other groups in Internet access, according to a survey.

The survey released Wednesday conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California found that only 40 percent of Hispanics had Internet access at home _ and about a third had broadband connections _ at a time when more Californians reported going online for vital information.

The same numbers held for California households with annual incomes of less than \$40,000.

"Latinos are lagging behind in both education and economic achievement, and I think the digital divide is another reflection of that," said Mark Baldassare, the institute's president and chief executive.

Lack of access reflects the state's social and economic divisions and could also reinforce those divisions as the Internet becomes increasingly central to education, jobs and community involvement, Baldassare said.

The survey also found that nearly 70 percent of whites, blacks and Asians had broadband Internet connections. Among households making \$80,000 or more a year, 85 percent had broadband connections.

The number of Californians who go online to get news or shop rose to more than half, according to the survey, as well as the number of parents who go online to visit their children's school Web sites. About 50 percent of those surveyed get health and government information on the Internet.

Since 2000, overall computer use among Hispanics has dropped from 64 percent to 58 percent. The drop among Asians was even steeper, with overall computer use falling from 91 percent to 81 percent.

Sharp jumps in Internet use were reported among blacks, with 82 percent surveyed using the Internet compared to 60 percent in 2000. Use among whites climbed from 70 percent in 2000 to 81 percent this year, and among adults 55 and over, from 42 percent to 58 percent.

Despite the popularity of online social networking, only 26 percent of respondents said they visited sites like Facebook and MySpace, which is owned by News Corp. However, half of residents under 35 said they used social networking sites, compared to 20 percent of residents between 35 and 54, and just 8 percent over 55.

The survey of a little more than 2,500 California adults earlier this month was funded by the California Emerging Technology Fund and ZeroDivide, which work to promote universal access to technology. ■

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