

Initial Summary Report



Computer and Broadband Use in West Virginia

Initial Summary Report to the Future Generations Graduate School

Emily Carlson, Study Director
Research and Evaluation Officer, Future Generations Graduate School

A baseline study and report developed for the Future Generations Graduate School's West Virginia Broadband Opportunities Program to expand broadband and educational access through 60 volunteer fire departments across West Virginia.

2 December 2010

www.futurewv.org



BROADBANDUSA
CONNECTING AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES

Project Summary



In 2010, the Future Generations Graduate School launched the West Virginia Broadband Opportunities Program to make computers and the internet more accessible and useful to West Virginia’s families. This program partners with one of the state’s strongest volunteer networks—local fire departments and rescue squads.

With support from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, over the next three years, this program will set up 60 public computer labs in the community centers of local fire departments.

A computer mentor selected by each fire department will offer basic computer classes. Other training partners, including the Monongahela National Forest, Mission WV, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, and the WV Partnership of African American Churches, will offer additional classes to make broadband more useful for families. Volunteers from the communities are also encouraged to share their skills and knowledge through these new learning centers.

About the Future Generations Graduate School

The Future Generations Graduate School is an accredited institution of higher education based in Pendleton County, West Virginia, offering a Master’s Degree designed for community leaders worldwide. The Graduate School is an outgrowth of Future Generations, an organization based in West Virginia since 1992, specializing in community-led development.

Survey Methodology

In July-November 2010, the Future Generations Graduate School conducted baseline household surveys in 30 communities of this project's year-one service area. The baseline survey served three functions:

1. Collect data for evaluating program impact and change in broadband subscription rates
2. Generate awareness about the new computer labs through face to face interaction with the public
3. Assess each community's interests and needs so that each computer center offers useful resources and training programs

Methodology

Staff and a team of eight Community Interviewers conducted door-to-door household surveys throughout the project's service area. Using a Stratified Cluster Sampling Method, each geographic area served by a Fire and Rescue Station served as the primary sampling frame. Within 26 Fire and Rescue Station service areas, a randomly selected United States Postal Service mail carrier route became the secondary cluster. Along this route, Community Interviewers conducted 30 surveys, an appropriate sample size according to statistical calculations. For service areas that contained both rural and urban carrier routes, the sample was split accordingly.

Community Interviewers conducted a 6-10 minute, face-to-face interview with each household to gauge their knowledge of computers, internet access, and also inquire about training and opportunity interests. Families that demonstrated exceptionally creative ways of improving their livelihoods with broadband were invited to participate in an outreach campaign to stimulate interest and excitement within their community.

Years Two and Three of Project

Year 2: The same baseline survey will be conducted at 30 new sites to be equipped with computer labs in years two and three .

Year 3: Concluding this project in year three, a follow-up survey will be conducted in all 60 sites to evaluate program impact and changes in broadband subscription rates.

Other Crucial Data Sources

Additional evaluation approaches will be used to complement the Baseline Community Survey.

Monitoring Public Computer Labs

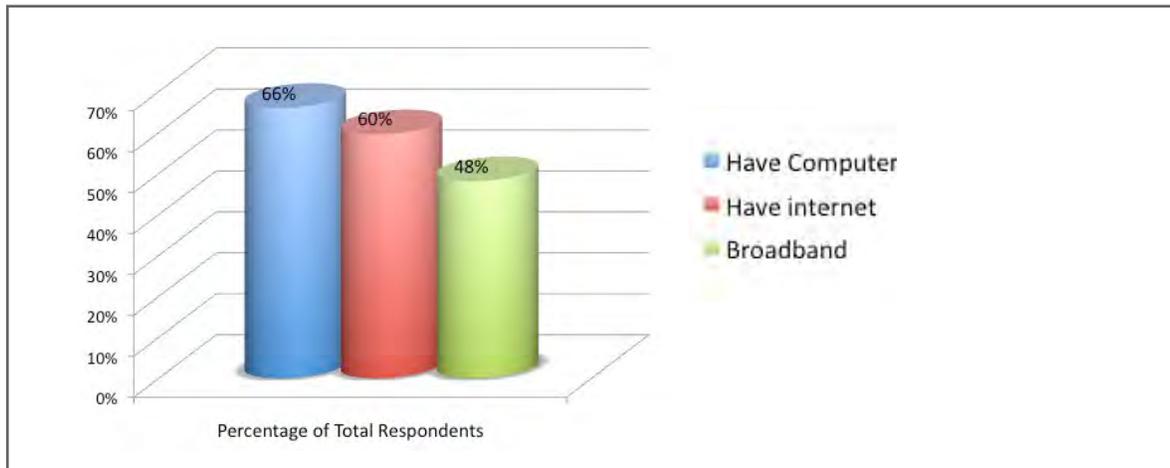
When a unique individual logs into a public computer for the first time, he or she will be prompted to answer a few questions about their home access to a computer and/or internet. They will be given an anonymous PIN (Personal Identification Number), which they will use to sign on to a public computer. Every four months, each user will be prompted with a brief follow-up survey. This data will help the project monitor how the public computer centers and training programs influence changes in broadband use and subscriptions as well as levels of volunteerism.

Coordination with Internet Service Providers (ISPs)

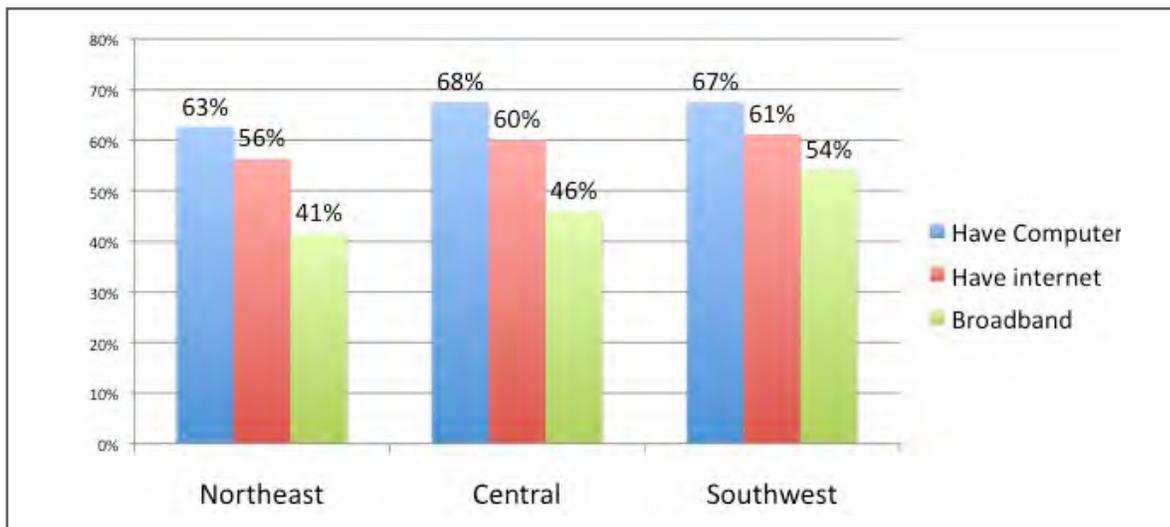
Coordination and partnership with Internet Service Providers will help this project track new broadband subscribers who benefited from Future Generations programming with local Fire and Rescue Squads. ISPs will work with Future Generations to code marketing material that will track whether users of the public computer labs become new broadband subscribers at home.

Key Findings: Computer and Internet Use

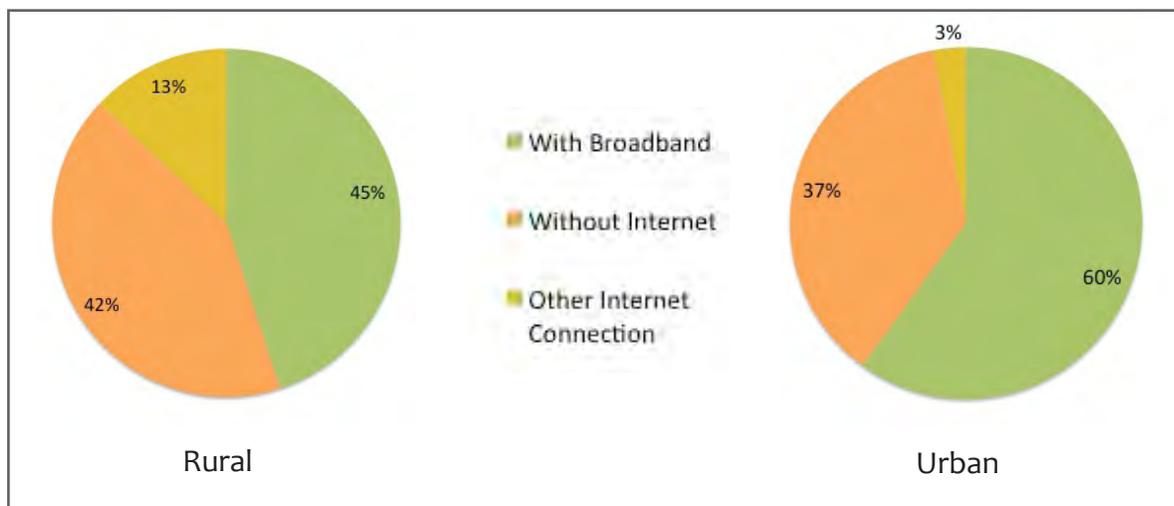
1.1 Overall Computer and Internet Use



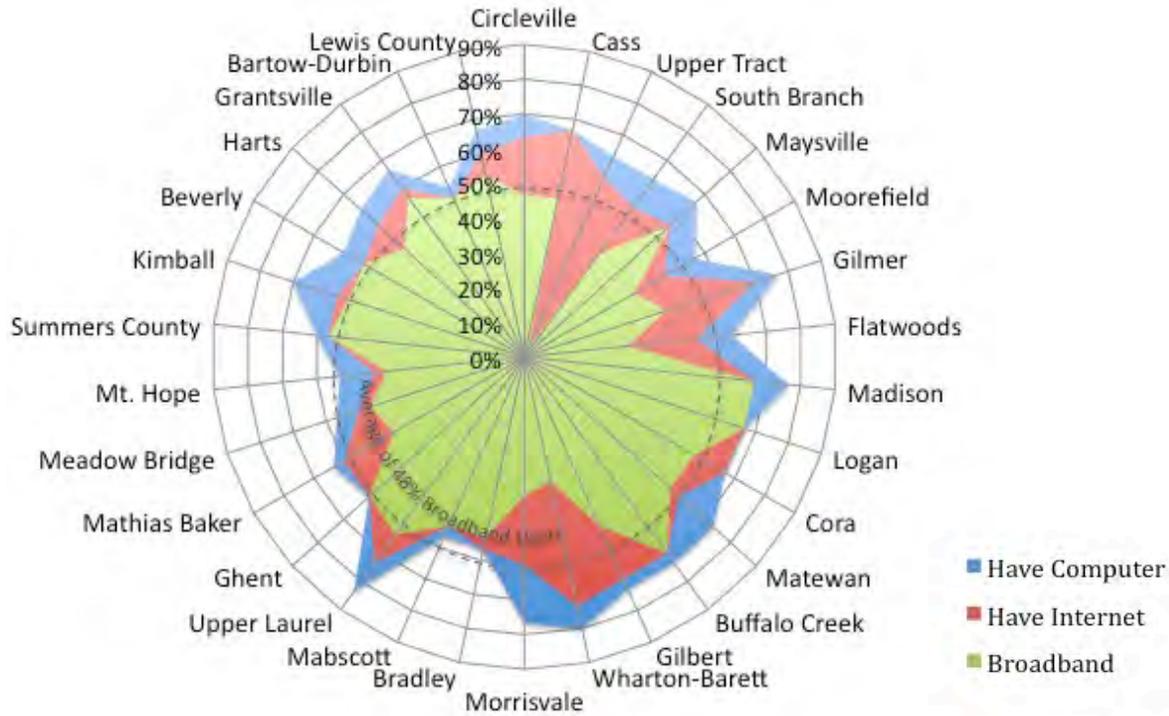
1.2 Regional Comparisons



1.3 Rural and Urban Comparisons



1.4 Computer and Internet Use Per Community



1.1 66% of households own a functioning computer, and 49% of those same households have a broadband connection. Of the 900 households surveyed, only 58 had a computer and did not subscribe to an internet connection. The top three reasons respondents gave are that it is too expensive, they already have free internet access, or there is no broadband connection currently available. Of the 298 respondents that did not have computers, 37% of them responded that they did not need one. Affordability, time, and difficulty to learn were other major factors accounting for people not having computers.

1.2 A regional comparison indicates that although computer ownership at home is fairly consistent throughout the region, Southwestern West Virginia has a 10% higher broadband subscription rate. This could be a result of available access.

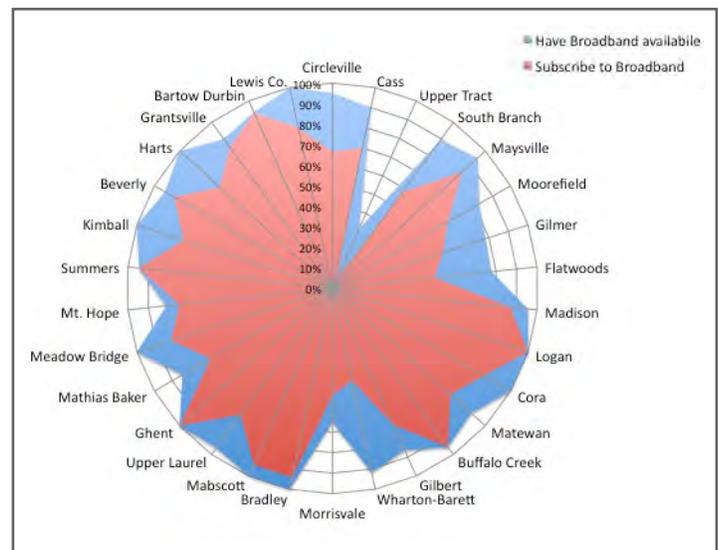
1.3 Households in less populated rural areas, versus town centers, have a 19% lower broadband subscription rate. This may be a result of lack of broadband availability. Rural households that are located too far from the broadband trunk line cannot affordably connect.

1.4 This graph offers a visual representation of which communities are underutilizing broadband. In some

communities, such as Upper Tract, broadband has only recently become available.

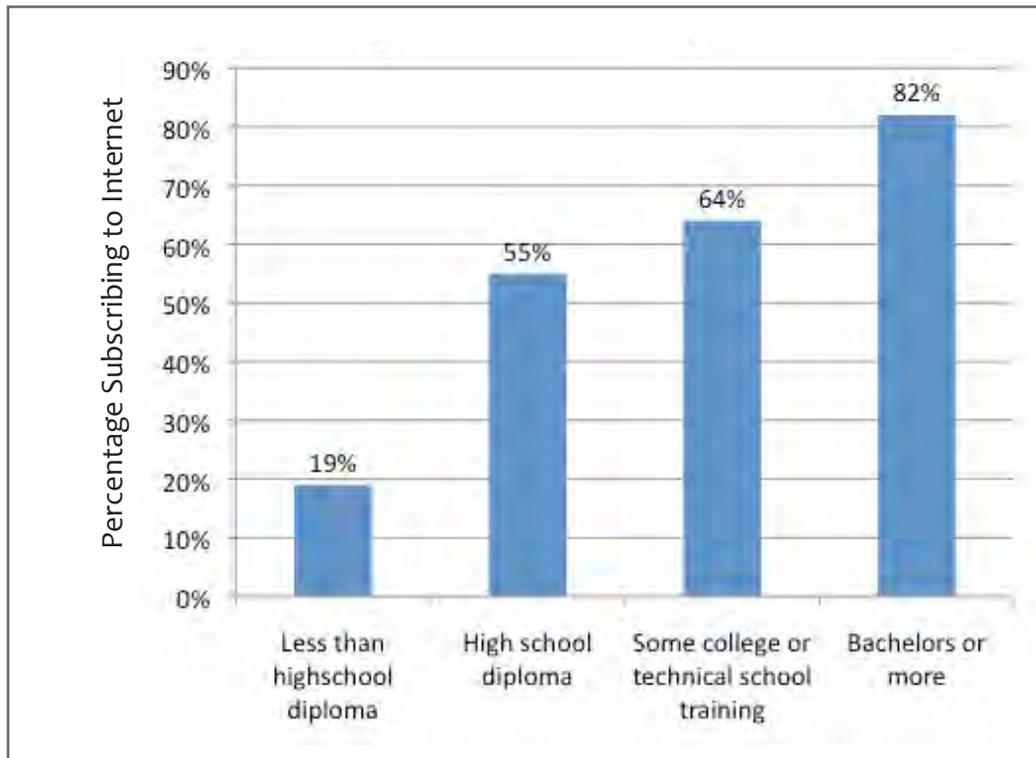
1.5 Of the 594 respondents owning a functioning computer, 10% do not have a broadband connection available to their home. 89% of computer owners have broadband available to their home. 75% of these computer owners with broadband availability subscribe to broadband.

1.5 Broadband Availability and Subscriptions Among Computer Owners



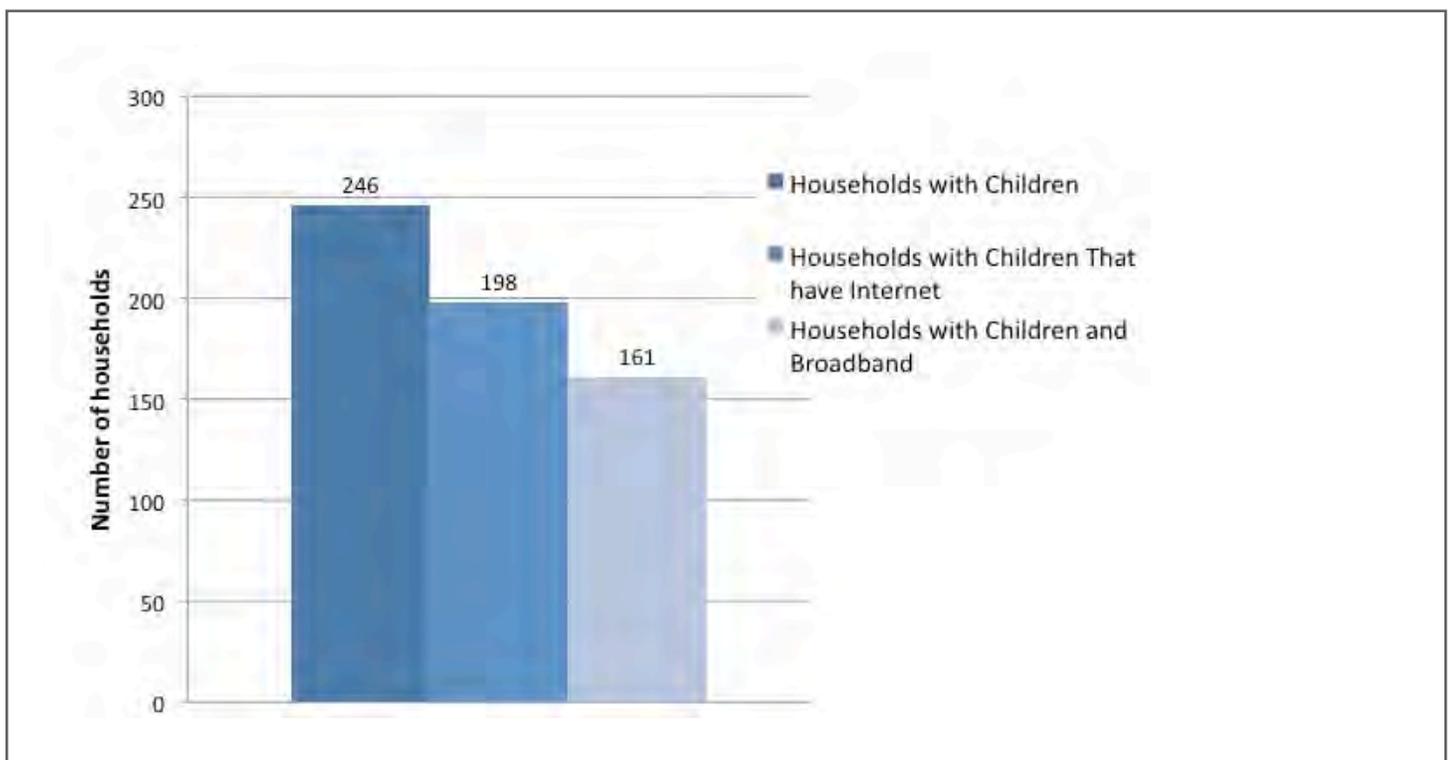
Key Findings: Education & Training Interests

1.6 Percentage of Internet Subscriptions within Educational Levels

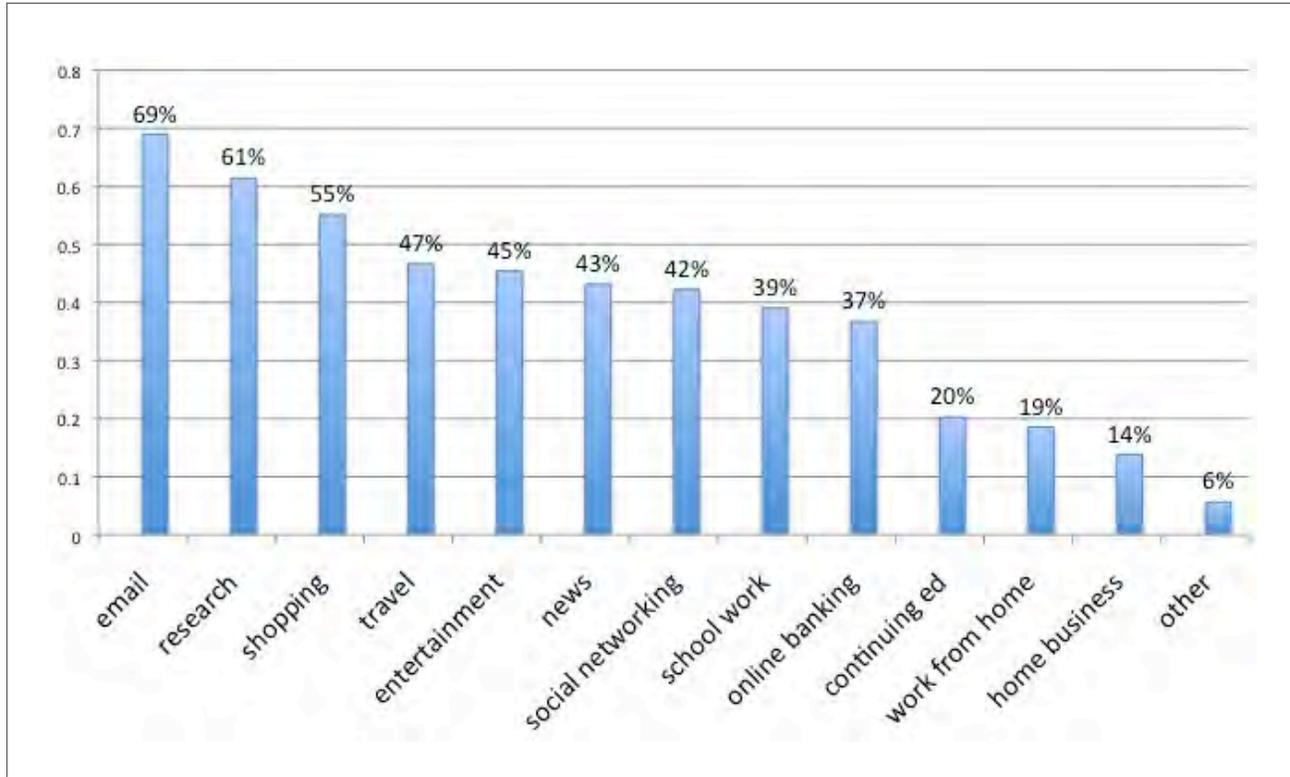


1.6 Of the 900 households interviewed, 359 had the highest educational attainment of a high school diploma, 100 households had less than a high school education, 195 had some college or technical school training, and 185 households had achieved a Bachelor's degree or higher.

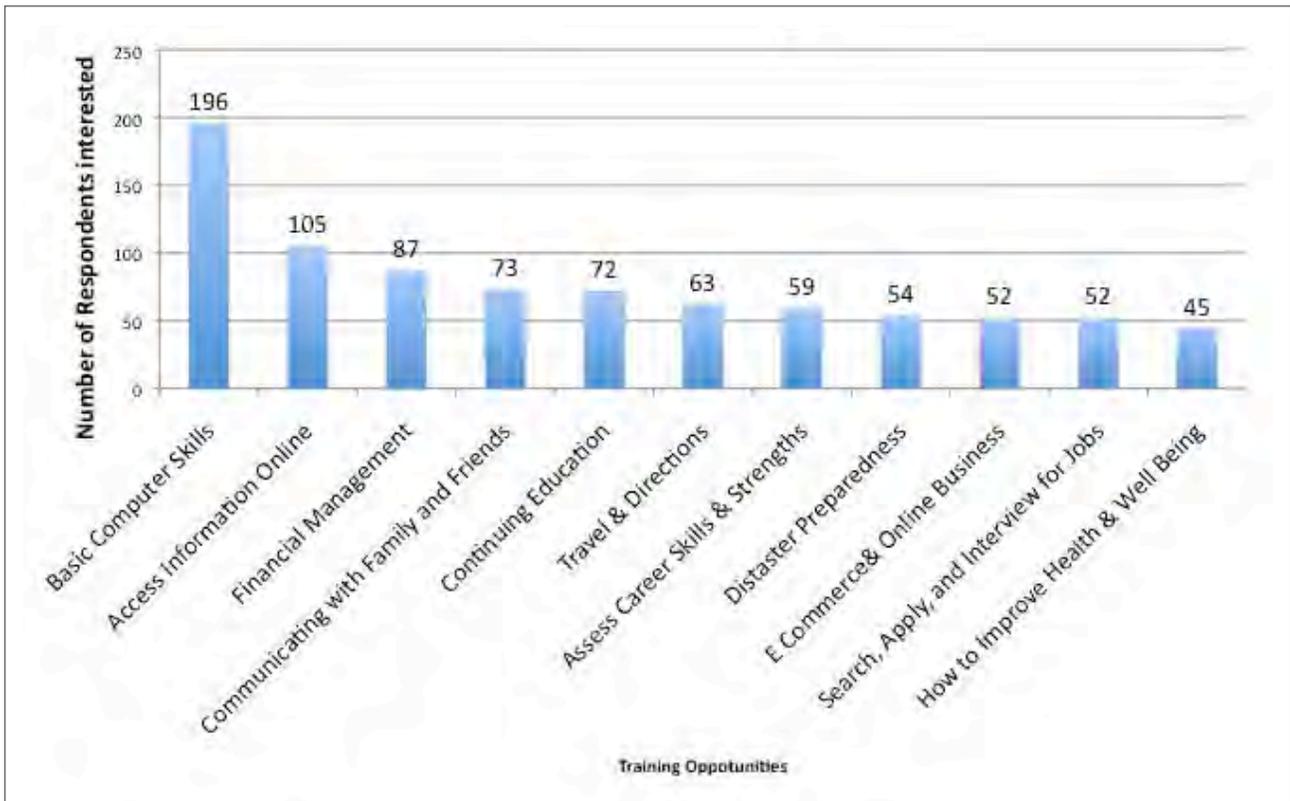
1.7 80% of Households with Children (age 7-18) have Internet



1.8 Current Internet Use Activities



1.9 Classes and Learning Interests



Contact

FutureGenerations and the
FutureGenerations Graduate School

North Mountain
HC 73 Box 100
Franklin, WV 26807 USA
Tel: 304.358.2000
Fax: 304.358.3008
Email: broadband@future.edu