

New eMarketer Report on Black Consumers' Evolving Digital Usage

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eMarketer Editors

Consumer adoption of digital has not proceeded equally for all races and ethnic groups. In the first wave of the development of the internet, black consumers were less likely to be online, with below-average internet penetration and access to digital devices. That changed in the mobile era: As mobile became widespread, black consumers were in the vanguard, with high levels of smartphone adoption.

"Black consumers were early adopters of smartphones. They no longer stand out as smartphone owners, though, with multiple demographic groups having converged at a high penetration level. However, smartphones do retain outsized importance in black users' digital lives," said senior analyst Mark Dolliver, and author of eMarketer's latest report, "US Black Consumers as Digital Users: What's Distinctive in Their Usage, and What's Not."

(eMarketer PRO subscribers can access the [full report here](#). Nonsubscribers can [learn more here](#).)

We forecast that 67.8% of the US black population will be smartphone owners this year, close to the 69.6% figure for the total population.

Penetration is rising just slightly, with the respective figures expected to reach 71.2% and 73.0% in 2022.

US Smartphone User Penetration, by Race/Ethnicity, 2018

% of population in each group

White	70.4%
Asian	70.0%
Hispanic*	69.1%
Black	67.8%
Other**	62.8%

*Note: individuals of any age who own at least one smartphone and use the smartphone(s) at least once per month; *can be of any race; **includes Native Americans, Alaska Natives, Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, and bi- and multiracial individuals*

Source: eMarketer, Jan 2018

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While there is negligible difference in smartphone penetration between black consumers and the total population, a disparity does open up when one examines how people go online. That was the subject of July 2017 polling by CivicScience for the Internet Innovation Alliance. Black respondents were more likely than respondents in general to cite the smartphone as their primary means of accessing the internet, 45% vs. 36%.

And while half of white respondents said they get online mainly via broadband, barely three in 10 black respondents said the same. In that respect, a digital divide does persist, given the general usefulness of broadband access.