



Pew Internet
Pew Internet & American Life Project

a project of the
PewResearchCenter

Online Product Research

58% of Americans have researched a product or service online

September 29, 2010

Jim Jansen, Senior Fellow, Pew Internet Project

<http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Online-Product-Research.aspx>

Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project
1615 L St., NW – Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036
202-419-4500 | pewinternet.org

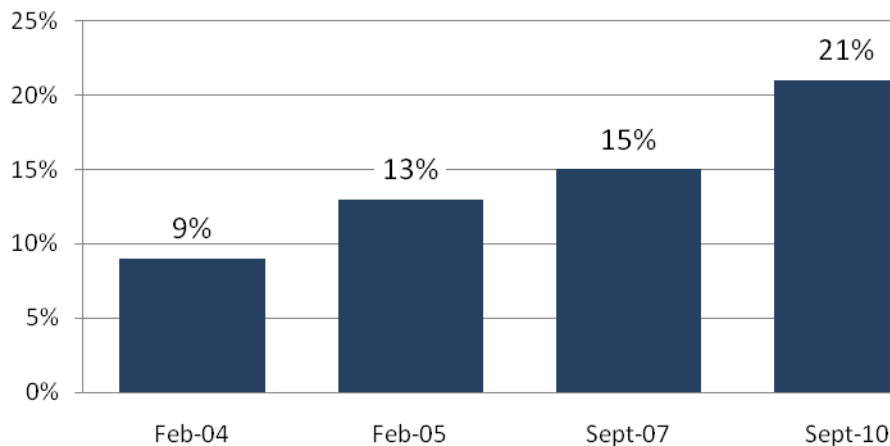
58% of Americans have researched a product or service online

Nearly six-in-ten adults (58%) have done research online about the products and services they buy, and about a quarter (24%) have posted comments or reviews online about the things they buy.

On a typical day, 21% of adults search for product information online. This is an increase from 15% in 2007 and 9% in 2004.

Researched a product or service yesterday

% of all adults who researched a product or service yesterday



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, August 9-September 13, 2010 Tracking Survey. N=3,001 adults and the margin of error is +/- 2.5 percentage points.

The share of adults who report having at least occasionally conducted product or service research online has also increased – from 49% in 2004 to 58% in 2010.

The 2010 data come from a telephone survey by the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project conducted between August 9 and September 13, 2010. The survey was administered to a sample of 3,001 adults, age 18 and older, using a combination of landline and cellular telephones. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish. The sample margin of error is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points for the general population and plus or minus 2.9 percentage points for internet users (n=2,065).

Among internet users, 78% say that they at least occasionally conduct product research and 32% report that they have posted online product comments.

Online commercial activity has steadily risen on several fronts

The increase in product and service research online coincides with a general trend in stepped up use of the internet for commercial activities. Pew Internet Project's initial surveys:

- The proportion of the general population that has bought products such as books, music, toys or clothing online rose from 22% in May 2000 to 52% in the Project's May 2010 survey.
- The proportion of the general population that has made travel reservations or bought travel services such as airline tickets, hotel rooms, or rental cars rose from 18% in May 2000 to 52% in the Project's May 2010 survey.

The sharing of product and service information also coincides with increasing use of social networking sites, with 46% of Americans reporting the use of internet sites such as Facebook or LinkedIn. That is an increase from the 5% who reported using social networking sites when the Project first started asking about them in a survey in February 2005. Such sites might be informal channels of commercial information that are shared in social networks, though the Pew Internet survey did not specifically address this aspect.

Who is conducting research online for product or service information?

Demographic survey results are shown in the *Online researching for products or services* table. The September 2010 data show:

- Men and women conduct online product research at similar rates.
- Online African-Americans do product research at significantly lower rates than do online whites or Hispanics.
- Online adults who are ages 65 and older do significantly less online product research than those in the 30-49 and 50-64 age groups.
- Internet users in higher income brackets do more online research than those in lower income brackets.
- Online Americans who speak English do more online product research than those who are Spanish speakers.
- There is no significant difference in online product researching among rural, suburban, and urban internet-using adults.
- Some 83% of broadband users report doing online product research, compared with 67% of non-broadband users.

Online researching for products or services

Percentage of internet users in each group who have researched products online

Total internet users	78%
Gender	
Male	77%
Female	79%
Race	
White	81%
Black	66%
Hispanic	76%
Age (at time of survey)	
18-29	77%
30-49	80%
50-64	81%
65+	68%
Education	
Some high school	56%
High school graduate	72%
Some college	79%
College graduate or more	87%
Household Income	
< \$30,000	67%
\$30,000 - \$49,999	81%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	84%
\$75,000+	88%
Language	
English	79%
Spanish	53%
Community Type	
Rural	77%
Suburban	79%
Urban	79%
Home Internet Connection	
Broadband	83%
No Broadband	67%

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, August 9-September 13, 2010 Tracking Survey. N=3,001 adults and N for internet users=2,065. The margin of error is +/- 2.5 percentage points for all adults and 2.9 points for internet users.

Posting online product reviews and comments

A quarter of Americans (24%) have posted product reviews or comments online. The table below illustrates the demographic character of this population:

Reviewing online products or services

Percentage of internet users in each group who have posted online product reviews

Total internet users	32%
Gender	
Male	31%
Female	33%
Race	
White	32%
Black	38%
Hispanic	34%
Age (at time of survey)	
18-29	33%
30-49	35%
50-64	30%
65+	31%
Education	
Some high school	27%
High school graduate	27%
Some college	33%
College graduate or more	38%
Household Income	
< \$30,000	29%
\$30,000 - \$49,999	32%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	34%
\$75,000+	40%
Language	
English	34%
Spanish	15%
Community Type	
Rural	24%
Suburban	35%
Urban	34%
Home Internet Connection	
Broadband	35%
No Broadband	17%

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, August 9-September 13, 2010 Tracking Survey. N=3,001 adults and N for internet users=2,065. The margin of error is +/- 2.5 percentage points for all adults and 2.9 points for internet users.

- Among internet users, there are only small differences by gender, race and age in the likelihood of posting online product reviews.
- Among internet users, those with college degree or more (38%) are more likely than those with a high school diploma or less (27%) to post product reviews online.
- Among internet users, those in the higher income brackets are more likely than those in lower income brackets to post product reviews .
- English-speaking online adults are more inclined than Spanish-speaking adults to post product comments online.
- Fewer rural adults post product or service comments than suburban or urban adults. And a significantly higher percentage of adults with broadband report posting comments than do those without broadband.

Methodology

This report is based on the findings of a daily tracking survey on Americans' use of the Internet. The results in this report are based on data from telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International between August 9 and September 13, 2010, among a sample of 3,001 adults, age 18 and older. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 2.5 percentage points. For results based Internet users (n=2,065), the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.9 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting telephone surveys may introduce some error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all adults in the continental United States who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. Both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC (SSI) according to PSRAI specifications. The landline sample for this survey was designed to generalize to the U.S. adult population and to oversample African-Americans and Hispanics. To achieve these objectives in a cost effective manner, the design uses standard *list-assisted random digit dialing* (RDD) methodology, but telephone numbers are drawn disproportionately from telephone exchanges with higher than average density of African-American and/or Hispanic households. The cellular sample was not list-assisted, but was drawn through a systematic sampling from dedicated wireless 100-blocks and shared service 100-blocks with no directory-listed landline numbers.

New sample was released daily and was kept in the field for at least five days. The sample was released in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger population. This ensures that complete call procedures were followed for the entire sample. At least 7 attempts were made to complete an interview at a sampled telephone number. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making contact with a potential respondent. Each number received at least one daytime call in an attempt to find someone available. For the landline sample, half of the time interviewers first asked to speak with the youngest adult male currently at home. If no male was at home at the time of the call, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest adult female. For the other half of the contacts interviewers first asked to speak with the youngest adult female currently at home. If no female was available, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest adult male at home. For the cellular sample, interviews were conducted with the person who answered the phone. Interviewers verified that the person was an adult and in a safe place before administering the survey. Cellular sample respondents were offered a post-paid cash incentive for their participation. All interviews completed on any given day were considered to be the final sample for that day.

Disproportionate sampling and non-response in telephone interviews can produce biases in survey-derived estimates. The dataset was weighted in two stages. The first stage of weighting corrected for the disproportionate landline sample design and also accounted for the overlapping landline and cellular sample frames as well as different probabilities of selection associated with the number of adults in the household. The second stage of weighting matched overall sample demographics to population parameters. The demographic weighting parameters are derived from a special analysis of the most recently available Census Bureau's March 2009

Annual Social and Economic Supplement. This analysis produces population parameters for the demographic characteristics of adults age 18 or older. These parameters are then compared with the sample characteristics to construct sample weights. The weights are derived using an iterative technique that simultaneously balances the distribution of all weighting parameters.

Following is the full disposition of all sampled telephone numbers:

Table 1: Sample Disposition

Landline	Cell	
53,160	17,075	Total Numbers Dialed
2,613	441	Non-residential
2,430	32	Computer/Fax
21	---	Cell phone
27,936	6,428	Other not working
4,308	311	Additional projected not working
15,852	9,863	Working numbers
29.8%	57.8%	Working Rate
1,436	104	No Answer / Busy
2,734	2,370	Voice Mail
84	17	Other Non-Contact
11,598	7,372	Contacted numbers
73.2%	74.7%	Contact Rate
1,020	1,027	Callback
8,303	4,597	Refusal
2,275	1,748	Cooperating numbers
19.6%	23.7%	Cooperation Rate
158	60	Language Barrier
---	646	Child's cell phone
2,117	1,042	Eligible numbers
93.1%	59.6%	Eligibility Rate
116	42	Break-off
2,001	1,000	Completes
94.5%	96.0%	Completion Rate
13.6%	17.0%	Response Rate

The disposition reports all of the sampled telephone numbers ever dialed from the original telephone number samples. The response rate estimates the fraction of all eligible respondents in the sample that were ultimately interviewed. At PSRAI it is calculated by taking the product of three component rates:

- Contact rate – the proportion of working numbers where a request for interview was made

- Cooperation rate – the proportion of contacted numbers where a consent for interview was at least initially obtained, versus those refused
- Completion rate – the proportion of initially cooperating and eligible interviews that were completed

Thus the response rate for the landline sample was 13.6 percent. The response rate for the cellular sample was 17.0 percent.

August Health Tracking Survey 2010

Final Topline

9/17/10

Data for August 9 – September 13, 2010

Princeton Survey Research Associates International
for the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life ProjectSample: n= 3,001 national adults, age 18 and older, including 1,000 cell phone interviews
Interviewing dates: 08.09.10 – 09.13.10Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on Total [n=3,001]
Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on internet users [n=2,065]**Q6a** Do you use the internet, at least occasionally?**Q6b** Do you send or receive email, at least occasionally?¹

	USES INTERNET	DOES NOT USE INTERNET
Current	74	26
May 2010	79	21
January 2010 ⁱ	75	25
December 2009 ⁱⁱ	74	26
September 2009	77	23
April 2009	79	21
December 2008	74	26
November 2008 ⁱⁱⁱ	74	26
August 2008 ^{iv}	75	25
July 2008 ^v	77	23
May 2008 ^{vi}	73	27
April 2008 ^{vii}	73	27
January 2008 ^{viii}	70	30
December 2007 ^{ix}	75	25
September 2007 ^x	73	27
February 2007 ^{xi}	71	29
December 2006 ^{xii}	70	30
November 2006 ^{xiii}	68	32
August 2006 ^{xiv}	70	30
April 2006 ^{xv}	73	27
February 2006 ^{xvi}	73	27
December 2005 ^{xvii}	66	34
September 2005 ^{xviii}	72	28
June 2005 ^{xix}	68	32
February 2005 ^{xx}	67	33
January 2005 ^{xxi}	66	34

¹ Prior to January 2005, question wording was "Do you ever go online to access the Internet or World Wide Web or to send and receive email?"

Nov 23-30, 2004 ^{xxii}	59	41
November 2004 ^{xxiii}	61	39
June 2004 ^{xxiv}	63	37
February 2004 ^{xxv}	63	37

WEB1 Next... Please tell me if you ever use the internet to do any of the following things. Do you ever use the internet to...? / Did you happen to do this **yesterday**, or not?²

Based on all internet users [N=2,065]

	TOTAL HAVE EVER DONE THIS	----- DID YESTERDAY	HAVE NOT DONE THIS	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
Research a product or service online ³					
Current	78	28	22	*	*
September 2007	81	20	19	*	--
February 2005	78	19	21	*	--
February 2004	78	15	22	*	--
Dec 2002	83	19	17	0	--
June 2000	73	13	27	*	--
May 2000	72	11	28	*	--
March 2000	74	14	26	*	--

Post a comment or review online about a product you bought or a service you received

Current	32	4	67	*	*
September 2007	30	3	70	*	--

ⁱ January 2010 trends based on the Online News survey, conducted December 28, 2009 – January 19, 2010 [N=2,259, including 562 cell phone interviews].

ⁱⁱ December 2009 trends based on the Fall Tracking "E-Government" survey, conducted November 30 – December 27, 2009 [N=2,258, including 565 cell phone interviews].

ⁱⁱⁱ November 2008 trends based on the Post-Election 2008 Tracking survey, conducted November 20-December 4, 2008 [N=2,254].

^{iv} August 2008 trends based on the August Tracking 2008 survey, conducted August 12-31, 2008 [N=2,251].

^v July 2008 trends based on the Personal Networks and Community survey, conducted July 9-August 10, 2008 [N=2,512, including 505 cell phone interviews]

^{vi} May 2008 trends based on the Spring Tracking 2008 survey, conducted April 8-May 11, 2008 [N=2,251].

^{vii} April 2008 trends based on the Networked Workers survey, conducted March 27-April 14, 2008. Most questions were asked only of full- or part-time workers [N=1,000], but trend results shown here reflect the total sample [N=2,134].

² Prior to January 2005, question wording was "Please tell me if you ever do any of the following when you go online. Do you ever...?/Did you happen to do this yesterday, or not?" Unless otherwise noted, trends are based on all internet users for that survey.

³ In September 2007 and through Dec 2002, item wording was "Look for information about a service or product you are thinking about buying". For February 2004, item was "Research a product or service." For February 2005, item wording matched the current wording ("Research a product or service online").

-
- ^{viii} January 2008 trends based on the Networked Families survey, conducted December 13, 2007-January 13, 2008 [N=2,252].
- ^{ix} December 2007 trends based on the Annual Gadgets survey, conducted October 24-December 2, 2007 [N=2,054, including 500 cell phone interviews].
- ^x September 2007 trends based on the Consumer Choice survey, conducted August 3-September 5, 2007 [N=2,400, oversample of 129 cell phone interviews].
- ^{xi} February 2007 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted February 15-March 7, 2007 [N=2,200].
- ^{xii} December 2006 trends based on daily tracking survey, conducted November 30 - December 30, 2006 [N=2,373].
- ^{xiii} November 2006 trends based on Post-Election tracking survey, conducted Nov. 8-Dec. 4, 2006 [N=2,562]. This includes an RDD sample [N=2,362] and a cell phone only sample [N=200]. Results reflect combined samples, where applicable.
- ^{xiv} August 2006 trends based on daily tracking survey, conducted August 1-31, 2006 [N=2,928].
- ^{xv} April 2006 trends based on the Annual Gadgets survey, conducted Feb. 15-Apr. 6, 2006 [N=4,001].
- ^{xvi} February 2006 trends based on the Exploratorium Survey, conducted Jan. 9-Feb. 6, 2006 [N=2,000].
- ^{xvii} December 2005 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 31, 2005 [N=3,011].
- ^{xviii} September 2005 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted Sept. 14-Oct.13, 2005 [N=2,251].
- ^{xix} June 2005 trends based on the Spyware Survey, conducted May 4-June 7, 2005 [N=2,001].
- ^{xx} February 2005 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted Feb. 21-March 21, 2005 [N=2,201].
- ^{xxi} January 2005 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted Jan. 13-Feb.9, 2005 [N=2,201].
- ^{xxii} November 23-30, 2004 trends based on the November 2004 Activity Tracking Survey, conducted November 23-30, 2004 [N=914].
- ^{xxiii} November 2004 trends based on the November Post-Election Tracking Survey, conducted Nov 4-Nov 22, 2004 [N=2,200].
- ^{xxiv} June 2004 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted May 14-June 17, 2004 [N=2,200].
- ^{xxv} February 2004 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted February 3-March 1, 2004 [N=2,204].