

“ Social Trends draws together social and economic data from a wide range of government departments and other organisations; it paints a broad picture of British society today, and how it has been changing. ”  
*(Office for National Statistics, 2004a)*

### BOX 8.6 WHAT ARE STATISTICS?

Originally the term ‘statistics’ meant facts about the state (or society). Then statistics came to mean facts in the form of numbers, though not necessarily about the state.

Statistics is now a branch of science concerned with techniques for gathering and working on large sets of numbers, in order to present summaries of their main features.

I looked for *Social Trends* on the internet and soon found it on the National Statistics website. I downloaded the most recent issue and found in it the highly relevant table shown in Figure 8.4. Try out your skills in table-reading by answering the questions in Activity 8.2.

Households with selected durable goods <sup>1</sup>					
United Kingdom	Percentages				
	Mobile phone	Satellite receiver	CD player	Home computer	Internet access
1996/97	17	19	59	27	0
1997/98	21	26	63	29	0
1998/99	27	28	68	33	10
1999/00	44	32	72	38	19
2000/01	47	40	77	44	33
2001/02	65	43	80	50	40
2002/03	70	46	83	55	45

<sup>1</sup> Based on weighted data. Data from 1998/99 onwards include children's expenditure

Source: Family Expenditure Survey and Expenditure and Food Survey, Office for National Statistics

**Figure 8.4** A table from *Social Trends* (2004 edition) showing ownership of electronic communications media

(Source: Office for National Statistics, 2004b)

### Activity 8.2

Write down answers to the following questions, and check them against mine afterwards. It will take a little time, but if you work steadily through