

**Data Memo**

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**RE:** Generations online  
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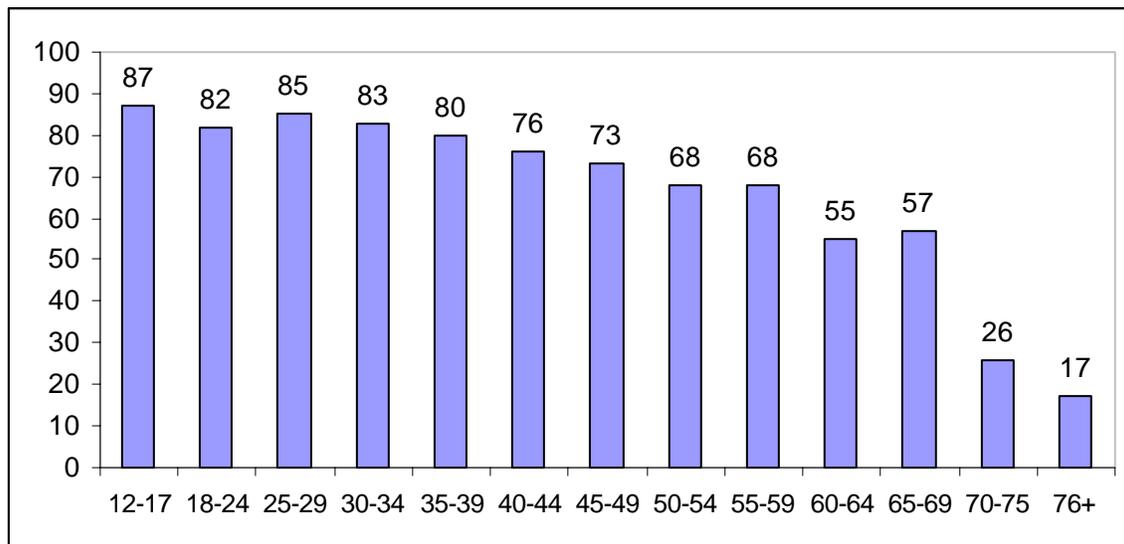
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*Internet users ages 12-28 are more likely to IM, play online games, and create blogs  
Internet users over age 28 (but younger than 70) are more likely to make travel  
reservations and bank online*

**Internet Use and Email**

All age cohorts of internet users (ages 12 and older) are equally likely to use email; about 90% of all internet users send or receive email. Given the many other variations in internet use among different age groups, it is notable that this basic communications tool is almost universally used. Even teens, many of whom disparage email as something for “old people,” and tend to prefer instant messaging, have not completely abandoned it. Email is the most popular online activity, especially for internet users age 65 or older. However, the best place to reach someone age 70 and older is still offline. Only 26% of Americans age 70-75 and 17% of Americans age 76 or older go online.

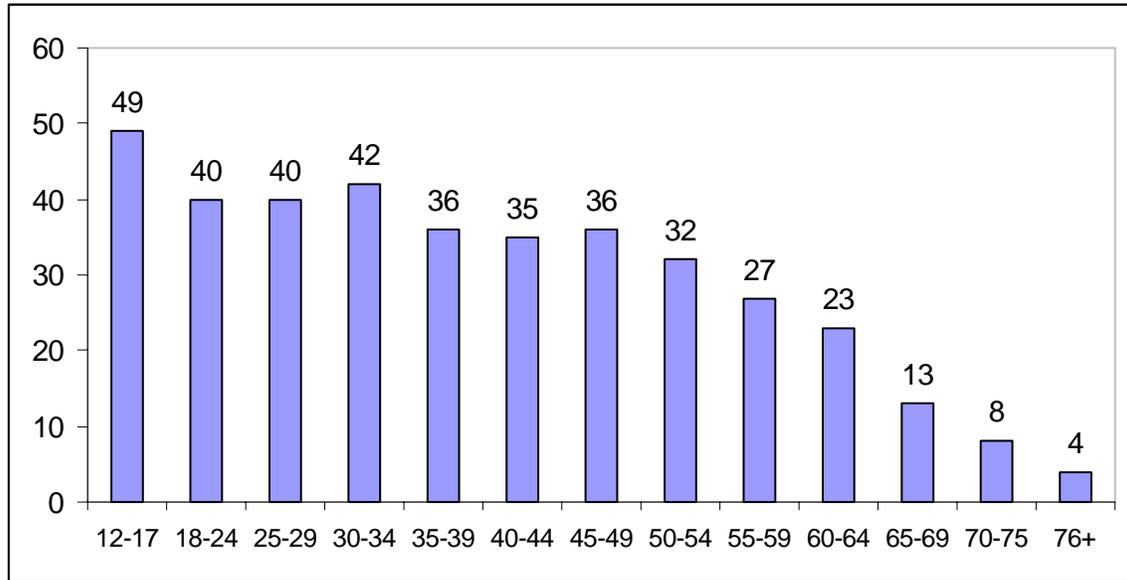
Chart: Share of Americans online by age (Teens Oct-Nov. 2004, margin of error = ± 3%. Adults Jan-June 2005, margin of error = ± 1%.)



## **Teens and Generation Y**

Internet users ages 12 to 28 years old have embraced the online applications that enable communicative, creative, and social uses. Teens and Generation Y (age 18-28) are significantly more likely than older users to send and receive instant messages, play online games, create blogs, download music, and search for school information. An always-on, high-speed connection at home enables some of these activities for young internet users, but broadband access is not the whole story. Internet users in their 30s are about as likely as users in their 20s to have broadband at home and yet do not match the younger users in their enthusiasm for games and IM.

Chart: Share of Americans with broadband at home by age (Teens Oct-Nov. 2004, margin of error =  $\pm 4\%$ ; Adults Jan-June 2005, margin of error =  $\pm 2\%$ .)



## **The New Middle**

Internet users ages 29 to 69 years old are more likely than internet users in other age groups to engage in online activities that require some capital: travel reservations and online banking. In both cases, internet users with high-speed access at home are more likely to do these activities than those with dial-up connections at home, but again, there are notable generational differences. Fully 50% of internet users between 29 and 40 years old bank online, compared to 38% of their younger peers (internet users age 18-28).

Buying a product online is equally popular with all internet users except those at either end of the age scale: teens and internet users age 70 or older.

<b>Generational Differences in Online Activities</b>								
	<b>Online Teens<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Gen Y</b>	<b>Gen X</b>	<b>Trailing Boomers</b>	<b>Leading Boomers</b>	<b>Matures</b>	<b>After Work</b>	<b>All Online Adults<sup>b</sup></b>
	(12-17)	(18-28)	(29-40)	(41-50)	(51-59)	(60-69)	(70+)	
<b>Go online</b>	87%	84%	87%	79%	75%	54%	21%	72%
<b>Teens and Gen Y are more likely to engage in the following activities compared with older users:</b>								
<b>Online games</b>	81	54	37	29	25	25	32	36
<b>School research</b>	*	73	60	61	48	33	14	57
<b>Instant message</b>	75	66	52	38	42	33	25	47
<b>Text message</b>	*	60	44	29	15	11	8	35
<b>Get info about a school</b>	57	59	42	50	40	30	14	45
<b>Download music</b>	51	45	28	16	14	8	5	25
<b>Read blogs</b>	38	41	30	20	21	19	16	27
<b>Download video</b>	31	27	22	14	8	8	1	18
<b>Create a blog</b>	19	20	9	3	9	3	4	9
<b>Activities where Gen X users or older generations dominate:</b>								
<b>Get health info on at least one topic</b>	*	73	84	80	84	68	72	79
<b>Travel reservations</b>	*	50	72	64	64	59	60	63
<b>Job research</b>	*	44	59	59	54	31	13	51
<b>Use gov't sites</b>	*	41	56	64	60	55	45	54
<b>Bank online</b>	*	38	50	44	37	35	22	41
<b>Religious info</b>	26	30	38	24	28	28	28	30
<b>And for some activities, the youngest and oldest cohorts may differ, but there is less variation overall:</b>								
<b>Use email</b>	89	88	92	90	94	90	89	91
<b>Get news</b>	76	72	76	75	70	74	68	73
<b>Product research</b>	*	79	80	83	79	74	60	78
<b>Online purchase</b>	43	68	69	68	67	65	41	67
<b>Job hunting</b>	30	62	51	40	36	17	2	44
<b>Use a photo service</b>	*	39	38	31	32	31	30	34
<b>Rate a person or product</b>	*	36	34	27	31	24	8	30
<b>Search for a person</b>	*	31	31	23	23	24	29	27
<b>Participate in an online auction</b>	*	26	29	25	20	18	6	24

<sup>a</sup> Source for Online Teens data: Pew Internet & American Life Project Teens and Parents Survey, Oct.-Nov. 2004. Margin of error is  $\pm 4\%$  for online teens.

<sup>b</sup> Source for Online Adult data: Pew Internet & American Life Project Surveys conducted January 2005, May-June 2005, and September 2005. Margin of error for all online adults is  $\pm 3\%$  for these surveys. Questions pertaining to health topics, government sites, and religious info were asked in November 2004. Margin of error for that survey is  $\pm 5\%$  for all online adults. The average margin of error for each age group, which can be considerably higher than  $\pm 5\%$ , is listed in the Methodology section of this report.

## Methodology

The results in this report are based on data from a series of telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International between October, 2004, and June, 2005. For results based on the sample of 6,403 adults, 18 and older, conducted January-June, 2005, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 1 percentage point. For results based adult internet users (n=4,207), the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2 percentage points. For results based on the sample of teens (ages 12 to 17), conducted in October-November, 2004, (n=1,100), the margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points. For results based on teen internet users (n=971), the margin of error is plus or minus 4 percentage points. Some questions were asked in only one recent survey and therefore have a higher margin of sampling error, as noted in the table on page 3. The table includes analysis of subgroups of internet users that also have a higher margin of error. Below is a list of the average margin of error for each age group listed in the table:

- The average margin of error for internet users ages 18-28 is  $\pm 7\%$  across all surveys.
- The average margin of error for internet users ages 29-40 is  $\pm 6\%$  across all surveys.
- The average margin of error for internet users ages 41-50 is  $\pm 6\%$  across all surveys.
- The average margin of error for internet users ages 51-59 is  $\pm 7\%$  across all surveys.
- The average margin of error for internet users ages 60-69 is  $\pm 9\%$  across all surveys.
- The average margin of error for internet users ages 70+ is  $\pm 11\%$  across all surveys.

For more information about the latest trends in internet use, please see <http://www.pewinternet.org/trends.asp>.

For more information about the sample of 12- to 17-year-olds, please see the “Teens and Technology” report (available at [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/162/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/162/report_display.asp)).

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.

The sample for this survey is a random digit sample of telephone numbers selected from telephone exchanges in the continental United States. The random digit aspect of the sample is used to avoid “listing” bias and provides representation of both listed and unlisted numbers (including not-yet-listed numbers). The design of the sample achieves this representation by random generation of the last two digits of telephone numbers selected on the basis of their area code, telephone exchange, and bank number.

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 10 attempts were made to complete an interview at sampled households. 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 household received at least one daytime call in an attempt to find someone at home. In each contacted household, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest male currently at home. If no male was available, interviewers asked to speak with the oldest female at home. This systematic respondent selection technique has been shown to produce samples that closely mirror the population in terms of age and gender. All interviews completed on any given day were considered to be the final sample for that day.

Non-response in telephone interviews produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population, and these subgroups are likely to vary also on questions of substantive interest. In order to compensate for these known biases, the sample data are weighted in analysis. The demographic weighting parameters are derived from a special analysis of the most recently available Census Bureau's Annual Social and Economic Supplement (March 2004). This analysis produces population parameters for the demographic characteristics of adults age 18 or older, living in households that contain a telephone. 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.