

Studying Broadband Access: Consider the Non-Adopter

Marc D. Weiner, J.D., Ph.D.

Assistant Research Professor and Associate Director
Bloustein Center for Survey Research, Rutgers University

Chintan Turakhia, M.B.A.

Senior Vice President, Public Policy, Media & Financial Services Research
Abt SRBI

David Ciemnecki

Project Manager
Abt SRBI

Orin T. Puniello, M.P.P.

Project Director
Bloustein Center for Survey Research
Rutgers University

AAPOR ABSTRACT

In March 2010, the Federal Communications Commission made the establishment of a high-speed Internet as the country's dominant communication network a national policy priority. A vital part of that effort, beyond the development of a broadband infrastructure is understanding usage propensities. A fair amount of recent research addresses attitudes and behaviors that lead to broadband adoption and the types of activities in which various populations engage over the internet. However, the research conversation on the non-adopter has lagged.

Thus, rather than further exploring the broadband adopter, we focus on the non-adopter, as the greater social and cultural barrier to full incorporation of the Internet into the American economic/commercial structure. We explore, both descriptively and inferentially, the predictors of nonadoption at the statewide level, in an effort to develop a best-practices model for collecting and analyzing data from broadband non-adopters.

Relying on original statewide data collected under the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's nationwide broadband mapping and planning effort, we describe the attributes and suggest models that predict non-adoption, a critical concomitant component to full, nationwide broadband adoption. From a total sample of 3,100, we will analyze 1,240 non-adopters, 37.5% of which were captured in a cross-section and 62.5% of which were collected through a stratified oversample. These 1,240 non-adopters can be comparatively analyzed against 1,860 adopters, 25% captured by cell-phone and the remaining landline.

In addition, we discuss the methodological challenge of the data capture for broadband non-adopters, where the phenomenon-of-interest (broadband adoption and use) is inversely associated with advanced age, and, where the propensity to respond to a landline survey increases with age.

In sum, then, this paper will present a full-overview of the substantive aspects and methodological challenges of describing and modeling broadband non-adoption and non-use. These findings will have both methodological and policy implications.