Reference No. 94

Summarising: Radoll (2006), *Information and Communication Technology*
Responsibility for the preparation of this research summary rests with the authors of the MCEETYA report *Education, Training and Indigenous Futures: CAEPR Policy Research 1990–2007* and not the original author(s) of the summarised material.

Title of Research:
Information and Communication Technology

Research Publication:
In Assessing the Evidence on Indigenous Socio-economic Outcomes: A focus on the 2002 NATSISS B.H. Hunter (ed)
CAEPR Research Monograph No. 26 2006

Name of Researcher(s):
P. Radoll (a participant in the CAEPR sponsored NATSISS seminar)

Time period:
2002

Geographic location:
Australia-wide

Methodology:
A statistical analysis of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) data collected by the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS).

Aims:
The purpose of this paper is to examine the value and scope of the ICT items contained in the 2002 NATSISS with a particular focus upon identifying the extent to which the notion of ‘digital divide’ applies to Indigenous Australia.

Selected findings and insights:
There was a significant digital divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. In 2002, 44% of Indigenous Australians had used a computer at home in the preceding 12 months, compared to 68% of non-Indigenous Australians. A similar difference in internet usage at home existed between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians - 30% and 58% respectively.

ICT usage was influenced by income and education levels:
• Those in the highest income brackets were twice as likely to use a computer or the internet as those in the lowest income bracket (as measured by comparing the fourth or fifth income quintiles to the lowest income quintile); and
• Whilst those Indigenous Australians with low or no formally quantifiable educational qualifications had the lowest ICT usage, it seemed that post Year 11 represents a key threshold in ICT usage.
Not only was there are significant digital divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, as noted above, there was a significant digital divide between Indigenous Australians living in remote areas compared to those living in non-remote areas:

- Remote communities used computers and the internet less than half as much as those living in non-remote areas. Some 25% of remote Indigenous Australians compared to 51% of non-remote Indigenous Australians had used a computer at home in the preceding 12 months. For internet access, the percentage usage was 14% and 37% respectively.

Access to computers was a significant issue for remote Indigenous Australians who were more reliant on accessing computers at a place of work than at home, whereas computer usage at home was the most common access point for those living in non-remote areas.

- Less than 10% of remote Indigenous people used a computer at home compared to 40% of Indigenous people living in non-remote areas. For using a computer in a neighbour’s, friend’s or relatives house the percentages were less than 5% and almost 25% respectively;

- School access was used by about 10% of both remote and non-remote Indigenous Australians, but again a difference in accessing through TAFE or a public library was apparent - less than 5% (remote) compared to more than 10% (non-remote) in each case.

Some 32% of non-remote Indigenous people accessed the internet at least once a week compared to 15% of those living in remote areas. Non-remote Indigenous people tended to use the internet much more often for private/personal reasons than did remote Indigenous people. About 52% of non-remote Indigenous people did not use the internet at all - compared to 78% of remote Indigenous people who did not use the internet.

Apart from computer/internet access, the paper identifies several other influences upon ICT usage:

- Those on CDEP exhibited least ICT usage compared to unemployed or employed (non-CDEP) Indigenous Australians;

- Younger people were more likely to use computers and the internet;

- Health appeared to play a role in ICT usage, with those without a disability more likely to use ICT than those with a disability (62% and 45% respectively for computer use, with a similar difference for internet use); and

- Access to a home telephone for connectivity, with only 43% of remote homes surveyed having a home telephone compared to 82% of the non-remote population.

The uptake of internet banking was quite low for both non-remote and remote Indigenous populations - 6.1% and 1.1% respectively had used internet banking.

Educational implications:

This paper highlights that both remote and non-remote Indigenous Australians have significant ICT needs. For those living in remote Australia these relate to both access and education whereas for non-remote Indigenous Australians access appears less of an issue but education, especially adult education, seems of primary importance. In both cases, schools can play a major role in encouraging Indigenous adults to attain computer literacy through providing access to ICT and through short-courses for the adult school community – which have spin-offs in creating a high level of parental involvement with the education of their children.

[adult education]
Relevance:

*Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education*

Access to post-compulsory schooling, training, employment and higher education

Return to adult education

**Related papers:**

A.E. Daly, 'Bridging the digital divide: The role of community online access centres in Indigenous communities', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 273, 2005.*