

Study finds prime time on the Internet is 11 p.m.

September 2 2009, By PETER SVENSSON , AP Technology Writer



(AP) -- It's 11 p.m. Do you know where your neighbors are?

Chances are they're online. According to a study, North Americans have been staying up late to do their Internet surfing this summer, so late that the peak usage for the whole day has been at 11 p.m. Eastern time.

That appears to be a shift from previous years, when most [Internet activity](#) was in the daytime.

The new study by Chelmsford, Mass.-based Internet security firm Arbor Networks found that people using the Internet at work and school produce a smaller traffic peak around 4 p.m. Eastern time on weekdays.

Internet activity then declines as people head home. At 8 p.m. Eastern, U.S. and Canadian home Internet traffic starts spiking, and stays surprisingly strong past midnight, Arbor found. At 2 a.m. Eastern, overall traffic is as high as it is at 9 a.m., when people are logging in at work.

Of course, 11 p.m. Eastern time is just 8 p.m. on the West Coast. But the Eastern and Central time zones account for three-quarters of the U.S. population, so it's clear there's a lot of late-night traffic.

It also seems North Americans are staying up much later on the Internet than Europeans. Their traffic peaks when it's 9 p.m. in Western and Central Europe, and then drops sharply.

So what is it that keeps us up at night?

Internet video, including both [YouTube](#) and pornography, appears to be a big part of the answer, according to Arbor's Craig Labovitz. Video usage peaks at midnight Eastern, later than any other traffic.

Gaming is another big evening activity, but one that's most intense between 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. Eastern, coinciding with TV's prime time for most Americans. Labovitz found a jump in gaming traffic at exactly 8 p.m. Eastern, and speculates that it's caused by "World of Warcraft" players who prearrange to get together at that time to tackle virtual monsters.

Arbor gathers data from Internet service providers that account for about half of North American traffic. The study looked at 10 weekdays in July. Labovitz said there was a chance that children on summer vacation could be affecting the numbers, and plans to keep watching [traffic](#) patterns in different seasons.

On the Net:

<http://asert.arbornetworks.com/2009/08/the-internet-after-dark/>

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