

Online News

For many home broadband users, the internet is a primary news source

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Summary of Findings

The growth in online news-gathering mirrors the growth in broadband adoption.

Some 50 million Americans turn to the internet for news on a typical day, a new high-water mark for online news-gathering that coincides with rapid growth of broadband adoption in American homes.

Over the last four years, overall internet penetration rose from 58% of all adult Americans to 70%, and home broadband penetration grew from 20 million people (or 10% of adult Americans) to 74 million people (37% of adult Americans).

Americans with high-speed internet connections at home are more likely than dial-up internet users to get news online on the typical day.

When asked in our December 2005 survey of 3,011 Americans if they turn to any of six possible sources of news on a typical day, respondents told us the following about their news consuming habits:

Where People Got News "Yesterday"				
	All respondents	Non-internet users	Dial-up users	Broadband users
Local TV	59%	57%	65%	57%
National TV	47	43	50	49
Radio	44	34	52	49
Local paper	38	37	41	38
Internet	23	--	26	43
National paper	12	8	12	17
Source: Pew Internet Project December 2005 survey.				

For broadband internet users, online news is a more regular part of the daily news diet than is the local paper; it is nearly as much of a daily habit as is getting news from national TV newscasts and radio. For home dial-up users, however, online news is not as much an everyday activity.

This Pew Internet & American Life Project report is based on the findings of a daily tracking survey on Americans' use of the internet. All numerical data was gathered through telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates between November 29 and December 31, 2005, among a sample of 3,011 adults, aged 18 and older. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is +/- 2%. For results based on internet users (n=1,931), the margin of sampling error is +/- 2%. For results based on home broadband internet users (n=1,014), the margin of sampling error is +/- 3%.

Online news takes center stage as a news source for 40% of broadband users — those who are most heavily engaged with the internet.

A consistent finding of the Pew Internet Project has been that home broadband users log onto the internet more frequently and do a wider scope of online activities on the average day than dial-up users. Since some broadband users are heavier users of the internet than others, we define as “high-powered” internet users those who do more online on the typical day than other home high-speed users. These high-powered broadband users are those who reported doing 4 or more things online “yesterday” (as compared the median 3 activities for all broadband users from the list of 10 online pursuits asked about in December 2005). Additionally, they are early adopters of broadband to the home and, as sophisticated demanders of online news, high-powered users are likely to shape how the online news market evolves.

These high-powered broadband users comprise 40% of the entire population of home broadband users and 44% of *all* internet users who get news on the typical day. They are better educated and have higher incomes than other Americans, and, as noted, they are part of an information-elite that shapes how delivery of news and information will evolve online. Among these high-powered users:

- 71% of high-powered users get news online on the average day—three times the rate of other high-speed users;
- 59% get news on the average day from local TV;
- 53% get news on the typical day from radio;
- 52% get news on the average day from national TV newscasts;
- 43% get news on the average day from the local paper;
- 21% get news on the average day from a national newspaper.

It is worth pointing out that 72% of these users report getting news from both local and national TV on the average day. Although the survey didn’t ask where respondents get most of their news, it is clear that, for a sizable and influential group of broadband users, the internet is a prime news source.

Approximately 25% of the growth of daily online news consumption since 2002 is attributable to the increase in home broadband adoption.

This number is derived by comparing what daily online news consumption would be at the end of 2005 if home broadband adoption was at 2002 levels—while holding constant other factors that predict news consumption, such as age, education, online experience, and other demographic characteristics.

Broadband is not the only thing behind the growing popularity of online news. Other factors driving the growth of online news include overall internet growth and increasing levels of internet experience.

Summary of Findings

Internet penetration generally has grown from 58% of adults in 2002 to 70% by the end of 2005; this accounts for an additional one-third of the increase in online news consumption.

Online experience is responsible for another 25% of the growth in daily online news consumption. Internet users, as they gain tenure online, are increasingly comfortable with the idea that they can consume news online.

Additional growth may be attributable to improvement in the quality of online news. Media industries have made their content more attractive to users over time, a supply side development no doubt driven in part by a demand side phenomenon; more users have the broadband connections that make richer online content easier to deliver.

Age is the key factor in explaining how daily news consumption patterns differ for home high-speed users.

A home high-speed internet connection influences news consumption in different ways for different people. One can imagine that an “always on” high-speed internet connection means some users might get news more often than they would if they had slow dial-up. For some, it may push out an “old fashioned” media source; for others, it may be a supplement to an established pattern of news consumption.

Here is how daily online news consumption looks when comparing dial-up and broadband users across age groups:

- Home broadband users **under age 36** are more likely than their dial-up counterparts to consult a wide range of news sources; much of this increment comes from online news and national newspapers. Almost half (46%) of broadband users in this age group get news online on the average day, more than twice the rate (21%) of dial-up users in this cohort.
- Among those internet users ages **36 through 50**, 40% get news online on the average day, compared with 30% of dial-up users in this age range. But broadband users don't consult a greater number of sources than do dial-up users on a typical day, and there's only a modest shift away from local TV news. There are also small downticks in the frequency with which broadband users in this age group get news from radio and national TV.
- Among internet users **over age 50**, 43% get news online on the average day compared with 26% of dial-up users. Again, broadband users don't consult a greater number of sources for news on a typical day than do dial-up users, and there is a modest shift away from local TV news as a daily source for news for broadband users.

In terms of how the internet rearranges news consumption patterns more broadly, the impact is greatest for the “under age 36” age group. This age group is generally less news-hungry than older online users. They are particularly less likely to get news on the typical day from local TV, national TV, or local newspapers than older users. For

Summary of Findings

broadband users, the only news source category where younger users trump older ones is for online news, although younger high-speed users are more likely to get news from a national paper than their counterparts in the age 36-50 group.

This suggests that, for younger home high-speed internet users, certain news gathering habits, namely reading a local daily newspaper and to a lesser extent watching local and national TV news, are not being formed – at least for some of them. But, relative to dial-up users in the same age group – a new newsgathering habit enters the picture for the “under age 36” cohort. And that is turning to the internet for news.

Traditional media organizations dominate online news sources.

When asked where they go online for news—

- 46% of all internet users say they go to the website of a national TV news organization such as CNN or MSNBC; 52% of home broadband users say this.
- 39% go to portal websites such as Yahoo or Google; the figure is 44% for broadband users.
- 32% go to websites of a local daily paper; 36% of broadband users do.
- 31% go to the website of a local TV news station; 33% of broadband users do.
- 20% say they go to a website of a national daily newspaper; 24% of broadband users say this.

Foreign and non-traditional news sites play more of a niche role.

Among all internet users, 22% report going to foreign or non-traditional news sites at least once, and 25% of broadband users say this. Here is the share of online users who have ever been to four such news sites included in the survey:

- 12% of online users have been to an international news site such as al Jazeera or the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC); 15% of home broadband users say this.
- 9% of all internet users have been to news blogs, with 12% of broadband users saying they’ve been to news blogs.
- 6% of all internet users have been to websites such as Newsmax.com or Altnet.com; 7% of home broadband users say this.
- 5% of all users (and the same share of broadband users) have gotten news from listservs.

The non-traditional news sites seem to loom largest for “high-powered” broadband users. Fully 38% have at one time been to at least one of the four non-traditional news sites included in the survey, on the typical day, 18% of “high-powered” broadband users get news from at least one such site.

Online news consumers are willing to register for news, but are not willing to pay.

- Most (54%) internet users who have gotten news online have registered at a news site.
- Only 6% of internet users have paid for news content (video clips, articles, or news broadcasts).
- Close to a quarter of online news consumers (23%) have set up personal preferences at a news site to get news alerts. Of those who have done this, the plurality (30%) get headline or general news alerts.

Online News Consumption: Summary of Findings at a Glance
The growth in online news-gathering mirrors the growth in broadband adoption.
Americans with high-speed internet connections at home are more likely than dial-up internet users to get news online on a typical day.
Online news takes center stage as a news source for 40% of broadband users—those who are most heavily engaged with the internet.
Approximately 25% of the growth of daily online news consumption since 2002 is attributable to the increase in home broadband adoption.
Age is the key factor in explaining how daily news consumption patterns differ for home high-speed users.
Traditional media organizations dominate online news sources.
Foreign and non-traditional news sites play more of a niche role.
Online news consumers are willing to register for news, but are not willing to pay.
Source: John B. Horrigan, <i>Online News</i> , Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project, March 22, 2006.

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Acknowledgments

About the Pew Internet & American Life Project: The Pew Internet Project produces reports that explore the impact of the internet on children, families, communities, the work place, schools, health care, and civic/political life. The Project aims to be an authoritative source on the evolution of the internet through collection of data and analysis of real-world developments as they affect the virtual world. Support for the non-profit Pew Internet Project is provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts. The Project is an initiative of the Pew Research Center. The Project's website: www.pewinternet.org

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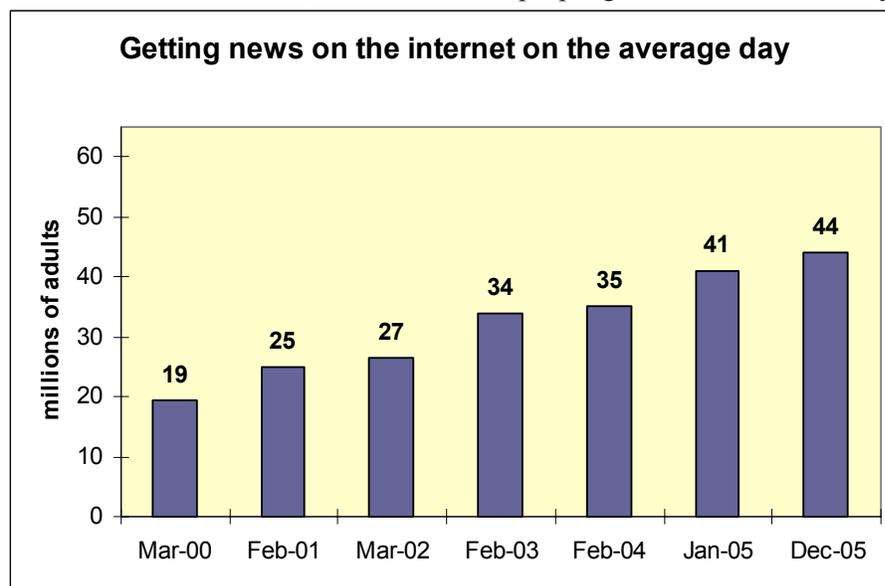
Part 1.

Growing Consumption of Online News

Once a person makes the switch to a high-speed internet connection at home, his or her relationship to the internet deepens. A home broadband user logs onto the internet more often and does a wider range of activities online than a dial-up internet user.¹ One thing a broadband user does with greater frequency is surf the internet for news; having a home high-speed internet connection increases the likelihood, relative to dial-up users, of someone using the internet to gather news and information. The purpose of this report is to profile people's daily newsgathering habits with a special focus on how the picture differs for those with broadband connections at home.

Online news has an important place in the daily online habits of internet users.

After email and going online to conduct a search, news is the third most popular online activity on the average day. According to our December 2005 survey, in which we expanded the news-gathering questions to capture a more accurate picture of the activity, 35% of adult internet users, or about 50 million adults, check the news online on the typical day. Historically, we have asked a single news-gathering question, which in December 2005 garnered 31% of internet users, or about 44 million adults – a significant increase since March 2002, when 27 million people got news online on the typical day.



¹ The Project has documented how a home broadband connection affects the scope and frequency of online activities several times in recent years. See John B. Horrigan, *The Broadband Difference* (2003), available online at http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/63/report_display.asp, and also John B. Horrigan, *Broadband Adoption in the United States: Growing but Slowing* (2005), available online at: http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/164/report_display.asp.

Part 1. Growing Consumption of Online News

Some of this growth is due to an increase in overall internet penetration, which rose from 58% of adult Americans in March 2002 to 70% by the end of 2005. Some of the growth is undoubtedly a supply-side phenomenon. News organizations have made news sites more attractive and rich with content in recent years. The growth of online news sources such as blogs also may have lured more Americans to cyberspace for news. Furthermore, newspapers, radio broadcasts, and TV news now routinely push people to their websites for additional information about stories.

Consumption of online news is also supply-driven: news sites are more attractive and rich with content.

The expansion of high-speed internet connections has also increased online news consumption.

Another reason that more Americans are getting news on the internet is the advent of broadband (or high-speed) internet connections at home.² In March 2002, 20 million Americans had broadband at home, compared with 48 million in February 2004 and 74 million by December 2005. Today, with 37% of adult Americans now have high-speed connections at home (compared with 23% with slower dial-up connections). Broadband has thus become the principal means of online access for Americans. Given that news has been a popular online activity for some time, it is no surprise that, for most Americans, having an “always on” connection increases their use on online news sites on the average day.

Broadband is now the principal means of Internet access for Americans.

We estimate that approximately 25% of the increase in online news consumption on the typical day from 2002 to December 2005 is attributable to higher home broadband penetration.³ About one-third of the growth is due to the expansion of the internet population over that time horizon, with the remainder being either unexplained by the model (18%) or a result of greater online experience in the internet population (26%). The latter effect may be capturing improvement in news content on the internet, as well as growing comfort with online news. People turn more often now to online news than they did four years ago because the offerings are more attractive *and* because they have formed online news consumption habits.

² A note on terminology: throughout this report, “broadband” and “high-speed” will be used interchangeably in discussing internet users with broadband internet connections at home.

³ This number is derived from a logistic regression model that predicts the likelihood an internet user gets news online on a typical day, holding constant a variety of demographic characteristics and type of connection speed. Comparing the model’s prediction for online news use on a typical day with 2006 and 2002 broadband penetration rates yields the 25% figure for the increase in online news consumption attributable to growth in home high-speed penetration.

Part 1. Growing Consumption of Online News

Major events spur people to go online for breaking news.

It is also the case that major news events create spikes in online news consumption. In the week following 9/11, 27% of internet users got news online (5 percentage points higher than late summer 2001 readings) and 37% of internet users were getting news online in the days following the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, 11 percentage points higher than figures from the prior month. People tend to dig in-depth into news stories online in the face of major events, and this may draw new people into the habit of going online for news. Some portion of the unexplained growth in online news over the past few years might reasonably be attributed to the effect of major news events.

News consumption on the average day varies between high-speed and dial-up users.

People with high-speed internet connections at home have different patterns of news consumption compared to dial-up and non-internet users. The table below shows the news sources American turn to on the typical day comparing all respondents, non-internet users, and online users with different home connection types.

Getting news on the typical day				
<i>(% of all in each group who say they get news from specific source 'yesterday')</i>				
	All respondents	Non-internet users	Dial-up at home	Broadband at home
Local TV	59%	57%	65%	57%
National TV	47	43	50	49
Radio	44	34	52	49
Local paper	38	37	41	38
Internet	23	--	26	43
National paper	12	8	12	17
Average number of sources	2.22	1.80	2.45	2.52
Number of cases	3,011	1,080	633	1,014

Source: Pew Internet Project December 2005 survey.

On the average day, 83% of Americans get news from at least one of the sources included in the survey, with most (56%) getting news from several (between 2 and 4 inclusive) sources. For the average American, TV remains the most popular news source, followed by the radio and the local newspaper. For home broadband internet users, TV

Part 1. Growing Consumption of Online News

and radio lead the way, but online news sources are on par with the local paper as a news source and rival national TV and radio.

TV and radio remain the most popular news source for Americans, but broadband internet users rely on online sources as much as their local newspaper.

Explaining the differences across the categories of users can be complicated, given the interactions between age, education, technology use, and overall interest in the news. Non-internet users tend to be older, and advancing age generally tracks with greater interest in following the news. But non-internet users are less educated on average than internet users, and lower educational levels are also associated with less interest in news.

Demographic differences between dial-up and broadband internet users further muddies comparisons across types of news sources to which people turn on the average day. People with home broadband connections tend to be younger than dial-up users, and young people tend to have lower levels of interest in news. However, broadband users are also better educated and have higher incomes, which correlate with higher rates of news consumption.

Most internet users continue to rely on a number of sources for news.

Looking at the data, a high-speed internet connection at home is clearly related to greater use of the internet for news; 43% of home broadband users seek out news on the internet on the average day compared to 26% of those with dial-up internet connections. On the face of things, however, this broadband effect doesn't seem to result in any a greater frequency of turning to a wider range of news sources; dial-up and broadband users use about the same number of news sources per day. Because a variety of forces may act on users in different ways, the total number of sources may be less interesting than what influences the predilections of different subgroups to prefer one source to another.

Part 2.

Broadband and Daily News Consumption

A broadband connection can affect daily news consumption in a variety of ways.

In trying to disentangle the forces that shape online news consumption, it might help to list several ways broadband could influence news consumption patterns.

- A broadband connection might **add** to the total number of news sources people turn to on the average day. The “always on” connection might enable users to more frequently consult more news sources than is possible with a dial-up connection.
- A broadband connection might **substitute** for other news sources. Some users might not bother with the newspaper or TV news given the easy availability of online news over a home broadband connection.
- Broadband might have a **supplementary** effect; users may get online news more often than they did when they have dial-up, but their overall daily news consumption may not be radically different than before.

Online news consumption appears to vary with age.

Since age is a strong predictor of interest in news and is a convenient dividing line, the table below helps sort through the different effects by dividing home high-speed and dial-up internet users by age and looking at their daily news consumption habits.

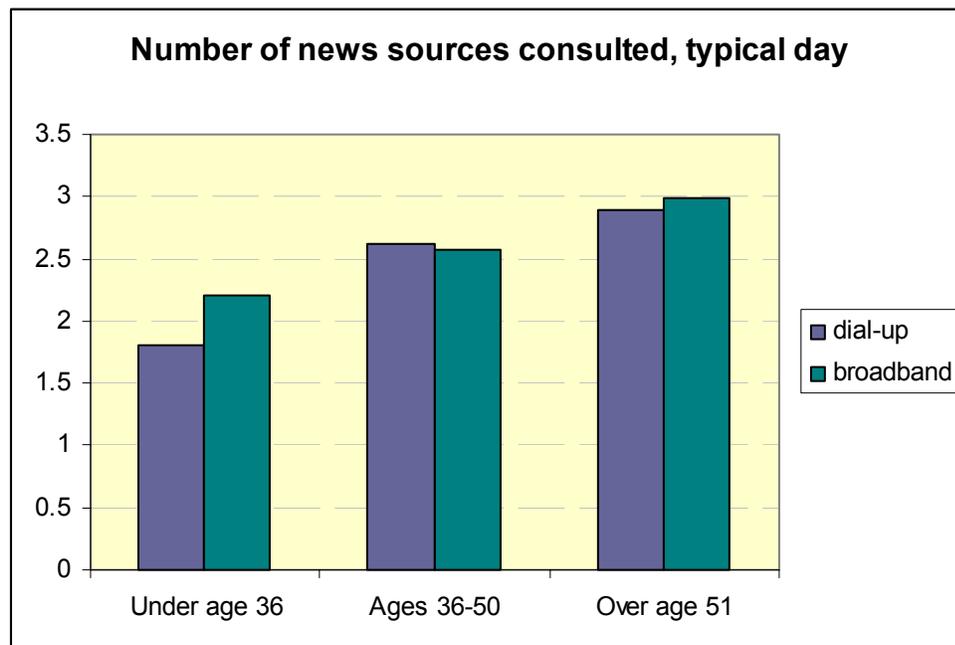
Getting News on the Typical Day: Comparing Age Groups and Connection Speed						
<i>(% of all in each group who say they get news from specific source 'yesterday')</i>						
	Under age 36		Between 36 & 50		Over age 50	
	Broadband	Dial-up	Broadband	Dial-up	Broadband	Dial-up
Local TV	51%	54%	60	72	61	71
National TV	40	35	49	52	62	61
Radio	41	43	53	57	57	54
Local paper	28	27	41	40	52	55
Internet	46	21	40	30	43	26
National paper	17	2	12	10	23	21
Number of cases	307	141	360	215	347	265
Source: Pew Internet Project December 2005 survey.						

Part 2. Broadband and Daily News Consumption

There are clear differences in patterns of news consumption across the different age cohorts of home broadband users. Among the generally less ardent news consumers in the under age 36 group, local TV is the most popular news source on a daily basis, clearly preferred to national TV, radio, and other sources. The internet trails local TV by a small margin that is not statistically significant, and the frequency with which online news is consulted is no different (statistically) from national TV or radio. Among those with high-speed connections at home and under the age of 36, the internet is very much at the center of how they get news on the typical day.

For older (over age 35) home broadband users, the internet occupies an important space in their daily news habits—about 41% turn to an online source on the average day—but traditional media, TV and radio especially, dominate how they get news.

Another way to assess broadband and news consumption across age categories is to compare the number of news sources consulted by home broadband and home dial-up users on the average day. As the chart below shows, for those under the age of 36, there is a gap in the number of news sources consulted on a typical day by users with different types of internet connections. Young broadband users, on average, consult more news sources on the average day than their dial-up counterparts. For older online users, there is no such gap.



The data indicate that a home broadband connection shifts daily news consumption in different ways across age groups.⁴ The typical young person gets news from TV and

⁴ This finding is confirmed by multivariate analysis that models the number of offline news sources respondents turn to on the average day as a function of various demographic characteristics and home connection speed. The statistical significance of an interaction term for age and home broadband connection shows that having a home broadband connection *reduces* the likelihood that a young person gets news from many offline sources; this effect is not present for “over age 36” respondents.

Part 2. Broadband and Daily News Consumption

radio, but is not very likely to subscribe to the local paper or, say, the *New York Times*. Give that person a broadband connection at home, and real differences emerge in comparison to a dial-up user of roughly the same age. The broadband user gets news from more sources, and most of the additional sources are accessed through the internet (though some are national newspapers).⁵ The dial-up user is getting news mostly from local TV and radio. For a young person, broadband's impact is *additive* with respect to daily news consumption.

For older (over age 36) broadband users, online news plays a *supplementary* role in how they get news daily—filling out entrenched online and offline news habits but not adding many new sources. Both types of older high-speed users get news from traditional media sources, and although there is a modest shift away from local TV news and toward online news for broadband users, there is no difference in total number of news sources used on the typical day.

Finally, it is important to understand the magnitude of these effects. The findings for the under 36 age group affects a large share of them; nearly half (46%) of adults under age 36 have high-speed internet connections at home. For the 36 to 50 age group, 43% have broadband at home. Only 23% of people over age 50 have high-speed at home.

⁵ Research from the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press suggests that young people may substitute online offline media sources such as newspapers. See *Public More Critical of Press, But Goodwill Persists*. <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=248> In the context of the finding that young broadband users report reading national papers, it may be that some of these respondents are saying they read national newspapers online when they say “yes” when asked if they read national papers.

Part 3.

Spotlight on “High-Powered” High-Speed Users

The behavior of current “high-powered” high-speed users may offer a glimpse into the future.

In our December 2005 survey, the median broadband user did three online activities on a given day (out of a list of ten) compared to one for the median dial-up user.⁶ This is indicative of how a high-speed internet connection pulls people to broader engagement with the internet. Within the group of broadband users, however, some are more engaged with the internet than others.

This section examines the news-gathering behavior of broadband users with the closest relationship with the internet, as measured by the number of online activities they do on an average day and the frequency with which they log on. These high-powered broadband users are defined as those who do four or more of the ten activities on a given day. They are more likely to log onto the internet several times a day than other broadband users (by a 78% to 37% margin). Additionally, they make up a substantial portion of home broadband users—about 40%—or approximately 29 million people.

Why focus on this high-powered segment of broadband internet users? First, it might offer a glimpse of future behavior in the general population. To the extent that these users are trailblazers—and the fact that they have been online longer (than other broadband users and much longer than dial-up users) suggests they may be—later-comers may mirror their behavior. The growth of broadband penetration in recent years and future upgrades in network speeds are other reasons to think these users may hold clues to future behavior.

Second, these users are elite in ways separate and apart from connection speed. They are better educated (49% have college degrees or more compared with 36% of other broadband users and the 27% national average) and high-income. Fully 46% of elite high-speed users live in households with income over \$75,000 annually compared with 32% of other broadband users and 21% for all respondents.

High-powered users may feed information to others.

Call them “influencers” or opinion leaders, many of these elite broadband users are likely to be people others rely upon when gathering information of various sorts. The demands they place on the content-providing industries may shape what is offered to everyone

⁶ The average (or mean) number of activities was 2.8 for broadband users and 1.5 for dial-up users out of the 10 activities.

Part 3. Spotlight on “High-Powered” High-Speed Users

online. These users may also be innovators themselves—finding novel ways to consume online news using information technology—that has an impact eventually on the entire market.⁷

Getting News on the Typical Day: Elite Broadband Users Versus the Rest		
<i>(% of who say they get news from specific source 'yesterday')</i>		
	“High-powered” home broadband	All other home broadband
Local TV	59%	54%
National TV	52	46
Radio	53	47
Local paper	43	35
Internet	71	24
National paper	21	14
Average no. of sources	3.0	2.2
Number of cases	395	619
Source: Pew Internet Project December 2005 survey.		

High-powered users are heavy consumers of online news.

They make up 44% of the population of internet users who seek out news online on the average day. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of high-powered broadband users turn to the internet for news on the average day, a rate three times that for remaining high-speed users. The internet is the most frequently used news source, on the typical day, for elite high-speed users, outpacing local and national TV newscasts, which traditionally lead the way. Since 72% of these users watch *either* local TV news *or* national news on a typical day, this means elite broadband users are equally as likely to get news from TV as the internet on the average day.

For the heavily engaged broadband user, it is clear that online news occupies a central place in his or her daily newsgathering habits in a way that distinctly differs from other broadband users.

⁷ Anywhere from 10% to 40% of innovations in the high-technology sector originate with consumers – so-called “lead users” who find a way to tweak a product to meet their needs. See Eric von Hippel, *Democratizing Innovation*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005. Podcasting is a good example of this in the internet space.

Part 4.

Online Sources for News

Internet users have a wide array of online sources for news, and they use them.

The number of choices internet users have to get news online is vast. The December 2005 survey asked respondents about ten different kinds of online news sites as a way to benchmark the variety of sources people may use.

Where users get news online			
Percent in each group who have EVER gone to these sites	All internet users	Dial-up internet users	Broadband internet users
National TV news site (CNN or MSNBC)	46%	40%	52%
Portal (Google, Yahoo)	39	35	44
Local daily paper	32	31	36
Local TV news site	31	31	33
National daily paper	20	17	24
Site of radio news organization	13	10	16
International news sites (BBC or al Jazeera)	12	9	15
News blogs	9	6	12
Alternative news organizations	6	5	7
Online list serves	5	5	5
Have gone to at least one of these sites	73%	70%	79%
Have gone to at least two of these sites	56	54	61
Have gone to at least three of these sites	41	39	45
Have gone to at least four of these sites	31	30	34
Source: Pew Internet Project December 2005 survey.			

Part 4. Online Sources for News

Most internet users have at one time been to at least one of these sites, and a majority has been to at least two at some point. Substantial numbers have been to several different sites, suggesting that online news consumers—broadband ones more so—jump around to multiple news sites.

Traditional, offline media sources have established a place online, too.

The table also shows that established offline media players tend to have a strong foothold in cyberspace as well. (Since Google and Yahoo tend to aggregate news stories from wire services or well-established news organizations, it seems reasonable to include them in this category.) Local news, either from a TV station or a newspaper, also has a prominent place among online news users.

For news consumption on a typical day, the patterns are similar. What is worth pointing out here is that broadband users are particularly active in seeking out several online news sources on a typical day, with one-quarter saying they check out at least four online news sites regularly.

Part 4. Online Sources for News

Where users get news online on the typical day			
Percent in each group who YESTERDAY went to these sites	All internet users	Dial-up internet users	Broadband internet users
National TV news site (CNN or MSNBC)	16%	13%	21%
Portal (Google, Yahoo)	14	9	17
Local daily paper	9	6	11
Local TV news site	8	6	10
National daily paper	6	4	8
International news sites (BBC or al Jazeera)	3	2	3
News blogs	3	2	5
Site of radio news organization	2	2	3
Alternative news organizations	2	1	2
Online listservs	2	2	2
Have gone to at least one of these sites	35%	26%	43%
Have gone to at least two of these sites	28	20	34
Have gone to at least three of these sites	23	17	27
Have gone to at least four of these sites	21	16	25
Source: Pew Internet Project December 2005 survey.			

Although the range of choice for online news is large, one recurring issue has been the degree to which people actually take advantage of online news sources that are not connected to the so-called mainstream media. The four categories of news websites that might not be considered traditional media—news blogs, international websites (such as British Broadcasting Corporation or al Jazeera), alternative news sites such as Altnet or Newsmax, or news listservs—obviously rate lower than other sources. Overall, 22% of online users have at one time been to one of these four sources and 8% go to one of these sources on the average day. For home broadband user, 25% have done this, 10% on a typical day. The numbers for home dial-up users are 18% and 5% respectively.

Part 4. Online Sources for News

A look at high-powered users

As in the case of general online news consumption, the broadband elite have very different patterns than other high-speed users when focusing on specific news sites. First, they are wide-ranging news surfers in cyberspace—61% have been to at least three out of the ten sites queried, twice (32%) the rate for other broadband users. On a typical day 41% go to at least two online news sites versus only 7% of other broadband users. For the 4 non-traditional media sites, 38% of elite broadband users have at one time been to one of those sites. On a typical day, nearly one in five (18%) goes to at least one of these sites.

Though the news sites of established media organizations dominate among the broadband elite for daily news, it is notable that a sizeable share of elite broadband users turns to non-traditional sites at about the same rate all internet users did for general news in the internet's prehistoric days. In the Project's first two surveys, March and April 2000 when virtually all users had dial-up, 22% of internet users went online for news on the typical day. That is just a bit higher than the 18% of today's broadband elite who use non-traditional news sites.

Part 5.

Online News Preferences: Topics and Delivery

News topics users pursue in cyberspace

The internet offers choice in variety of topics in addition to choice in numbers of news sites. Our December 2005 survey not only asked internet users a general question of whether they get news online, but also asked them about six different kinds of news available online. The table below shows that internet users have a wide range of online news interests. A strong majority (81%) have gotten news about at least one variety of news asked about and more than half have sought out three types of news topics online. Broadband users, unsurprisingly, seek out a greater variety of news topics online and indeed half have explored four of the six topics at an online news site.

News topics EVER explored online	All internet users	Dial-up	Broadband
Finance	40	34	47
Entertainment	52	47	58
Local/community	44	38	49
Medical/health	45	41	50
Science/technology	45	37	55
Politics/public affairs	54	50	62
At least one	81	77	88
At least two	69	64	78
At least three	55	50	64
At least four	41	33	49

Source: Pew Internet Project December 2005 survey.

Once again, the high-powered users are most fully engaged with a range of news topics online. Nearly all (97%) have gotten news about one topic online, and approaching half (45%) have gotten news about at least five of the topics. With respect to specific topics:

- 79% of the broadband elite have gotten news about politics and public affairs online (a 28 percentage point advantage over remaining broadband users);
- 73% have gotten news about science and technology online (a 30 point margin over remaining broadband users);
- 73% have gotten news about entertainment (a 25 point margin over remaining broadband users).

Part 5. Online News Preferences: Topics and Delivery

Paying, Personalization, and Preferences

The interactive nature of the internet allows users to have a “hands on” relationship their online news experiences in a way that wasn’t possible ten years ago. Online news consumers can get specialized news alerts or probe online archives; in some cases, they may be asked to pay for these items.

A frequent occurrence at an online news site is for a user to be asked to register at the site, which usually involves providing some demographic information and often requires the user to set up a password to use the site. Overall, 45% of internet users say they have done this, and of those who say they have ever gone online for news, 53% say they have registered at a website in order to get news and information. These number rises to 54% for all broadband users and 59% for broadband users who have gotten news online.

In addition to being, often, a gateway to news, registration at news sites facilitates paying for content that news sites may offer for a fee. Such items may be past news articles, news broadcasts, or video clips. Not many internet users pay for such content; only 6% say they do. Home broadband users are more apt to do this than dial-up users by a 8% to 4% margin.

High-powered broadband users are most likely to do pay for news content; 14% have. Just about half (48%) of all those who have paid for this kinds of online news content are in the broadband elite.

As to setting up personal preferences for news alerts, 19% of all internet users have done this, or about 23% of online users have visited a news site online. Fully 61% of those who have done this are broadband users. The following table shows the kinds of preferences users set—both for all respondents who have done this and home high-speed users.

Part 5. Online News Preferences: Topics and Delivery

The Kinds of News Alerts People Get		
	All respondents who set preferences	Home broadband users
General news or headlines	30	27
Weather	15	11
News related to your business or industry	13	14
Sports	11	12
Finance	11	12
Entertainment	10	9
Health	9	7
Science/technology	6	7
Politics	5	6
Travel	2	3
Horoscopes	2	2
Other	20	24
Don't know	5	4
Source: Pew Internet Project December 2005 survey.		

The plurality of internet users simply wants the headlines or to be notified of breaking news when they set up preferences at news sites. There is nonetheless a variety of interests for news alerts, as one-fifth of all online users identifying some “other” category of news alerts not listed.

Many dial-up home users use their high-speed access at work to gather news online.

With about 40% of Americans who go online from home still using dial-up connections and with 77% of employed Americans with workplace online access having high-speed at work, some home dial-up users enjoy broadband at work.⁸ As it happens, some 44% of dial-up internet users have high-speed connections at work.

It is no secret that online connections in the workplace are used not solely for business purposes. Online retailers are well aware of “Black Monday,” the Monday following Thanksgiving, when people begin their online Christmas shopping, with much of that happening during work hours and, presumably, from the workplace. The table below shows that checking out what’s going on in the world is among the non-work-related online activities that take place at the office.

⁸ The vast majority of internet users have online access at home – 89% do. About 55% of online users have access in the workplace, with just 5% of adult internet users having the workplace as their *only* means of internet access.

Part 5. Online News Preferences: Topics and Delivery

Surfing at High-Speed at Work		
	Broadband at work only, not at home	Dial-up at home and not at work
Local TV	62%	67%
National TV	49	50
Radio	57	48
Local paper	37	40
Internet	35	23
National paper	13	10
Number of cases	268	374
Source: Pew Internet Project December 2005 survey.		

Methodology

This Pew Internet & American Life Project report is based on the findings of a daily tracking survey on Americans' use of the Internet.

Telephone interviews were conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates between November 29 and December 31, 2005, among a sample of 3,011 adults, 18 and older. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 2 percentage points. For results based internet users (n=1,931) the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2 percentage points. For results based on home broadband internet users (n=1,014) the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3 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.

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 2005). 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

Part 5. Online News Preferences: Topics and Delivery

weights are derived using an iterative technique that simultaneously balances the distribution of all weighting parameters.

PSRAI calculates a response rate as the product of three individual rates: the contact rate, the cooperation rate, and the completion rate. Of the residential numbers in the sample, 77 percent were contacted by an interviewer and 40 percent agreed to participate in the survey. Eighty-six percent were found eligible for the interview. Furthermore, 92 percent of eligible respondents completed the interview. Therefore, the final response rate is 29 percent.