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E-Citizen Planet

- 92 million American adults use government Websites
- 75 million used internet in connection with the political campaign in 2004
  - 64 million did so in 2006 (mid-term election)
- 52 million use the internet to research policy issues
- 38 million have sent email to government officials to try change policies
- 36 million use government Websites for health and safety information
- 32 million have emailed jokes about candidates
- 31 million use government Websites for tourist and travel information
- 29 million have researched or applied for government benefits
- 26 million use the internet for news about politics on average day in 2006, up 140% from 2002
- 25 million fact-checked the candidates online in 2006
- 24 million have participated in organized lobbying campaigns
- **21 million have watched political videos online (as of February, 2007)**
- 15 million consulted issue-oriented Websites in 2006
- 14 million were political content creators and sharers in 2006
- 14 million read political and media blogs
- 13 million consulted candidate sites in 2006
- 4 million donated to candidates online in 2006
- 2 million write about politics on their blogs

Politics online

- 1) The number of Americans using the internet for politics news, information, and activity has grown steadily since 1996 and will likely continue to do so through several more election cycles

**1996** – 4% of population got political news and information about that election online (about 7 million people); <2% discussed politics via email  
**2004** – 29% of population got political news and information about the election online (about 63 million people); 22% discussed politics via email  
**2006** – 25% of population got political news and information about the election (about 53 million people); 15% discussed politics via email

- 2) The composition of the online political audience has evolved to look more like America than in the earliest days of the web, but the demographic trend is also towards those with higher socio-economic circumstances.

**1996** – The online political news audience was 65% male; 37% under age 30 and the median age was 33; 38% lived in households earning more than \$50,000; 39% had college degrees or more; 87% were white

**2006** – The online political news audience was 53% male; 26% were under age 30 and the median age had jumped to 39; 77% were white. But the percentage with college degrees increased to 49% and the percentage living in households earning over \$50,000 rose to 64%.

- 3) The relative value of the internet to politically active citizens is increasing. Twice as many people (15% of the full population) cited the internet as their primary source of their political news and information in 2006 compared to the most recent off-year election in 2002, when 7% said the internet was their main source of news and information.
- 4) The spread of broadband connections is a major factor undergirding the growth of the online political audience – but not the only factor.

About a third of the growth in the online political audience between 2002 and 2006 can be tied to the spread of broadband. Indeed, we now see that younger broadband users – those age 35 and under – are more likely to cite the internet as a key political source of news and information than newspapers.

<b>Where People Got MOST of their Election News: Comparing Age Groups and Connection Speed</b>						
<i>(% of all in each group who say they get most election news from specific source)</i>						
	<b>Under age 36</b>		<b>Between 36 &amp; 50</b>		<b>51 and older</b>	
	<b>Broadband</b>	<b>Dial-up</b>	<b>Broadband</b>	<b>Dial-up</b>	<b>Broadband</b>	<b>Dial-up</b>
Television	57%	71%	65%	76%	73	74
Newspapers	18	28	28	35	45	48
Internet	35	17	22	11	17	10
Radio	17	20	21	16	14	19
Magazines	2	0	2	2	1	2
Number of cases	496	123	368	114	279	132

Source: Joint post-election survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People & The Press. November 2006. N=2,562. Margin of error in the overall sample is ±2%.

Besides broadband, the rest of the growth is likely attributable to several factors: One is the maturation of the online audience and people’s growing level of online experience. In 2002, the average internet user had been online a bit less than four years. By 2006, the average was close to 7 years.

Another factor driving traffic to all kinds of news sources was the competitiveness of the races and the perception that Democrats could regain control of one or both houses of Congress.

- 5) One final factor related to the value of the internet to the politically-interested is worth breaking out as its own item: It is their perception that the internet is a different kind of realm for information seeking, sharing, and creating.

Many people like to use the internet because of the convenience of using it anytime and at the user's discretion. But there is a widespread belief among users that compared to other media and venues, the online environment offers more in-depth information, a greater variety of voices and perspectives, and allows for user participation in political action and debate.

<b>Some use the internet for politics because it is convenient and others use it to get extra news or dig deeper into the news</b>				
<i>Asked of campaign internet users: Please tell me if each of the following is a MAJOR reason you get political and campaign news and information online, a MINOR reason, or not a reason at all for you?</i>				
	<b>Major reason</b>	<b>Minor reason</b>	<b>Not a reason at all</b>	<b>Don't know / refused</b>
Getting information online is convenient	71%	16%	12%	NA
You can get information on the Web that is not available elsewhere	49%	24%	26%	1%
You don't get all the news and information you want from traditional news sources such as the daily newspaper or the network TV news	41%	33%	23%	NA
You can get perspectives from outside your community on candidates and issues	34%	37%	27%	2%
You can get local perspectives online about candidates and issues	28%	35%	35%	2%

Source: Joint post-election survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People & The Press, November 2006. N for campaign internet users 821 in the sample including the cell phone only users (margin of error is ± 3.7%) and 742 for the landline only sample (margin of error is ± 4%).

- 6) The internet is a place where people seek many different kinds of information and perform basic political activities. Among the politically active cohort online in 2006:

- ◆ 52% of campaign internet users looked for information about candidates' positions on the issues or voting records.
- ◆ 41% of campaign internet users checked online about the accuracy of claims made by or about the candidates.
- ◆ 32% of campaign internet users watched video clips about the candidates or the election online.
- ◆ 27% of campaign internet users searched online for candidate endorsements or ratings by outside organizations.
- ◆ 9% of campaign internet users signed up to receive emails from candidates or campaigns.
- ◆ 5% of campaign internet users contributed money to a candidate.

For all of these activities, several demographic and technological realities stand out. Those doing these activities are significantly more likely than others to have a broadband connection at home, a college education, live in a household with relatively high income, and be under age 40.

7) More specifically, people use all kinds of sites to gather political information. Many are related to mainstream media. However, more than half of campaign internet users (53%) went to Web sources in the 2006 campaign beyond those that are fed by traditional news media in the United States.

- ◆ 60% got news and information about the campaign from **news portals** such as Google News or Yahoo! News. This is the first post-election survey in which we have framed the question this way and it is striking to note that these services were especially popular with younger internet users (those age 18-29 years old) overall and even more so with civically-engaged young users, particularly those who follow political news closely.
- ◆ 60% got news and information about the campaign from **TV network websites** such as CNN.com or ABCNews.com. These kinds of sites were particularly compelling to campaign internet users between ages 30-49 and those who have broadband connections at work, presumably because a portion of campaign internet users were checking in with their favorite sites during the day on the job.
- ◆ 48% got news and information about the campaign from **local news organization websites**. Again, these kinds of traditional news organization websites were particularly appealing to those age 30-49 years old. These sites were also especially important to those who say they liked the internet because it gave them news and information with local perspective.
- ◆ 31% got news and information about the campaign from **websites of major national newspapers** such as *USA Today* or the *New York Times*. These sites are especially popular with those who have higher levels of education and with those who have broadband connections at work. These sites were also especially important to those who say the internet gave them access to non-local perspectives on politics.
- ◆ 28% got news and information about the campaign from the **websites of state or local governments**. There were no notable demographic traits that characterized the campaign internet users of these sites. They were evenly spread among all ages, races, and socio-economic classes. However, these sites had special appeal to campaign internet users who go online in hopes of getting extra local perspective on politics.
- ◆ 24% got news and information about the campaign from **issue-oriented websites**. Internet users with relatively high levels of education were drawn to these sites. These sites particularly appealed to women in the campaign internet user population. They also were attractive to those who do not feel that traditional news sources like television and newspapers give them all the information they seek and to those who are looking for perspective from non-local sources.
- ◆ 20% got news and information about the campaign from **blogs**. Those with relatively high levels of education and high levels of household income were

particularly drawn to blogs as were campaign internet users in their 30s and their 50s. Blogs held special force with those who used the internet to get political news and information from places outside their communities.

- ◆ 20% got news and information about the campaign from **international news organization websites**, such as the BBC or Al Jazeera. Online men were more likely than women to be drawn to such sites, as were younger campaign internet users. They also were a favorite destination of people who wanted perspective from outside their community and also those who felt the internet gives them information beyond what is available from traditional news sources.
- ◆ 20% got news and information about the campaign from **websites created by candidates**. These sites were disproportionately used by civically-engaged young voters and voters who felt that the internet is a good source of information that is unavailable elsewhere. They were also important to people who see the internet as a place to get local perspectives.
- ◆ 19% got news and information about the campaign from **news satire websites** like *The Onion* or *The Daily Show*. These sites drew a lot of traffic from younger users (those under age 30). Some 30% of campaign internet users under age 30 went to such sites. Further, these sites were appealing to those who felt the internet gives them political information that is not available elsewhere.
- ◆ 19% got news and information about the campaign from the **websites of radio news organizations**, such as National Public Radio. Such sites are particularly appealing to those with higher levels of education.
- ◆ 10% got news and information about the campaign from **websites of alternative news organizations**, such as Altnet.org or NewsMax.com. Not surprisingly, these sites were especially popular to those who liked the internet for giving them information not available in traditional news sources like television and newspapers.
- ◆ 10% got news and information about the campaign from **email listservs**. Interesting, listservs were seen as a good source of political information from places outside a person's local community.

8) Political videos are an increasingly important part of the story – a natural outgrowth of the spread of broadband. Our latest survey in February showed that 15% of internet users watch political videos.

Men are more likely to do this than women (59% of political video viewers are men); unlike other kinds of online video watching, this is an area where those between the ages of 30 and 50 dominate the market.... For many other categories those under age 30 are considerably more likely to be watching.

9) The marriage of politics and Web 2.0 features is well underway. In the 2006 campaign about 14 million people used the read-write Web to contribute to political discussion and activity.

- ◆ 8% of campaign internet users posted their own political commentary to a newsgroup, website or blog.

- ◆ 13% of them forwarded or posted someone else's political commentary.
- ◆ 1% of them created political audio or video recordings.
- ◆ 8% of them forwarded or posted someone else's political audio or video recordings.

In all, 23% of campaign internet users (or 11% of internet users and 7% of the entire U.S. population) had done at least one of those things.

- 10) Though we have not directly focused research on wireless connections and politics yet, it is very likely that the rise of wireless connectivity will be associated with increased civic engagement. Some 34% of internet users connect wirelessly at least some of the time. That is a figure that is a 55% increase since 2004 when we first began asking about wireless connections.

And we have found that wireless users are considerably more likely to go online for news than even high-end broadband users. In addition, they are more to use email on any given day. Clearly, this is a ripe area of exploration for us in this election cycle.

- 11) The internet matters more to politics now because the online population and the voting population largely overlap each other.

- ◆ 69% of registered voters are internet users
  - 79% of registered voters under age 60 are internet users
  - 84% of registered voters under age 30 are internet users
- ◆ 63% of those who voted in the last election are internet users
  - 81% of those under age 60 who voted in the last election are internet users
  - 87% of those under age 30 who voted in the last election are internet users

- 12) Use of internet for getting political news is more strongly associated with voting than use of other news channels. There is a statistically significant correlation between using the internet to get political news and information and the actual act of voting – and it is an effect that holds up with you control for all the things you'd expect would predict the likelihood of voting.

This is NOT necessarily to say that online political resources increase voter turnout, though there are some tantalizing hints this might be happening. Many other things come into play with the decision of whether to vote or not. But this does signal that online political information could play an important role in efforts to promote civic engagement – especially among the young.

- 13) For e-government – the delivery of government services using the internet – users of these services have higher levels of satisfaction with respect to government. And internet use in and of itself is a strong predictor of whether someone has had an interaction with government in the past year. It seems that the ability to engage government online and arm oneself with information contributes to the perception that government is more efficient.

14) We are in the midst of a process that will make the longstanding “horserace” between media channels – TV vs. newspapers vs. radio vs. the internet – is increasingly meaningless. And the most obvious exemplars of this digital convergence are the young.

- ◆ 43% of young adults now regularly “listen to radio” on a device that is not a traditional radio console or car radio.
- ◆ 20% of young adults now regularly “watch TV” on a device that isn’t a tradition television set.
- ◆ 13% of young adults regularly “make phone calls” using internet protocols

Moreover, teenagers are starting to look quizzically at us when we want to talk to them about things we sometimes call “the virtual world” or “cyberspace.” These are less relevant descriptive categories to the way they live their lives. They don’t inhabit two separate realms – the “virtual world” as compared to the “real world.” Those realms are interwoven, unbounded, and indistinct to them.

Reports on use of the internet and other media for politics and civic activity from the Pew Internet Project and Pew Research Center for The People & The Press can be found at:

- 2006: [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/199/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/199/report_display.asp)
- 2004: [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/150/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/150/report_display.asp)  
[http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/141/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/141/report_display.asp)  
[http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/128/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/128/report_display.asp)
- 2002: [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/85/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/85/report_display.asp)  
[http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/82/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/82/report_display.asp)  
[http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/57/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/57/report_display.asp)
- 2000: [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/27/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/27/report_display.asp)
- 1998: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=72>
- 1996: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=117>