



NEWS RELEASE

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Internet now integral to New Zealanders' daily life

The Digital Divide is disappearing in New Zealand, with social differences in Internet usage shrinking by the year.

The second bi-annual survey of more than 1200 New Zealanders shows that New Zealand has reached a point where most of us are using the Internet and there's no longer a typical user.

The survey results demonstrate how ingrained the Internet has become in daily life, says the Director of AUT's Institute of Culture, Discourse and Communication Professor Allan Bell.

"In two years broadband usage has jumped to over 80 percent of users, taking Internet presence over a threshold which makes it an established part of most New Zealanders' lives," Professor Bell said.

Most New Zealanders, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender or socio-economic status, are increasingly using the Internet for a variety of activities such as social networking, buying and selling goods online, Internet banking, accessing information, learning and entertainment.

The World Internet Project initially collected Internet user data in 2007 and for the first time ever is now able to map the trend in Internet usage in New Zealand, thanks to the second round of surveying last year. "By collecting data through repeated surveys, we are now identifying trends that can inform government and business decision-making" says Professor Bell.

Other highlights in the report revealed that nearly half of all users are members of social networking sites, and three quarters of these report that Facebook is the site they use most often.

“The social, economic and cultural barriers that existed previously with Internet use are gradually diminishing as more New Zealanders incorporate the technology into their lives in new and different ways,” Professor Bell said.

“These changes are not happening overnight and are somewhat reliant on advances in technology such as faster broadband speed or Internet access via mobile phones. Previously the ‘digital divide’ was the difference between the ‘haves and have nots’ of Internet usage but that’s no longer an acceptable way to describe different users. Since more people are now users, we’re now looking at a much more subtle ‘digital differentiation’, for example how much people use the Internet and what for.”

Highlights of the 2010 New Zealand World Internet Project

More than 1200 New Zealanders aged from 12 years old and up were surveyed at the end of 2009 about their Internet use. The sample included users, non-users and ex-users.

- The number of Internet users rose from 79% in 2007 to 83% in 2009.
- Broadband usage jumped to 82% compared with 67% in 2007. Conversely, dial-up access decreased.
- The proportion of people accessing the Internet via mobile phones more than doubled from 7% in 2007 to 18% in 2009.
- Two thirds of users said the Internet was so important to their everyday lives that losing access to it would be a problem.
- Nearly half of all users are members of social networking sites and three quarters of these report that Facebook is the site they use most often.
- Asian New Zealanders had the highest level of Internet use at 97%, while Maori, Pasifika and Pakeha hovered around the 80% mark.
- Males and females used the Internet equally – more than 80%.
- About half of users post online messages, images or videos, while one in ten earns income in this way.
- Nearly half of users report that the Internet has increased their contact with other New Zealanders, and more say it has increased their overall contact with family and friends.
- Of people with under-18s in their household, around 80% have rules governing online activities.

Background

New Zealand is one of 30 countries involved in the World Internet Project – a longitudinal study that enables comparisons of Internet use across countries. AUT University, with support from the National Library of New Zealand and from InternetNZ, conducted its first survey in 2007, with the most recent data deriving from interviews in 2009.

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For more information about findings or other aspects of the World Internet Project, please visit www.aut.ac.nz.