

Lack of interest or cost remain the most frequently reported reasons for not using an internet or broadband service at home. Other factors include education level, work status, occupation, income and living arrangements.

Older Australians: What's holding back their interest in **online** participation?

***Australia in the Digital Economy Report 2: Online Participation* was released by ACMA on 7 May and presents research findings into the take-up and use of the internet. In seeking to build an understanding of the factors that influence the propensity of Australians to participate online or not, the report found that age is one of a number of significant factors.**

The findings show that while the internet has become an essential part of the lives of most Australians, with the majority (84 per cent) logging on at least weekly, segments of the community still use the internet infrequently or not at all. These Australians are generally older, retired, living on their own and more likely to earn less than \$50,000 per annum.

'The report indicates that lack of interest or cost remain the most frequently reported reasons for not using the internet,' said Chris Chapman, ACMA Chair. 'As well as age, a number of other factors affect the willingness to subscribe to an internet or broadband service at home, including education level, work status, occupation, income and living arrangements.'

'The majority of older non-internet users see no real benefit in using the internet, while non-internet users aged between 18 and 49 identified cost as the major barrier to connection. The majority of those not online

(77 per cent) do not plan to connect or use the internet in the future,' Mr Chapman said.

'Addressing these barriers to participation is important for social inclusion and ensuring that all Australians can garner the benefits of online activities in the rapidly evolving digital economy. Access to the internet, an understanding of how to effectively use it, and managing online risks are all important to wider adoption of it, and its role in underpinning the digital economy.'

The report also found that as Australians become familiar with the internet and its potential benefits they start to use it for day-to-day activities such as banking, shopping, entertainment and research. The report indicates that the number of people who used the internet daily increased from 36 per cent in the quarter ending September 2004 to 52 per cent in the quarter ending June 2008.

Although the most popular internet activities include email, banking, general browsing and

paying bills, use of newer applications such as user-generated content and social networking is increasing. While adoption of these services is being driven by younger Australians, they are increasingly being used by all age groups. Their use is influenced by factors such as lifestyle, the frequency of internet use and broadband connection.

ACMA has released three reports complementary to Online Participation:

- *Australia in the Digital Economy: Trust and Confidence*, which outlines the attitudes and behaviour of Australians regarding their online security.
- *Convergence and Communication Report 1: Australian Household Consumers' Take-up and Use of Voice Communication Services*, which examines adoption of emerging services such as VoIP and 3G by household consumers, and the level of substitution between fixed-line and mobile phones.
- *Convergence and Communication Report 2: Take-up and Use of Communications by Small and Medium Enterprises*, which examines changing trends in SME adoption and use of communications services.

All four reports are available on the ACMA website www.acma.gov.au (go to > About ACMA: Publications & research: Research).