

China's online population reaches 731 million

23 January 2017



Jack Ma, chairman of Alibaba—his e-commerce company took \$17.8 billion in revenue on a single day of promotions last year

The number of internet users in China—already the world's highest—reached 731 million in December, authorities said, as e-commerce drives consumer demand across the Asian giant.

Total [internet users](#) rose 6.2 percent from the end of December 2015 and equals the entire population of Europe, the government-linked China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) said in a statement Sunday on its website.

E-commerce is a vital part of the government's efforts to China into a consumer demand-driven economy, although Beijing also imposes strict controls on online content, barring citizens from accessing major websites including Facebook and Google.

The government is pushing a so-called "internet plus" project that aims to expand the role of online technology in the economy.

The number of people who go online through cellphones has reached 695 million, or 95.1 percent, as computers lose their appeal, according to the CNNIC.

Online consumption has become an increasingly important part of the economy, the statement said, adding that its contribution to GDP growth is gradually increasing.

As of December 12, the number of people in China who used online payments had reached 475 million, up 14.0 percent year on year, according to the CNNIC.

In one example of the growing power of China's [online shoppers](#), consumers spent \$17.8 billion in e-commerce giant Alibaba's biggest [online](#) shopping promotion on November 11 last year, more than twice the five-day desktop sales from Thanksgiving through Cyber Monday in the US last year.

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