Beyond Access: Engaging Citizens in the Information Society

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Tackling Ontario's Digital Challenge

Two key points:

- Access is not enough
- Access may not be what you think it is

Accessing the Information Society

- The vision:
  - Promotion of economic and social development through the deployment of broadband technologies
  - All sectors of Ontario society will participate in the 'digital economy' and the 'information society'
- Basic requirement:
  - Development of broadband infrastructures for use by all citizens
- Infrastructure development is a necessary but not sufficient condition to enable participation in the information society

Understanding the Terrain

- The information society is experienced at many levels
- People engage with a digital economy in many ways:
  - Government use of information and communication technologies
  - Online delivery of public services
  - Provision of electronic services to communities
  - Proxy access to the internet and services
  - Individual access to the Internet and information services

Progress to Date

2006 data from the CRTC:

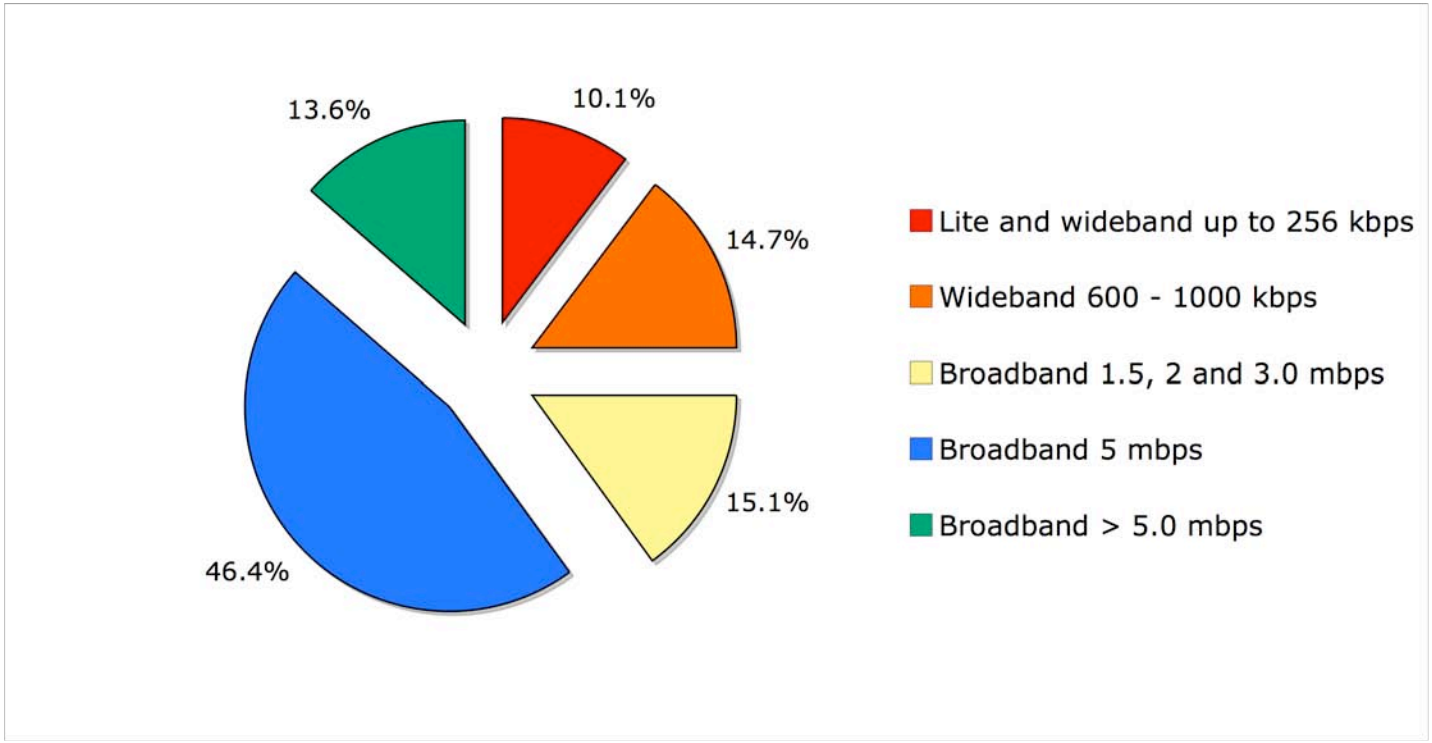
- 70% of all Canadian households subscribe to the Internet
- 86% of Internet subscribers have a broadband connection
- So far, so good…?

Multiple Digital Divides

- 'Dual' digital divide:
  - lack of basic access for certain segments of society
  - not interested
- Technology divides
  - connection speeds, availability of service (e.g. choice)
- Capacity divides
  - literacy and skill levels of users
- Engagement divides
  - intensity and scope of usage

What does 'Broadband' Mean?

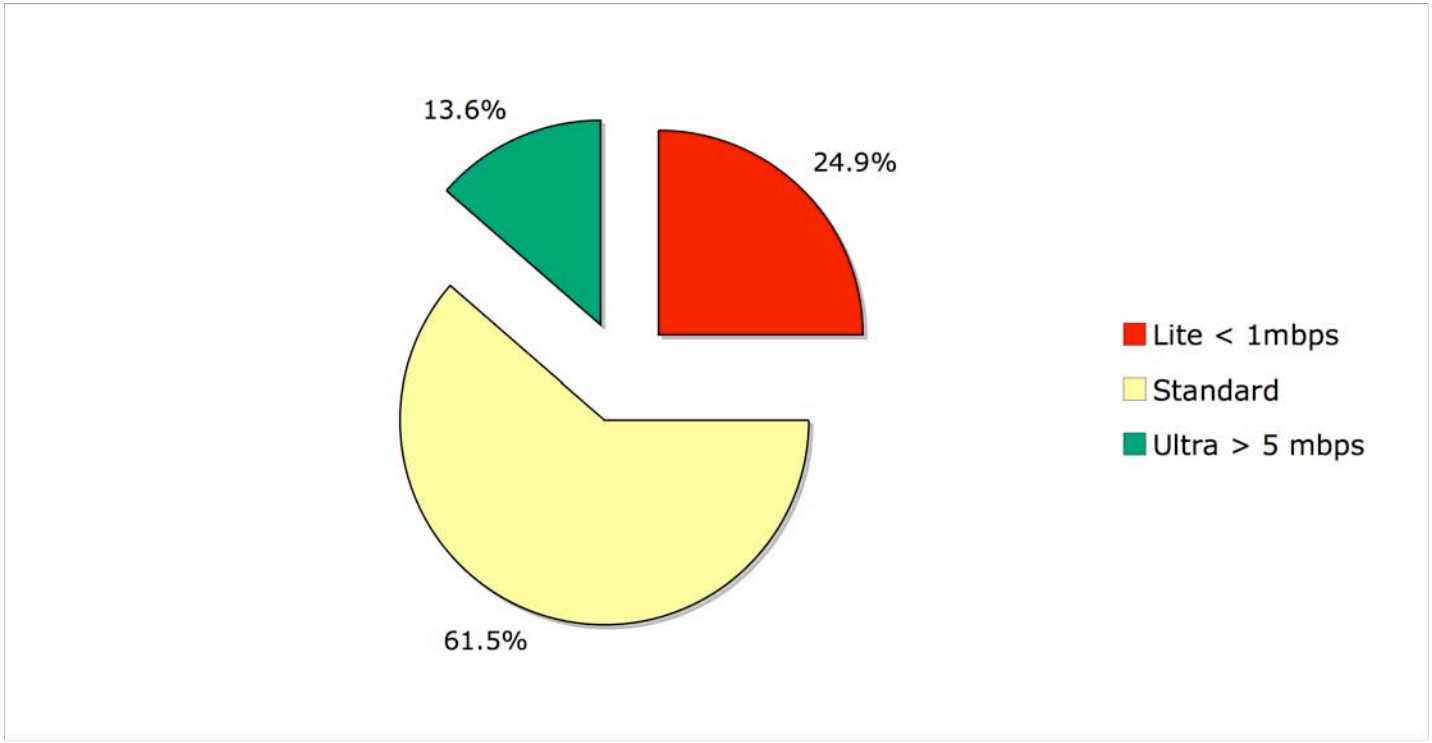
Types of Broadband Connections in Canadian Households



Source: *CRTC Telecommunications Monitoring Report: Status of Competition in Canadian Telecommunications Markets – Deployment/Accessibility of Advanced Telecommunications Infrastructure and Services*. Gatineau (2007). 2006 data.

How do we Compare?

Types of Broadband Connections in Canadian Households



In Japan and Korea:
$40 USD or less per month for > 50 mbps service

How do Canadians use the Internet?

- Intensity of use:
  - high intensity users are online daily, and for more than 5 hours per week
  - almost 60% of Internet users are low intensity users

	Weekly or less	Daily
≥ 5 hours	4.3% *Infrequent, high hours*	42.4 *High intensity*
<5 hours	30.3% *Occasional users - Low intensity*	23.1 *Frequent, low hours*

Source: *Canadian Internet Use Survey (2005). Statistics Canada.*

Intensity of Use by Age/Gender

	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 +	Total
Low Intensity	35.2%	52.9	64.6	66.1	64.6	62.2	57.6
High Intensity	64.8%	47.1	35.4	33.9	35.4	37.8	42.4

	Male	Female	Total
Low Intensity	51.8%	63.3	57.6
High Intensity	48.2%	36.7	42.4

Scope of Internet Usage/# Activities

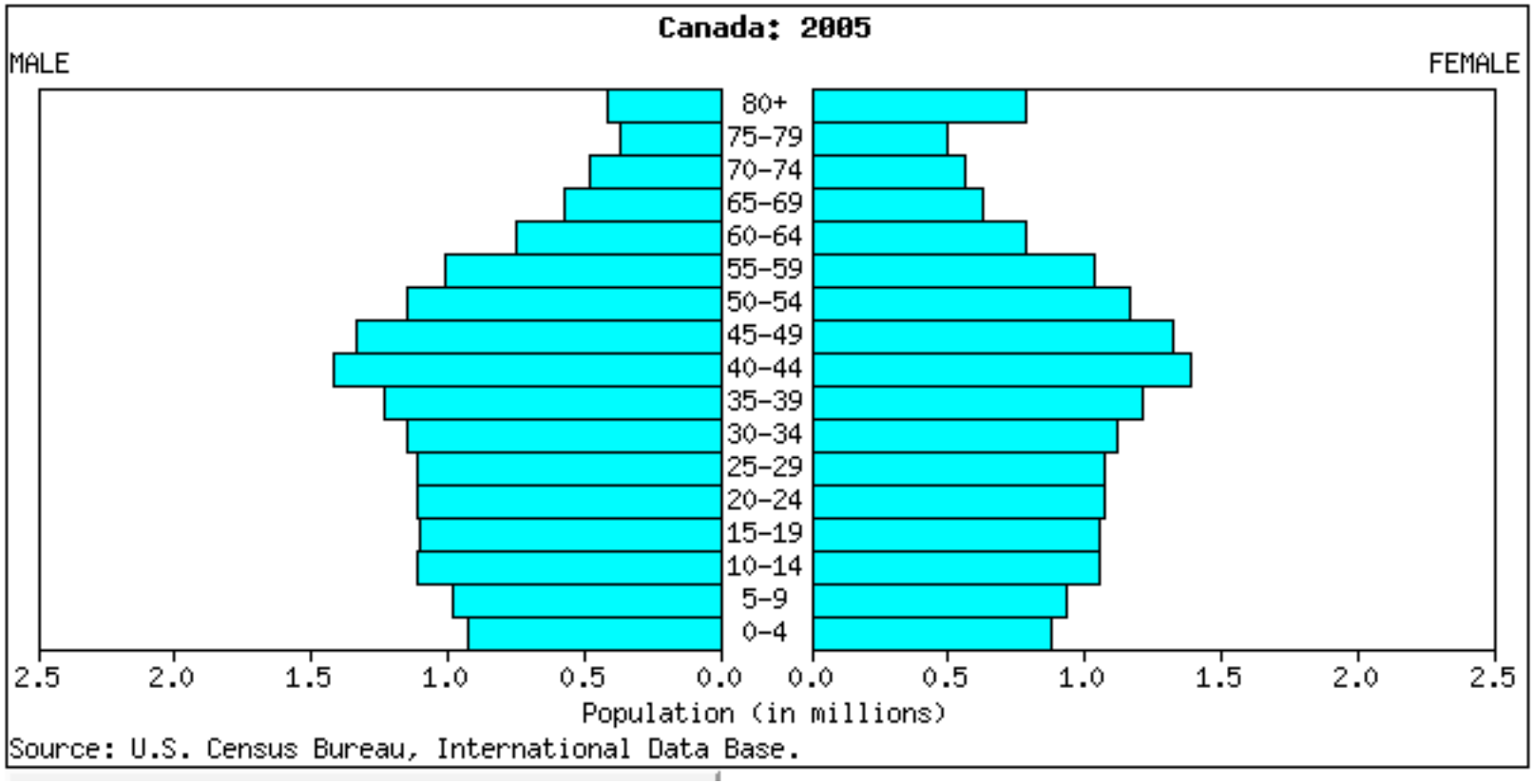
Activity	**% of Total**
E-mail	91.3
General browsing	84.0
Weather/road condition	66.6
Travel information	63.1
View news sports	61.7
Search for health information	57.9
Electronic banking	57.8
Pay bills	55.0
Search for Canada government information	52.0

Scope of Usage	Low Hours	High Hours	Total
Low (1-7 activities)	46.1%	14.4	31.0
Medium (8-11)	34.2%	32.9	33.6
High (≥12)	19.7%	52.7	35.1

So, what about 'Engagement'?

- Does Internet access = Internet engagement?
- How can engagement be assessed?
- What are the implications of low intensity, and limited scope, of Internet usage?
  - Have you heard (or made?) this argument?: "the data is old and the 'problem' will solve itself with time"
  - the lowest intensity group is aged 45-54

Who are the Participants in the Information Society?



Engagement, Intensity and Web 2.0

- Blogs, Wikis, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, RSS, Twitter, Ning, Chumby, Nabaztag
- There is a huge challenge here, to bridge the gap (social/technical) between 'digital natives' and 'the rest of us'
- The technology gap will be persistent (remember when you could run technological circles around your elders?)

What Role does Broadband Play?

- It's just the beginning, one starting point on a path toward an information society/digital economy
- Access to broadband infrastructure is important
  - Infrastructure should be developed in the public interest (e.g. affordable, choice in providers, unrestricted usage, reliable, high quality, ubiquitous

What Else is Access About?

- Access to information and services, independent of technologies, locations, ability to pay, skill levels etc.
  - Mobility, choice of access devices
  - Use of cellular technologies (SMS/txt msg anyone?)
  - F2F
- 2005 data indicate ~2.2 billion mobile phone users worldwide compared to .97 billion Internet users
- High speed 'pipes' to fixed locations and ubiquitous mobile access

Key Issues to Consider in Building a Digital Economy

- Access and capacity building are just the beginning
- Access is more than broadband connectivity to homes, it's about information connectivity to people
- There will always be generational differences in capacity to use/interest in/engagement with information and communication technologies
- Citizens must embrace the Information Society to achieve the anticipated benefits