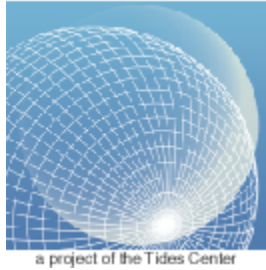


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EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE AT 6:00 P.M. (EASTERN), JULY 16, 2001

TIME ONLINE

*Why some people use the Internet more than before
and why some use it less*

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Basic findings on the varying amount of use of the Internet

There has been interest recently in whether Americans' use of the Internet is growing or shrinking. Some have wondered whether there was a drop in Internet use that was tied to the problems of the dot-com economy or whether a kind of Internet fatigue was setting in as users lost interest in the novelty of the online world.

In February, we began to ask respondents to our Internet tracking survey whether they were spending more time or less time online than they had been six months ago. We found that there is hardly a uniform pattern in the American Internet population in the amount of time users spend online: The majority of Internet users say the amount of time they spend online is about the same now as six months ago. But more than four in ten Internet users say the amount of time they spend online has changed in the last six months, with most saying their time online has increased.

Here is the breakdown of responses to a query of whether respondents were using the Internet more or less than they had been six months ago:¹

- 54% said they were using the Internet the same amount.
- 29% said they were using the Internet more.
- 17% said they were using it less.

Internet users who are spending more time online cite several reasons for their increased use:

- 29% say they need to use the Internet more for school or work.
- 21% say they have found more things to do on the Internet.
- 14% say they have more access to a computer or the Internet than before.
- 13% say they learned more about how to use the Internet or are more comfortable using it.
- 5% say they have a faster Internet connection.
- 18% listed some other reason such as their increased interest in an Internet activity like emailing a particular person, or their interest in playing a specific online game, or their greater use of a particular Internet feature such as online banking or auctions.

Internet users who are spending less time online cited the following reasons:

- 19% say they are not as interested in the things they used to do on the Internet.
- 16% say they don't have time or are too busy.
- 11% say they no longer need to use the Internet for work or school.
- 11% say they didn't find it useful or worthwhile.
- 8% say they no longer have access or have less access than before.
- 5% say the Internet is too slow or took them too long to find information.
- 4% say they spend less time online because they can do things online more quickly than before.
- 1% say they have a faster Internet connection.

¹ These questions were asked only of the 1,081 Internet users who have been online for at least six months.

- 21% cited some other reason such as the loss of a free Internet connection, a medical reason that makes it harder to use the Internet, or a problem with their computer or Internet provider.

Our findings suggest that utilitarian Internet users – those who need it for work or school – are more likely to spend more time online than they did six months ago. Adventurous users who discover new activities are also likely to spend more time online. Those who are spending less time online now are most likely to say they have just found other ways to spend their time – the Internet is not an indispensable resource for these users.

For some, the fact that they are spending less time online is not necessarily a rejection of Internet activities – a small group of users say they are more efficient now than they were six months ago. Indeed, users who have upgraded their connection speed take advantage in different ways. Most say they spend more time online now, but a few say the faster connection allows them to spend less time online than they did six months ago.

And while dot-com site closings make headlines, the downturn has not had a big effect on Internet users' habits. Only 8% of Internet users say one of their favorite Web sites has gone out of business. And only a small fraction of these users also report that their time online has dropped in the last half year. Clearly, in most cases, those who have lost Web sites are finding other ways on the Internet to get the information they need, make their purchases, or interact with others.

A typical day for the U.S. Internet population: No notable change

There is a strong consistency in online Americans' reports about their use of the Internet on a typical day, and there is no evidence that the amount of time spent online is dramatically increasing or decreasing. When Internet users tell us in a survey that they have been online the previous day, we ask them questions about what they did online and how much time they spent online. In our survey in March 2000, for instance, we found that 61% of those who had been online the previous day said they spent an hour or less logged on. In February 2001, 63% of Internet users said they spent an hour or less logged on during the previous day's session. That is a statistically meaningless difference. Similarly, 15% of Internet users in March 2000 told us they had spent more than three hours online on the previous day. In February 2001, 14% spent that amount of time online in the previous day. That is also a statistically meaningless difference.

Veteran users are set in their ways

Online veterans are more likely than the newest users to be fixed in their time use of the Internet and to say they spend "about the same amount" of time online. Sixty-two percent of Internet users who have been online for three or more years say so, compared to 50% of those with just six months to a year of online experience.

Internet users with the most experience are also the most devoted to email and the Web. When asked how much they would miss going online, 59% of online veterans say "a lot," compared to 29% of Internet users who got access within the last six months. Online veterans are more likely than new users to weave the Internet into their lives at all levels – search for hobby information, do job-related research, conduct financial transactions,

and go online to answer a specific question. New users match online veterans' enthusiasm for email, surfing for fun, and visiting adult Web sites.

Women and well-off users report increasing their time online

Women are more likely than men to say they spend more time online now than they did six months ago. Some 33% of online women report greater use, compared to 25% of online men. Relatively well-to-do Internet users are also more likely than those with modest incomes to say they spend more time online. Some 35% of those living in households with an annual income exceeding \$75,000 report greater use, compared to 24% of those living in households with an annual income less than \$30,000. Work or school requirements are the top motivators for both women and wealthy users to spend more time online.

While new users and veteran users were equally likely to say they spend more time online now than they did six months ago, their reasons for doing so are strikingly different. Internet users with three or more years of experience are about twice as likely as the newest users to cite school or work as the main reason they spend more time online now. Not surprisingly, new users tend to say they spend more time online now because they have learned more about how to use the Internet or feel more comfortable using it.

Younger users and newcomers are the most likely to have cut back their time online

Adults who are between ages 18 and 29 are more likely than older users to say they spend less time online now than six months ago. Some 24% of young adults say they are using the Internet less, compared to 17% of 30-49 year-olds. The younger users who have cut back their Internet use usually cite either a time crunch or fewer school/work demands than before.

Newcomers to the Internet are more likely than veteran users to say they spend less time online now than six months ago. One in five Internet Newcomers (21%) – users with less than year's worth of experience online – say they spend less time online now, compared to 11% of those with three or more years of experience online who say that. Those new users who say they are spending less time online report it is because they are not as interested in the things they used to do. For these users, the Internet bug may have been just that – a 24-hour flu, not a life-changing event.

Veterans compared to Newcomers		
<i>Sometimes roughly the same percentage of new Internet users as veterans have done an online activity:</i>		
	<i>Veterans ¹</i>	<i>Newcomers ²</i>
Go online just for fun	64%	61%
Visit an adult site	15	14
<i>Usually, though, veterans show significantly more experience with any given activity:</i>		
Send or read email	97	88
Search for the answer to a specific question	87	60
Look for info on hobbies	83	64
Get news online	78	44
Look for job-related information	65	30
Buy a product	64	31
Look for health-related information	63	47
Look for financial information	54	21
Listen to music online	45	33
Download music	33	27
Buy or sell stocks	18	3

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Tracking Survey, February 2001. Margin of error is ±3%.

¹ *Veterans have been online for at least 3 years.*

² *Newcomers have been online for 6 months or less.*

Our September 2000 report, "New Internet Users," highlights another possible reason for new users' disenchantment. New users are often reluctant to shop or conduct financial transactions over the Internet. But once new users cross that commercial threshold, their Internet usage patterns are similar to more experienced users' patterns.

Frequency of Internet use

There is also evidence in our survey that use of the Internet at work is intensifying, while at the same time use of the Internet at home is holding relatively steady. In March 2000, 40% of people with access to the Internet at work said they went online several times a day. In February 2001, the proportion of those with work access who said they went online several times a day had jumped to 51%. (In the February survey, we found that 49% of Internet users had access at work.)

In March 2000, 23% of home users said they went online from home several times a day and 29% said they went online about once a day. In February 2001 the proportions had not changed in a significant way: 25% of those with Internet access at home said they went online several times a day and 29% said they went online about once a day. (Fully 85% of Internet users said in February they have access at home.)

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 between February 1, 2001 and March 1, 2001, among a sample of 2,096 adults, 18 and older. Some 1,198 of them say they have gone online to access to the Internet or World Wide Web. 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, 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.

A new sample was released daily and was kept in the field for at least five days. This ensures that complete call procedures were followed for the entire sample. Additionally, the sample was released in replicates to make sure that the telephone numbers called are distributed appropriately across regions of the country. At least 10 attempts were made to complete an interview at every household in the sample. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making contact with a potential respondent. Interview refusals were re-contacted at least once in order to try again to complete an

interview. All interviews completed on any given day were considered to be the final sample for that day. The final response rate for this survey is 38%.

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 Current Population Survey (March 2000). 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.

About the Pew Internet & American Life Project

The Pew Internet & American Life Project creates and funds original research that explores the impact of the Internet on children, families, communities, the work place, schools, health care, and civic/political life. The Project is an independent, nonpartisan organization that aims to be an authoritative source for timely information on the Internet's growth and societal impact. The Project is a non-profit initiative affiliated with the Pew Research Center for People and the Press. The project is fully funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts.