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Accessing the Internet: evidence from the New Zealand census

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In the five years between 2001 and 2006 the Internet penetration rate in New Zealand rose from just over a third to over one half of all households. Although inequalities in access appear to have been reduced over these five years, penetration rates still remain highly uneven across most socio-economic, demographic and geographic domains.

This paper presents a multivariate model of Internet access at three different scales: the Territorial Local Authority, the Area Unit and the individual (with unit records accessed through the Statistics New Zealand Data Lab). The ecological regressions are used to estimate change in the relationship between Internet penetration and the selected characteristics of areas across the two censuses. The unit record model is estimated on the full population of individuals in 2006 allow us to assess in considerably more detail the possible reasons for the contemporary inequality in Internet access. Of particular interest is the evidence for the increased importance of ethnicity in accounting for access differentials.

Keywords: Internet, penetration rate, digital divide

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