

Student Computing Use - Executive Summary

A Web-based survey of student computer use was conducted during the period February 25 through March 4, 1998. Replies were received from 373 Undergraduates and 151 Graduate Students.

1. 82% of the undergraduates and 74% of the graduate students report owning *at least one* computer. 15% of the undergraduates and 22% of the graduate students report owning *two* computers at school.
2. Students computers are overwhelmingly Intel machines. 87% of all computers are Intel, 11% are Macintosh, 2% are UNIX workstations.
3. 16% of the students report owning a laptop. (This number is 27% for graduate students, 12% for undergraduates.)
4. Over 90% of the students with computers in dorms and ILG's are connected to MITnet. This corresponds to about 75% of all students living in dorms and ILG's. This does not take into account students who have access to a roommate's computer on MITnet.
5. 43% of students with a computer also have a printer.
6. Win95 is the most popular operating system (69%), followed by some form of Intel UNIX (39%), WinNT (21%), and Win3.1 (7%). These numbers add up to more than 100% because many students run both Windows and UNIX.
7. Students report spending many hours using their personal computers. (Median = about 22 hours, Mean = 35 hours)
8. People with their own computers tend to read email on their own machines, although many read mail on Athena as well. Over half of those reading mail on their own machines use Eudora. About a quarter telnet to Athena. (This is a large increase in Eudora as compared to telnet over a few years ago.) Of those who read mail both on Athena and on their own PC, about half store mail on Athena.
9. Overall, 19% use Quickstations often, 55% use Quickstations sometimes, and 26% never use them. When restricted to those who do not own a computer, 26% use them often, 61% use them sometimes, and 12% never use them.
10. Self-reported data on the number of hours of Athena use are suspect because of their clustering and wide range. Email is the activity reported by the most people, but other activities reported by more than 30% of the students are Homework, Web Browsing, Communication other than Email, and Web use for Classwork.
11. The three most popular applications on Athena (other than mail, emacs, and Web browsers) are Matlab (used by 43%), C (used by 35%), and FrameMaker (used by 31%).