

China's online population exceeds 700 million: govt

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China says it has 710 million internet users—defined as those who have gone online at least once in the past six months—more than double the number of people in the United States

The number of web users in China—already the world's largest online population—has risen over 700 million, authorities said Wednesday as they seek to turn the internet into a new growth driver.

The country had 710 million internet [users](#)—defined as those who have gone online at least once in the past six months—by June, up 3.1 percent from the end of December, the government-linked China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) said in a statement.

The number is more than double the number of people in the United States and means more than half of the world's largest national population are now using the internet.

Beijing imposes strict controls on online content, while e-commerce is a vital part of its efforts to transform the economy into one driven more by consumer demand.

The government is pushing for a so-called "internet plus" project that aims to expand the application of online technology in industry as part of attempts to modernise.

The CNNIC said that 92.5 percent of Chinese users go online through their mobile phones.

"The social lifestyle formed by the [mobile internet](#) was further developed and the internet plus project facilitated the government and companies diversifying and mobilising their services," it said.

But the number of rural users remained low—accounting for less than a third of the total—as residents in the countryside either have no knowledge of computers or the internet, or are not interested, said the CNNIC.

Several Chinese tech firms, such as Jack Ma's Alibaba, have become multi-billion-dollar giants in recent years as the country's online population has boomed.

At the same time Beijing blocks websites it deems politically sensitive in a system dubbed the "Great Firewall of China", and social media companies censor user-generated content.

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