

Online pulse: Web surfing explored (Part II)

In Part II of *Information International's* poll on Internet users in Lebanon, web-based activities and issues of privacy are explored. A sample of 600 people in the Greater Beirut were surveyed with a gender distribution of 47.2% females and 52.8% males.

Graph 1 reveals that the Internet is valued primarily as a communication tool, then as a source of information. More specifically, 16.4% noted the importance of the Internet in reading the news.

Communication

As a communication tool, instant messaging took precedence over the use of e-mail, with almost 80% of those polled declaring it to be the principal online communication device.

Entertainment

In terms of entertainment, more than half of respondents revealed that the Internet is a valuable resource for online games and music, while a minority of those polled stated that pornographic sites are a main attraction on the Web.

Online Shopping

As illustrated by **Graph 1**, online shopping remains of little significance to the Internet users polled, with only 5.7% considering it an important online pursuit. 9.2% of respondents have made online purchases according to **Graph 2**. The majority of those Internet shoppers (43.2%) fell into the 23-28 year age bracket, followed by 21.6% in the 29-34 year-old age group. 18-22 year-olds represented almost 20% of shoppers while those between 35-44 made up 13.5%.

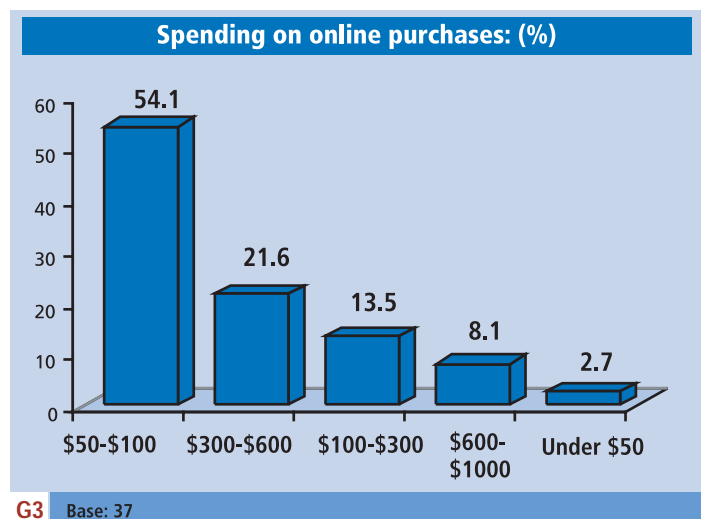
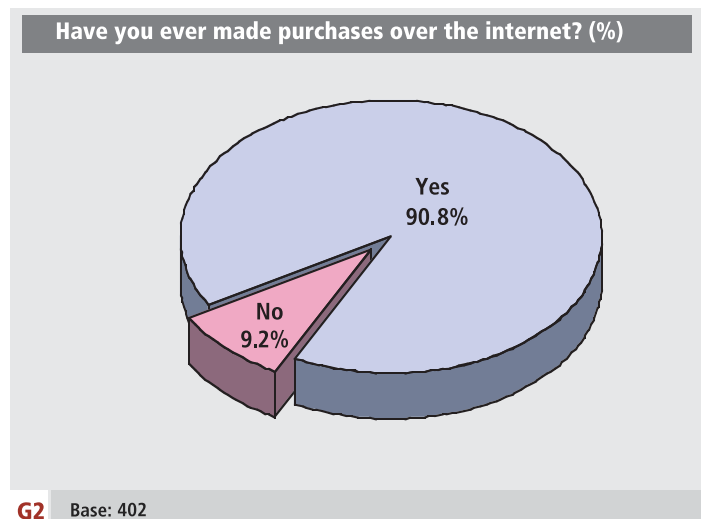
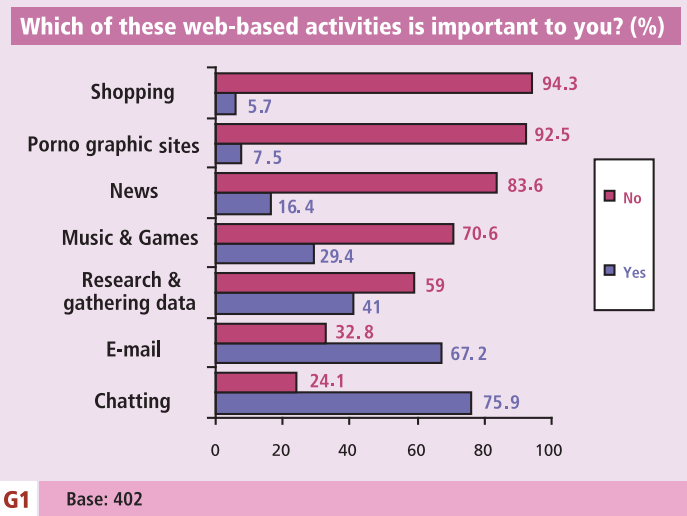
Income brackets were also assessed, revealing that 55.6% of respondents who shop online fall into the \$1,000-\$2,000 category. Those making between \$500-\$1,000 represented 19.4% of the sample, with the figure dropping to 8.3% for respondents earning between \$200-\$500.

Most online shoppers in the sample (62.2%) hold a university degree, with the percentages dropping off in accordance with lower levels of instruction.

Purchases

Less than half of online shoppers used what is perceived to be the more secure Internet card, while 51.4% opted for the use of credit cards to make online purchases. Also, Internet cards were most utilized for purchases ranging from \$50-\$100, while sums paid for by credit cards fell into the \$300-\$600 category.

The majority of shoppers polled (54.1%) have spent between \$50-\$100 on Internet purchases, with 13.5% having spent \$100-\$300.



Shoppers who spent \$300-\$600 made up 21.6% of the sample, while 8.1% had made purchases between \$600-\$1,000 (see [Graph 3](#) on the opposite page).

[Graph 4](#) illustrates the kinds of purchases being made online, with music items such as CDs topping the list. Clothing is also popular, with almost 20% of respondents claiming to have made such purchases, closely followed by books at 17.6%, household items at 7.8% and beauty products with 4%. Other responses made up less than 2% of the sample.

Books were most popular with the 35-44 year age bracket, while more than half of respondents between the ages of 23-28 are purchasing music items. Clothing is also the most common with in this age bracket, followed by beauty products for 18-22 year-olds.

Online shoppers and privacy

As shown in [Graph 5](#), issues of privacy are a concern for those shopping online, with only 24.3% feeling secure about giving out personal information on the Web.

Those between the ages of 23-28 worry the least about online privacy, while 43% of the 29-44 year age bracket had reservations about giving out personal information over the Internet.

Compromising privacy issues

However, when the whole sample was polled on willingness to give out personal information in exchange for desired content on the Web, 37% replied positively while 3% were unsure and 60% were opposed to the idea.

Again, the younger age brackets were most open to the idea, with 44.3% of the 23-28 year-olds being unconcerned, followed by 33.6% in the 18-22 year-old group.

In addition, it was detected that respondents who use the Internet primarily for entertainment were most willing to give out personal information in exchange for content they like on the Web, while those who use the Internet mainly for communication were the least prone to the idea for fear of compromising their privacy.

Internet Advertising

Finally, as illustrated in [Graph 6](#), people were polled on their opinions toward advertising on the Net. The majority of respondents looked rather favorably on such publicity, with 58.1% stating that they like internet advertising, as opposed to only 14.7% who found it objectionable. Another 18.2% did not have any opinion on the subject while 9% were unsure about their feelings on the issue. n

