

Wealth, Age, and Education Play Key Role in Internet Use

How many Internet users are there in rural Canadian towns? What factors have an influence over Internet use and access in rural Canada? Which groups of society are more likely to use the Internet?

The federal government's *Connecting Canadians Agenda* is a six-point platform including a number of interlinked initiatives: Canada On-line, Smart Communities, Canadian Content On-line, Electronic Commerce, Canadian Government On-line, and Connecting Canada to the World. It is intended to make Canada the most connected nation in the world. At the same time, it is designed to "improve access to federal government programs and services for rural Canadians."

The government recently established Rural and Remote Canada On-Line, calling it "a single window to knowledge, information, programs and services for and about rural and remote Canada." Rural and Remote Canada On-Line also has a special section dedicated to health information.

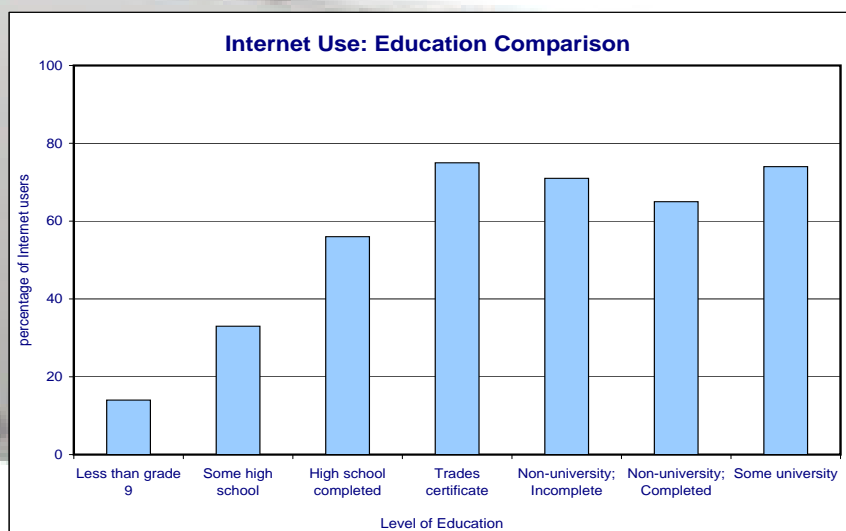
Internet use in rural communities is quite variable depending on three demographic distinctions: age,

income, and education attainment . 54% of rural households use the Internet. However, 80% of rural Canadians age 18-24 use the Internet, compared to only 19% among those 65 years or older. The gap between the two age groups is most likely caused by familiarity of technology. The younger age group has had computer and Internet training through the school system, while the 65+ group is far less familiar with computers and the Internet.

Income also plays a significant role in determining who is more likely to use the Internet. Of households with an income of \$80,000 or more, 86% use the Internet. In contrast, only 32% of those households with incomes less than \$10,000 use the Internet. The significant gap between the two income

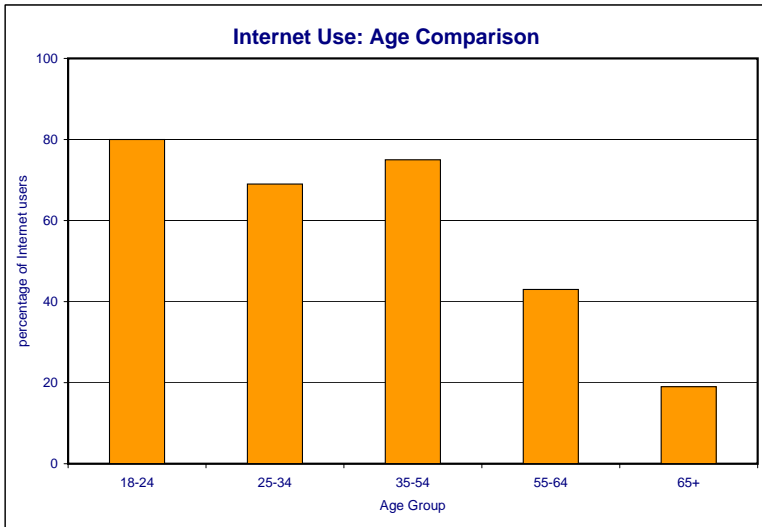
brackets is most likely due to the fact that the more disposable income a household has, the more likely it is going to be able to purchase a computer and Internet services.

The survey results show that as the level of education one attains increases, so too does the likelihood of Internet use. 85% of those who completed a Bachelor's degree or higher reported using the Internet. However, only 56% of those whose education finished with high school graduation used the Internet. Furthermore, a mere 14% of rural Canadians with less than a grade nine education reported using the Internet. This finding blends in with the link between wealth and Internet access, because it is more likely that wealthier individuals are able to access higher education.



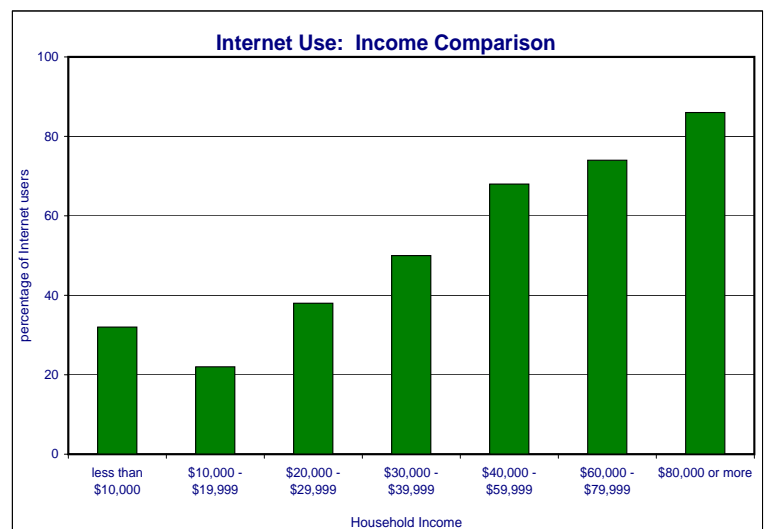
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Income, education, and age all play a significant role in determining Internet use in rural households. In order for those in groups which have low Internet use levels to take advantage of the options available on-line, they will have to find other means to get connected. This could be an opportunity for CAP sites to have a larger role in the community, and become an access point for those who are unable to afford a computer or Internet services.



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