THE HENRY J. KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION

Facts Fact Sheet

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

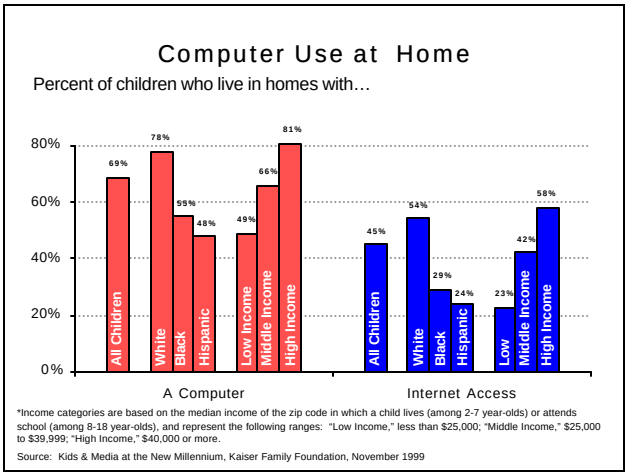
April 2000

As technology continues to drive the American economy, recent studies suggest the revolution may be leaving many people behind. Preliminary employment data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that the U.S. high-tech industry employed a total of 4.8 million workers in 1998, making it one of the nation's largest industries.[1] Yet women and minorities are still underrepresented in the technology workforce,[2] and the opportunities for those without technical training and skills are limited.[3]

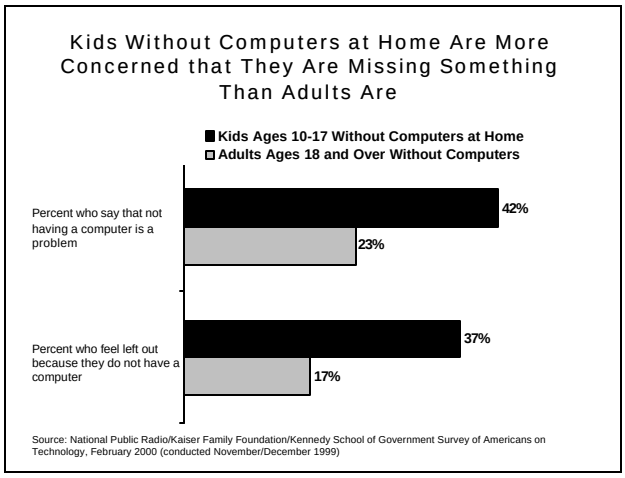
"Demand for highly-skilled information technology workers leads all other occupations and is expected to continue in the years ahead."[4]

Computer and Internet Access at Home

- While 81percent of kids ages 2-18 in higher-income communities ($40,000 or more) have a computer *at home*, and more than half (58 percent) have Internet access, only 49 percent of kids in lower-income communities (less than $25,000 per year) have a computer *at home*, and just a quarter (23 percent) have Internet access.[5]



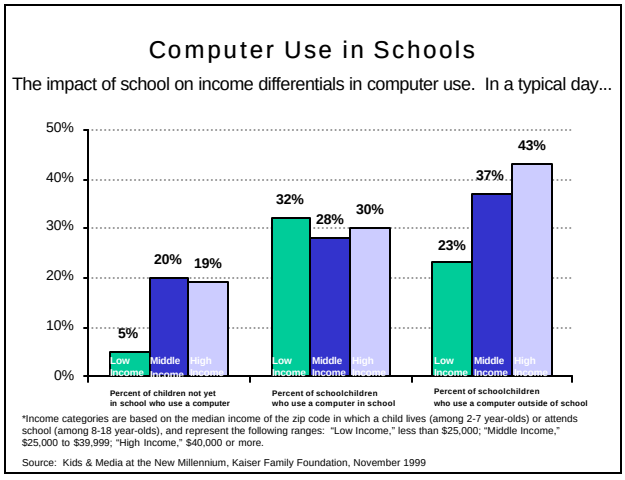
- Kids ages 10-17 who don't have computers at home are twice as likely as adults to say not having a computer is a "problem" (42 percent vs. 23 percent). These kids are also more likely to feel left out because they don't have a computer (37 percent vs. 17 percent).[6]



Computer and Internet Access at School

- Schools are helping to equalize access, although disparities still exist: Market Data Retrieval, a company that has surveyed the nation's public schools reports that, "94 percent of *schools* in wealthy districts have access to the Internet, compared with 84 percent of schools that serve poor populations."[7]

- Approximately the same percentage of kids ages 2-18 from lower-income communities (less than $25,000 per year) report having used a computer in school the day before as those from higher-income communities ($40,000 or more): 32 percent vs. 30 percent.[8]



The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation: 2400 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park, CA 94025 (650) 854-9400 Facsimile: (650) 854-4800
Washington, D.C. Office: 1450 G Street, N.W., Suite 250, Washington, DC 20005 (202) 347-5270 Facsimile: (202) 347-5274
Request for Publications: (800) 656-4533 http://www.kff.org

- According to a report by the U.S. Department of Commerce, just over half (51 percent) of public school *classrooms* had Internet access in 1998, up from just three percent in 1994.[9] The Commerce Department estimates there were six students for each computer in K-12 schools in 1999.[10]

Current Technology Market

- When it comes to computers, as many adults (49 percent) say they feel they are "keeping up" as say they are "being left behind" when it comes to new technology. However, lower-income adults (under $30,000 per year) are more likely than higher-income adults (over $50,000 per year) to report they are "being left behind" (59 percent vs. 34 percent).[11]

- According to 1999 U.S.Commerce Department statistics, African-Americans and Hispanics remain vastly underrepresented in the technology workforce today. African-Americans "represent only 7.2 percent of computer systems analyst and scientists and 6.4 percent of computer programmers. Hispanics account for only 3.6 percent of computer systems analysts and scientists, and only 4.9 percent of computer programmers."[12]

- "In the professional-level information technology workforce today, women represent only 26.9 percent of computer systems analysts and scientists, and only 28.5 percent of computer programmers."[13]

- Women earn more than half of all bachelors' degrees but are less likely to earn that degree in science or engineering than men (29 percent vs. 41 percent).[14]

Technology Trends and Forecasts

- The U.S. Department of Commerce Office of Technology Policy estimates that by 2006, the number of *core* information technology workers – computer scientists, computer engineers, systems analysts and computer programmers – will grow to 2.6 million.[15]

"The underrepresentation of women and minorities in core IT occupations stems partly from their underrepresentation in the technical education pipeline that leads to employment in the field."[16]

- The U.S. Department of Commerce calculates that between 1996 and 2006, the United States will require an average of 137,800 new highly skilled information technology workers a year to fill newly created jobs and replace others who are leaving the field.[17]

- In the near future, two-thirds of new work force entrants will be women and minorities.[18]

References

[1] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
[2] Department of Commerce, Office of Technology Policy: *The Digital Workforce: Building Infotech Skills at the Speed of Innovation*, June 1999 (Pg. 94)
[3] Ibid.
[4] Department of Commerce, Office of Technology Policy: *The Digital Workforce: Building Infotech Skills at the Speed of Innovation*, June 1999 (Pg. 1)
[5] The Kaiser Family Foundation*: Kids & Media @ the New Millennium: A Comprehensive National Analysis of Children's Media Use*, November 1999.
[6] NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/Kennedy School Technology Survey, February 2000.
[7] Katie Hafner, *A Credibility Gap in the Digital Divide*, New York Times, 3 March 2000 (Pg. 4)
[8] The Kaiser Family Foundation*: Kids & Media @ the New Millennium : A Comprehensive National Analysis of Children's Media Use*, November 1999
[9] Department of Commerce, Office of Technology Policy: *The Digital Workforce: Building Infotech Skills at the Speed of Innovation*, June 1999 (Pg. 70)
[10] Ibid.
[11] NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/Kennedy School Technology Survey, February 2000.
[12] Department of Commerce, Office of Technology Policy: *The Digital Workforce: Building Infotech Skills at the Speed of Innovation*, June 1999 (Pg. 94)
[13] Ibid.
[14] Department of Commerce, Office of Technology Policy: *The Digital Workforce: Building Infotech Skills at the Speed of Innovation*, June 1999 (Pg. 95)
[15] Department of Commerce, Office of Technology Policy: *The Digital Workforce: Building Infotech Skills at the Speed of Innovation*, June 1999 (Pg. 25)
[16] Department of Commerce, Office of Technology Policy: *The Digital Workforce: Building Infotech Skills at the Speed of Innovation*, June 1999 (Pg. 94)
[17] Department of Commerce, Office of Technology Policy: *The Digital Workforce: Building Infotech Skills at the Speed of Innovation*, June 1999 (Pg. 25)
[18] Department of Commerce, Office of Technology Policy: *The Digital Workforce: Building Infotech Skills at the Speed of Innovation*, June 1999 (Pg. 94)

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