



Rich PC, Poor PC—They Lead (Somewhat) Different Lives

Dan Ness, Principal Analyst, MetaFacts, December 7, 2004

The rich are different from you and me—they order a lot more photo prints online. The upper crust (well, those who make above \$50,000 yearly) are also far more likely to purchase consumer services, perform video editing, work with numbers, and use financial services. But the other half (i.e., those who make less than \$50,000) are more likely to use their PCs for VoIP, and to watch DVDs.

Why is this important?

It misses the mark to assume that only the highest-income households are early adopters, simply because they have more disposable income. Saving money is a key driving factor for some products among those with less to spend. At the same time, assuming that money-saving benefits will cross the income divide to attract those with higher-incomes also misses the mark.

These are other insights came to light when 10,418 households—broken down by income—responded to the Technology User Profile survey from MetaFacts, Inc., about what activities they regularly use their PCs for. The result: rich or poor, nearly everyone (averaging 89 percent) uses their PC for e-mail, and hardly anyone (averaging only 3.3 percent) uses their PC to watch TV. But between those two extremes, there are some important differences and interesting wrinkles.

In terms of how the high-end PC users differ from the low end, the big differentiator is the practice of obtaining prints from online photo services—15.5 percent of the upper crust do it, compared to 8.6 percent of the low end. Evidently the rich are not only more likely to own and use digital cameras, but they want glossy hardcopies to show around.

Meanwhile, using the PC to purchase consumer services online is more popular with people with more money, but involves a divide that is not quite as steep: 28.1 percent of the upper crust does it, as opposed to 16.5 percent of the lower crust. The same holds true for using the PC to work with numbers, with 32.1 percent of the high-end doing it as opposed to 19.5 percent of the low end. Apparently the rich have more numbers to crunch—but the poor have some, too. The situation was similar when it came to accessing financial services, with 37.6 percent of the high end doing it compared to 25.5 percent of the low end.

As for video editing, the rich/poor divide was stark—but hard to get excited about because the total numbers are so small. Only 5.4 percent of the high-end use their PCs for video editing, compared to 3.3 percent of the low end. Those who said that people were not going to spend their days at the office working at a PC in order to rush home to spend the evening at a PC editing family videos were correct.

There are, meanwhile, areas where low end users outshine high-end users. When it comes to using the PC to make phone calls via Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), those with less money employ this money-saving technology 9 percent of the time, compared to 6.6 percent of high-end users. And when it comes to using their PCs to watch movies on DVD (and thus avoid buying a separate DVD player) 12.7 percent of

the low-end users report doing it, compared to 11.2 percent of the high-end users. While these are not huge figures, they do indicate that early adopters can be found at all economic strata. And, since the percentages cover the national user base, the figures should not be dismissed—if nine percent of low-end households are making use of VoIP, that’s almost five million households that have found a way to use their available technology to side-step the phone company and save some money.

If case you were wondering, there are instances where the high-end and low-end uses exactly coincide. When it comes to hobbies, about 35 percent of both strata use their PC. When it comes to calendar management, 17.5 percent use it on both sides of the divide. Differences are statistically insignificant when it comes to educational activities for adults (averaging 20.1 percent) and for children (averaging 20.8 percent) and for downloading music (averaging 30.2 percent.) If it’s true that there are things that money can’t buy, it also appears to be true that there are activities that money has little impact on.

Online & Offline Activities

Selected Activities
(% of Home PCs)

Selected Activities	\$50,000 Income or Higher	Less than \$50,000 Income
Use financial services	37.6	25.5
Working with numbers	32.1	19.5
Purchase consumer services	28.1	16.5
Obtain prints of digital photos from online photo service	15.5	8.6
Watch DVD movies	11.2	12.7
Make VoIP calls	6.6	9.0
Video editing	5.4	3.3

Source: MetaFacts, Inc. – Technology User Profile – 2004 Annual Edition

Background & Methodology

Factual, decision-making information like this is only found in one place, the Technology User Profile from MetaFacts. The Technology User Profile market research information service is based on extensive primary research selected and balanced to represent the American population - including technology users and non-technology users. Drawn from more than 30,000 surveys per year reporting on over 250 questions, it is the most comprehensive total market technology study available. TUPdates are brief summaries of information contained in the Technology User Profile.

Links to Source Data

Current Technology User Profile subscribers may be interested in the following links with related, more detailed or updated information:

[Activities for which PC is Regularly Used \(Home/Family\)](#)

- [TUP 2004 Annual Edition](#) (Excel)
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Online/Internet Activities (Home/Family)

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Other Resources

Current Technology User Profile subscribers may be interested in the following links with related, more detailed or updated information:

Activities for which PC is Regularly Used (Total Market)

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Activities for Which PC is Used (Multiple PC Households)

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