

# **WORLD INTERNET PROJECT NEW ZEALAND**

## **Pilot Project 2007 Summary Report of Findings**

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The World Internet Project (WIP) is an international collaborative project looking at the social, political and economic impact of the internet and other new technologies. It gathers longitudinal information on the way people use the internet and the effect it has on their lives. Project partners conduct questionnaire surveys every one or two years in their country.

In 2006, the Institute of Culture, Discourse and Communication (ICDC) at AUT University became the 28<sup>th</sup> country to join the World Internet Project. A pilot study was conducted early in 2007 supported by a research grant from AUT University's Faculty of Applied Humanities.

The WIP New Zealand survey contains questions common to all international WIP partners as well as a set designed specifically for New Zealand. The pilot was conducted on a sample of 106 individuals aged 12 and over to test the survey design and methodology. It leads on to a full survey of at least 1000 New Zealanders to be conducted in 2007-08.

The pilot survey, although small, also provides preliminary indications about the impact of the internet on New Zealanders. This Summary Report presents a brief overview of these findings. Also available from the research team is a Full Report on the findings of the pilot project, accessible on ICDC's website.

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- Just on three quarters of the sample of 106 use the internet. Half have broadband, half dialup. The median amount of time they spend online is 4 hours per week.
- Almost three quarters of users say the internet is ‘important’ or ‘very important’ to their everyday life.
- Almost all users access the internet from home. One third access it at work, one fifth at school or university, and one fifth at other places such as internet cafes or libraries. When at home, half access the internet from an office or study, a third from a general living area, and the rest from a bedroom.
- Three fifths of the users always shut down their computers when not using them, although just over one quarter of those with broadband say they never shut down their computer.
- Two fifths of the users have been using the net for 6 years or less, a fifth for between 10 and 17 years (Figure 1), making the earliest reported usage 1990.

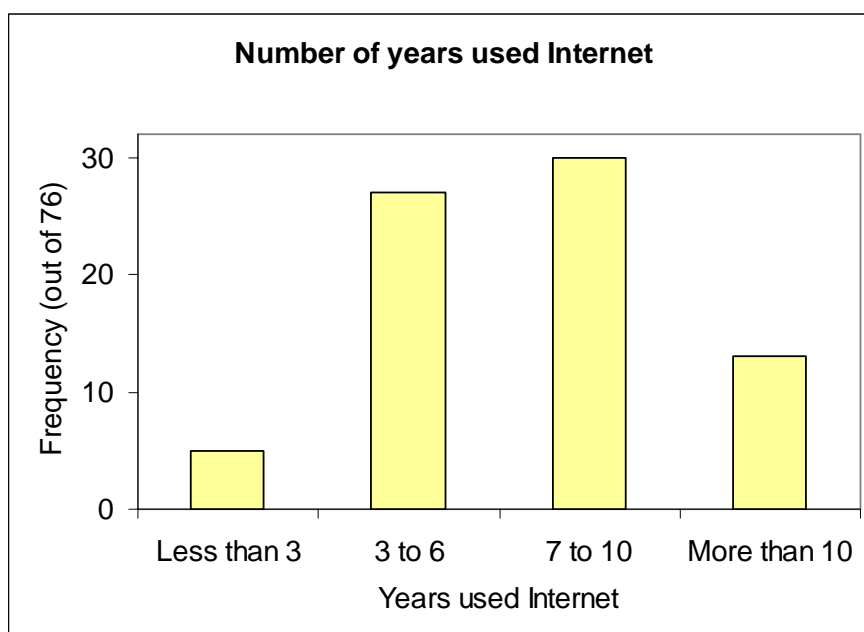


Figure 1. Number of Years Used Internet

- Users rely on the internet to access a variety of information (Figure 2). About half search for news online at least weekly. One third use the internet to find health information either monthly or weekly. About three quarters use a search engine at least weekly.

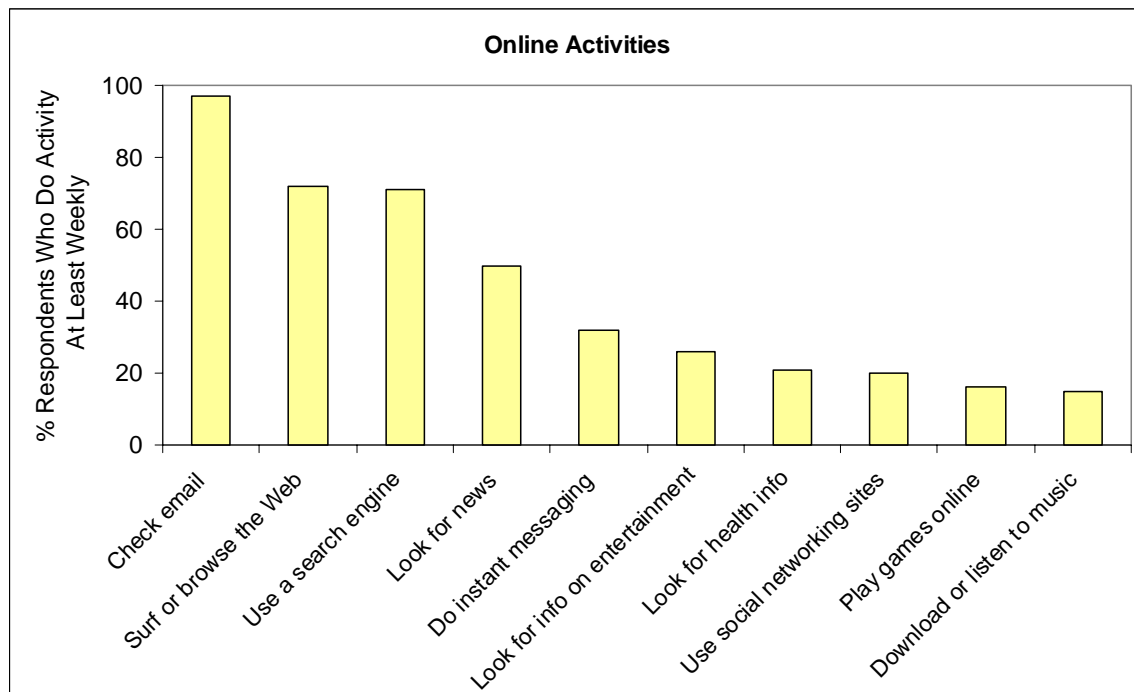


Figure 2. Online Activities

- Users rate the internet as a more important source of information than newspapers, television and radio (Figure 3). But more (three quarters) rate interpersonal sources such as family and friends as important.
- Just over half of users accessed national or local government information and services online in the past year. More than one third have sought information about Government policy issues online, and a quarter have looked for information about a Member of Parliament, political party or candidate. One quarter have paid taxes, a fine, licence or service online in the past year. One in seven people have emailed an MP during this time.
- Two fifths of all respondents believe that most of the information on the internet is reliable. A similar number say half is reliable, and the rest think only a small portion is reliable.
- One in ten users has their own website. More than one quarter has posted messages on discussion/message boards. Slightly more have posted pictures, photos or videos on the web, and one in ten has posted audio material. Two out of five have used a distribution list for email.
- As entertainment, just on two thirds of users surf or browse the internet weekly or daily. One third download or listen to music on the internet. Less

than a third look at religious or spiritual sites or play games online, and almost nobody says they bet or gamble online or visit sites with sexual content.

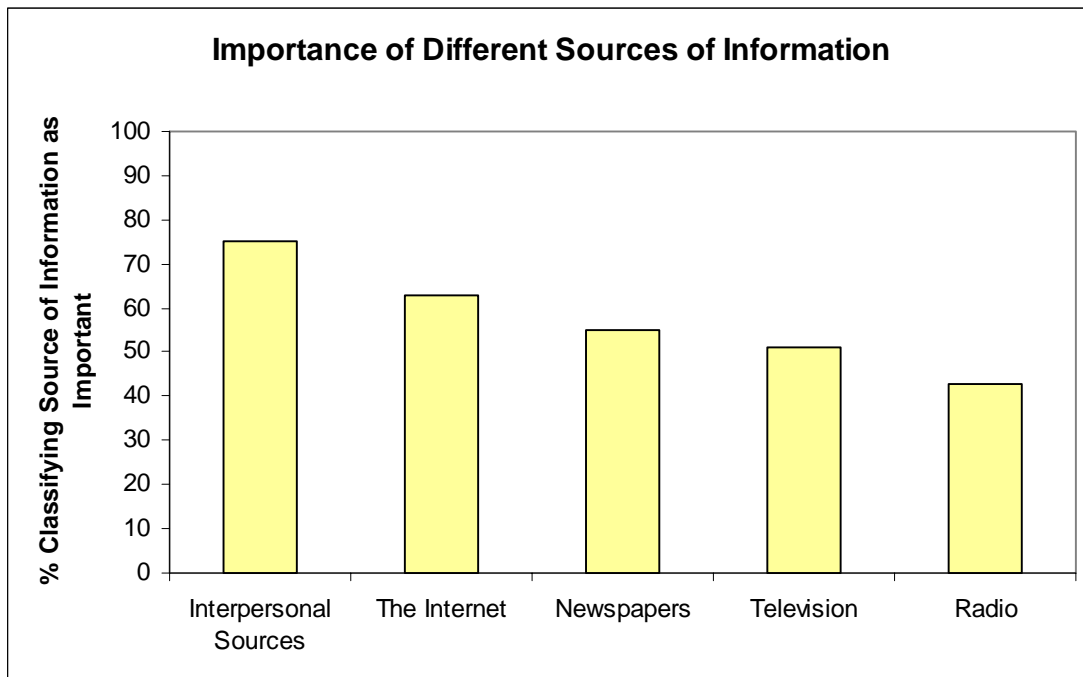


Figure 3. Importance of Different Sources of Information

- Socializing is a major use of the internet, and nearly all users check their email daily. One in ten participate in multi-player online games at least monthly, and one in five do instant messaging every day. One in five participate in social networking sites like MySpace.com at least weekly, while fewer than one in ten participates in chat rooms at least monthly. Just over one in ten makes or receives phone calls over the internet at least monthly.
- Most users say that the internet has increased their contact with other individuals or groups, fewer report that it has decreased (Figure 4). This applies particularly to contact with people in their profession, with those who share recreational interests, and with people generally in New Zealand and overseas. Contact with people who share religious interests has increased, but with those sharing political interests there is a decrease reported.
- Most users say the internet has increased their amount of contact with friends and family. However, some say they spend less time face to face with family and more with friends since being connected to the internet.
- In conducting their everyday business, three quarters of users access the internet to get information about a product. Three out of five use their bank's online services, and about half make travel reservations or bookings, buy things and pay bills online. However, nearly all users say they never make investments online.

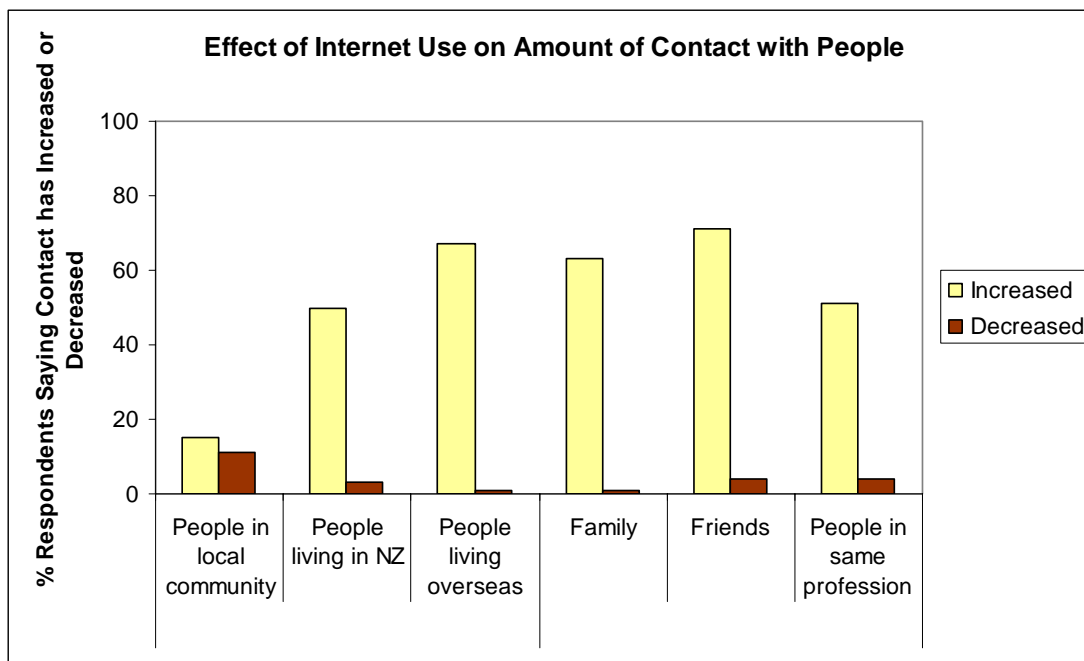


Figure 4. Effect of Internet on Amount of Contact with People

- For educational or learning purposes, three quarters of internet users find or check facts online, and a quarter do this weekly. More than half use the internet to look up the definition of a word (three in ten weekly). Almost all school and university students use the internet for study purposes, most of them weekly.
- Most parents place rules around their children's internet use. In most households, under 18 year olds who use the internet are told not to visit some sites, not to give out personal information online, not to chat with strangers online, and not to meet up in person with someone they've only met online. Most are told to use the PC only under a parent's control, and how much time to spend online.
- The most commonly accessed New Zealand websites are Trademe and local banks, followed by airline and other travel sites and the *NZ Herald* website. About a third of users know of sites that carry facts and figures about New Zealand and sites with information on cultural events.
- Those who responded believe that the internet is helping maintain te reo Māori, and two thirds of Māori know of websites in te reo. Seven out of ten users who speak a language other than English access websites in that language and least once a month, mainly to get information such as news.
- One third of users say that their use of the internet has increased their sense of identification with New Zealand, for the rest it remains the same. For one fifth their sense of identification with their ethnic group has increased.