

Pew: Blacks, Hispanics among biggest users of wireless Web

Changes in wireless internet use by demographic groups, 2009-2010

% of all adult Americans

	April 2009	May 2010	Change
Total	51%	59%	+8
Gender			
Male	55	62	+7
Female	49	56	+7
Age			
18-29	73	84	+11
30-49	61	69	+8
50-64	44	49	+5
65+	17	20	+3
Race/Ethnicity			
White, non-Hispanic	49	57	+8
Black, non-Hispanic	57	64	+7
Hispanic (English-speaking)	64	63	-1
Education			
Less than high school	31	38	+7
High school grad	42	48	+6
Some college	59	68	+9
College grad	67	76	+9
Annual household income			
Less than \$30,000	35	46	+11
\$30,000-\$49,999	53	55	+2
\$50,000-\$74,999	63	67	+4
\$75,000+	72	80	+8

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, April 29-May 30, 2010 Tracking Survey. N=2,252 adults 18 and older. **Wireless internet users* includes going online wirelessly with a laptop (either via wi-fi connection or mobile broadband); using email on a cell phone; using the internet on a cell phone; or using instant messaging on a cell phone.



By Cecilia Kang
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African Americans and Hispanics continue to be among the most avid users of the Internet over their cellphones, according to a report released Wednesday by the Pew Research Center.

And low-income groups are the fastest adopters of the mobile Web, showing an opportunity that wireless technology could play in helping to bridge a digital divide that has brought the Web disproportionately to wealthier communities over the past two decades.

According to the **Pew Internet & American Life Project**, 64 percent of African Americans surveyed last May said they access the Internet over their laptop or mobile phone, an increase from 57 percent who said they did in 2009.

That compares with 59 percent of all adults surveyed last May who said they accessed the Web wirelessly

through laptops or cellphones – up from 51 percent last year. Indeed, overall use of cell phones and other gadgets is up among all demographic groups -- and youth are, no surprise, big users too.

But the survey revealed more refined data than previous surveys. Poorer households see wireless devices as their gateway to the Internet, for example. By household income, 46 percent of households earning less than \$30,000 a year said they used data services on a wireless devices, an 11 percentage point increase from 2009. It's still a relatively small

group, but their adoption rate is faster than those earning \$30,000 to \$49,000 (up two percentage points), \$40,000 to \$74,999 (up four percentage points), and those earning more than \$75,000 (up eight percentage points).

Drilling down, Hispanics were the biggest users of data applications on their cellphones and laptops. About 83 percent of Hispanics send or receive text messages, compared with 79 percent of Americans and 68 percent of whites. And 47 percent of Hispanics said they send or receive an e-mail, compared with 41 percent of blacks and 30 percent of whites surveyed. Also interesting was that 18 percent of Hispanics said they purchased a product over their mobile device compared with 13 percent of blacks and 10 percent of whites.

The findings support similar survey results by Pew last year and show the fast penetration of smart phones and other devices in minority populations.

"The mobile population is becoming more diverse over time and more people are relying on their cellphones as their primary form of wireless connectivity," said Aaron Smith, author of the Pew report.

But public-interest advocates warn of the limits of some wireless technologies, which can't replace the greater capacity of broadband connections into homes. And the cost of computer equipment and monthly fees for Internet cable and DSL service has been a great obstacle for lower-income homes, they said.

David Saunier of One-Economy.org, a group that uses technology to help solve socioeconomic problems, said it is difficult to know what kinds of applications the people surveyed are using. His group focused on "public purpose" applications – on wireless and land-line devices – to help users find jobs, manage household expenses and do homework, for example.

The penetration of smart phone and other wireless technology in minority communities shows promise, he said.

"This shows the opportunity for mobile to be a crucial vehicle for delivering public purpose content and that mobile technologies in particular offer unique opportunities for those tools and applications to be delivered," Saunier said.