

# Four Out of Five Adults Now Use the Internet

*184 Million adults are online from their homes, offices, schools or other locations*

**ROCHESTER, N.Y. – November 17, 2008** – In 1995, when *The Harris Poll*® began measuring online activity, less than 18 million adults used the Internet in their homes, offices, schools, libraries or other locations. Now, thirteen years, later, fully 184 million adults are online.

The proportion of adults online trebled between 1995 (9%) and 1997 (30%), and kept on climbing rapidly to 63% in 2000. Since then growth has been slower, reading 73% in 2004 and 81% now.

These are some of the results of The Harris Poll, a new nationwide survey of 2,020 U.S. adults surveyed by telephone between October 16 and 20, 2008 and October 30 and November 2, 2008 by Harris Interactive®.

## **Many People Go Online at Two or More Locations**

While most people (75%), and almost all those who use the Internet, use it at home, more than two out of five adults (43%) go online at work and a third (32%) do so at other locations (schools, cybercafés, libraries, etc.)

## **Internet Users Are Spending More Time Online**

Until 2002, Internet users spent an average of seven or eight hours online per week. That has increased to nine hours in 2005, eleven hours in 2007 and to fully fourteen hours in this new survey.

## **Virtually all Computer Users are Now Online**

Before 1998, less than half of the people who used computers also used the Internet. Over the last ten years, that has increased steadily. Today only two percent of computer users do not go online.

## **Demographic Profile of the Online Population Looks More Like the Whole Population**

In the early days of the Internet revolution, most of those online were young and well-educated. As the online population has grown it has come to look more and more like the population of the country. Internet penetration is still somewhat lower among people over 65, people who never went to college and people with household incomes of less than \$25,000, but large majorities of all of these demographic groups are now online.

## So What?

The internet revolution continues. The online population continues to grow and to use the Internet for more hours than ever before. Initially the Internet was used to do things we did before but to do them better, faster or cheaper. Now it is increasingly being used to do new things we could not do before which were prohibitively expensive or difficult.

As Roy Amara once said of the growth of new technologies, "There is a tendency to overestimate their short-term impact and to underestimate long-term impact." The Internet now touches many parts of our lives. With each new year we use it, and depend on it more for communication, information, work, shopping, and entertainment.

In the election, Barack Obama and the Democrats used the Internet to drive their campaign, to communicate with many millions of people, to raise unprecedented amounts of money and to motivate and turn out their supporters. There is now talk of using these systems to enable the president-elect and his administration to communicate directly with the public and by-pass the traditional media.

We may still be at the dawn of the age of the Internet.

**TABLE 1**

### **ONLINE FROM HOME, WORK OR OTHER LOCATION - TRENDS 1995–2008**

"At home, do you personally use a computer to access the Internet/World Wide Web?"

"At work, do you personally use a computer to access the Internet/World Wide Web?"

"At another location, do you personally use a computer to access the Internet/World Wide Web?"

"Excluding email, how many hours per week, on average, do you typically spend on the Internet or World Wide Web?"

Base: All adults

	Online Adults				Average (Mean) Hours Per Week Spent Online
	Total	Online at Home	Online at Work	Online at Other Location	
	%	%	%	%	
<b>2008</b>					
October/October	81	75	43	32	14
<b>2007</b>					
July/October	79	72	37	31	11
<b>2006</b>					
February/April	77	70	35	22	9
<b>2005</b>					
February/April	74	66	36	21	9

<b>2004</b>					
June/ August	73	65	34	17	8
<b>2003</b>					
October/December	69	61	31	16	9
<b>2002</b>					
November/December	67	57	28	18	7
February/March	66	55	30	19	8
<b>2001</b>					
September/October	64	52	28	19	7
March/April	64	53	27	20	7
<b>2000</b>					
October/November	63	49	29	17	7
April/May	57	45	24	15	7
<b>1999</b>					
December	56	46	N/A	N/A	7
<b>1998</b>					
January/February	35	22	22	N/A	N/A
<b>1997</b>					
May/June	30	16	18	N/A	N/A
<b>1996</b>					
June/September	19	16	16	N/A	N/A
<b>1995</b>					
September/November	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: N/A means "not asked"

**TABLE 2**

**PC AND INTERNET USE - TRENDS 1995-2008**

"Do you personally use a computer at home, work or another location?"

"At home, do you personally use a computer to access the Internet/World Wide Web?"

"At work, do you personally use a computer to access the Internet/World Wide Web?"

"At another location, do you personally use a computer to access the Internet/World Wide Web?"

Base: All adults

	Proportion of All Adults (from work, home, school or other location)		Percent of Computer Users Who Are Online
	Use PC	Are Online	
	%	%	%
<b>2008</b>			

October/October	83	81	98
<b>2007</b>			
July/October	81	79	97
<b>2006</b>			
February/April	81	77	95
<b>2005</b>			
February/April	79	74	94
<b>2004</b>			
June/ August	78	73	93
<b>2003</b>			
October/December	75	69	92
<b>2002</b>			
November/December	74	67	92
February/March	74	66	90
<b>2001</b>			
September/October	73	64	88
March/April	72	64	89
<b>2000</b>			
October/November	74	63	85
April/May	69	57	83
<b>1999</b>			
December	69	56	81
June/July	65	48	74
January/February	63	41	65
<b>1998</b>			
January/February	63	35	56
<b>1997</b>			
May/June	61	30	49
<b>1996</b>			
June/September	54	19	35
<b>1995</b>			
September/November	50*	9	18

Notes:

1. All samples of 2,000 or more adults, conducted by telephone.
2. "Are Online" includes all adults who use Internet from home, office, school, library or other location.

\* Estimated from other sources.

**TABLE 3**  
**PROFILE OF ONLINE POPULATION**  
*(October/October 2008)*

"At home, do you personally use a computer to Access the Internet/World Wide Web?"

"At work, do you personally use a computer to access the Internet/World Wide Web?"

"At another location, do you personally use a computer to access the Internet/World Wide Web?"

Base: All adults

	<b>Total U.S. Adult Online Population</b>	<b>Total U.S. Adult Population*</b>	<b>Percentage Point Difference</b>
	%	%	%
<b>AGE</b>			
18 – 29	23	22	+1
30 – 39	20	18	+2
40 – 49	22	20	+2
50+	32	40	-8
50 – 64	23	24	-1
65+	10	16	-6
<b>SEX</b>			
Men	49	48	+1
Women	51	52	-1
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>			
White	74	75	-1
Black	11	11	0
Hispanic	12	14	-2
<b>EDUCATION</b>			
High school or less	39	45	-6
Some college	29	28	+1
College graduate (or postgraduate)	31	27	+4
<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME</b>			
Less than \$25,000	14	18	-4
\$25,000 to less than \$50,000	22	23	-1
\$50,000 and over	64	59	+5

\*Based on data from the March 2008 U.S. Current Population Survey

**TABLE 4**

**ESTIMATED NUMBERS OF ADULTS WHO ARE ONLINE (IN MILLIONS)**

"At home, do you personally use a computer to Access the Internet/World Wide Web?"

"At work, do you personally use a computer to access the Internet/World Wide Web?"

"At another location, do you personally use a computer to access the Internet/World Wide Web?"

Base: All adults

	<b>In Millions</b>
<b>2008</b>	
<b>October/October</b>	184*
<b>2007</b>	
July/October	<b>178</b>
<b>2006</b>	
February/April	172
<b>2005</b>	
February/April	163
<b>2004</b>	
June/August	156
<b>2003</b>	
October/December	146
<b>2002</b>	
November/December	140
February/March	137
<b>2001</b>	
September/October	127
March/April	126
<b>2000</b>	
October/November	121
April/May	114
<b>1999</b>	
December	113
<b>1998</b>	
January/February	70
<b>1997</b>	
May/June	59
<b>1996</b>	
June/September	33
<b>1995</b>	
September/November	17.5

\*Based on July 2007 U.S. Census estimate released January 2008 (227,700,000 total adults aged 18 or over)

### **Methodology**

*The Harris Poll*<sup>®</sup> was conducted by telephone within the United States in October 2008 (October 16 and 20, 2008) and October 2008 (October 30 and November 2, 2008) among

2,020 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region, number of adults in the household, size of place (urbanicity) and number of phone lines in the household were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.