

Trend survey 2012: 'The Dutch are online any time, any place'

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The internet has secured an increasingly prominent place in the everyday lives of the Dutch population, whether at home or at work. Nearly every section of the population is spending more time online and reaping more of the benefits. Having said this, the younger generation and highly qualified people seem to be benefiting the most and a new digital gap is looming on the horizon. The gap does not concern whether or not people are online, but whether they benefit from the internet or not.

This is one of the conclusions of the *Trend report on [internet use](#) 2012*, written by the CTIT research institute at the University of Twente and commissioned by Digivaardig & Digiveilig. 96% of Dutch people (the highest percentage in Europe) now have physical access to internet at home. 87% use the internet every day, not only at home, but also at work or school and increasingly, while out and about. In the course of just one year, access to mobile internet via smart phones has risen from 31 to 42%, and via tablets from 10 to 27%. In 2012, Dutch people spent an average of 4 hours and 48 minutes of any given weekday (including leisure time) on the internet. On non-working days, this figure was 4 hours and 18 minutes. According to researchers Dr Alexander van Deursen and Prof. Jan van Dijk: "Every Dutch person can be online at practically any time, any place. More and more people are getting online via laptops, tablets and smart phones and experiencing the huge benefits. Highly qualified people are making maximum use of the countless possibilities of today's internet." The findings will be presented today during the ECP annual conference in Scheveningen.

Alexander van Deursen from the University of Twente: "On an average weekday, highly qualified people use the internet more than less well-qualified people. The opposite applies on non-working days. This difference in usage can be explained by the type of internet consumption people choose. Highly qualified people use the internet for information, education and career, while less well-qualified people focus more on entertainment such as gaming, chatting and watching films. More highly qualified people work from home via internet; 21% at least once a week. Only 6% of less well-qualified Dutch people do this."

New digital gap

The trend survey for 2012 shows that across the board, everyone is reaping more benefits from the internet. The majority of benefits involve economic participation. Apart from economic advantages, the internet also serves an individual and social purpose. 28% of the Dutch population uses the internet to decide which way to vote, and 38% has signed an online petition. Thanks to the internet, 56% feel more up-to-date on government information and 28% has discovered a grant, social benefit or tax credit online. Internet also makes people more sociable: 58% of Dutch people say that they have more contact with family and friends thanks to the internet, and 33% have made new friends online. The researchers refer to a digital gap between the Dutch internet users. Not everyone is benefiting equally from increased internet usage. Alexander van Deursen: "There are still vast differences between sections of the population. Those capitalizing most on the opportunities offered by the internet are highly qualified people, men more than women and the younger generation more than older people."

Working population makes increasing use of the internet

When considering the working population (both men and women), 70% used the internet at work in 2012. Here too, highly qualified employees have more access to the internet (81%) than those that are less well-qualified. Alexander van Deursen: "Internet has a positive effect at work. More than half of the respondents claim to work more effectively, efficiently and to a higher standard thanks to the internet. The boundaries between work and private life are being eroded. The amount of time employees spend on the internet sorting out their private affairs while at work is more than compensated by the time they spend on work via the internet while at home."

Tineke Netelenbos, Chair of Digivaardig & Digiveilig: "Internet provides fantastic economic and social opportunities. But a digital gap between sections of the population is looming, showing us that there is still a world to be won. Anyone who lags behind and doesn't keep their digital skills up-to-date, whether at home or at work, will soon miss the boat."

Social media

The trend survey also examined the use of social network sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. 77% of Dutch people use at least one social network, whereby Facebook (68% of adults over the age of 16) is by far the most popular. This is followed by Youtube (57%), Hyves (40%) and Google+ (32%). Students communicate extensively via Facebook (86%), and on average, more women use Facebook than men. Posting personal news information on the internet and participating in discussion forums now largely takes place via social media.

Online safety

Unlike in 2011, this year the Dutch are taking more measures to protect

themselves on the internet. This might be due to the warning effect of several wide-scale internet hacks that recently hit the headlines. More Dutch people are using a virus scanner (increase from 82% to 87%) and more internet users regularly change their passwords (38% in 2012 as opposed to 31% in 2011).

This week, the Alert Online campaign was launched to make businesses and consumers more aware of the need to be careful when using internet and other forms of mobile communication.

Provided by University of Twente

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