

Are you a next generation user of the internet?

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Nearly half of Internet users in Britain are 'Next Generation Users'

(PhysOrg.com) -- A new survey shows that nearly half of internet users in Britain are 'Next Generation Users', who routinely access the internet on the move using portable devices – more than double the proportion in 2007.

Oxford University researchers, who ran the survey, found that 44 per cent of British internet users now access the internet using smart phones, tablets, and readers, or own three or more computers. This group, described in the survey as Next Generation Users, use multiple devices and locations to browse the Internet to do at least two of the following: use email, update a social networking site or find directions. This compares with just 32 per cent in 2009 and 20 per cent in 2007.

Next Generation Users are not passive consumers, but have revealed they are more likely to produce their own online content, such as writing blogs, maintaining personal websites, or engaging in social networking. They also regard themselves as highly engaged in political processes.

This is the fifth report that researchers from the Oxford Internet Institute (OII) have produced on British attitudes and usage of the internet since 2003. It is the only ongoing survey tracking the effects of the Internet and technology on society in Britain.

In 2009 OII researchers found that 97 per cent of internet users in Britain owned a mobile phone but only about one-quarter of these accessed email or the Internet over their mobile device. However, by 2011 nearly half of all mobile phone users surveyed said they accessed the Internet using their [mobile phone](#). The report says that use of readers and tablets has boomed: nearly one-third of internet users now own them, and six per cent of Internet users own both. It suggests that the diffusion of wireless devices and access enables users to further integrate the Internet into their everyday life and work. It also points out that access to these multiple devices, which are often portable, is not evenly distributed but creates another digital divide.

Annual income more than age determines who the Next Generation Users are likely to be, says the report. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Next Generation Users are more likely to be in the highest income band because of the expense entailed in buying several devices. Three-quarters of Internet users with an annual income of at least £80,000 a year use multiple devices to access the internet. This compares with 49 per cent of Internet users on an annual income of £50,000 or 41 per cent of Internet users earning below £12,500 a year.

Half (52 per cent) of students who access the Internet are Next Generation Users, almost identical to the 51 per cent of ‘employed’

internet users of all ages who were Next Generation Users too. The elderly, the retired and the poorly educated tended to be least likely to be in this Next Generation; however, nine per cent of retired people are Next Generation Users.

Report author Professor William Dutton from the OII said: ‘There is too much focus on the sales of new products, like smart phones and tablets that miss the big picture captured by the Next Generation User. The rise of Next Generation Users is reshaping how people use the Internet. The internet has become a central part of their lives, particularly in how they inform and entertain themselves. These users are not just passive consumers either; they actively create content for others.’

Co-author Dr Grant Blank from the OII said: ‘We have to think about more than simple access. How people make use of their access also matters a lot. Next Generation Users are changing lives for themselves and others through the use of multiple portable devices to stay connected with the internet, and this is creating a new style of interaction.’

Other key findings were that more women than men engaged in [social networking](#): 63 per cent of female [Internet users](#) compared with 57 per cent of men who accessed the Internet.

Young people are much more likely to use the internet: almost everyone (99 per cent) aged between 14 and 17 years uses the internet compared with only one-third of people over the age of 65. Overall, Internet use in Britain has grown from 59 per cent in 2003 to 73 per cent in 2011.

The 2011 OxIS survey was supported by the Nominet Trust, which champions the use of the internet for social good. Commenting on the findings, Nominet Trust Chief Executive Annika Small said: ‘We believe in the massive power of the internet to change people’s lives for the better. We invest in research like this to discover how the internet can do

that. This survey shows huge changes have taken place in just two years, but we need to ensure all parts of society benefit by using the internet to its fullest potential – not just the most digitally savvy.’

More information: The full report microsites.oii.ox.ac.uk/oxis/

Provided by Oxford University

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