



USE OF THE INTERNET BY HOUSEHOLDERS

AUSTRALIA

EMBARGO: 11:30AM (CANBERRA TIME) TUES 13 JUNE 2000

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- For further information about these and related statistics, contact John Ovington on Canberra 02 6252 5189, or the National Information Service on 1300 135 070.

NOTES

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION	This publication presents statistics about the extent of computer and Internet access in Australia. It also presents a profile of adult users at home, work and other locations.
ABOUT THE SURVEY	The survey was conducted during February 2000, collecting information from 3,200 adults randomly selected from private households. Households in remote and sparsely settled parts of Australia are excluded from the survey. The survey will be conducted again in May, August and November 2000.
ACCURACY OF ESTIMATES OF MOVEMENT	Users are advised to take care when comparing the data shown in this publication with similar data in previous issues of <i>Use of the Internet by Householders</i> (Cat. no. 8147.0). Some of the data items have high standard errors, so observed differences may be the result of sampling error. Users comparing data in this publication with data from earlier releases should refer to paragraphs 10 and 11 of the Explanatory Notes.
PUBLICATION RELEASES	Data from the quarterly surveys have been released via the publication <i>Use of the Internet by Householders</i> (Cat. no. 8147.0). This publication is available for each quarter from May 1998 to November 1999. In addition, the publication <i>Household Use of Information Technology, Australia</i> (Cat. no. 8146.0) is available for 1998 and 1999. This annual publication presents results based upon data consolidated from the four quarterly surveys of each year. This consolidation allows detail for smaller target groups to be presented, such as estimates at State and Territory level.
END OF THE QUARTERLY DATA SERIES	The four surveys conducted during 2000 will be the last quarterly Household Use of Information Technology surveys conducted by the ABS. The Population Survey Monitor (PSM), through which the data is currently collected, will be conducted for the last time for the November quarter 2000. The ABS is currently developing an annual survey vehicle to replace the existing PSM series.
SYMBOLS AND OTHER USAGES	<p>ABS Australian Bureau of Statistics</p> <p>ATM Automatic Teller Machine</p> <p>EFTPOS Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale</p> <p>TAFE Tertiary and Further Education</p> <p>* estimates have a relative standard error between 25% and 50%</p> <p>** estimates have a relative standard error of 50% or more</p> <p>— nil or rounded to zero</p> <p>n.a not available</p>

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Australian Statistician

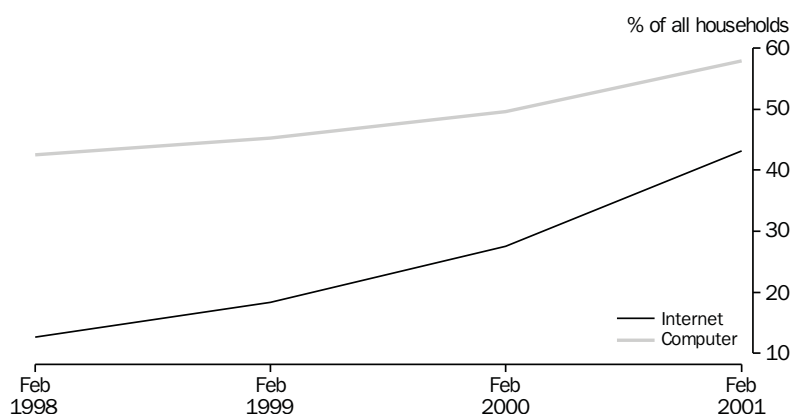
MAIN FEATURES

HOUSEHOLD ACCESS TO COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET

By February 2000 half (50%) of the households in Australia, or 3.5 million households, had access to a computer at home. The number of households with access to the Internet at home rose to 1.9 million, or 28% of all Australian households.

The following graph indicates the increase in the proportion of households with access to a computer or the Internet at home. Included is an estimate for February 2001, based upon the reported intentions of those households without home access at February 2000. While the proportion of households with home access continues to rise for both computers and the Internet, the difference is decreasing.

1 HOUSEHOLD COMPUTER AND INTERNET ACCESS



Differences in the level of access can be seen when groups of households with distinct characteristics are compared. By February 2000:

- Households with higher incomes were more likely to have access to a computer or the Internet at home. Households with incomes of \$50,000 or more were twice as likely to have access to a computer at home than households with incomes under \$50,000 (69% compared to 34%) and more than three times as likely to have access to the Internet at home (45% compared to 14%).
- Households with children under 18 years were more likely to have access than households without children under 18 years. Although 39% of households without children under 18 years had access to a computer at home, the proportion of households with children under 18 years that had access was considerably higher (68%). Similarly for home Internet access, 22% of households without children under 18 years had access compared to 37% of households with children under 18 years.

HOUSEHOLD ACCESS TO COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET *continued*

- Households in metropolitan areas were more likely than households in other areas to have access at home, particularly Internet access. Over half (54%) of the households in metropolitan areas had access to a computer at home compared to 42% of households outside metropolitan areas. A third (33%) of the households in metropolitan areas had access to the Internet at home compared to 19% of households outside metropolitan areas.

2 HOUSEHOLD ACCESS TO COMPUTERS OR THE INTERNET(a)

	<i>Households with access to a computer at home</i>			<i>Households with access to the Internet at home</i>		
	<i>February 1998</i>	<i>February 1999</i>	<i>February 2000</i>	<i>February 1998</i>	<i>February 1999</i>	<i>February 2000</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Household income						
\$0-\$49,999	29	30	34	7	9	14
\$50,000 or more	63	68	69	21	33	45
Households						
With children under 18 years	64	64	68	19	25	37
Without children under 18 years	29	35	39	9	14	22
Region						
Metropolitan areas	46	50	54	16	23	33
Other areas	36	38	42	7	10	19
Total	42	45	50	13	18	28

(a) Proportions are of all households in each category.

FREQUENCY OF HOUSEHOLD COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE

Over half (53%) of the households with access to a computer at home used it daily. A high proportion (88%) of households used their home computer at least once a week. Households with Internet access tended to use their home computer more frequently than households without Internet access. Households with home Internet access were almost three times as likely as households without home Internet access to use their home computer daily (74% compared to 27%).

For households with access to the Internet, almost half (48%) accessed the Internet daily, while a very high proportion (93%) accessed the Internet at least once a week.

3 FREQUENCY OF HOUSEHOLD COMPUTER USE AND INTERNET ACCESS

<i>Frequency of computer use</i>	<i>Computer use(a)</i>	<i>Internet access(b)</i>
	%	%
Daily	53	48
2-6 times a week	27	38
Once a week	8	7
Once every 2 weeks	2	2
Once every month or less	7	4
Not used	3	—
Total	100	100

(a) Proportions are of all households with access to a computer at home, February 2000.

(b) Proportions are of all households with access to the Internet at home, February 2000.

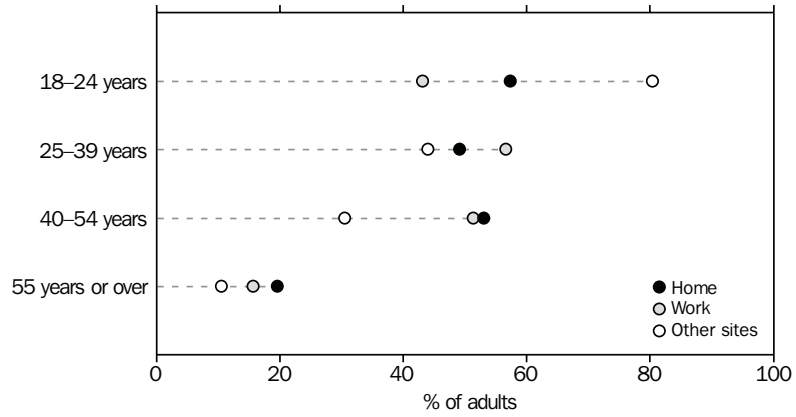
CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT COMPUTER USERS

Almost two-thirds (65%) of the adults in Australia, or 9.0 million adults, used a computer during the 12 months to February 2000. The most popular sites of use were either home (43% of all adults) or work (42% of all adults). Over a third of all adults (36%) had used a computer at sites other than home or work. The most popular of these sites were a neighbour, friend or relative's home (20% of all adults), library (13% of all adults) and TAFE or other tertiary institution (10% of all adults).

Differences in the likelihood that an adult is a computer user can be seen when the characteristics of the adult or the site of use are compared. During the 12 months to February 2000:

- Adults aged 55 years or over were far less likely to have used a computer than adults aged 18 to 54 years. Only 28% of adults aged 55 years or over had used a computer compared to 72% of adults aged 40 to 54 years, 80% of adults aged 25 to 39 years and 92% of adults aged 18 to 24 years. For adults aged 55 years or over the most popular site of use was home. Home or work were the most popular sites of use for adults aged 40 to 54 years, while work was the most popular site of access for adults aged 25 to 39 years. Adults aged 18 to 24 years were more likely to have used a computer at sites other than home or work.
- There was little difference in the likelihood that males and females had used a computer regardless of the site of use. Overall, 67% of adult males used a computer compared to 64% of adult females.
- Adults who were employed were twice as likely as those who were not employed to have used a computer (81% compared to 40%). Even at home, employed adults were twice as likely as unemployed adults to have used a computer (54% compared to 27%).
- Adults with incomes of \$40,000 or more were far more likely to have used a computer than adults with incomes under \$40,000 (88% compared to 59%). Both at home and work, there were large differences in the likelihood that an adult had used a computer between these two income groups.
- Adults residing in metropolitan areas were only slightly more likely to have used a computer than adults residing outside metropolitan areas (67% compared to 61%). The largest difference occurred in computer use at home. In metropolitan areas 47% of adults had used a computer at home compared to 36% of adults outside metropolitan areas.

4 ADULT COMPUTER USE, FEBRUARY 2000



5 ADULT COMPUTER USE BY SITE OF USE(a)(b)

	Site of use(c)			
	Home %	Work %	Other %	Any site %
Age				
18-24 years	57	43	80	92
25-39 years	49	57	44	80
40-54 years	53	51	31	72
55 years or over	20	16	11	28
Sex				
Males	45	45	33	67
Females	41	39	39	64
Employment status				
Employed	54	63	41	81
Not employed	27	n.a	28	40
Income				
0-\$39,999	38	31	36	59
\$40,000 or more	60	75	40	88
Region				
Metropolitan areas	47	44	37	67
Other areas	36	38	34	61
Total	43	42	36	65

(a) Computer used during the 12 months to February 2000.

(b) Proportions are of all adults in each category.

(c) Adults can nominate more than one site if applicable.

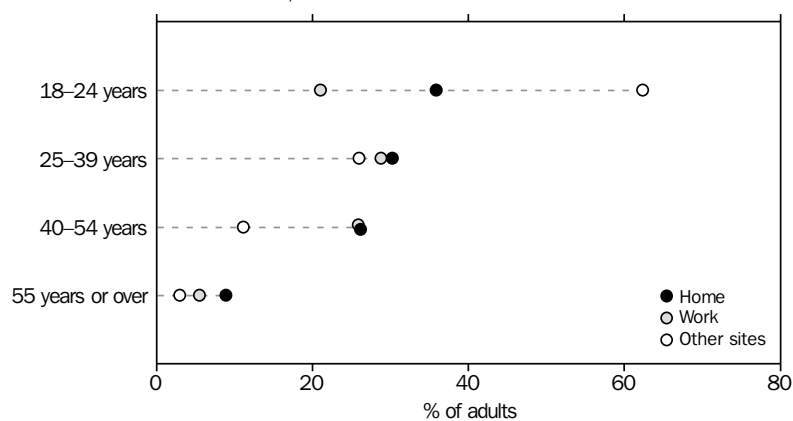
CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT INTERNET USERS

In the 12 months to February 2000, 43% of the adults in Australia, or 6.0 million adults, accessed the Internet. Almost 24% of all adults accessed the Internet at home while 21% accessed the Internet at work. Also 20% of all adults accessed the Internet at sites other than home or work. The most popular of these sites were a neighbour, friend or relative's home (12% of all adults), TAFE or other tertiary institution (6% of all adults) and library (5% of all adults).

Differences in the likelihood that an adult is an Internet user can be seen when the characteristics of the adult or the site of access are compared. During the 12 months to February 2000:

- The likelihood that an adult was an Internet user decreased as age increased. Of the adults aged 18 to 24 years, 77% were Internet users compared to 55% of adults aged 25 to 39 years and 43% of adults aged 40 to 54 years. Only 13% of adults aged 55 years or over were Internet users. Adults aged 18 to 24 years were far more likely to access the Internet at sites other than home or work, while home or work were the most popular sites of access for adults in the other age groups.
- Adult males were slightly more likely than adult females to have been Internet users (46% compared to 41%).
- Adults who were employed were more than twice as likely as those who were not employed to have been Internet users (56% compared to 23%). Work (32%) and home (31%) were the most popular sites of access for adults who were employed. Adults who were not employed were just as likely to have accessed the Internet at other sites (15%) as at home (13%).
- Adults with incomes of \$40,000 or more were far more likely to have been Internet users than adults with incomes under \$40,000 (66% compared to 37%). There was little difference in the likelihood that adults in either income group accessed the Internet at sites other than home and work. However adults with incomes of \$40,000 or more were far more likely than adults with incomes under \$40,000 to have accessed the Internet both at work (46% compared to 12%) and home (38% compared to 19%).
- Adults residing in metropolitan areas were more likely to have accessed the Internet than adults residing outside metropolitan areas (47% compared to 37%). The largest difference occurred in the likelihood that the Internet was accessed at home. In metropolitan areas 28% of adults had accessed the Internet at home compared to 16% of adults outside metropolitan areas.

6 ADULT INTERNET ACCESS, FEBRUARY 2000



7 ADULT INTERNET ACCESS BY SITE OF ACCESS(a)(b)

	Site of access(c)			
	Home %	Work %	Other %	Any site %
Age				
18-24 years	36	21	62	77
25-39 years	30	29	26	55
40-54 years	26	26	11	43
55 years or over	9	6	3	13
Sex				
Males	28	24	21	46
Females	21	18	20	41
Employment status				
Employed	31	32	24	56
Not employed	13	n.a	15	23
Income				
0-\$39,999	19	12	21	37
\$40,000 or more	38	46	23	66
Region				
Metropolitan areas	28	22	22	47
Other areas	16	19	18	37
Total	24	21	20	43

(a) Internet access during the 12 months to February 2000.

(b) Proportions are of all adults in each category.

(c) Adults can nominate more than one site if applicable.

FREQUENCY OF ADULT
COMPUTER AND INTERNET
USE

A high proportion of adults (81%) who used a computer at home did so at least once a week. At work, adults who used a computer were even more likely (92%) to use it at least once a week. At sites other than home or work, only one third (35%) of adults who used a computer did so at least once a week while 59% only used it once a month or less often.

Similar patterns of use were seen among Internet users. At home, 84% of adults who accessed the Internet did so at least once a week and 79% of adults who accessed the Internet at work did so at least once a week. At other sites, only 30% of adults who accessed the Internet did so at least once a week while 63% of adults who accessed the Internet at these sites did so only once a month or less often.

8 FREQUENCY OF ADULT COMPUTER USE AND INTERNET ACCESS

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Site(a)</i>		
	<i>At home</i>	<i>At work</i>	<i>At other sites</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
COMPUTER USE(b)			
Daily	33	(c)70	8
2-6 times a week	35	16	14
Once a week	13	6	13
Once every 2 weeks	7	2	6
Once a month or less	12	5	59
Total	100	100	100
INTERNET ACCESS(d)			
Daily	32	(c)41	5
2-6 times a week	41	24	16
Once a week	11	14	9
Once every 2 weeks	4	5	8
Once a month or less	11	16	63
Total	100	100	100

(a) Adults can nominate more than one site if applicable.

(b) Proportions are of all adults using a computer at a particular site, February 2000.

(c) Will include adults who do not work 7 days each week.

(d) Proportions are of all adults accessing the Internet at a particular site, February 2000.

ADULTS MAKING SELECTED ELECTRONIC TRANSACTIONS

Only a very small proportion of the adult population used the Internet to access government services (5% of all adults) or to pay bills or transfer funds (5% of all adults). In comparison, almost half the adult population (49%) used the telephone to pay bills or transfer funds, two thirds (66%) used EFTPOS and three out of every four adults (74%) used ATMs.

9 ADULTS MAKING SELECTED ELECTRONIC TRANSACTIONS(a)

	%
Accessed the Internet to use government services(b)	5
Paid bills or transferred funds via the Internet(c)	5
Paid bills or transferred funds via telephone(c)	49
Paid bills or withdrew funds via EFTPOS(c)	66
Transferred or withdrew funds via ATM(c)	74

(a) Proportions are of all adults.

(b) Period covers the 12 months to February 2000.

(c) Period covers the 3 months to February 2000.

ADULTS WORKING FROM HOME

At February 2000, 6% of employed adults had an agreement with their employer to work from home on an ongoing basis. On average, these adults spent one quarter of their total working hours actually working from home.

To enable them to work from home, almost half (49%) of these adults had use of a portable PC while over a third (36%) could access their employer's computer system via a modem. Almost a third (30%) took home work related information on floppy disks or CDs. While 39% reported using a mobile phone to work from home, only 5% reported this as the only form of technology that enabled them to work from home. One in every six adults working from home (16%) did not use any of the technologies listed in table 10 to work from home.

10 ADULTS WORKING FROM HOME

	%
Have an agreement with employer to work from home on an ongoing basis(a)	6
Technologies that allow employee to work from home(b)	
Access to employer's computer system at home via a modem	36
Use of portable PC (either personal or employer provided)	49
Use of floppy disks/CD ROMS containing work related information	30
Mobile phone	39

(a) Proportions are of all employed adults.

(b) Proportions are of all employed adults who have an agreement to work from home on an ongoing basis.

INTERNET SHOPPING FOR
PRIVATE USE

In the 12 months to February 2000, 5% of all Australian adults purchased or ordered goods or services for their own private use via the Internet. These adults will be referred to as Internet shoppers. Overall 740,000 adults were Internet shoppers during the 12 months to February 2000, an increase of 260,000 adults on the February 1999 estimate of 480,000 adults.

Differences among Internet shoppers in the 12 months to February 2000 included:

- Adults aged 55 years or over were unlikely to have been Internet shoppers (1%).
- Adult males were more than twice as likely as adult females to have been Internet shoppers (8% of adult males compared to 3% of adult females).
- Employed adults were more likely to have been Internet shoppers than unemployed adults (7% compared to 2%).
- Adults with incomes of \$40,000 or more were four times more likely to have been Internet shoppers than adults with incomes under \$40,000 (12% compared to 3%).
- Adults in metropolitan areas were twice as likely to have been Internet shoppers than adults in other areas (7% compared to 3%).

1.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT INTERNET SHOPPERS(a)(b)

	<i>Internet shoppers</i>	<i>Internet users</i>
	%	%
Age		
18–24 years	7	77
25–39 years	8	55
40–54 years	6	43
55 years or over	*1	13
Sex		
Males	8	46
Females	3	41
Employment status		
Employed	7	56
Not employed	2	23
Income		
0–\$39,999	3	37
\$40,000 or more	12	66
Region		
Metropolitan areas	7	47
Other areas	3	37
Total	5	43

(a) Proportions are of all adults in each category.

(b) Adults purchased or ordered goods and services for their private use during the 12 months to February 2000.

INTERNET SHOPPING FOR
PRIVATE USE *continued*

Features of the purchases/orders made in the 12 months to February 2000 included:

- Books and magazines (35% of all Internet shoppers), computer software (28% of all Internet shoppers) and music (19% of all Internet shoppers) were the most popular types of purchase/order.
- Almost a third (30%) of all Internet shoppers purchased or ordered on only one occasion.
- Nearly one third (30%) of Internet shoppers spent \$100 or less and 43% spent between \$101 and \$500. However 14% of Internet shoppers spent over \$1000.
- Nearly three in every four (74%) Internet shoppers paid for all or part of their purchase/order online by giving their credit card details.
- Half (51%) of the Internet shoppers purchased/ordered goods or services only from overseas while 39% purchased/ordered only from Australia.

12 CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERNET PURCHASES AND ORDERS(a)

	%
Location of purchase/order	
Australia only	39
Overseas only	51
Both Australia & Overseas	*10
Number of occasions on which purchase/order made	
One	30
Two to four	41
Five or more	28
Value of purchases/orders	
0-\$100	30
\$101-\$500	43
\$501-\$1000	*8
\$1,001 or more	14
Don't know	*5
Paid online for good and services	74
Type of goods/services purchased/ordered	
Books or magazines	35
Computer software	28
Music	19
Entertainment or tickets to entertainment	*11
Clothing or shoes	*10
Holidays	*8
Food and groceries	*7
Sporting equipment	*6
Computer hardware	**3
Other goods/services	14

(a) Proportions are of all adults having purchased or ordered goods or services for private use via the Internet in the 12 months to February 2000.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

POPULATION SURVEY MONITOR

1 The Population Survey Monitor is a quarterly household survey of approximately 3200 private households throughout Australia. During 2000, the Population Survey Monitor will carry questions about the use of information technology (IT). In each household, an adult (person aged 18 years or over) is selected at random to complete the survey. A trained interviewer conducts a personal interview with the selected adult to obtain information relating to both the household's and the selected adult's usage of IT.

SCOPE AND COVERAGE

2 All usual residents in private households are included in the scope of the PSM. However, households in sparsely settled and Indigenous areas are excluded from the survey. The exclusion of the persons in these households has only a minor impact on the aggregate estimates produced for individual States and Territories. The exception is the Northern Territory where such persons account for approximately 20% of the population.

HOUSEHOLD DATA

3 In addition to gathering data on the use of IT, the survey collected data regarding the characteristics of the household. These characteristics include:

- household income;
- household family classifications;
- State and Territory; and
- region (metropolitan or ex-metropolitan).

PERSONAL DATA

4 The survey also collected data on the characteristics of the randomly selected adult, namely:

- age;
- gender;
- highest educational qualification;
- income;
- labour force status; and
- occupation.

DEFINITION OF HOUSEHOLD

5 A group of one or more persons in a private dwelling who consider themselves to be separate from other persons in the dwelling, and who make regular provision to take meals separately from those other persons. Lodgers who receive accommodation and meals are not treated as separate households. A household may consist of any number of family and non-family members.

DEFINITION OF METROPOLITAN

6 Refers to capital city statistical divisions. These delimit an area which is stable for general statistical purposes. The boundary is defined to contain anticipated development of the city for a period of 20 years. They contain more than just the urban centre, and represent the city in the wider sense.

ACCURACY OF DATA

7 As the estimates in this publication are based on information obtained from a sample drawn from households in the surveyed population, the estimates are subject to sampling variability; that is, they may differ from the figures that would have been produced if all households in Australia had been included in the survey. One measure of the likely difference is given by the standard error (SE), which indicates the extent to which an estimate might have varied by chance because only a sample of households was included. There are about two chances in three that a sample estimate will differ by less than one SE from the figure that would have been obtained if all households had been included in the survey, and about 19 chances in 20 that the difference will be less than two SEs.

8 The SEs for some statistics are relatively high and users are advised to exercise caution in interpreting these statistics. Estimates with SEs of 25% or more have been marked with an asterisk. The following table of SEs relate to estimates of the number of households and estimates of the number of adults.

Size of estimate	Standard error for persons 18+			Standard error for households		
	February 1998	February 1999	February 2000	February 1998	February 1999	February 2000
'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000
5	3.3	3.6	3.6
10	6.9	7.0	7.1	4.7	5.1	5.1
20	9.8	10.5	10.5	6.7	7.3	7.3
50	15.1	17.0	17.0	9.9	11.3	11.3
100	20.8	23.8	23.8	13.3	15.5	15.5
200	27.9	32.4	32.4	17.8	20.9	20.9
500	40.4	46.6	46.6	25.2	30.2	30.2
800	48.4	55.1	55.2	29.5	35.0	35.0
1 000	53.0	59.5	59.5	32.3	39.2	39.2
1 500	60.0	67.7	67.7	37.1	43.4	43.4
2 000	68.2	73.8	73.8	41.8	50.1	50.1

EXAMPLE USING THE STANDARD ERROR TABLE

9 Consider the estimate of the number of households with home Internet access at February 2000. The estimate of 1.9 million households has a standard error of around 50,000. This means there are about two chances in three that the true value (i.e. the value that would have been obtained from a complete census) is within the range 1.85 million to 1.95 million households. There are about 19 chances in 20 that the true value is in the range 1.8 million to 1.9 million households.

COMPARING DATA OVER TIME

10 Users are advised to take care when comparing the data from this publication to similar data from previous issues of *Use of the Internet by Householders* (Cat. no. 8147.0). High standard errors for estimates of movements may mean that an apparent difference between figures is not actually significant. An approximate value for the standard error (SE) of the difference between two estimates (x-y) may be calculated by the following formula:

$$SE(x - y) = \sqrt{[SE(x)]^2 + [SE(y)]^2}$$

11 For example, the increase in the number of households with home Internet access between February 1998 and February 1999 is 660,000. The standard error on this movement is about 64,000. Therefore we can say that there are 2 chances in 3 that the true value is within the range 596,000 to 724,000 and 19 chances in 20 that the true value is in the range 532,000 to 788,000. If the range does not include the value zero, the movement can be considered to be statistically significant.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

12 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) publications draw extensively on information provided freely by individuals, businesses, governments and other organisations. Their continued cooperation is very much appreciated. Without it, the wide range of statistics published by the ABS would not be available. Information received by the ABS is treated in strict confidence as required by the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

13 Other ABS publications on the production and use of information technology and telecommunication goods and services in Australia are:

Household Use of Information Technology, Australia (Cat. no. 8146.0)
1998 and 1999 issues

Use of the Internet by Householders, Australia (Cat. no. 8147.0)
February, May, August and November 1999 issues

Use of Information Technology on Farms, 1998-99 (Cat. no. 8150.0)

Information Technology, Australia, Preliminary 1998-99
(Cat. no. 8143.0)

Telecommunications Services, Australia, 1996-97 (Cat. no. 8145.0)

Business Use of Information Technology, Australia, 1997-98
(Cat. no. 8129.0)

Government Use of Information Technology, 1997-98 (Cat. no. 8119.0)

AVAILABILITY OF UNPUBLISHED STATISTICS

14 As well as statistics included in this publication, the ABS has a range of data on the use of selected information technologies in households. Inquiries about these statistics should be made by telephoning John Ovington on Canberra 02 6252 5189 or email john.ovington@abs.gov.au.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

- INTERNET** www.abs.gov.au the ABS web site is the best place to start for access to summary data from our latest publications, information about the ABS, advice about upcoming releases, our catalogue, and Australia Now—a statistical profile.
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