

# Internet use translates into greater economic than social benefits

May 7 2015, by Laurens Van Der Velde

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Using the internet helps people benefit financially in the 'real world', but

not necessarily socially, according to research from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), the University of Oxford and the University of Twente. The 'From digital skills to tangible outcomes' project looked at the tangible benefits people gain from using the internet and which groups of people profit, through a series of in-depth interviews and surveys in the UK and the Netherlands.

The researchers found that 66 per cent of people questioned said that their internet use has led to shopping products online cheaper than in the stores. In contrast, only 30 per cent said that the internet had improved their relationship with friends and family, with 21 per cent said they have met people with [common interests](#) as a result of their internet use.

## **Digital skills**

Dr Alexander van Deursen, one of the researchers, said: "Having access to and using technology does not necessarily mean that people are able to reap the [benefits](#) of it in their everyday lives. We need to make sure that people have the digital skills to take advantage of the opportunities that the internet and other technologies offer, so that no one is left behind. There is adequate training methods available to use for governmental and commercial organizations."

The researchers found that just because a person took part in a certain online activity did not mean that they achieved the intended benefit or were satisfied with the outcome. For example, 'socializing' with others online did not automatically lead to lower levels of social isolation or greater feelings of belonging.

Furthermore, people were not always able to transfer the benefits they achieved from one area of internet use into another. For example, someone who was able to use the internet to save money or improve their work situation was not necessarily able to achieve benefits related

to their [personal health](#) or increase their participation in political or social organizations and issues.

The differences that the researchers found between socio-cultural and socio-economic groups, in achieving and being satisfied with their use of the [internet](#) could often be explained by differences in skill levels.

**More information:** The full report and more information are available at: [www.alexandervandeursen.nl](http://www.alexandervandeursen.nl).

Provided by University of Twente

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