

# FAMILY SPENDING SURVEY 2009

## Introduction

It seems extraordinary that in 2009 we still have to monitor the extent to which young learners have access to a computer and the Internet at home. Yet the latest figures from the Government's Family Spending Survey, covering 2008, suggest a staggering 2.2m young people still cannot go online at home and 1.4m lack access to a computer at home.

This is backed up by a recent Save the Children report that found 4m children are living in poverty in the UK and 1.7m children are in "severe poverty", with 19% of all children in London falling into this category.

("Severe poverty" is defined as children living in households with incomes less than 50% of the UK median income and missing some basic possessions such as a winter coat or a bed.)

## Survey Results

72% of all households in the UK now own a computer, up from 32% ten years ago and 45% five years ago.

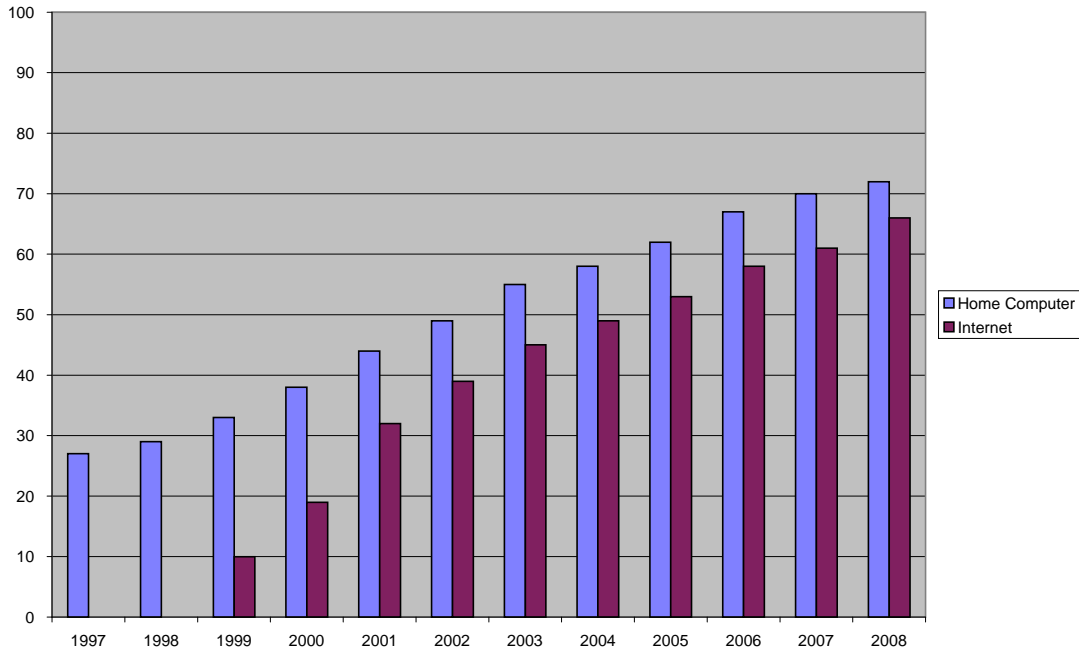
66% of all households have the Internet, up from 45% five years ago.

When we just look at households with children we see that 1.4m children still live in households without a PC, which represents no change from the previous year, and 2.24m live in households without the Internet, a significant reduction from 2.77m the previous year. So families with a computer are now getting online, but those without one are still not engaging with technology.

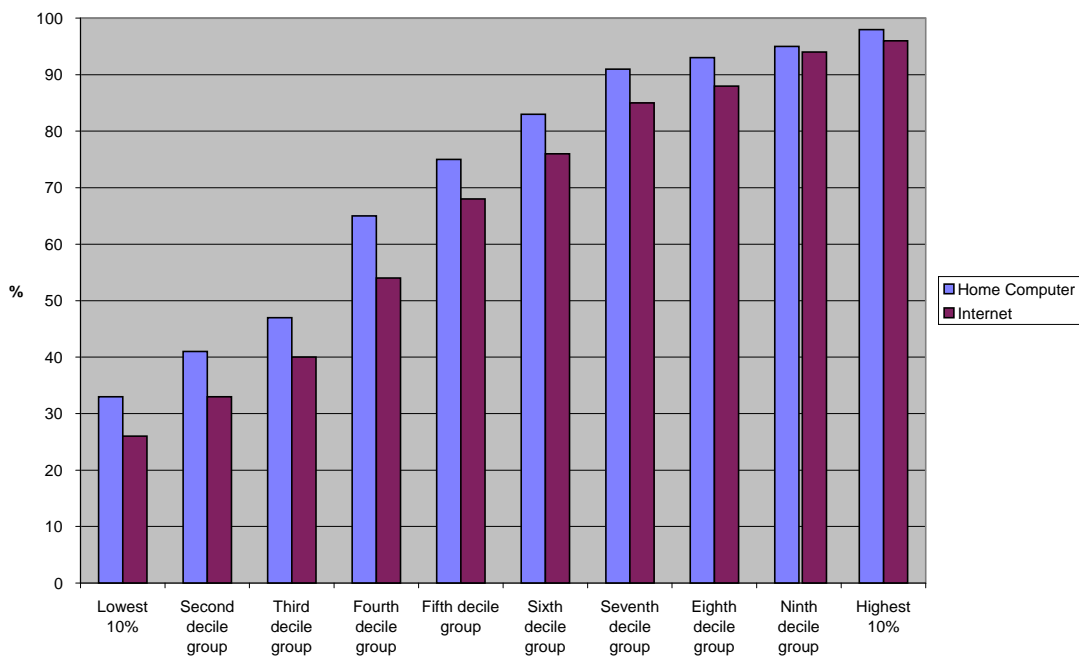
Given the findings from the Save the Children report, it would appear that children living in the poorest 15-20% of households may never engage with the digital economy unless special steps are taken while those who do have access are increasingly getting connected to the Internet, creating a deeper digital divide.

**Household income** continues to be a major determinant of ownership; the graph below clearly demonstrates the "digital divide" with the gap between the lowest and highest income groups continuing to grow. One would expect to see this gap reduce over time with government intervention such as the Computers for Pupils programme run in 2007/8 and the Government Home Access programme which will make a useful contribution to this through 270,000 families being provided with a computer and one years Internet during 2010. However, much more still needs to be done to totally eradicate the digital divide.

**% Households with Computer & Internet 1997-2008**

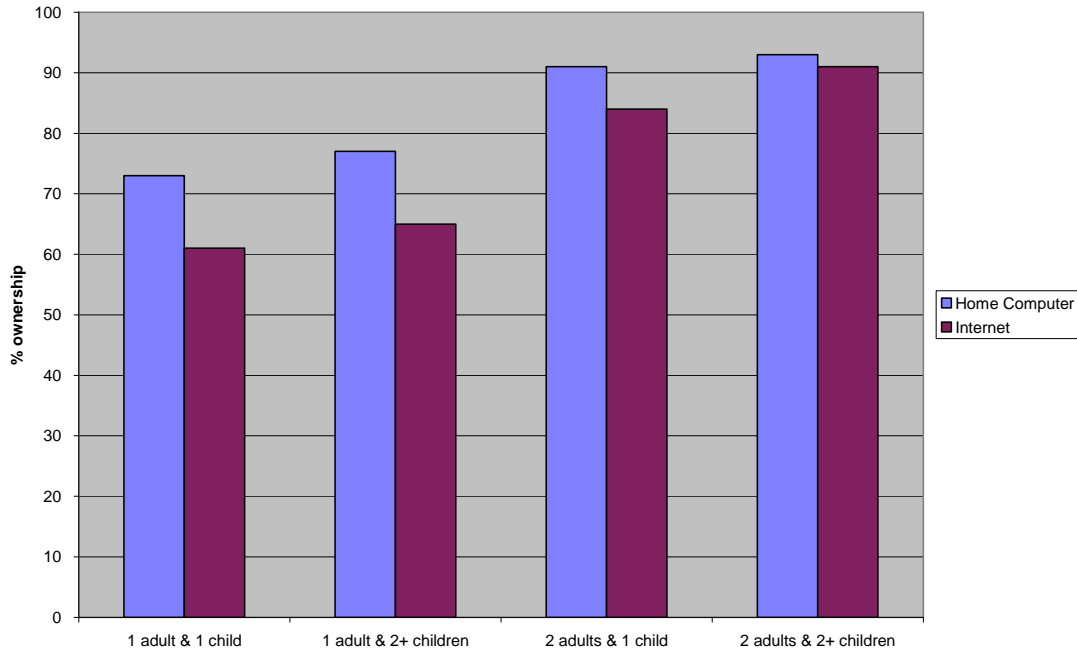


**Computer & Internet at home by family income**



In line with the family income data, **household composition** data shows how single parents are much less able and/or willing to acquire ICT in the home, especially the Internet.

Impact of family composition



## Conclusions

The digital divide remains a significant factor in the UK with children in single parent and low income families most affected. The survey data reinforces the need for charities like the e-Learning Foundation to continue its work to ensure every child has home access to the learning technologies that are now part and parcel of the 21<sup>st</sup> learning experience enjoyed by better off children.

Recent Government decisions to pump in further financial help are fully vindicated by these figures and we should start to see the impact of these programmes in future survey data.

**e-Learning Foundation**  
**January 2010**

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### Source:

[http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_social/Family\\_Spending\\_2007/FamilySpending2008\\_web.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/Family_Spending_2007/FamilySpending2008_web.pdf)

**National Statistics Office: Family Spending Survey 2007; published 2008**

**Save the Children report: Measuring Severe Child Poverty in the UK: January 2010**