

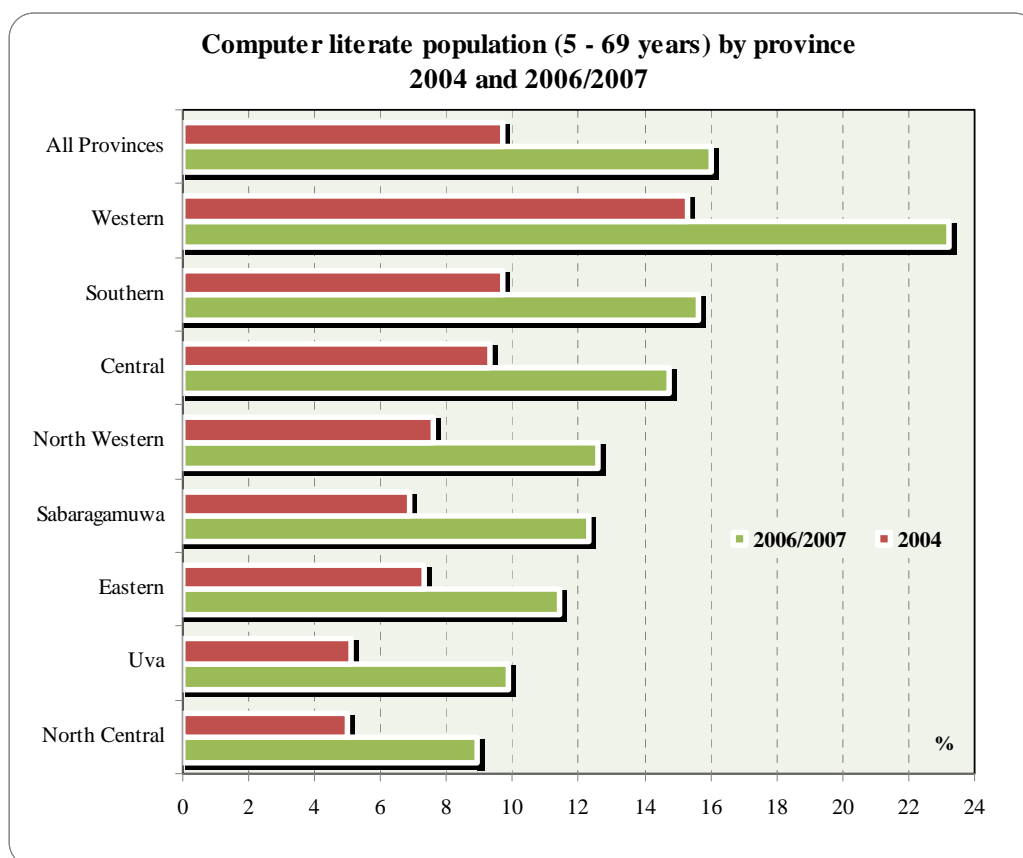
## Census Department Measures ICT Penetration into Households

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Many experts believe that computer literacy has become the fourth pillar to the traditional three tenets of education: reading, writing, and arithmetic, and that a failure to acquire the now requisite technical knowledge will prevent large segments of population from realizing the fruits of the Information Age. The Department of Census and Statistics recently released the report of the Household Survey on Computer Literacy conducted in 2006/2007 by the department. The main objective of this survey was to assess the computer literacy of household population in the age group of 5 to 69 years and e-readiness of households. It also examined the availability of ICT related infrastructure facilities and use of computers and e-mail/Internet etc at households.

This survey covered the whole country other than Northern Province and Trincomalee district in the Eastern Province. Number of households surveyed was 19,628. Altogether 63,225 persons in the age group of 5 – 69 years were interviewed.

Electricity is an important utility for using ICT equipment. According to the findings of this survey, about 80% of Sri Lankan households are having electricity. Availability of electricity in the urban sector is near universal (94%) and even in rural sector 65% of households have electricity. Hence, Sri Lanka is not likely to left behind in the Digital Divide due to lack of electricity.



Computers are becoming a household item. The luxury of emailing messages is definitely preferred over telephone which is far more expensive. Checking news, weather, and sports via the Internet is a convenience that many are taking advantage of. Computer skills are essential for efficiency in all aspects of our fast changing world. The home is where family members can spend unlimited hours on the computer, something not possible at libraries or community centers.

The study shows that 8.2% of all households in Sri Lanka now possess a personal computer – a figure up from 3.8% in 2004. In the Western Province, 16.4% of households have computers. North Central (2.7%) and Uva (2.7%) provinces particularly lag behind compared to other provinces of the country in computer ownership.

There are significant differences in the availability of personal computers across sectors. While 17.8% of Sri Lanka's urban households own a computer, only 6.9% of rural and 1.1% of estate sector households own computers. At national level, Laptop Computers are available in only 0.9% households and these are primarily in the Colombo District (3.3%).

Among households that have computers, 27.3% have the e-mail facility which implies that only 2.3% of all households have e-mail access from home. However, this is an increase from the 0.9% level in 2004.

Internet provides access to a number of communication services including the World Wide Web and carries email, news, entertainment and data files. Wealth of information for almost any field can be accessed through internet. Internet facility is available in 2.4% of households in Sri Lanka up from 0.7% in 2004. Digital divide in locations is clearly evident from the fact that 7.1% of urban sector households and only 0.3% of estate sector households have internet facilities. Similarly 5.7% of Western province households have internet and availability is less than 1.5% for all other provinces. In about 10% of households in Colombo district, internet facility is available. The availability of internet is less than 4% in all other districts.

The government is setting up computer resource centers such as Nenasala, Vishva Ganna Kendra etc., from where ICT services could be obtained. It is encouraging to note that almost one fourth of households indicated that at least one member of their households were aware about availability of such computer resource centers in their localities.

According to the findings of this study, home computers are not idling. About 45% of the home computers are used daily and 36% are used several times a week. Computers in only 2.4% of the households are used infrequently (less than once a month).

As indicated before, 91.8% of the Sri Lankan households do not possess a computer. This survey attempted to find out the reasons for not having a computer. Little over 60% of households not having computers have reported that having a computer was not required. Some households (46.9%) have not acquired a computer due to financial constraints. The fear

that computers are not good for children is not a factor hindering the acquisition of computers in Sri Lankan households. Only 1.9% of households have reported that they didn't acquire computer, because they thought computers were not good for children.

Computer literacy is measured by different methods. Now most countries measure computer literacy in terms of ability to use computer. Sri Lanka is still not using this technology at very high levels particularly at household level. It was found that only 8.2% of Sri Lankan households have computers. Therefore, for the purpose of this survey, the ability to use computers was measured in terms of three indicators, namely computer awareness, computer literacy and the ability to use two different software packages.

Knowing about at least one of the uses of computers was defined as computer awareness. Ability to use a computer to perform a task was defined as computer literacy. Here, the type of task was not defined. For example, a child of 5 years who can use a computer to play a game was considered as computer literate. The computer awareness of the household population in the age group of 5 - 69 years stands at 37.1%, up from 18.2% in 2004. Nearly half of the urban sector population is aware of computers while the percentage was only 10.3% for estate sector. Computer awareness is about 40% for the rural sector population in the ages of 5 - 69 years.

Computer literacy of Sri Lanka is 16.1% up from 9.7% in 2004. Digital divide is clearly present in computer literacy with respect to location. Computer literacy is 25.1% in urban sector and for rural and estate sectors it is 15.1% and 4.3% respectively.

Some countries use ability to use software packages to measure computer literacy. In this study also, it was attempted to find out the ability of Sri Lankan population in the age group of 5 - 69 years using at least two different software packages. It was found that 11.4% can use at least two software packages.

There is a clear relationship between educational attainment and computer literacy. Higher the educational attainment higher is the computer literacy. For example for those who have attained G.C.E. (A/L) or above the computer literacy is 53.4% while it is only 0.9% for those have had no schooling.

With respect to the use of e-mail and internet, three groups were identified. Some can use e-mail and internet on their own. Some can use it with the assistance of others. Those who cannot use it belong to the third group. Percentage of population in the age group of 5 - 69 years who can use e-mail without assistance is 5.2% and another 5.0% can use e-mail with the assistance of others. Almost 90% are unable to use e-mails. Usage of internet among household population in the age group of 5 - 69 years is still at low levels. Only 5.0% can use internet on their own and another 4.7% can use it with the assistance of others indicating that 90% of the population cannot use internet.

Findings of this study provide a basis against which changes in the trends in using ICT at Sri Lankan households can be measured. This report provides data on availability of ICT related infrastructure facilities at households as well as on household populations' access and use of ICT. These data can help policymakers focus policies and programs to promote inclusion in using computers and the Internet at household level and thereby enhancing the use of emerging technology for improving the lives of people.

Copies of this report can be obtained from the sales counter of the Department of Census and Statistics, Located at 5<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Unity Plaza building, Bambalapitiya.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Some key indicators on e-readiness of households: Sri Lanka

No	Indicator	2004	2006/2007
<b>A. Percentage of households with</b>		(%)	(%)
1	electricity	-	80.2
2	radio	-	80.1
3	television	-	76.3
4	land phone	-	30.4
5	mobile phone	-	36.6
6	fax machine	-	0.9
7	at least one member aware about government computer resource centers	-	24.7
8	desktop computers - National	3.8	8.2
	8a - Urban sector	10.5	17.8
	8b - Rural sector	3.1	6.9
	8c - Estate sector	0.3	1.1
9	computers which had been acquired within 12 months prior to the survey	44.2	47.0
10	laptop computer	-	0.9
11	e-mail	0.9	2.3
12	internet	0.7	2.4
<b>B. Households</b>			
13	having a printer as a percentage of those who have computers	41.8	39.0
14	having a CD drive as a percentage of those who have computers	58.9	82.3
15	having e-mail as a percentage of those who have computers	24.7	27.3
16	having internet as a percentage of those who have computers	19.2	28.6
17	experienced computer failures as a percentage of those who have computers	-	36.0
<b>C. Percentage of household population in the age group of 5 – 69 years who</b>			
18	are aware about computers	18.2	37.1
19	are computer literate	9.7	16.1
20	are able to use at least two different software packages	-	11.4
21	can use e-mail without assistance	2.8	5.2
22	can use internet without assistance	2.6	5.0
23	have used a mobile phone at least once*	-	46.1
<b>D. Population in the age group of 5 – 69 years</b>			
24	who have used e-mail at least once as a percentage of those who are able to use e-mail*	-	41.5
25	who have used internet at least once as a percentage of those who are able to use internet*	-	45.2
26	who have an e-mail address as a percentage of those who are able to use e-mail	-	30.2
- Not available due to either data not collected or differences in definitions			
* Reference period is the 12 months prior to the survey			

