



Australian Government

**Australian Communications
and Media Authority**

Australia's regulator for broadcasting, the internet, radiocommunications and telecommunications

www.acma.gov.au

Access to the internet, broadband and mobile phones in family households

No. 3

September 2008

Media and Communications
in Australian Families series



Introduction

Access to the internet, broadband and mobile phones in family households is the third of a series of short reports that provide detailed analysis of particular topics from a major piece of community research commissioned by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). That research, *Media and communications in Australian families* (the MCAF report), was first published by ACMA in December 2007 and provides a rich source of data on:

- the use of electronic media and communications technologies by young people aged 8–17 years
- the level of ownership of those technologies by families with young people aged 8–17 years
- parent concerns about young people’s use of electronic media and communications, family rules and arrangements around media use, and the challenges experienced by parents in supervising young people’s media and communications activities.

Some of the short reports in this series reproduce data from the MCAF report but go into greater analysis of that data. *Access to the internet, broadband and mobile phones in family households* is one such report. Other reports in the series will provide additional data analyses of young people’s use of media and communications technologies.

This and other short reports in the series are available on ACMA’s website at www.acma.gov.au/mediareports along with the MCAF report (which also includes an academic literature review regarding media influences on young people and families) and other related material.

REGULATORY CONTEXT

ACMA is Australia’s regulator for broadcasting, the internet, radiocommunications and telecommunications. ACMA regulates broadcasting services, internet content and mobile content in accordance with a number of pieces of legislation, including the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*, the *Radiocommunications Act 1992*, the *Australian Communications and Media Authority Act 2005*, the *Telecommunications Act 1997*, and the *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999*.

Understanding consumer adoption and use of electronic media and communications technologies is a core part of ACMA’s regulatory responsibilities. ACMA has an ongoing research program to assist in providing an evidence base for its regulatory and other functions.

The research in this report will assist ACMA to:

- understand aspects of the contemporary media and communications environment within Australian family households
- understand key socio-economic, demographic and geographic barriers to the adoption and use of electronic media and communications technologies by families and young people
- promote a regulatory framework that supports the long-term interests of end-users of services provided by carriage services
- advise the Minister on technological advances, service trends and other matters in relation to the broadcasting, internet and telecommunications industries
- conduct public education programs about matters relating to the telecommunications industry
- inform the public on the take-up of communications technologies and services, including barriers to adoption in family households.

ACCESS TO THE INTERNET, BROADBAND AND MOBILE PHONES IN FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS

The ability of young people and families to access and effectively use the internet, broadband internet, and mobile phones is associated with potential social and economic benefits. Benefits include education and learning, social inclusion, access to services, and personal safety and security.

Young people are generally big users of electronic media and communications technologies. Households with children and students have higher internet and broadband connection levels than Australian households generally¹.

In 2007, 91 per cent of family households with young people aged between eight and 17 years in the study had the internet, an increase from seven per cent of homes with a modem in 1995 (ABA 1996). Seventy-six per cent had broadband internet, leaving the remaining 24 per cent of families without it. Almost half the 8–17 year olds did not have their own mobile phone (46 per cent).

This report explores the nature of families and young people without home access to the internet, broadband internet and mobile phones. In doing this, it goes some way to determining if there is a digital divide between family households, and whether there are particular enablers and barriers associated with such a divide. The report does this within the limits of the geographic, demographic and socio-economic data collected in the survey. The survey did not directly ask about reasons for not taking up technologies.

The broader context of reporting also covers the adoption of other electronic media and communications technologies including television, video and computer games, and portable music and video players that are widespread in family households.

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007).

Community research data presented in this report provides information on:

- the penetration of various electronic media and communications technologies in family households with young people aged 8–17 years
- the characteristics of family households without the internet and broadband internet at home
- the different types of online activities that were engaged in by young people
- the characteristics of young people without their own mobile phone
- whether parent views on the balance achieved by their child between electronic media and non-electronic media leisure activities is associated with family access to broadband internet at home
- parent views on the benefits to their child from using the internet and mobile phones, and parent concerns about their child’s use of these technologies.

Key findings

ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN FAMILIES

There were no particular socio-economic or demographic barriers to having certain electronic media in family households with 8–17 year olds—television (99 per cent), computer or laptop (98 per cent), DVD player (97 per cent), mobile phone (97 per cent), or the internet (91 per cent).

Higher family income was a key enabler associated with having certain additional technologies in family homes—i.e. multiple computers or laptops, multiple mobile phones, having a portable music or video player (i.e. MP3 or MP4 player), subscription television, and digital free-to-air television.

FAMILIES WITHOUT BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS

Twenty-four per cent of family households did not have broadband internet at home, and nine per cent were without any internet.

The main barrier to families adopting broadband internet was household income—50 per cent of families with an income less than \$35,000 pa did not have broadband internet.

Other demographic factors associated with not having broadband internet were families with single parents (39 per cent), respondent parents who did not complete secondary school (34 per cent), families living in country areas (33 per cent), and where the main child was aged 8–11 years (29 per cent).

YOUNG PEOPLE WITHOUT MOBILE PHONES

Forty-six per cent of young people aged 8–17 years did not have their own mobile phone.

There were no evident socio-economic barriers to mobile phone ownership by young people.

Being a younger child was the main factor associated with not owning a mobile phone—82 per cent of under 12s did not have their own mobile phone, compared with 25 per cent of 12–14 year olds, and 10 per cent of 15–17 year olds without their own mobile.

Gender was also a factor—54 per cent of 8–17 year old boys did not have their own mobile phone, compared with 37 per cent of girls.

The research

The findings in this report are sourced from the major community research study commissioned by ACMA from Urbis, and reported in *Media and Communications in Australian Families 2007* (ACMA 2007). The research was conducted with a representative sample of Australian families with young people aged eight to 17 years between March and June 2007.

The community research design comprised:

- a representative telephone survey of parents from 751 family households across Australia (n=751 parents with young people aged 8–17 years), including an inventory of electronic media and communications equipment in these households
- three-day time-use diaries completed by young people aged 8–17 years (n=751 one main child from each household; and n=1,003 total young people who completed a diary) during school term, and short questions on the use of communications technologies at the end of each of the three diary days
- a short self-complete survey that was filled out by young people on the day after completing the three-day time-use diary (i.e. Day 4 diary questions, n=1,055).

Findings in this report are predominantly from the parent survey and the day 4 diary questions that were completed by young people.

Some reference is also made to data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007).

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Statistically significant differences are noted in the figures and tables in this report.

The sample of 751 family households from across Australia gives a confidence interval of +/- 3.5 at $p < 0.05$. That is, if we asked this sample a yes/no question and half said 'yes', we can be 95 per cent sure that households with 8–17 year olds in Australia would find a 'yes' answer of between 46.5 per cent and 53.5 per cent.

For smaller sample sizes the confidence intervals will be wider (e.g. a confidence interval of +/-6.3 at $p < 0.05$ applies to a sample of 245 young people without broadband or internet at home).

Media-rich family households

Besides the internet, broadband internet, and mobile phones that are the focus of this report, the broader electronic media and communications environment in family homes also includes a range of other technologies.

The following box shows the penetration of these technologies in family households with 8–17 year olds.

PENETRATION OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT IN FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS

MORE THAN 85% OF HOMES		BETWEEN 48% AND 83% OF HOMES		LESS THAN 33% OF HOMES	
Television	99%	Any games device	83%	Digital free TV	32%
Computer/laptop	98%	Game console	77%	Subscription TV	32%
DVD player	97%	Portable MP3/4 player	76%	Portable DVD player	27%
Mobile phone	97%	Broadband internet	76%	DVD recorder	23%
Internet	91%	Mobile phone (advanced)	56%	Portable MP4 player	17%
VCR	89%	Hand-held games device	48%	Hard-drive recorder	13%

Source: Parent survey (n=751)

A number of electronic media and communications devices were found in about 90 per cent or more of family households, and characteristics such as household income, parent education, couples or single parents, and location did not appear to be particular barriers to access. The devices that were most prevalent in family homes with 8–17 year olds were televisions (99 per cent), computers or laptops (98 per cent), DVD players (97 per cent), mobile phones (97 per cent), the internet (91 per cent), and VCRs (89 per cent).

FAMILY INCOME

Higher combined household income was a key factor associated with the likelihood of families having:

- multiple computers or laptops (from an average 1.2 per household with incomes less than \$35,000 pa, increasing to 2.1 in homes with \$100,000 pa or more) (Table 1)
- multiple mobile phones (from an average 2 mobiles per home with incomes less than \$35,000 pa, to 3.2 in homes with \$70,000 pa or more)
- the internet (from 75 per cent of homes with less than \$35,000 pa, to 96 per cent with \$70,000 pa or more)
- portable music or video players (from 58 per cent of homes with less than \$35,000 pa, up to 83 per cent with \$70,000 pa or more)
- broadband internet (from 50 per cent of homes with less than \$35,000 pa, to 91 per cent with \$100,000 pa or more)
- subscription TV (from 21 per cent of homes with less than \$35,000 pa, to 34 per cent with \$35,000 pa or more)
- digital free-to-air television (from 17 per cent of homes with less than \$35,000 pa, increasing to 41 per cent with \$100,000 pa or more)
- portable MP4 video players (from nine per cent for homes with less than \$35,000 pa, to 19 per cent for homes with \$35,000 pa or more).

LOCATION

In addition, significantly more families living in cities compared with country dwellers had the internet (93 per cent and 87 per cent respectively), broadband internet (81 per cent and 67 per cent), and a portable music or video player (79 per cent and 71 per cent).

Table 1: Family household inventory of electronic media and communications equipment, by household income and location, 2007

Households had ...	Household income					Location	
	Total n=751	<\$35k n=105	\$35k- \$69k n=192	\$70k- \$99k n=192	\$100k+ n=190	City n=509	Country n=242
Average no. TVs per home	2.8	2.6	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.8
Average no. computers per home	1.8	1.2	1.7	2.0	2.1	2.0	1.6
Average no. mobile phones per home	2.9	2.0	2.9	3.2	3.2	3.1	2.7
Internet	91%	75%*	90%	96%	96%	93%	87%
Total—any video games device	83%	84%	82%	84%	84%	82%	84%
Games console	77%	82%	79%	79%	72%	75%	81%
Total—portable music (MP3) or video players (MP4)	76%	58%*	73%	83%	85%	79%	71%
Broadband internet	76%	50%*	69%	82%	91%	81%*	67%*
Advance mobile phone	56%	56%	60%	57%	55%	57%	54%
Handheld games device	48%	43%	45%	47%	56%	50%	43%
Subscription TV	32%	21%	33%	31%	38%	32%	30%
Digital free TV	32%	17%	28%	36%	41%	34%	29%
Portable DVD player	27%	15%*	35%	24%	30%	26%	28%
DVD recorder	23%	20%	22%	26%	29%	23%	24%
Portable video player (MP4)	17%	9%	21%	19%	17%	18%	14%
Hard-drive recorder	13%	9%	10%	14%	17%	14%	10%

Source: Parent survey

Blue shading indicates a significant difference compared against other household income groups at $p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.01$ *

Orange shading indicates a significant difference between city and country areas at $p < 0.05$ or $p, 0.01$ *

Internet access

A small proportion of family households did not have an internet connection at home—nine per cent of family households with 8–17 year olds in the sample (i.e. a total of 68 families).

Ninety-one per cent of households with young people aged 8–17 years had internet access at home. This is considerably higher than internet penetration across all Australian households².

2. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) reported that 64 per cent of occupied private dwellings in Australia had the internet.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT INTERNET ACCESS

A significantly higher proportion of families within certain demographic sub-groups did not have access to the internet at home. The proportion of households with 8–17 year olds without internet access comprised:

- 25 per cent of family households with a combined income of \$35,000 or less pa (Table 2)
- 19 per cent of families with a single parent
- 16 per cent of family households where the respondent parent had not completed secondary school (Table 3)
- 13 per cent of family households located in country areas
- 13 per cent of households where the main child was aged between eight and 11 years (Table 4).

Table 2: Internet penetration in families by household income and parental status, 2007

Internet access at home	Total n=751	Household income				Status of respondent parent	
		<\$35k n=105	\$35–\$69k n=192	\$70k–\$99k n=192	\$100k+ n=190	Couple n=607	Single n=144
Yes	91%	75%	90%	96%	96%	93%	81%
No	9%	25%	10%	4%	4%	7%	19%

Source: Parent survey

Blue shading indicates a significant difference compared against other household income groups at $p < 0.01$

Orange shading indicates a significant difference between couples and single parents at $p < 0.01$

Table 3: Internet penetration in families by education and location, 2007

Internet access at home	Education level of respondent parent				Location	
	Did not complete secondary school n=177	Completed secondary school n=201	Trade/technical qualification n=109	University qualification n=264	City n=509	Country n=242
Yes	84%	91%	93%	95%	93%	87%
No	16%	9%	7%	5%	7%	13%

Source: Parent survey

Blue shading indicates a significant difference compared against other education groups at $p < 0.01$

Orange shading indicates a significant difference between city and country areas at $p < 0.05$

Table 4: Internet penetration in families, by age and gender of main child in household, 2007

Internet access at home	Age of main child in household			Gender of main child in household	
	8–11 yrs n=334	12–14 yrs n=219	15–17 yrs n=198	Girls n=346	Boys n=405
Yes	87%	93%	95%	92%	90%
No	13%	7%	5%	8%	10%

Source: Parent survey

Blue shading indicates a significant difference compared against other age groups at $p < 0.01$

The small sample size for family households without the internet (68 homes) precludes further analysis of this group.

BENEFITS AND CONCERNS ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE’S ONLINE ACTIVITIES

In the 91 per cent of family households with the internet, a majority of parents felt their child received some or many benefits from using the internet. This is despite more of these parents also being concerned about their child’s use of the internet compared with other electronic media and communications activities.

BENEFITS OF INTERNET USE

- 96 per cent of parents who had the internet at home believed their child benefited from using the internet (53 per cent of those parents said many benefits, 44 per cent some benefits, two per cent said hardly any or no benefits, and one per cent couldn’t say).

The main benefits identified by parents were:

- learning and educational opportunities (95 per cent of parents with the internet at home)—specifically for researching and completing school assignments, and providing access to a wide variety of resources, learning aids and photographic libraries
- skills development (49 per cent of parents)
- helping their child keep in touch with their friends (37 per cent)
- entertainment value (18 per cent)
- relaxation (six per cent).

CONCERNS ABOUT INTERNET USE

- 39 per cent of parents said they were concerned about their child’s use of the internet (eight per cent were very concerned, 31 per cent somewhat concerned, and 61 per cent felt “OK” or weren’t concerned).

The study did not identify the views of parents in households without the internet, or parent’s specific concerns.

Broadband internet access

Seventy-six per cent of families with young people aged 8–17 years had a broadband internet connection at home. Broadband internet was defined in the study as including cable, ADSL, satellite, or wireless, while a dial-up internet connection was explained as using a phone line that makes ringing or beeping noises when connecting.

As with the internet, broadband internet penetration in family households was higher than broadband internet penetration across all Australian households³.

The remaining 24 per cent of family households in the sample did not have broadband internet or dial-up internet access at home—a total of 177 households without broadband internet.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT BROADBAND INTERNET

Almost a quarter (24 per cent) of families did not have broadband internet access at home. These family households comprised:

- 50 per cent of family households with a combined income of less than \$35,000 pa (Table 5)
- 39 per cent of family households with single parents
- 34 per cent of family households where the interviewed parent had not completed secondary school (Table 6)
- 33 per cent of family households in country locations
- 31 per cent of family households with a combined income of between \$35,000 pa and \$69,000 pa (Table 5)
- 29 per cent of households where the main child was aged 8–11 years (Table 7).

Table 5: Broadband internet penetration in family households by income and parental status, 2007

Broadband access at home	Total n=751	Household income				Status of respondent parent	
		<\$35k n=105	\$35–\$69k n=192	\$70k–\$99k n=192	\$100k+ n=190	Couple n=607	Single n=144
Yes	76%	50%	69%	82%	91%	80%	61%
No	24%	50%	31%	18%	9%	20%	39%

Source: Parent survey

Blue shading indicates significant differences between household income groups at $p < 0.01$

Orange shading indicates a significant difference between couples and single parents at $p < 0.01$

3. The ABS (2007) reported that 43 per cent of Australian occupied private dwelling had a broadband internet connection.

Table 6: Broadband internet penetration in family households by education and location, 2007

Internet access at home	Education level of respondent parent				Location	
	Did not complete secondary school n=177	Completed secondary school n=201	Trade/technical qualification n=109	University qualification n=264	City n=509	Country n=242
Yes	66%	71%	78%	87%	81%	67%
No	34%	29%	22%	13%	19%	33%

Source: Parent survey

Blue shading indicates significant differences between education groups at p<0.01

Orange shading indicates a significant difference between city and country areas at p<0.01

Table 7: Broadband internet penetration in families, by age and gender of main child in household, 2007

Broadband access at home	Age of main child in household			Gender of main child in household	
	8-11 yrs n=334	12-14 yrs n=219	15-17 yrs n=198	Girls n=346	Boys n=405
Yes	71%	77%	85%	78%	75%
No	29%	23%	15%	22%	25%

Source: Parent survey

Blue shading indicates significant differences between age groups at p<0.01

Parent views on balance between media and non-media activities

Parent views about their child’s overall use of electronic media and communications technologies were not associated with the adoption of broadband internet in family homes.

Figure 1 shows that while more parents from households without broadband internet said it would not bother them if their child were more involved in electronic media, this was not significantly different from the views of parents with broadband.⁴

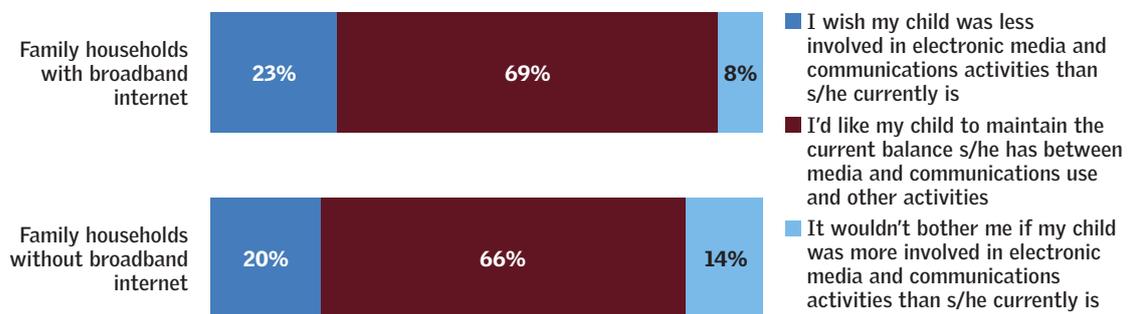


Figure 1: Parents' preferences for balance in their child's activities by households with and without broadband, 2007

Source: Parent survey (n=574 family households with broadband; n= 177 family households without broadband or internet):

Q: "I'd like you to think broadly about your child's use of electronic media and communications is general—this includes things I've been asking about like television, the internet, video or computer games and mobile phones. I'll read out three statements, and I'd like you to tell me which one best describes your view ..."

Note: there are no significant differences between families with broadband and those without broadband or the internet

4. The study did not ask parents directly about their reasons for not having broadband internet.

DESCRIPTION OF FAMILIES WITHOUT BROADBAND INTERNET

Figure 2 describes family households without access to broadband internet. This is different to Tables 5-7 that identify the proportion of families within community sub-groups without broadband internet.

Household income less than \$70,000 per annum

Most families without broadband internet had a combined household income less than \$70,000 pa (68 per cent, or a total of 112 households in the sample). Fifty-three households without broadband had an income of less than \$35,000 pa (32 per cent).

Within these households, most of the parents who were interviewed had some secondary schooling or had completed secondary school (87 respondent parents). There were also more couples (62 couples) than single parents (50 single parents) and they lived almost equally in city (57 families) and country locations (55 families)—the proportion of parents who were educated to secondary school level, single, and who lived in the country are over-represented in households without broadband internet compared to their respective proportions in the total sample (see Tables 5 and 6 for sample sizes).

Few parents in this category (25 respondents) had tertiary qualifications.

For each of these segments, the main child was more likely to be 8–11 years of age (59 children), than 12–14 years (35 young people), or 15–17 years (18 young people).

Household income of \$70,000 or more per annum

The remaining 32 per cent of households without broadband internet (a total of 53 homes in the sample) had incomes of \$70,000 pa or more, were couples (52 couples), mainly lived in cities (34 families), and tended to have younger children.

The educational qualifications of respondent parents from these higher income households were spread across the spectrum, from not completing secondary school to having a university qualification.

Further research could explore the reasons for families not adopting broadband internet, and identify the non-demographic factors that contribute to such decisions.

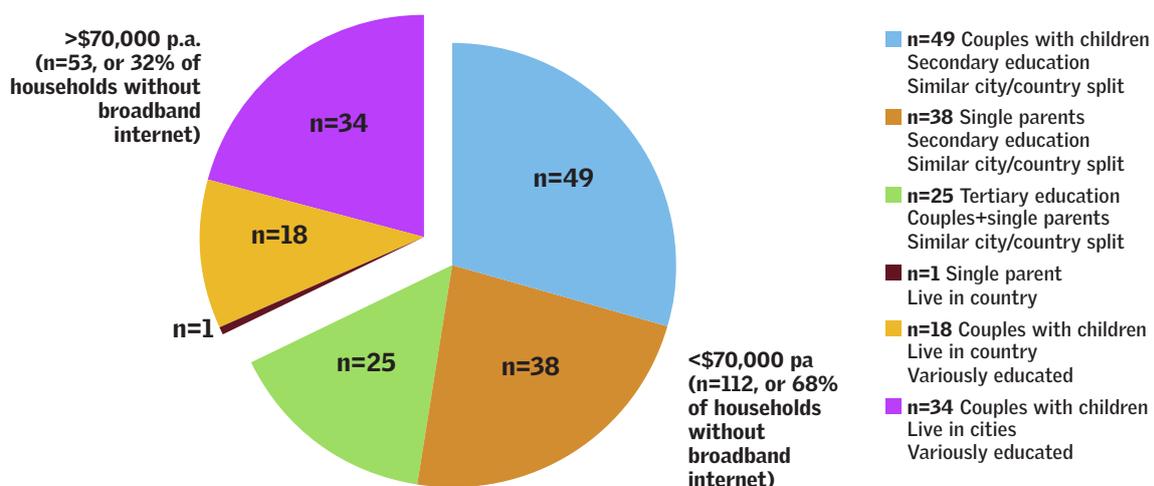


Figure 2: Description of families without broadband internet at home, 2007

Source: Parent survey (n=165⁵ family households without broadband or the internet)

Note: care needs to be taken when interpreting small sample sizes

5. There are fewer than 177 non-broadband internet family households because some families did not answer the question on household income.

BROADBAND INTERNET = CAPACITY TO ENGAGE IN MORE ONLINE ACTIVITIES

From the day 4 diary questions, young people who had broadband internet at home were more likely than those without it to engage in bandwidth-intensive activities such as watching downloaded video content, and posting their own material online.

Among young people with broadband internet at home, 50 per cent had watched video content downloaded from the internet, including 24 per cent who watched at least once a week (Figure 3).

Young people with broadband internet were also more likely to generate their own material online. Forty-eight per cent of these young people had some form of web authorship at the time of the study, including 39 per cent who had a personal profile on a social networking website.

It is notable that a number of young people without broadband internet at home also engaged in these activities, indicating that these young people had undertaken those online activities away from home.

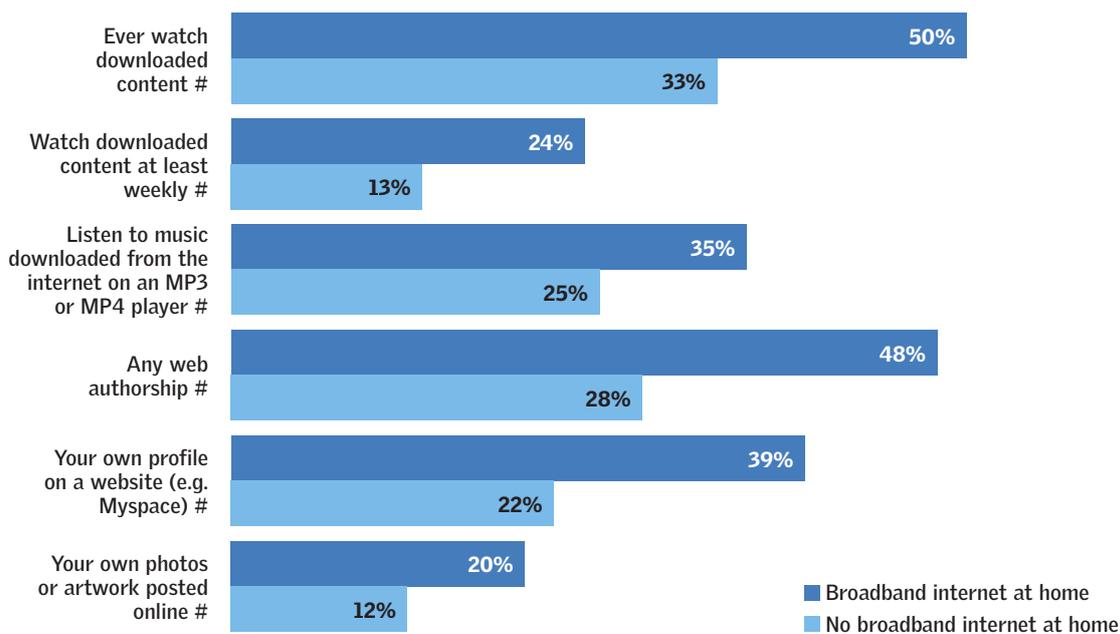


Figure 3: Internet activities by young people in broadband and non-broadband homes, 2007

Source: Day 4 diary questions (n= 754 young people aged 8-17 with broadband at home; n= 245 young people aged 8-17 without broadband internet at home)

Q: "How often (if at all) do you watch TV shows, movies, cartoons, video clips etc that have been downloaded from the internet?"

Q: "If you used an iPod or other MP3/MP4 player over the last three days, did you...listen to music downloaded from the internet?"

Q: "Do you currently have ... your own profile on website (e.g. MySpace)...your own photos or artwork posted online ...? (Fill in as many circles as you need)"

denotes significant difference between young people with broadband at home and those without broadband internet at home at $p < 0.01$

Mobile phone use by young people

Although all families had at least one mobile phone (98 per cent), just over half (54 per cent) of young people had their own mobile phone. Sixteen per cent of young people owned a mobile phone with advanced features such as internet access, video content, mobile TV or an MP3 player.

Compared with broadband internet penetration in family households, ownership of mobiles was strongly associated with the young person's age rather than socio-economic factors such as household income.

The 46 per cent of 8–17 year olds in the sample who did not have their own a mobile phone (a total of 349 young people) comprised:

- 82 per cent of 8–11 year olds (Table 8)
- 54 per cent of boys.

Young people from family households in country areas were less likely than those from cities to own a mobile phone with advanced features (11 per cent and 18 per cent respectively).

Table 8: Mobile phone ownership among young people by age, gender and location 2007

Young person owns a mobile phone	Total n=751	Age of main child			Gender	
		8–11 yrs (n=334)	12–14 yrs (n=219)	15–17 yrs (n=198)	Boys (n=405)	Girls (n=346)
Yes, any mobile phone	54%	18%	75%	90%	46%	63%
Yes, mobile phone with advanced features	16%	3%	20%	34%	13%	20%
No mobile phone at all	46%	82%	25%	10%	54%*	37%*

Source: Parent survey

Blue shading indicates significant differences between age groups at $p < 0.01$

Orange shading indicates a significant difference between boys and girls at $p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.01^*$

Note: mobile phones with advanced features have internet access, video content, mobile TV and/or an MP3 player

Household income and parental status were not associated with ownership of mobile phones by young people (Table 9). However more young people from single parent households owned a mobile phone with advanced features than those from couple parent homes.

Table 9: Mobile phone ownership among young people, by household income and parental status, 2007

Young person has own mobile phone?	Location		Household income				Parental status	
	City (n=509)	Country (n=242)	<\$35k n=105	\$35-\$69k n=192	\$70k-\$99k n=192	\$100k+ n=190	Couple n=607	Single n=144
Yes, any mobile phone	56%	49%	46%	55%	55%	56%	53%	57%
Yes, mobile phone with advanced features	18%	11%	18%	19%	18%	13%	14%	23%
No mobile phone at all	44%	51%	54%	45%	45%	44%	47%	43%

Source: Parent survey

Blue shading indicates a significant difference between city and country at $p < 0.05$

Orange shading indicates a significant difference between couple and single parents at $p < 0.05$

Note: mobile phones with advanced features have internet access, video content, mobile TV or MP3 player

DESCRIPTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITHOUT A MOBILE PHONE

Figure 4 describes young people without their own mobile. This is different to Tables 8 and 9 that show the proportion of young people in sub-groups without a mobile phone.

Households with main child aged 8–11 years

Children of primary school age were much less likely to own a mobile phone. Seventy-nine per cent of young people without their own mobile phone were 8–11 year olds in the sample (a total of 246 young people in the sample).

Within this 8–11 year old group, most were from households with an income of \$35,000 pa or more (203 young people), lived in cities (162 young people), and were boys (149 boys) (Figure 4).

Households with main child aged 12–17 years

Once young people reached high school, few were without their own mobile phone. Twenty-one per cent of non-mobile owners were aged 12–17 years (a total of 67 young people). By the time children were 15 years of age, ten per cent did not have a mobile.

Only one per cent of girls aged 15–17 years did not have their own mobile phone, compared with 20 per cent of boys without a mobile. This is supported by the time-use diaries, girls and older teenagers showed greater interest in, and were higher users of, mobile phones.

Similar to the 8–11 year olds, the older 12–17 year olds without mobiles were mostly from households with incomes of \$35,000 p.a. or more (53 young people), were boys (47 boys), and were spread across city (32 young people) and country areas (35 young people).

In summary, ownership of mobile phones by young people is not strongly correlated to socio-economic factors. Rather, mobile phones were very important to 12–17 year olds, particularly girls.

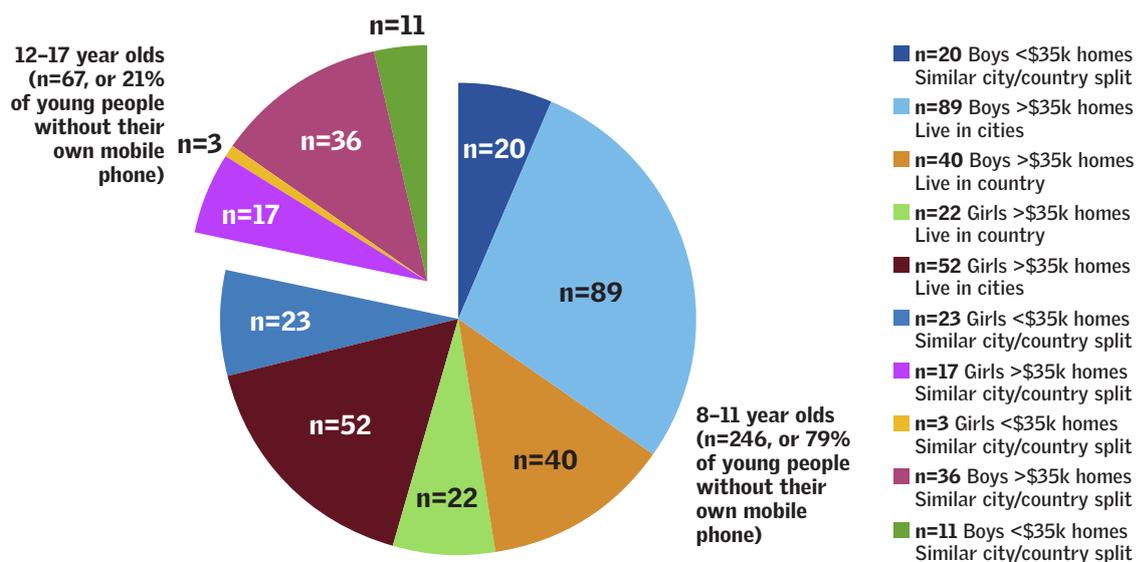


Figure 4: Description of young people without a mobile phone, 2007

Source: Parent survey (n=313⁶ young people without their own mobile phone)

Note: care needs to be taken when interpreting small sample sizes

BENEFITS AND CONCERNS ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE'S USE OF MOBILE PHONES

Out of the 59 per cent of families whose main child used a mobile phone⁷, a majority of parents said their child received benefits from its use. Most of these parents also held concerns about their child's use of mobile phones.

BENEFITS OF MOBILE PHONE USE

- 80 per cent of parents whose child used a mobile phone identified some (60 per cent) or many (20 per cent) benefits associated with their child's use of a mobile.

The main benefits identified by parents were their child's:

- ability to keep in touch with family (59 per cent of parents whose child used a mobile)
- safety and security (58 per cent)
- ability to keep in touch with friends (37 per cent)
- ability to make a call in an emergency (35 per cent).

CONCERNS ABOUT MOBILE PHONE USE

- 24 per cent of parents whose child used a mobile phone said they were concerned about their child's use of mobiles (five per cent were very concerned, 18 per cent somewhat concerned, and 76 per cent felt "OK" or weren't concerned).

The study did not identify the views of parents whose child did not own a mobile phone, or parent's specific concerns.

6. There are fewer than 349 non-owners of mobile phones because some families did not answer the question on household income.

7. This is more than the 54 per cent of young people who had their own mobile phone.

Conclusion

In 2007, Australian family households with young people aged 8–17 years were media-rich, with basics such as televisions, computers, mobile phones, DVD players, and the internet found in almost all homes. Family households with lower incomes were less likely to have additional items such as portable MP4 players with video capabilities, portable DVD players, digital free-to-air television, and subscription television.

Despite the educational, entertainment and communication benefits that a majority of parents of young users attributed to the internet, almost a quarter of families were without broadband internet.

Higher household income, and to lesser degrees, where parents were couples, where respondent parents had higher education levels, and where families lived in cities were factors associated with broadband internet adoption.

In contrast, for mobile phone ownership by young people, age was significantly more important in determining use with fewer 8–11 year olds (18 per cent) owning a mobile phone compared with 15–17 year olds (90 per cent). Gender was also important with fewer boys than girls having their own mobile.

Further research could explore any relationships between socio-demographic factors and other non-demographic factors on family decisions about taking-up broadband internet at home.

REFERENCES

- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007 *Household use of information technology, Australia, 2006-07*, Cat. No. 8146.0, viewed 12 February 2008, [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/DFEED0F4BFFE51E0CA2573B6001F777B/\\$File/81460_2006-07.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/DFEED0F4BFFE51E0CA2573B6001F777B/$File/81460_2006-07.pdf)
- Australian Broadcasting Authority 1996 *Families and electronic entertainment*, Sydney.
- Australian Communications and Media Authority 2007 *Media and communications in Australian families 2007*, Report of the Media and Society Research Project, Sydney, www.acma.gov.au/mediareports