

US Residential Broadband Speeds Accelerate

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Broadband Services Survey: The Importance of Bandwidth

Today's broadband service subscriber is becoming increasingly aware of the capabilities, and the limitations, of their broadband connection. More and more broadband subscribers know the speed of their broadband connections—or at least they know the speed claims made by their broadband service provider. Either way, the amount of available bandwidth is now an important issue for broadband service subscribers.

Bandwidth, sometimes also called throughput, or speed, is simply defined as the width of a telecommunications channel. In the analog world, bandwidth is usually measured in Hertz, which are cycles per second. In the digital world, which includes broadband data services, bandwidth is typically measured in bits per second (bps). These bits per second are normally measured in Kilobits per second (Kbps) or Megabits per second (Mbps).

The amount of bandwidth that is available to a broadband data service end-user is important for a number of reasons, including:

- As websites become increasingly “media rich” and integrate more video content, audio content, and advanced graphics, it takes a greater amount of bandwidth to access these sites. The more bandwidth an Internet service offers, the faster the end-user can access them.
- Every year, consumers around the world download more and more files from the Web. Similar to the website discussion, an increasing number of these files are video or audio files, which require significant bandwidth to download.
- Broadband service providers commonly use their available bandwidth as a marketing tool, particularly if they are comparing their service to a competitor's that offers less bandwidth.

As a general rule of thumb in the broadband world, more bandwidth is better. Consumers around the world readily recognize this fact, and a growing number of them are looking for a broadband service that will provide them a greater amount of bandwidth.

In order to better report on the bandwidth issue, for the third consecutive year In-Stat conducted a survey designed to measure download and upload speeds for residential broadband Internet connections. In addition, we polled broadband subscribers about their broadband services in order to better understand the dynamics of the US residential broadband market.

HIGHLIGHTS

- US residential broadband speeds continue to increase, albeit at a slower rate than in 2008. Between YE2008 and YE2009, downstream bandwidth rose by \diamond %.
- The average downstream speed of a US broadband connection is \diamond Mbps, while the average upstream speed is \diamond Mbps.

Report Summary

The speed of residential broadband connections in the US continues to increase. This report, In-Stat's third annual survey of broadband speeds, shows that downstream bandwidth to the home increased by \diamond % in 2009.

This report provides survey results from US broadband subscribers about the amount of bandwidth currently available to their home. It details the type of broadband access technology (i.e., cable modem, DSL, FTTH, etc.) being used, the company providing the service, the download and upload speeds of the subscribers' broadband connection, how much they are paying for broadband service, and whether or not they also have a mobile wireless broadband connection.

Fielded in December 2009, the survey polled 535 residential broadband users who are members of In-Stat's Technology Adoption Panel (TAP). The TAP is an online panel of almost 18,000 US-based technology users and decision makers interested in contributing their opinions and insights about technology usage and technology issues in the workplace. The panel is composed of a diverse group of people who represent a wide range of company sizes, industries, and areas of expertise. The diversity of the panel also allows us to gather information about a variety of topics from many different perspectives.

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