everyoneon

March 10, 2017

Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration

Request for Comments: November 2017 Current Population Survey's Computer and Internet Use Supplement

EveryoneOn respectfully submits these comments in response to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) request for public comments and feedback on the Computer and Internet Use Supplement.

About EveryoneOn

EveryoneOn is a national nonprofit creating social and economic opportunity by connecting everyone to the Internet. Since 2012, we have connected more than 400,000 low-income people in 48 states to free and affordable home Internet service, devices, and digital literacy training. We aim to leverage the democratizing power of the Internet to provide opportunity to all people in the United States —using connectivity to create social mobility for all.

Our organization has been able to attain national scale while maintaining impact on a community level due to our three-part approach: 1) working with Internet service providers to create and deploy low-cost offers; 2) creating a best-in-class digital platform, which is best described as a "TurboTax for digital inclusion" that families can use to access affordable Internet service, devices, and digital literacy education; 3) and maintaining a nationwide network of partners across sectors who are working on-the-ground directly in communities. No other organization has brought together such a collection of assets to bridge the digital divide.

Serving as an facilitator between low-income communities and people and Internet service providers, device refurbishers, and digital literacy trainers, we also work with enrollment partners (nonprofits, schools, and other community-based organizations) across the country to better reach eligible populations. Through our digital platform, partner platforms, and relationships with Internet service providers and device refurbishers, we are able to market these affordable home Internet offers and collect data in order to help people adopt the Internet and end the digital divide once and for all.

Executive Summary: Recommendations

To that end, EveryoneOn recommends the following regarding the Computer and Internet Use Supplement:

- *Assess the Digital Literacy Component of Adoption and Non-Adoption*
  - In the USEINT follow-up section, delve deeper into measuring the respondent's comfort level with the enumerated tasks on a scale of 1 to 5.
  - Gaining data on the digital literacy of adopters will complete the three legs of the digital inclusion stool alongside devices and connectivity.
  - In the NONINT follow-up section, delve deeper into the respondent's comfort with digital tasks. Obtaining this data on digital literacy among non-adopters can inform digital inclusion advocates' work in digital literacy to lead to connectivity adoptions.
- *Identify the Internet Use Case that is an Adoption Tipping Point:*
  - Similar to the PRINOH question format, it would be incredibly useful to gauge what Internet-based activities are the strongest motivators behind unconnected folks' desire to connect to the Internet.
  - Additionally, we would be interested in learning more about the tipping point - where does desire to access something based online intersect with and supercede the number one barrier to adoption listed in NOHM?
- *Obtain Greater Detail on PSENSI, or the lower price at which non-adopters would adopt:*
  - The number one barrier to Internet adoption is high cost.[1] If the survey could present another proof point for this AND help determine what an affordable price point would be, the results could play a critical role in generating actionable solutions to closing the digital divide.
- *Ask Adopters about 1) Affordability and 2) Data Sufficiency of Internet Plans:*
  - Record range of monthly costs to help inform both sides of the price barrier to adoption, and measure respondent's self-categorization of affordability.
  - Determine data sufficiency of existing subscriptions. This can help set a baseline – how much data adopters need and use should inform the baseline for broadband assistance: how much data non-adopters receive through assistance should match what adopters need.
- *Inquire Further About the Use of Internet for Educational Purposes and Resources:*
  - The Supplement should ask about using the Internet for educational purposes and resources beyond the existing question about online classes or job training.
- *Add a Question about Using the Internet to Access or Use Government Benefit Programs:*
  - The Supplement should seek to learn if people are accessing federal or state-level social benefits online

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[1]http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/12/21/3-barriers-to-broadband-adoption-cost-is-now-a-substantial-challenge-for-many-non-users/

Assess the Digital Literacy Component of Internet Adoption and Non-Adoption
Understanding the value of the supplement's brevity, EveryoneOn would be greatly interested in the "Why?" follow-up questions to the USEINT section. Fully recognizing that the supplement cannot ask open-ended questions to determine why a respondent does or does not use the Internet for a particular task, we suggest asking a question evaluating comfort with the task on a scale from 1 to 5. The objective of asking this question is to come closer to an understanding of the digital literacy impediments to Internet use. So far, the Supplement does excellent work to obtain information on two of the three legs of the digital inclusion stool – devices and Internet connectivity – but does not go far enough in pursuing the third leg, digital literacy. Understanding more about the user's capabilities and understanding as related to the functions used or not used could shed light on the role of digital literacy in accessing important resources or functions.

In the NONINT follow-up section, delve deeper into the respondent's comfort with digital tasks. Obtaining this data on digital literacy among non-adopters can inform digital inclusion advocates' work in digital literacy to lead to connectivity adoptions.

Identify the Internet Use Case that would be an Internet Adoption Tipping Point
Similar to the PRINOH question format, it would be incredibly useful to gauge what Internet-based activities are the strongest motivators behind unconnected folks' desire to connect to the Internet. For example, is online banking the top reason why an unconnected individual would like to be online? Additionally, we'd be interested in learning more about the tipping point - where does desire to access something based online intersect with and supercede the number one barrier to adoption listed in NOHM.

Obtain Greater Detail on PSENSI, the price point at which non-adopters would adopt
The number one barrier to Internet adoption is high cost. If the survey could present another proof point for this AND help determine what an affordable price point would be, the results could play a critical role in generating actionable solutions to closing the digital divide.

The Supplement should seek to ascertain what the "lower price" at which people would purchase Internet is. The current understanding is that for low-income people in the United States, around $10 a month is an affordable cost. It would be extremely helpful if the Supplement could either provide another proofpoint or a correction to this understanding. Additionally, the field of digital inclusion doesn't have as strong a grasp on what price points prevent other socioeconomic brackets from purchasing Internet, and the Supplement can provide an invaluable service to the field in determining these price barriers across the board.

Ask Adopters about 1) Affordability and 2) Data Sufficiency of Internet Plans
  ● *For those with Internet in the home, record range of monthly costs.*
Similarly, it would be useful to learn about price points for current Internet subscribers. Since price is the largest barrier to Internet adoption, at what point have people crossed over that line? Collecting information about price points on both sides of adoption would help us continue to make Internet affordable for all. For those who do have Internet in the home, the Supplement should determine if the respondent feels their subscription is affordable. What is the price point, and does the payer feel it is affordable?

  ● *For those with Internet in the home, determine sufficiency of data plans*
With the knowledge that many do not know how much data they pay for, it would remain useful to gather data on the amount of data that consumers purchase. Coupled with the information obtained in the USEINT section, data usage can shed light on Internet usage This could help inform programs like Lifeline, which mandate the data minimums that can be offered to the disadvantaged recipients of the broadband subsidy.

Inquire Further About the Use of Internet for Educational Purposes and Resources
The Internet provides a wealth of educational resources beyond online classes and in-school use. The Supplement should seek to learn if respondents are using the Internet for educational purposes (accessing resources, studying for standardized tests, reviewing material, taking self-paced enrichment, etc.) beyond enrolled online courses or job training. For example, is a student using The College Board to prepare for the college admissions process? Is someone seeking their GED using Khan Academy to study? This additional piece bolsters our understanding of the role of Internet-based educational resources in the educational process beyond online classes and job trainings. Additionally, the questions should be phrased in a way that measures educational involvement of all age groups - traditional school-age, adult education, and any other learners.

Add a Question about Using the Internet to Access or Use Government Benefit Programs
The Supplement should seek to learn if people are accessing federal or state-level social benefits online. Many people in the United States could benefit from resources like benefits.gov, and the supplement should attempt to ascertain if these resource aggregators are being used or if these opportunities are being missed. If necessary, the question could be broadened to determine if low-cost opportunities and consumer resources (aside from those referenced in ECOMME) are being used.

Conclusion

EveryoneOn recommends the following as part of the November 2017 CPS Computer and Internet Use Supplement:

- _Assess the Digital Literacy Component of Adoption and Non-Adoption_
- _Identify the Internet Use Case that is an Adoption Tipping Point_
- _Obtain Greater Detail on PSENSI, or the lower price at which non-adopters would adopt_
- _Ask Adopters about 1) Affordability and 2) Data Sufficiency of Internet Plans_
- _Inquire Further About the Use of Internet for Educational Purposes and Resources_
- _Add a Question about Using the Internet to Access or Use Government Benefit Programs_

We at EveryoneOn advocate for a Computer and Internet Use Supplement that aims to obtain detailed and specific data on reasons behind non-adoption, to measure digital literacy, and to identify price points that would catalyze the closure of the digital divide. The Supplement should also better assess educational Internet use and assess the Internet as a tool for connecting people to government benefits. This supplement presents an incredible opportunity to record proofpoints for the digital divide and to provide data that leads to actionable solutions to close the digital divide, and we hope to use these course-altering data in future digital inclusion work.

Respectfully submitted,

Chike Aguh
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