

Internet Access in North Carolina

**Tracking Home Computers and
Internet Access in North Carolina**

**Citizen Surveys
1999 to 2008**

November 2008

Background of Four Studies

- **STUDY1** : In 1999, the North Carolina Board of Science and Technology included a set of questions concerning computer and Internet usage in a more general study of public perceptions of the role and importance of science and technology in the North Carolina economy. A general population telephone survey employed random digit dialing. A total of 522 respondents completed the interview. The complete report is available on the NC website (www.e-nc.org).

STUDY2

- In 2001, the Rural Internet Access Authority planned to extend the work started by Vision 2030 as it related to computer and Internet access of North Carolina citizens and to make it more relevant to local decision makers in every part of North Carolina. RIAA wanted results that could provide useful and valid information to the local decision makers in every North Carolina county. In order to facilitate planning for improved Internet access in all 100 North Carolina counties, independent random samples were drawn from each North Carolina county. A sample of 12,904 interviews of North Carolinians was completed in June 2002. So that the results can be generalized to the entire state, the data were weighted by the county's population and the respondent's education.

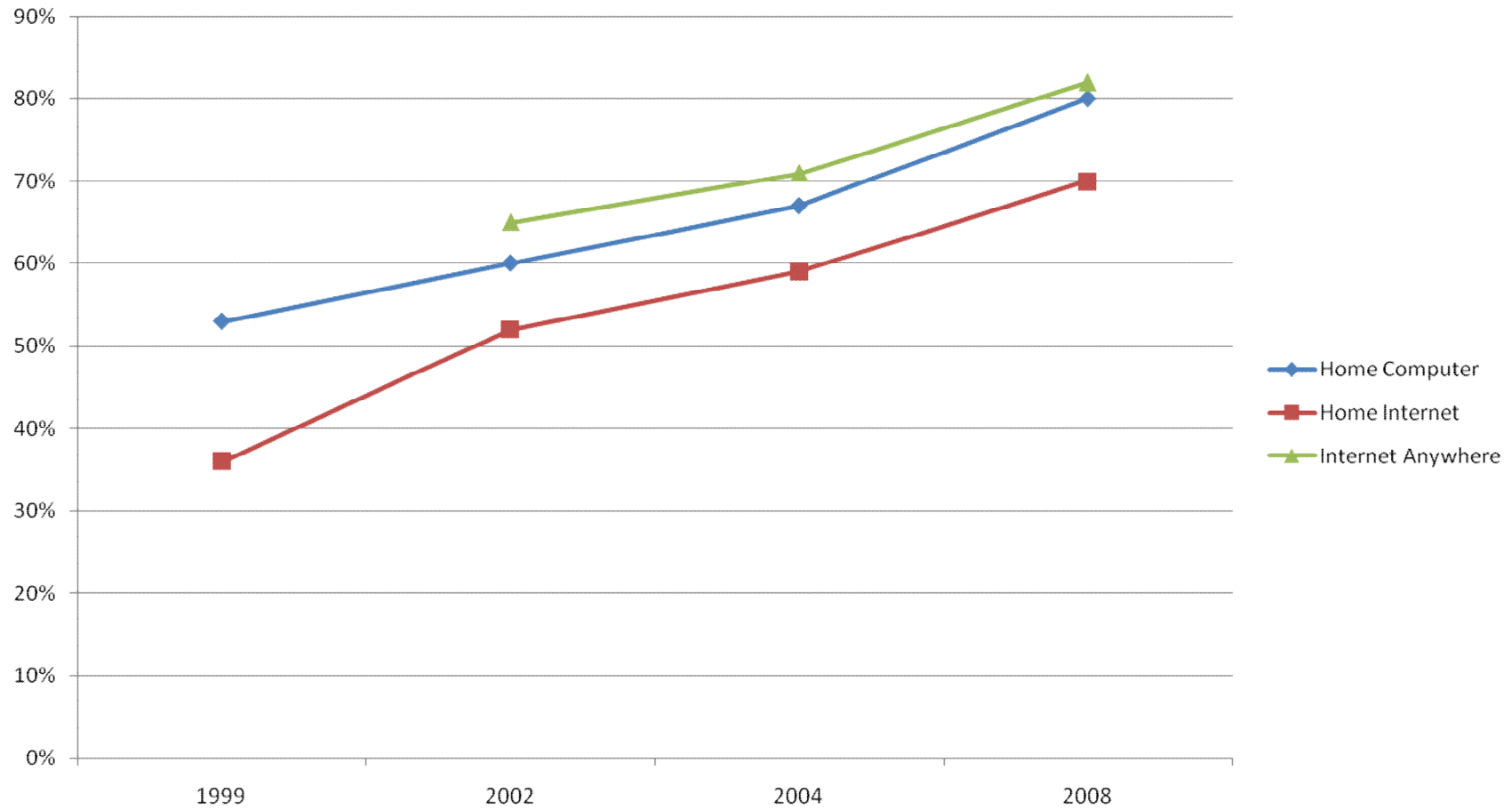
STUDY3:

- The third study continued to track computer and Internet use in North Carolina. Interviewing began on Jan. 14, 2004 and was completed on Feb. 11, 2004. There were 1197 completed interviews. Quotas were used to insure that there was an adequate representation of rural counties. The sample of telephone numbers was purchased from Survey Sampling, Inc. A significant number of interviews were conducted in Spanish using a bi-lingual interviewer. This is important to remember when the results for Hispanic respondents are compared to other studies that only interview English-speaking Hispanics. So that the results can be generalized to the entire state, the data were weighted by the county's population and the respondent's education.

Study4

- **STUDY4:** The fourth study tracking computer and Internet use in North Carolina was conducted this year. Interviewing began on September 14, 2008 and was completed on October 8, 2008. There were 1244 interviews. Quotas were used to insure that there was an adequate representation of rural counties. The sample of telephone numbers was purchased from Survey Sampling, Inc. This year households without landlines were contacted and 5 percent of the final sample consist of households with cell phones but no landlines.

Changes 1999 to 2008



Who doesn't have a home computer?

- Older citizens
- Less advantaged families with lower incomes and lower educations
- People without children living at home
- Note – 93% of people with children living at home have a home computer.

Why don't people have home computers?

- Only nine percent of the respondents who did not have a home computer were planning to buy one within the next year.
- Over half (60 percent) of the respondents reported that they did not have a home computer because they did not want one.
- Eighteen percent reported that computers were too expensive
- Fifteen percent reported that they used a computer at a public access point like a library or community college

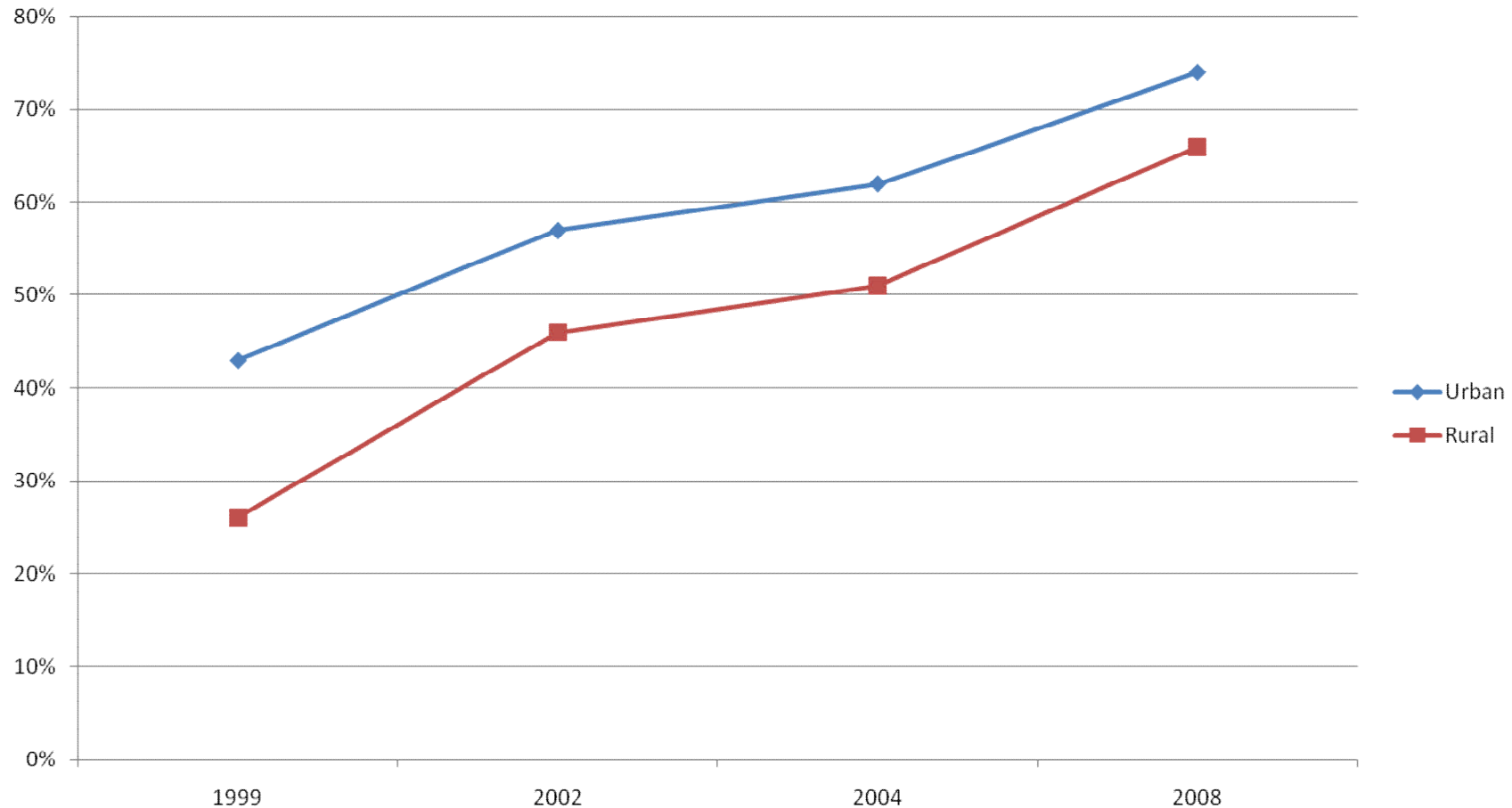
Income makes a difference

- **Most of the respondents who earned between \$15,000 and \$49,999 (54 percent) reported that computers were too expensive**
- compared to 7 percent who earned less
- and none of the respondents who earned more than \$50,000.

Proportion of All North Carolina Households

- Many people are interested in the proportion of households that subscribe to home Internet access. In these households, people can do private research and children can do their homework with their parents' help. Today about 70 percent of **all** North Carolina households subscribe to home Internet access.

Urban and rural regions converge in proportion of household subscribing to Internet access



Why Don't You Subscribe to Home Internet Access?

- The most common answer was that that subscribing to home Internet was too expensive (35 percent).
- This is consistent with the fact that almost all households earning more than \$50,000 per year subscribe while lower income households are less able to pay the monthly subscription fee (e.g., 73 percent of households earning less than \$15,000 indicated that the cost was a reason they did not have a home Internet subscription).

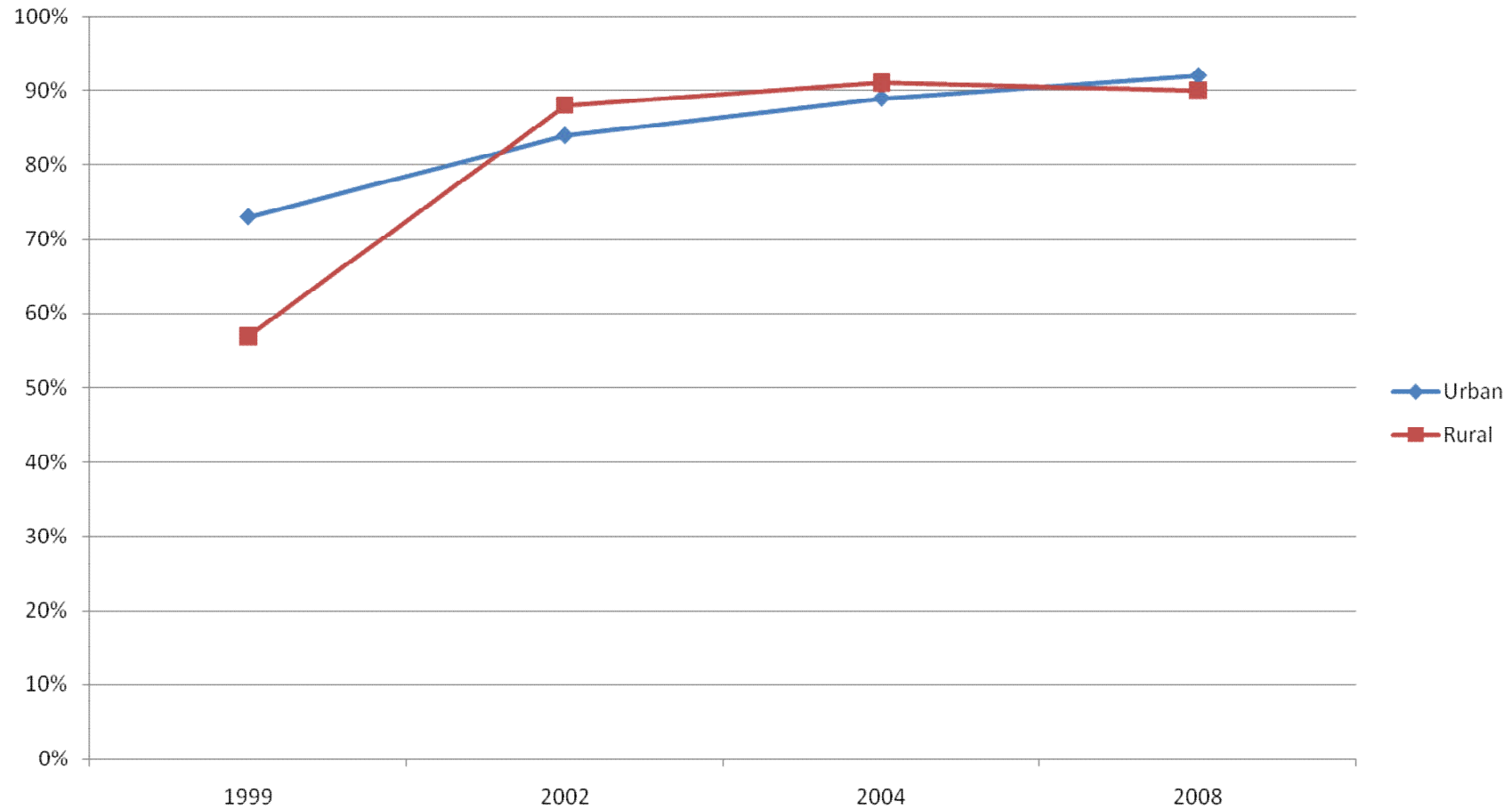
Why Don't You Subscribe to Home Internet Access?

- The second most common reason was that they could use the Internet somewhere else (31 percent).
- Public access provides an alternative for families on a tight budget (e.g., 53 percent of families earning less than \$15,000 give this as a reason for not having a home Internet subscription).

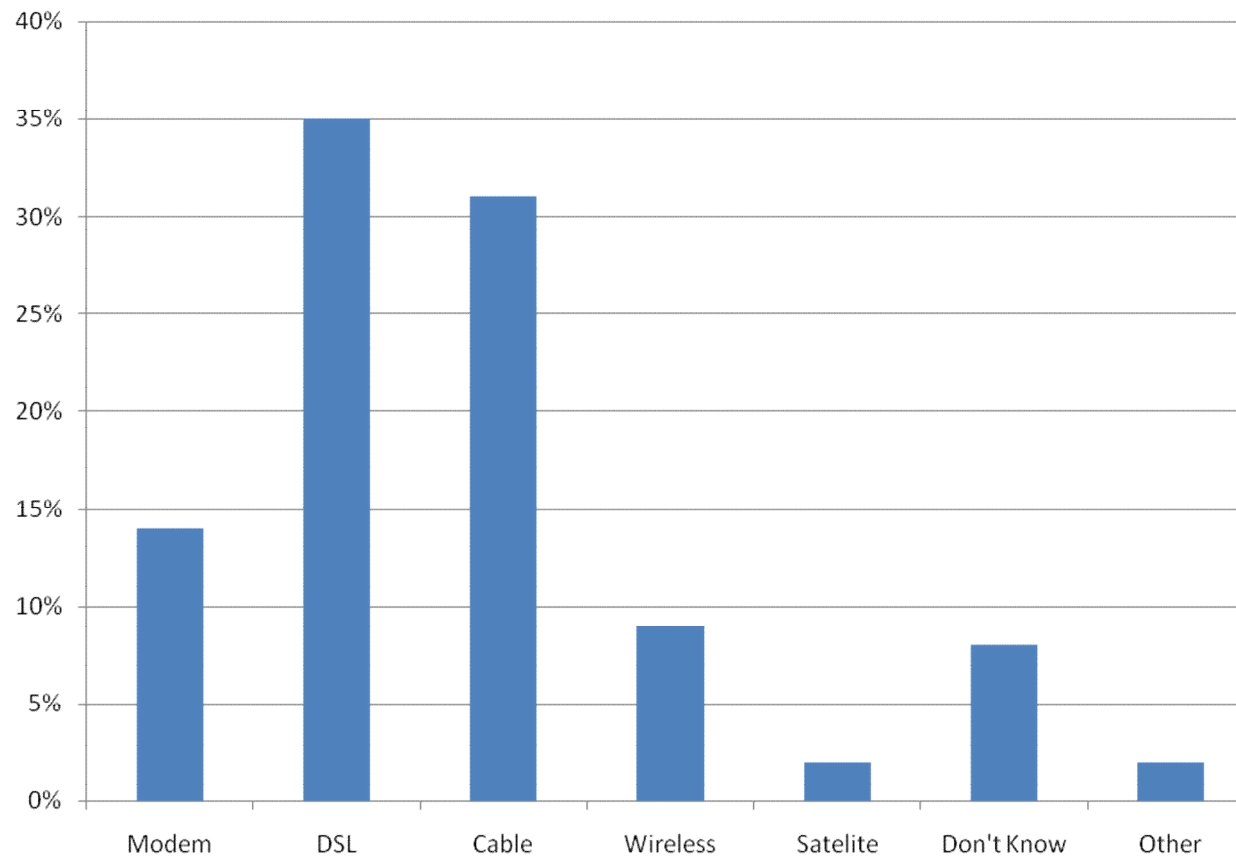
Proportion of North Carolina Households with a Computer

- At the beginning of this century, many North Carolina households could not get home Internet access. That barrier has been eliminated and today almost every North Carolina household can get home Internet access with a local telephone call. The biggest remaining barrier to home Internet access is that it requires a home computer. This proportion indicates the extent of the barriers remaining even after a home computer has been purchased. Today about **91** percent of the homes with computers subscribe to home Internet access.

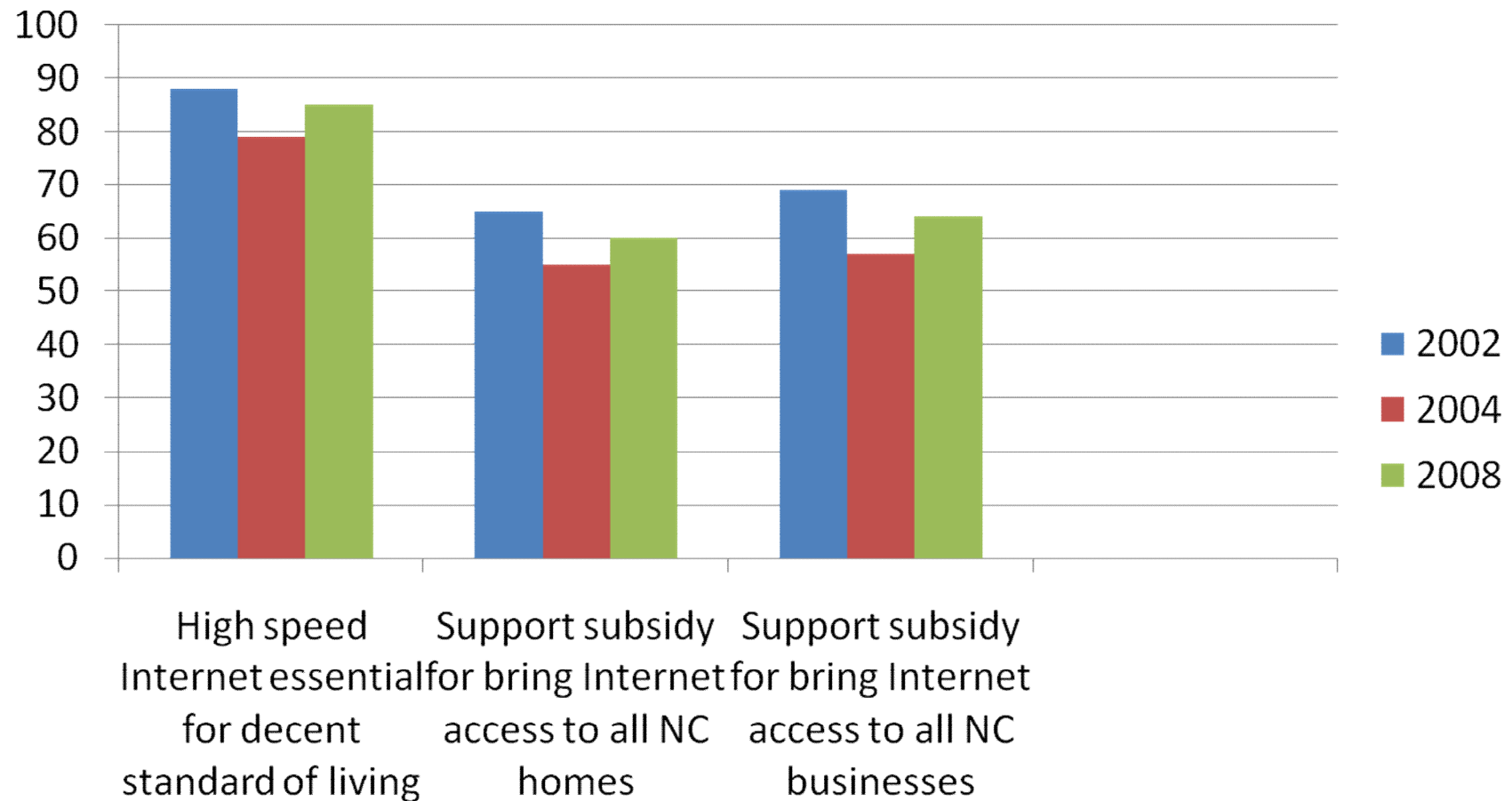
Homes with computers that subscribe to Internet access



Type of Internet Access



Support for Internet subsidy



AnAmazing Transformation

- Inthe pastdecade, NorthCarolina has experiencedan amazingtransformation. In lessthan adecade, NorthCarolina hasbeen transformedfrom aplace wherea lotof peopleuse theInternet butonly theelite have itin theirhomes toa placewhere almost everyoneuses theInternet andmost people haveit intheir homes.

LeftBehind

- While they are making some progress,
 - poor families,
 - minorities,
 - older citizens
 - and high school drop-outs
- lag behind the rest of North Carolina in these skills.

Rural Regions of North Carolina

- In 1999, only about half (57 percent) of the rural households with home computers had Internet access.
- By 2008, this figure had climbed to 90 percent.
- In rural North Carolina, one-third of the people who do not have home Internet access use the Internet somewhere else.
- Between 2002 and 2008, the proportion of rural North Carolinians who did not have home Internet access and reported using public access facilities increased from 3 percent to 16 percent.

Conclusion

- In 1999, North Carolina was struggling with the idea of a digital society that has now become commonplace. North Carolina has done a good job responding to this challenge.
- In 1999, knowledge of the Internet was an advantage but today lack of Internet knowledge is a serious handicap.

- Thee -NCAuthority also wishes to join Dr. Wilson in acknowledging the hard work of East Carolina University graduate students Jessama Allender, Sean Aube, Tabitha Dantzler, Amanda Drozdowski, Jonathan Harris, Heather Sheffield and Tahira Sneed - West and administrative assistants Betty Lou White and Becky Williammee. Their efforts allowed this project to be completed in a timely manner despite the many obstacles that needed to be overcome.