THE WORLD INTERNET PROJECT
International Report – Tenth Edition
December 2019

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For the complete list of international partners in the World Internet Project, see page 43.
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Welcome to the findings of the World Internet Project (WIP).

This report represents the tenth published results of the World Internet Project, collaboratively produced by the Center for the Digital Future in the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism in the USA along with partner countries worldwide. This work on the impact of the internet has evolved during 15 years of exploration and reveals an international picture of change brought about by online technology.

The internet has transformed entertainment, communication, information-gathering, and education across the globe. However, the scope of change varies widely from country to country – a prime reason for a comparative international study.

We originally created this project in 1999 because the internet represents the most important technological development of our generation; the effects of the internet may surpass those of television and could someday rival those of the printing press. By beginning our study of the internet early in its evolution, we have built a broad base of knowledge and analyzed the effects of the internet as it evolves, and not as postscripts after it has matured.

To achieve our objectives, the 46 countries that are partners in the World Internet Project conduct surveys of individuals in thousands of households, compiling the responses of internet users and non-users age 18 and older. We explore how online technology affects the lives of internet users, and how their views and behavior differ from those of people who are not online.

The World Internet Project partners are expanding their explorations of internet use as technology is transformed. When new types of access become available – such as the growth of broadband almost a decade ago, or other methods now unknown come tomorrow – the project will track them.
The World Internet Project: why an ongoing study of the internet?

The research conducted by the global network of partners in the World Internet Project differs from most other studies of online technology in three principal ways:

1. **The World Internet Project looks at the social impact of the internet**
   
   Most internet studies gather data about who is online, how long they are online, and what they do online. The World Internet Project also compiles this information, but then examines the implications of the use of online technology, and links this use to a broad range of values, behavior, attitudes, and perceptions.

2. **The project focuses on internet non-users as well as users**

   The World Internet Project follows how the behavior and views of internet users differ from those of non-users.

3. **The World Internet Project engages government and private industry decision-makers who can create policy based on our findings**

   Our work involves public and private organizations that use our results. Many WIP partners work closely with corporations – some of which are direct competitors – and foundations, all of whom are engaged with us in an ongoing dialogue about the issues we explore in our studies.

The World Internet Project: key areas

As you will see in these pages, the World Internet Project includes findings that compare the actions and views of internet users and non-users. The report is organized into nine general subject areas:

- Internet users and non-users
- Politics and the internet
- Media reliability
- Online security and personal privacy
- Keeping connected through the internet
- Research, education, and jobs
- Buying, selling, and financial management
- Online entertainment and personal interest

We hope these findings from the World Internet Project will enlighten you about the many ways in which online technology is transforming our world.

Jeffrey I. Cole, Ph.D.
Director, USC Annenberg School Center for the Digital Future
Founder and Organizer, World Internet Project
WORLD INTERNET PROJECT
International Partners
Status Reports
The internet in Belgium

Contact: University of Antwerp

By Jamilah Hah

Belgium currently has approximately 11 million internet users. Belgium's internet users spend an average of 5 hours a day on the internet, with over 90 percent of that usage conducted on mobile phones. Belgian citizens also enjoy some of the fastest internet speeds in the world due to advanced fiber optic infrastructure and a multitude of private internet providers in the country.

Belgium has a social media penetration of over 50 percent. In 2018, the population of Belgium averaged about 1.5 hours a day of social media usage. There were about 7.5 million active social media users in Belgium. As of 2018, YouTube was used by over 80 percent of the population and Facebook by just slightly less than that. Other heavily used social media platforms include Netlog and LinkedIn.

In 2018, Belgium had a total of over 10 million mobile connections, reaching almost 90 percent of the population. Many social media users in Belgium watch and share pictures, videos, and movies on a daily basis. As in many other countries, music streaming and podcasts are also quite popular.

Belgium also has a booming e-commerce system worth over 10 billion euros as of 2018. Most of their digital transactions are conducted through Bancard or Bancontact. Bancontact is used for over two-thirds of online purchases, and its use accounts for almost one-third of the money spent online in Belgium. The most popular platforms included Magento, WordPress/Woocommerce, Lightspeed, Drupal, and PrestaShop. The most popular purchases made online are for clothing and shoes.

While the Belgian government supports a free internet for the most part, there are some impediments to online free speech. In 2016, a European privacy standard called “The Right to be Forgotten” was established. This required Belgian newspapers to remove old articles that could impede an individual’s “right to be forgotten” from their archives, potentially removing important information from the public eye. Additionally, in March 2019, Belgium was one of 19 EU member states voting in favor of legislation known as the “Copyright Directive.” This directive includes a measure that would allow EU governments to place filters on the internet and gives administrators a large amount of discretion in restricting information.
The internet in Colombia

Contact: CINTEL – Centro de Investigación de las Telecomunicaciones
        www.cintel.org.co

By Gabrielle Sones

Ranking 96th in the world for mobile speeds and 109th for fixed broadband speeds in 2019, Colombia is rapidly acquiring more internet users. In 2009, only 30 percent of Colombians used the internet. A decade later, nearly double that number are connected online, with 32 million of the country’s 50 million people using the internet. Now about 64 percent of Colombians are online, constituting the highest internet growth rate in Latin America.

The major players initially bringing broadband access to Colombia were the cable TV operator “TV Cable” and Bologna-based University of the Andes. Colombia has had broadband internet access since 1997, but in the early years, cable internet access was only available in Bucaramanga and Bogotá, and only in the wealthier districts of those cities. Then in 2001, ADSL (asymmetric digital subscriber line) internet access arrived, causing commercial friction between cable operators and telecom companies. The main objective of both became attracting new customers in these two major cities.

Other Colombian cities, like Medellin, Cartagena, and Cali, typically have one single ADSL operator that caters to the entire city. Since there isn’t any competition between ADSL and cable operators in these cities, the costs are significantly higher. Colombia-Telecom, which is partly owned by the government, provides broadband access to cities with populations under one million.

A common feature of Colombia’s major cities is the cyber cafe, which offers fast and affordable internet connection. Some cafes require a Colombian ID to use their internet service. Free WiFi zones, which can be found in all major cities, serve as alternatives to the cafes.

As in other countries, social media is popular in Colombia. The most popular social media platforms in Colombia are Facebook and WhatsApp, with 90 percent of internet users having accounts on at least one of the platforms. When asked about sources they typically use to do further research on a product or brand, Colombian internet users most frequently cite social media, followed by search engines.
The internet in Egypt

Contact: Justin Martin, justin.martin@northwestern.edu

By Bruce Mei

The internet came relatively late to Egypt. By 2000, few in the country had access to the internet. However, internet penetration in Egypt has been steadily growing.

This dramatic increase in internet use is partly due to actions by the Egyptian government. In August 2008, the government initiated a program expanding internet access across the country, including into socially-disadvantaged areas. Personal computers were introduced to regular households, and prices for both computers and internet access decreased.

Most Egyptian citizens use the internet primarily for personal communications. According to the Egyptian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, most internet users access the internet on their mobile devices, especially to visit social media platforms and interact with friends, partners, and loved ones. Other uses of the internet, such as online shopping, are limited.

Despite increasing access to the internet, there are restrictions due to government censorship. For example, the government shut down the entire internet in response to protests in January 2011. Moreover, the government has the right to disconnect the national internet from the global one at any time.

The government also has established greater control over communication networks in general. It has engaged in continual surveillance, which has resulted in the arrest of citizens for various reasons, including their posts on social media. Their rationale for prosecution has included spreading inaccurate public information, violating religious principles, threatening public security, and showing disrespect for the country’s leader.

Beyond the realm of government control, conservative cultural and religious norms also play a role in restricting internet use in Egypt. For example, members of the LGBTQ community have been subject to personal attack and even threats of violence for their online activities, even though homosexuality is legal in Egypt.

Therefore, while access to and use of the internet has been steadily growing in Egypt, limitations from both the public and private spheres of society have created barriers to development.
The internet in Greece

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By Jamilah Hah

Greece has a population of more than 11 million people, 73 percent of whom live in urban areas, with the median age of 45. As of 2019, Greece has more than 8 million internet users – an internet penetration rate of 61 percent. About 95 percent of Greek adults own a mobile phone.

The development of the digital economy in Greece is heavily reliant on an infrastructure largely funded by the private sector. Government involvement has primarily focused on securing a strong investment environment.

Greece has 6 million (54 percent of the total population) active social media users. The most popular social media sites in Greece include Facebook (5.5 million users), Instagram (over 3 million users), and LinkedIn (1.5 million users). As is the case in most countries, social media users tend to be younger. A majority of Greece’s Facebook users are male (55 percent), while 52 percent of the Instagram users are female.

In addition to using social media, many Greek citizens shop online. By 2018, there were over 3.5 million online shoppers in Greece, and the number keeps growing despite financial crises in the country. One reason for such ecommerce growth is the ease of online price comparison. Online shoppers are not only able to access various choices of the goods they need but also are able to benefit from algorithms that quickly track the lowest prices for various goods. Such features of ecommerce are especially indispensable as Greek citizens continue to experience losses in family incomes and need to spend wisely.

Online freedom in Greece has been substantial as the government has enacted relatively lenient policies on internet surveillance. Most types of government interference are to “protect” citizens from online gambling, religious attacks, and obscenity. In general, the political authorities respect freedom of speech, including criticisms of the government and a wide variety of media advocacy. Nevertheless, in 2009, the government declared that privacy protections no longer include online communication.
The internet in Jordan

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By Isabella Hernandez

Because of its geographical location and developed infrastructure, Jordan is a major center for trading and investment in the Middle East. The country has also invested heavily in education in information and communication technology and supports many tech start-up companies.

According to the Information and Communications Technology Ministry, 89 percent of Jordanian households have internet subscriptions and 90 percent own smartphones.

The location of Jordan has made it vulnerable to the political conflict in Iraq and Syria. Jordan’s population growth, due to an influx of refugees from these conflicts, has disrupted the economy. At the same time, the population increase has provided an opportunity among mobile operators for subscription growth.

With a significant percentage of smartphone users in Jordan, companies are beginning to launch 4G LTE services. Accordingly, providers are focused on expanding data offerings. In the near future, these providers including Umniah, Zain, and Orange Jordan, holding relatively equal shares in the market, plan to provide 5G and IoT/M2M services to subscribers.

In recent years, the internet in Jordan has become more accessible and more sites have become available. In general Jordan’s constitution contains protections of freedom of speech online, but there is a penal code that directly prohibits any speech that is critical of state institutions, the royal family, national symbols, and foreign states. Moreover, the Press and Publications Law (PPL) requires registration of news organizations with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. In 2018, more legal restrictions on the internet were enacted through the Cybercrime Law, which states that online defamation can result in a fine and/or prison sentence. But this law was repealed after protests and related digital activism among Jordanians.
The internet in Lebanon

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By Ryan Robbins

In recent years Lebanon has experienced a steady growth in its internet penetration rate. However, despite recent advances, Lebanon lags behind much of the developed world in terms of internet speed, cost, and accessibility. Recent events may also place promised internet progress on hold.

All internet connection in Lebanon currently runs through a state-owned company called Ogero. While Ogero lowered internet service prices in 2017, the cost is still high compared with other countries in the Middle East. Internet speed in Lebanon is also relatively slow compared to other countries in the region, a problem that stems from the existing copper wire internet infrastructure. While the outdated copper wire is slated to be fully replaced with fiber optic cable by 2022, recent political turmoil has raised the possibility of delays.

Daily power outages in Lebanon also affect citizens’ internet access. In the greater Beirut area, outages are limited to three hours a day, but more rural regions frequently experience outages that can last seven hours or more a day. Outages with unpredictable and often lengthy durations present a major obstacle to reliable internet access.

Most websites are readily available on the Lebanese internet. Citizens can freely access websites such as Facebook and Google and are connected to global internet discourse. Civic engagement can also serve to limit state regulation. For example, in October 2019, the Lebanese government was forced to withdraw a proposed 20 cent per day tax on calls made through the internet protocol application WhatsApp after thousands of citizens took to the streets to protest the measure. The main websites that are periodically blocked or censored are those that violate Lebanese laws dealing with matters such as escort services, pro-Israeli content, and online gambling.

Nevertheless, there are limitations to freedom of speech on the Lebanese internet. With a complete government monopoly on internet access, the government maintains tight control over internet service providers and punishes dissenters. People accused of criticizing top government officials on the internet have been arrested and prosecuted.

The government has also declared a state of “economic emergency.” The emergency declaration comes at a time when the Lebanese economy has stagnated due to high debt, low growth, and a crumbling infrastructure. In response to the emergency, the Lebanese government has announced a package of economic reforms that includes a planned privatization of 40 percent of the telecommunications industry. The government hopes this privatization will drive both foreign and domestic private investment into the sector and bolster their economy. The planned privatization and infrastructure projects are promising, but the future of the Lebanese internet remains unclear.
The internet in New Zealand

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By Joanna Kim

In 2010, the Government of New Zealand announced the Ultra-Fast Broadband initiative, which is expected to build fiber-to-the-home networks for 87 percent of the New Zealand population by the end of 2022. Fiber-to-the-home networks are networks that use fiber optic cables to connect homes directly to the National Broadband Network (NBN). The government has invested a total of NZ$1.5 billion into the project and has partnered with four private companies, Chorus, Enable, Northpower, and Ultrafast Fibre. In his March 2019 press release, Kriss Faafoi, Broadcasting, Communications, and Digital Media Minister, projected that more than 390 towns and cities will be able to connect to the network by the end of 2022. As of March 2019, the program was approximately 79 percent complete, with almost 1.5 million users able to connect to the country's fiber network.

Nevertheless, having the ability to connect is not the same thing as doing so. Just a few months before Faafoi’s press release, in December 2018, the Broadband Deployment Update showed that only about 714,000 users had actually connected to the NBN; this means that only about 50 percent of eligible New Zealanders were willing to pay to connect at that time. In other words, more work needs to be done to achieve a widely connected New Zealand.

The New Zealand government has also invested in the Rural Broadband Initiative. This provides broadband and mobile coverage to rural and remote areas with difficult terrain, geographical isolation, and small populations. The initiative was announced in 2010, and its original target was to provide 80 percent of rural households and businesses with services of 5Mbps or better and the rest of the rural population with services of 1Mbps. In August 2017, the first contracts for the Rural Broadband Initiative phase two (RBI2) and the Mobile Black Spot Fund (MBSF) were announced. The MBSF involves installing cellular mobile coverage to state highways with no mobile coverage and to key tourist areas. According to the March 2019 Quarterly Connectivity Update, the initiative will provide 84,000 rural homes and businesses with new or improved broadband and install new mobile coverage to 1,400 km of state highway and 160 tourism sites by the end of 2023.

Use of the internet in New Zealand was given worldwide attention in March 2019. On March 15, 2019 a single gunman went into two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, killed 51 people, and injured 49. During the first shooting at Al Noor Mosque, the gunman live-streamed the attack on Facebook, where roughly 200 individuals watched the video as the event occurred. Despite Facebook removing the video minutes after the broadcast had ended, the content was rapidly spread throughout the internet. One of the individuals who distributed the material was Philip Neville, who was sentenced to serve 21 months in jail under the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993, which restricts the availability of content classified as objectionable and harmful.

As a result of the spread of the footage, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and French President Emmanuel Macron initiated the Christchurch Call for Action, which encourages tech companies to commit to ending the use of social media for terrorist acts. The Christchurch Call for Action Summit was held on May 15; 17 countries and 8 tech companies, including Facebook, Google, and Twitter, signed the pledge.
The internet in Qatar

Contact: Justin Martin, justin.martin@northwestern.edu

By Emily Zhou and Lara Washington

As of 2019, Qatar has one of the highest rates of internet penetration in the world. Qatari users average 45 hours of internet usage per week, and most of these users (71 percent) are 25 to 54 years of age. Roughly a quarter of Qatari internet users are younger than 24 years of age.

The most popular websites include Google, YouTube, and Yahoo. Aside from web browsing, the internet is commonly used to download movies, music, newspapers, and software.

The vast majority of Qatari use social media. The most popular social media platforms are WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and YouTube. WhatsApp is widely used by Qatari of all ages, with the majority of those in all age groups using it (76 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds, 80 percent of 25 to 34-year-olds, 85 percent of 35 to 44-year-olds, and 91 percent of those aged 45 and older). Qatar’s Snapchat penetration (64 percent) is the highest in the world.

Though Facebook ranks among the top social media platforms globally, a surprisingly small percentage of Qatari use it – only 23 percent – and the vast majority of them are male. Facebook penetration is generally more robust in other Middle Eastern countries.

Qatar has a smartphone usage level of over 90 percent. The wide availability and usage of smartphones contribute to their popularity as a medium of internet access; they account for 63 percent of Qatar’s web traffic. The majority of Qatari typically use their smartphones for communication through voice and video chat, as well as for entertainment, such as watching videos and gaming.

In Qatar, media outlets are highly restricted and do not have general access to official information. The government censors both domestic and foreign media, including the country’s flagship satellite television channel, Al-Jazeera. Internet service providers also block a wide range of content that does not align with the country’s religious, cultural, and political values. Those who violate restrictions can be punished under Qatar’s cybercrime law with prison sentences and heavy fines. Such restrictions, as well as the conservative culture of the country, also may be promoting significant self-censorship among users.
The internet in Saudi Arabia

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By Lara Washington

Saudi Arabia connected to the internet relatively late. The government’s concerns about the effects of the internet on the Kingdom’s conservative culture contributed significantly to this delay.

The internet was first allowed in academic institutions. After developments in the academic sector, the internet became available to the public in 1997. However, its usage was strictly controlled and censored by the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST). Since then, there has been a steady increase in both the number of internet service providers and the population’s connectivity.

Under Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has experienced rapid advancement in telecommunications. The plan was announced in 2016 by Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman to end the Kingdom’s economic dependence on oil. In a related action in 2017, the Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) issued the “Cloud Framework” to attract more foreign companies.

Subsequently, telecommunications companies created partnerships to improve network services and infrastructure. Recently, Zain Saudi Arabia, the third established mobile network operator in the country, signed a deal with Huawei, the largest Chinese telecommunications equipment manufacturer. This partnership allows Zain to provide 5G services to the Kingdom using Huawei’s technology.

Despite improvements in the network, Saudi Arabia’s internet users must still be careful about what they do online. The CITC continues to monitor and censor the internet. Moreover, in 2017 an anti-terrorism law was introduced that criminalizes nonviolent political and religious speech. Users supporting liberal ideals, minority rights, or political reform are often targeted by state authorities, as well as by government directed “troll farms.” These trolls monitor Twitter for dissenting voices, which they attempt to silence through insults and threats. They also engage in “hashtag poisoning” whereby they find popular hashtags on issues like the war in Yemen or women’s rights and spam the feed with irrelevant tweets to disrupt the dissent.

Over the past decade, the internet, as well as other media, globalization, and Western education, have connected the Saudis to the rest of the world. Initially, the internet was strongly rejected by religious scholars. But increasingly religious authorities issue fatwas compatible with modern lifestyles, and many conditionally approve the use of the internet. Even so, the religious authorities remain a strong and conservative force, one unlikely to approve of the internet potentially exposing the Saudi people to pornography, homosexuality, secularism, feminism, and other content which they perceive to be contrary to Islamic law.
The internet in Sweden

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By Lara Washington

Contemporary Sweden has undergone rapid technological immersion as access to broadband has become instrumental to basic participation in society. Its information and communication technology sector has been very successful, largely because of its high level of entrepreneurship, progressive public policies, and investment in an advanced infrastructure.

In the 1990s, the Swedish government subsidized the purchase of personal computers. This increased PC penetration in homes helped shape the technological environment. At present, the government is proposing a “completely connected Sweden” by 2025. The goal is to provide access to high-speed broadband and high-quality mobile services to everyone in Sweden.

With the promotion of this technological climate by the Swedish government, Stockholm has become a leader in tech start-ups. Prominent companies like Skype, Spotify, and µTorrent originated in Stockholm. Stockholm has produced more unicorns – privately held start-ups that reach $1 billion in market value – than any other city in the world. In 2014, Stockholm held 15 percent of all foreign investment directed into the European tech sector.

None of this success in Stockholm would have been possible without an advanced infrastructure. Stokab is a municipally-owned network provider established in 1994. It built the world’s largest open fiber network that, in total, stretches in length to over 30 times the distance of the Earth’s circumference. Stockholm’s public infrastructure was designed to lower network costs and increase competition among telecom providers. At the same time, the city controls infrastructure construction to keep disruption to citizens to a minimum. As home to over 700 tech companies and 900,000 people, Stockholm has seen a wide adoption of Stokab’s network; 100 percent of businesses and 90 percent of homes take advantage of it today.
The internet in Tunisia

Contact: Justin Martin, justin.martin@northwestern.edu

By Ryan Robbins

Tunisia has a relatively high internet penetration rate compared to the rest of Africa. Despite a largely open internet, there are significant issues regarding state control over telecommunications and laws restricting internet freedom.

While the state-controlled Tunisie Telecom (TT) company does not possess a complete monopoly over wireless internet access in Tunisia, TT is the sole manager of the domestic fiber-optic cable system upon which Tunisia’s internet depends. TT’s monopoly over international submarine communications cable was broken in 2014 when a privately-owned 175-kilometer cable linked Tunisia to Italy. More telecom companies continue to enter the country’s burgeoning telecom market, most notably Huawei.

Internet access has become progressively easier in Tunisia. Huawei and the Tunisian company Ooredoo Tunisia partnered in 2016 to provide consumers with an option to have a fixed internet box without buying a TT subscription. Mobile data plans are extremely popular, and mobile phones are ubiquitous. Additionally, internet cafes are no longer required to register with the government since the ousting of the autocratic president Ben Ali in 2011; they present a way for Tunisians to connect without mobile data plans.

The Tunisian internet landscape is a relatively open one. In 2018, a state court protected an LGBTQ online radio station’s right to broadcast despite large public disapproval. Additionally, sites such as Facebook and YouTube are freely available, and their content is very rarely blocked or suspended; it is only removed in cases of extremism or incitement of violence. Topics such as religion are much more freely debated online than they are in the mainstream media or by people on the streets.

While Tunisia’s internet is relatively free and open compared to the rest of Africa, there are restrictions. While journalists are offered protection under Tunisia’s press code, their activity is monitored online by the state, and online journalists and bloggers are not offered the same protections as their traditional counterparts. Both online and traditional journalists are frequently prosecuted under Tunisia’s penal code. The code also considers criticism of the military as criminal activity. Moreover, government agencies have widespread wiretapping capabilities, and surveillance is an issue of contention between the Tunisian government and public.

In addition, tacit threats to free speech online are also present. Self-censorship is exercised by most users in regard to criticizing security institutions. Moreover, unclear language in the 2014 Constitution leaves the door open for constitutional restrictions on internet freedom. Repressive laws that remain from the Ben Ali era also pose a threat to internet freedom, such as one that states that anyone found guilty of “using public communication networks to insult or disturb others” could face jail time.
The internet in the United Arab Emirates

By Emily Zhou and Lara Washington

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has an internet penetration among the highest in the world. Ninety-three percent of users access the internet daily, and Emiratis average nearly 30 hours of internet use per week. The most popular websites among Emiratis are Google, YouTube, Facebook, and Yahoo. The internet is most widely used for watching videos, but streaming television content and gaming are also common.

Social media is as ubiquitous in the UAE as internet usage. Virtually all of the internet users access some form of social media. UAE citizens average about 3 hours of social media usage per day. The most popular social media platforms are Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, and Twitter.

There is a clear disparity between genders when it comes to social media use; 72 percent of UAE Facebook users are male and a mere 28 percent are female. Similarly, 62 percent of Instagram users are male and only 38 percent are female. There are also age differences in social media usage, as roughly half (48 percent) of UAE’s social media users are aged 25-34, and 21 percent are between 35 and 44 years of age.

As of 2019 the United Arab Emirates has the fifth fastest mobile internet connection speed in the world, which is likely a major factor in the popularity of mobile phones. Smartphone ownership among UAE’s adult population is ubiquitous, and 96 percent of UAE’s internet users access the web through their mobile devices.

Mobile devices are by far the most popular way for Emiratis to access the internet, with 61 percent of its web traffic coming from smartphones and only 36 percent from laptops and desktops. Ninety percent of these users access news from their smartphones on a daily basis.

Although the UAE is one of the most connected countries in the Middle East, internet freedom is restricted. Providers must adhere to the laws and regulations set by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), which manages all aspects of telecommunications and information technology in the UAE. The government has enacted cybercrime laws to criminalize online activities such as gambling, offending the state and its rulers or symbols, and challenging religion. The TRA routinely blocks websites that contain such content and monitors users who wander into these territories. Recently, blocking and censorship have been used to isolate Qatar, which the UAE has accused of supporting terrorist groups, especially the Muslim Brotherhood. Expressing “sympathy for Qatar” is punishable with a 15-year prison sentence.
FINDINGS

1 Internet users and non-users
1.1 Internet penetration in the World Internet Project countries

Overall internet use

With the exception of Egypt, each of the countries in the current World Internet Project Study reported that a majority of respondents are internet users. In the previous WIP report, Tunisia also reported less than 50 percent of respondents using the internet.

Five countries reported an internet penetration rate of more than 50 percent but less than 75 percent: Tunisia and Indonesia (58 percent), Jordan (61 percent), Greece (61 percent), and Colombia (63 percent).

![Are you currently using the internet? (All respondents)](chart.png)
Internet use among men and women

Some differences in internet use based on gender were observed in all of the WIP reporting countries.

Seven countries reported less than five percentage-point difference between men and women: Saudi Arabia reported a difference of four percentage points; Indonesia, Sweden, and the UAE reported three percentage points; and Colombia, Lebanon, and New Zealand reported two percentage points.

Colombia was the only country to report a higher percentage of women than men.

The largest gender gaps were reported by Egypt (18 percentage points more men – seven points higher than the previous study) and Jordan (12 percentage points more men than women).

Internet use and education levels

In general, internet use increases with higher levels of education.

The internet was used by more than 70 percent of respondents with a high school education or more in all of the WIP countries except Egypt (34 percent or higher) and Jordan (67 percent or higher). Among respondents with a college degree or higher, the internet penetration rate was more than 80 percent in all WIP countries except Egypt (74 percent).
**Internet use by age**

In all of the WIP reporting countries, respondents aged 18-24 had the highest or was tied for the highest percentage of users. And only two countries reported percentages below 90 percent for this youngest age group: Indonesia (85 percent), and Egypt (60 percent).

For respondents aged 25-34, all but five countries reported penetration of at least 90 percent: Colombia (89 percent), Egypt (45 percent), Indonesia (66 percent), Jordan (70 percent), and Tunisia (78 percent).

Internet use among the oldest respondents – those 65 and older – varies widely in the reporting countries – from 10 percent in Indonesia to 78 percent in Sweden.
Internet use and income level

In nearly all of the WIP countries, internet use and income level are related; the higher the income level, the greater the percentage of users.

The study also found moderate differences in internet use in most of the reporting countries when comparing the respondents in the highest and lowest income levels. The largest disparity was in Egypt, with a 48 percentage-point difference between the highest 25 percent income earners and the lowest 25 percent earners, followed by Lebanon with a 31 percentage-point gap. All of the other countries in the current study reported a disparity of 17 percentage points or less.

![Are you currently using the internet? (All respondents by income)](image)

(Q3 I-1)
1.2 Internet use: at home, work, school, and other locations

Large percentages of users in the WIP reporting countries connect to the internet through a separate connection at home. More than 80 percent of users in the reporting countries connect to the internet through a separate home connection and a majority of users in every country connect through mobile phones.

In the last month, how did you connect to the internet?
(Internet users)

(Q6 U-1) multiple responses allowed
1.3 Devices for internet access

In all reporting countries, at least 75 percent of users connect to the internet either with their phones or computers on at least a daily basis. A majority of users in all countries go online daily or several times a day through a phone, and all but one reporting country (Colombia) report a majority of users connecting at least daily through their computers.

In four of the five countries, less than one-third of users connect at least daily through their tablets or eReaders.

![Chart showing internet access devices] (Q5 U-1)

When comparing the chart above (daily/several times a day) with the figures for “never” below, it becomes clear that in many instances, users utilize a connection method frequently, or not at all. In the majority of cases, there are less than 25 percent of users who use these methods weekly, monthly, or less than monthly combined.

![Chart showing internet access devices for never] (Q5 U-2)
1.4 Years online

Only three reporting countries report average online use of 10 or more years: New Zealand (14 years), and Greece and the UAE (10 years).
1.5 User proficiency

In all categories across all countries, a majority of users feel confident about their ability to navigate a variety of tasks online.

(Q15 U-1)
1.6 Internet non-users: reasons for not going online

The main reasons for not going online vary from country to country.

For most countries, either lack of interest or lack of knowledge was cited as the most important reason for not using the internet. Non-users in Jordan (41 percent) and Tunisia (38 percent) reported that lack of knowledge was the main reason they were not online.

Non-users in Sweden (53 percent), Greece (49 percent), Lebanon (47 percent), Saudi Arabia (41 percent), UAE (39 percent), and New Zealand (35 percent) cited lack of interest as the principal reason they were not online.

Colombia reported the same percentage for lack of knowledge and expense (23 percent) and Egypt reported the same for lack of interest and lack of knowledge (32 percent).

Only Qatar reported lack of time as the most significant reason (42 percent as compared to 25 percent for lack of interest and 17 percent for lack of knowledge).

When reasons are classified into two groups – attitude vs. equipment/cost – all countries report that the barriers are seldom from lack of the physical means to go online.

(Q4 N-2)
2 Politics and the internet
2.1 The internet and the political process

The internet plays an important role in the political process. But what kind of impact does digital technology have on the political process? Does the internet create political empowerment, help citizens participate in governance, build understanding of politics, or create greater engagement with public officials?

Opinions are mixed. Among all countries except for one responding to all four statements, the highest level of agreement was reported for “can better understand politics.” The exception was Saudi Arabia, for which “have more political power” garnered the highest level of support.

By using the internet, people like you can ..
(Internet users who responded somewhat or strongly agree)

(Q9A-D U-1)
2.2 Freedom of expression online and offline

The internet is also a vehicle for free expression regarding political opinions. In all reporting countries, 40 percent or more of users agreed that they felt comfortable saying whatever they think about politics online.

Only three of the reporting countries have lower than 40 percent of users agreeing that it is safe to express political opinions online: Belgium (23 percent), Greece (26 percent), and New Zealand (32 percent). There is a wide range of responses about the freedom to criticize the government online, with Greece reporting the highest (85 percent) level of agreement, and the UAE reporting the lowest (38 percent).

Only two of the reporting countries have less than half of users agreeing that it is “OK to express ideas online, even if extreme.” Belgium reported 28 percent and New Zealand reported 45 percent. On the other hand, Belgium, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and New Zealand had over half of users agreeing that “the government should regulate the internet more.”
3 Media reliability
3.1 Media reliability: information on the internet

In all WIP countries, at least two-thirds of users said that the information online is reliable to some degree (defined as believing that at least about half of it is reliable). In four countries, at least 25 percent of users believe that most or all of the information online is reliable: Colombia (55 percent), Sweden (50 percent), New Zealand (36 percent), and Belgium (25 percent).

Users in Greece report the lowest confidence in online information with 33 percent reporting that none or only a small portion of the information is reliable.

How much of the information on the internet overall is generally reliable?

(Internet users)

(Q10 U-1)
Online security and personal privacy
4.1 Negative online experiences

In general, the most common negative online experiences were accidentally arriving at a pornographic website, receiving a computer virus, and being contacted for personal/banking information.

At least 20 percent of users in all five reporting countries reported accidentally arriving at a pornographic website.

At the same time, less than 10 percent of users in all five countries report being bullied/harassed online or having credit card information stolen online.

(Q8 U-1)
4.2 Online privacy

Among three potential sources of privacy violation (governments, corporations, and other people), users in all but one reporting country were least concerned about governments violating their privacy online. The only exception was Colombia where corporations were of slightly less concern.

![Concerned that governments, corporations, or others will violate privacy online](chart)

(Q14BCD U-1)

Country by country, similar percentages of respondents report “there is no privacy online.” However, there is much variation among the countries about the view that “I can control my privacy online,” ranging from 37 to 49 percent.

![Attitudes toward online privacy](chart)

(Q14AEFGH U-1)
4.3 Privacy violations

Small percentages of users in each country have experienced a violation of their privacy in the last year. Only three percent or less reported a privacy violation that was a serious problem.

Among the small group that reported a privacy violation, consequences varied. In three countries, approximately a third of users reported that embarrassment was a consequence: Colombia (34 percent), Belgium (31 percent), and Greece (31 percent). Employment impacts were the least common across nearly all countries with only Colombia reporting an equal number for that problem and psychological impacts (six percent).
5 Activities on the internet
5.1 Internet as a communication tool

Person-to-person communication

In all countries, a majority of users go online for person-to-person communication daily or several times a day. However, the method varies.

Three countries report email being the most frequently utilized method: New Zealand (93 percent), Belgium (85 percent), and Sweden (75 percent). The other nine countries report direct messaging as the most frequent method: Colombia (92 percent), Lebanon (72 percent), Tunisia (71 percent), the United Arab Emirates (70 percent), Greece and Saudi Arabia (66 percent), Jordan (56 percent), and Egypt (55 percent).

Content sharing and creation

The sharing of content online varies widely in the WIP countries. Users who post their own content daily or multiple times a day ranging from 11 percent in New Zealand to 66 percent in Tunisia. Percentages reporting reposting content at least daily ranges from 15 percent in Greece to 65 percent in Tunisia.
5.2 Research

A majority of users in seven countries go online to look for news daily or several times a day: New Zealand (68 percent), Greece (66 percent), Tunisia (60 percent), Sweden and Belgium (59 percent), Saudi Arabia (58 percent), and Egypt (52 percent).

Of the remaining countries, only Colombia (nine percent) reports less than 35 percent of users who go online at least daily for news.

How frequently do you use the internet for the following purposes? Looking for news
(Internet users)

A majority of users in all reporting countries except Colombia report going online weekly or more often to find or check a fact. On the other hand, all countries report only 50 percent or less of users go online at least weekly to look up a definition.

How frequently do you use the internet for the following purposes?
(Internet users who responded weekly, daily, or several times a day)
5.3 **School-work and distance learning**

A quarter or more of students in all reporting countries go online at least weekly for school-related work. Distance learning is less common with less than 16 percent of users in most countries engaging in this activity at least weekly.

How frequently do you use the internet for the following purposes?
(Internet users who are students and not employed and who responded weekly, daily, or several times a day)

(Q20C-D U-2)
5.4 Buying and selling

Getting information about a product is a common activity in most of the reporting countries. Over 75 percent of users in Belgium, Greece, and New Zealand go online at least monthly to get product information.

Similarly, a majority of users in four of the five countries go online at least monthly to compare prices; only Colombia reports a lower number with just five percent of users going online at least monthly to check prices.

How frequently do you use the internet for the following purposes?
(Internet users who responded monthly, weekly, daily, or several times a day)

(Q19A-C, G-H U-1)

5.5 Financial management

Bills and banking are often managed on a monthly basis. When we look at that time frame, a majority of users in three of the five countries go online at least monthly to pay bills or conduct eBanking tasks. However, much lower numbers of users go online at least monthly for investing.

How frequently do you use the internet for the following purposes?
(Internet users who responded monthly, weekly, daily, or several times a day)

(Q19D-F U-1)
5.6 Entertainment

Music and videos

In nearly all countries, similar percentages of users go online at least weekly for both music and videos. Sweden has the greatest gap between the two, with a difference of 10 percentage points, followed by Jordan (eight points), and Lebanon and the UAE (seven points).

![How frequently do you use the internet for the following purposes?](chart)

(Q18B-C U-1)

Online games and competitions

In all but one reporting country (Colombia), 30 percent or more of users go online for gaming at least weekly. Among reporting countries, online gambling remains a much less common activity. Belgium has by far the highest percentage of users (18 percent) who go online for gambling at least weekly.

![How frequently do you use the internet for the following purposes?](chart)

(Q18A and E U-1)
5.7 Personal interest

Large percentages of users are turning regularly to online sources for various forms of information or content.

In all but two countries (Sweden and Colombia), a majority of users go online at least monthly for health information. In six countries, at least 70 percent of users go online at least monthly for religious or spiritual information: Saudi Arabia (91 percent), Qatar (83 percent), Jordan (82 percent), Tunisia and the UAE (74 percent), and Egypt (72 percent).
APPENDICES
## APPENDIX 1 | World Internet Project: international partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Partner Details</th>
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| United States | **Center for the Digital Future**  
USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism  
www.digitalcenter.org |
| Belgium      | University of Antwerp  
| Canada       | **Canadian Internet Project (CIP)/Recherche Internet Canada (RIC)**  
www.cipiconline.ca |
| Chile        | **Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile: Schools of Communications (head), Sociology, and Engineering/ Santiago Chamber of Commerce (CCS)**  
www.wipchile.cl |
| China        | **China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC)**  
cnnic.com.cn |
| Colombia     | **CINTEL – Centro de Investigación de las Telecomunicaciones**  
www.cintel.org.co |
| Cyprus       | **Cyprus University of Technology/Department of Communication and Internet Studies**  
www.cut.ac.cy/ |
| Czech Republic | **Charles University, Department of Sociology**  
https://www.ff.cuni.cz/home/research/departments_research_profiles/department-sociology/ |
| France       | **M@rsouin Network**  
www.marsouin.org |
| Greece       | **EKKE: The National Center for Social Research**  
www.ekke.gr |
| Indonesia    | **Indonesia Internet Service Provider Association (APJII)**  
www.apjii.or.id |
| Israel       | **The Research Center for Internet Psychology (CIP)**  
Sammy Ofer School of Communications, The Interdisciplinary Center  
www.idc.ac.il/communications/cip/en |
| Italy        | **SDA Bocconi, Bocconi University**  
www.sdabocconi.it/home/it/ |
| Japan        | **Rikkyo University, College of Sociology**  
english.rikkyo.ac.jp/ |
| Macao        | **ERS E-Research (Lab)**  
Macao Internet Project (MIP)  
www.macaointernetproject.net |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Contact/Website</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>Contact: Justin Martin, <a href="mailto:justin.martin@northwestern.edu">justin.martin@northwestern.edu</a> (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>NZ Work Research Institute AUT University of Technology <a href="http://www.workresarch.aut.ac.nz">www.workresarch.aut.ac.nz</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Department of Communication and Culture BI Norwegian Business School <a href="http://www.bi.no">www.bi.no</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Lisbon Internet and Networks International Research Programme (LINI) <a href="http://www.lini-research.org">http://www.lini-research.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) <a href="http://www.qatar.northwestern.edu">www.qatar.northwestern.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Sholokhov Moscow State University for the Humanities <a href="http://mggu-sh.ru/en">http://mggu-sh.ru/en</a></td>
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<td>South Africa</td>
<td>University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg The Media Observatory Wits Journalism <a href="http://www.journalism.co.za">www.journalism.co.za</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>IIS (The Internet Infrastructure Foundation) <a href="http://www.iis.se">www.iis.se</a> <a href="http://www.wii.se">www.wii.se</a></td>
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<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>University of Zurich, Switzerland IKMZ – Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research <a href="http://www.ikmz.uzh.ch">www.ikmz.uzh.ch</a></td>
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<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Taiwan e-Governance Research Center Department of Public Administration, National Chengchi University <a href="http://www.teg.org.tw">www.teg.org.tw</a> <a href="http://pa.nccu.edu.tw">http://pa.nccu.edu.tw</a></td>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Oxford Internet Institute oii.www.ox.ac.uk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>Universidad Católica del Uruguay <a href="http://www.ucu.edu.uy">www.ucu.edu.uy</a></td>
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</table>
APPENDIX 2 | Research Methods

Belgium

Data were collected from an online panel in June 2017. A total of 1,317 people between the ages of 18 and 85 were surveyed. Respondents were surveyed in Dutch and French in both of Belgium’s main regions: 815 from Flanders and 502 from Wallonia. No weighting was applied. Through application of quotas, the sample was representative of the Belgian population in terms of gender and age.

Colombia

The survey was conducted in Spanish. Six hundred and seventeen mobile phone users, aged 13 to 87, were interviewed from May 23 to June 30, 2017. A semi-structured questionnaire was used. The sample, stratified and drawn from more than 100 municipalities, was representative at the national level.

Egypt

Interviews were conducted face-to-face in Arabic and English from June 18 to July 27, 2017 with 1,000 individuals aged 18 and above. Visitors with no residence permit, farmers, servants, the mentally disabled, and those in labor camps were excluded. A multi-stage random probability sampling procedure was used. The data were weighted by age and gender.

Greece

Interviews were conducted over the phone in Greek with 1,222 individuals aged 15 and above from January 31 to February 21, 2015. The survey covered all 13 districts of the Hellenic Republic. A random stratified cluster sample design was applied. The dataset was weighted according to the 2011 Population Census and the Labor Force Survey. The Labor Force Survey accounts only for private households. The data were weighted according to the 2011 Population Census and the natural population mobility, including deaths, births, and migration flows.

Indonesia

Interviews were conducted face-to-face in Indonesia from February to June 2017 with 2,500 individuals aged 13 and above. The interviews were conducted in six major regions: Jawa, Sumatera, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Bali-Nusa, and Maluku-Papua. Each region was divided into three city/district categories: urban, rural-urban, and rural. A multi-stage cluster sampling procedure was used. The data were weighted by social economy (employment, education, expenses, gadget ownership, and utilities usage).
Jordan
Interviews were conducted face-to-face in Arabic from March 14 to March 26, 2017 with 1,009 individuals aged 18 and above. Visitors with no residence permit, farmers, servants, the mentally disabled, and those in labor camps were excluded. A multi-stage random probability sampling procedure was used. The data were weighted by age, gender, nationality, and geography.

Lebanon
Lebanon interviews were conducted face-to-face in Arabic from February 22 to March 25, 2017 with 1,018 individuals aged 18 and above. Visitors with no residence permit, farmers, servants, the mentally disabled, those in labor camps, and potential respondents in areas with heavy Hezbollah presence were excluded. A multi-stage random probability sampling procedure was used. The data were weighted by age and geography.

New Zealand
Data were collected between September and December 2017. A nationwide sample of 2,012 participants, with regional quotas based on the 2013 national census, completed the survey in English. These respondents, aged 16 to 94 years old, were drawn from two sampling frames: an online panel and a CATI (computer-assisted telephone interview) telephone bank. The online participants (n=1,008) were drawn from a panel of 143,000 active members, with a slight skew towards younger people. The distribution of the CATI participants (n=1,004) was as follows: 60 percent RDD landline, 20 percent RDD mobile phone, and 20 percent randomly selected from published (white pages) landline listings.

Qatar
Qatar Interviews were conducted by phone in Arabic and English from February 7 to March 23, 2017 with 1,140 individuals aged 18 and above. Those in army barracks, hospitals, dormitories, and prison were excluded. A randomized sample within the household using a constant fraction sampling procedure was used. The data were weighted by age, nationality, geography, and gender.

Saudi Arabia
Saudi Arabia Interviews were conducted face-to-face in Arabic and English from February 6 to March 23, 2017 with 1,016 individuals aged 18 and above. Visitors with no residence permit, farmers, servants, the mentally disabled, and those in labor camps were excluded. A multi-stage random probability sampling procedure was used. The data were weighted by age, gender, nationality, and geography.

Sweden
In 2017, 3,184 respondents aged 12 and above were surveyed in February and March. The Swedish data were collected by both telephone interview and web-based questionnaire. In 2000, the first year the survey was conducted, a random sample of the Swedish population was drawn from the national telephone register. This sample has been supplemented annually with a stratified sample (by age and sex to ensure adequate representation) to replace lost members. No weighting procedures were applied to the 2017 data.
Tunisia

Interviews were conducted face-to-face in Arabic, English, and French from March 8 to March 27, 2017 with 1,000 individuals aged 18 and above. Visitors with no residence permit, farmers, servants, the mentally disabled, and those in labor camps were excluded. A multi-stage random probability sampling procedure was used. The data were weighted by age, nationality, and geography.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Interviews were conducted face-to-face in Arabic and English from February 1 to March 29, 2017 with 1,013 individuals aged 18 and above. Visitors with no residence permit, farmers, servants, the mentally disabled, and those in labor camps were excluded. A multi-stage random probability sampling procedure was used. The data were weighted by age, gender, and geography.