

A Matter of Trust: What Users Want From Web Sites

Results of a National Survey of Internet Users
for
Consumer WebWatch

***By
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Executive Summary

The Internet is now an integral part of the everyday lives of a majority of Americans, whether at home, at work or in both locales. In less than a decade, it has been transformed from a technological curiosity to the place millions of Americans shop every day, to a place they go for news, information and communication and to a place for both entertainment and serious business.

With this transformation from marvel to mainstream, Internet users now have strong, strict expectations when they go online. They are demanding Web sites that offer credible information – just as much as they want sites that are easy to navigate. And users want to be able to identify the sources of online information – just as much as they want Web sites to be updated frequently.

But the online reality today is that few Internet users say they can trust the Web sites that have products for sale or the sites that offer advice about which products and services to buy. Only 29 percent of users say they trust Web sites that sell products or services. And just 33 percent say they trust Web sites giving advice about such purchases. That compares to 58 percent who trust newspapers and television news and 47 percent who trust the federal government in Washington.

This gap between consumers' expectations and their judgments of how Web sites are doing is one striking finding of a new survey of Internet users, conducted for Consumer WebWatch, a project of Consumers Union, by Princeton Survey Research Associates with 1,500 adult online users.

Online users' low ratings of Web site credibility do not stand in the way of people going online and using the variety of sites that are the World Wide Web. But credibility stands tall among the nine key reasons that users go to one Web site and not to another. (*See Table 1: Nine Factors in Deciding to Visit a Web Site, page 8.*)

From the old hands to the newbies online, users want the Web sites they visit to provide clear information to allow them to judge the site's credibility. Users want to know who runs the site; how to reach those people; the site's privacy policy; and how the site deals with mistakes, whether editorial or transactional. For example, 80 percent say it is *very* important to be able to trust the information on a Web site – the same percentage who say it is *very* important that a site be easy to navigate.

In the eyes of consumers, all sites are not equal. Consumers have different credibility standards for different types of sites.

For sites where consumers can spend money – whether to buy something like a book or to make a travel reservation – consumer expectations and demands are just about as high as they can be. Internet users were asked about six specific Web site policies and information for e-commerce sites. For each of the six policies examined, more than three-quarters of users say that it is *very* important that e-commerce sites provide specific, accurate information about the site's policies and practices. For example, a total of 95 percent of users say it is *very* important that sites disclose all fees, while 93 percent attach the same emphasis to statements of the site's policy on using personal information.

For news and information sites, users are also demanding. They want sites to have and to display a privacy policy. Users want advertising clearly labeled as advertising. They want a prominent page where corrections of past mistakes are available. And users want the site to provide a list of the editors responsible for the site's content, including the editors' email addresses. For example, 65 percent say it is *very* important that a site display its privacy policy and 59 percent say that it is *very* important that advertising be clearly labeled and distinguished from news and information.

Search engines provide a special case of Web sites, for they are often the switching stations that users take to move from one site to another. Potential danger lurks in these switching stations and the average user does not know of the problem. Users are largely unaware that search engines may not be neutral guides to the online world: Three in five users (60%) do not know that search engines are often paid to list some sites more prominently than others in their results. Users overwhelmingly (80%) want search engines to reveal these practices. (*See The Special Case of Search Engines, page 17, for more detail.*)

Consumers have strong opinions about what information Web sites should provide on practices and policies, but that doesn't mean that users are always aggressive in seeking out this information. For example, about three in five (57%) have read at least most of the policies about credit card use on the sites they visit. Just 35 percent report reading the privacy policies on most sites and only 22 percent report reading the "About Us" pages that provide key information about the site, such as its personnel, goals and purpose. Although users may not always be diligent in reading this type of key information, they are consistent in their demands that the Web sites make the information easily available when they do want to read through the policies and practices.

Despite concerns about the credibility of sites and an overall lack of trust, users continue to exercise their power of choice on the Internet to figure which sites to use and which to avoid. Three-quarters (75%) have gone to Web sites selling products in the past few months, while just about as many have gone to news sites (73%). When their concerns are satisfied, consumers are willing to extend trust to selected sites: nearly three out of four users (73%) have provided personal information such as their name or email address to at least one Web site. About two in three (65%) have used their credit cards online. Those who have been online more than three years are much more likely to have used their card online (79%), compared to those online six months or less (36%). (For a breakdown of users by online experience, see *Appendix: Profile of the Online Population*, page 42.)

About Consumer WebWatch

Consumer WebWatch is a three-year, grant-funded project of Consumers Union, the non-profit publisher of *Consumer Reports* magazine and ConsumerReports.org. Through research and the promotion of guidelines for best practices and other analytical means, the project seeks to improve consumer trust in the World Wide Web. The project will also, through research and analysis, develop in-depth guidelines for specific sectors of the Web. These sectors will include travel Web sites, children's sites, search engines and portals, and health sites.

Consumer WebWatch is supported by grants from The Pew Charitable Trusts, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and the Open Society Institute.

About This Survey

The survey results are based on interviews with 1,500 Internet users age 18 and older, conducted for Consumer WebWatch by Princeton Survey Research Associates. The Internet users were identified from among 2,542 adults interviewed for the survey by telephone from December 20, 2001, to January 7, 2002. For results based on all Internet users, the sampling error margin is plus or minus 3 percentage points.¹ The sampling error margin is higher for sub-groups of users.

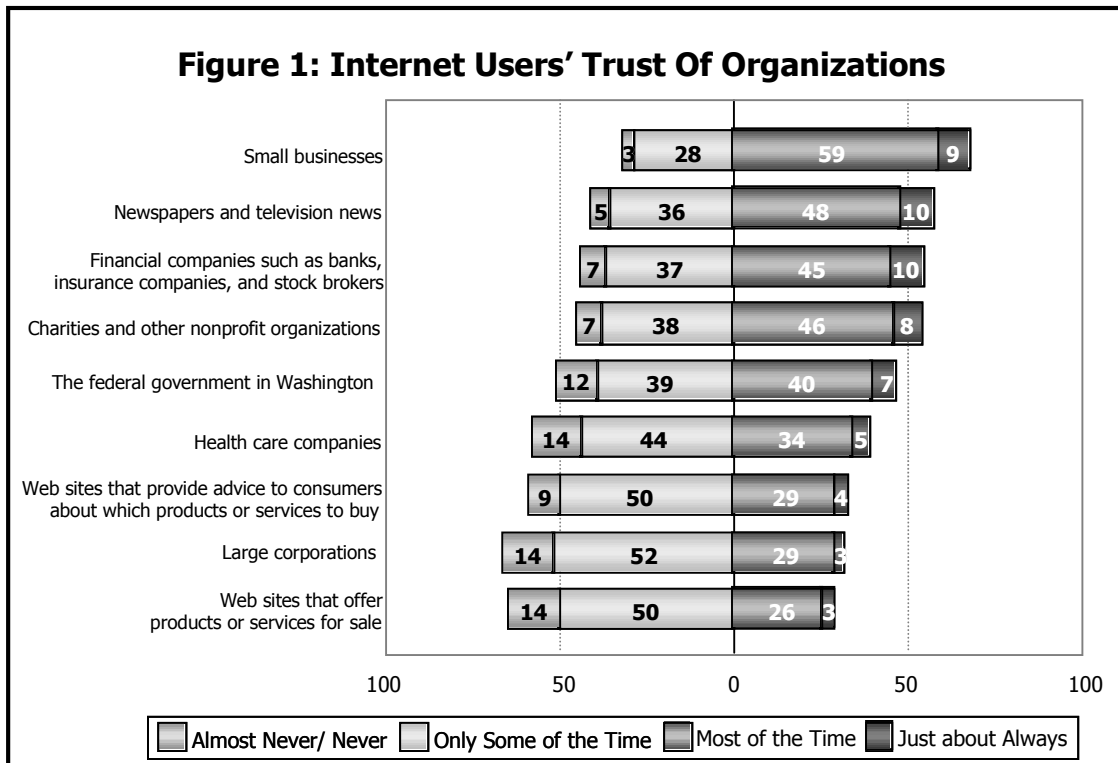
¹ See *Appendix: Survey Methodology Report* for full explanation of survey methods, sampling and response rates.

Credibility and Trust Online

Building and keeping credibility in the eyes of consumers is a complex task faced every day by the news media, retail stores and many other organizations, big and small, that deal with the public. Some do it well and some less well.

By this gauge, two major types of Web sites are not doing well at all. Users rate Web sites that sell products and sites that offer consumers advice about products near the bottom in terms of trust on a list of nine types of organizations that many people deal with frequently.

E-commerce sites overall draw dismal ratings, even among those who use them. Only three in ten (29%) say they trust e-commerce sites either “just about always” or “most of the time” while more than six in ten (64%) trust them “only some of the time” or “never”. Internet users show a similar degree of skepticism towards consumer advice sites. Just over three in ten (33%) trust them and six in ten (59%) express low levels of trust.



Compare these ratings of Web sites with those of other organizations. For example, 68 percent say they trust small businesses; 58 percent trust newspapers and television news; and 55 percent trust financial companies such

as banks, insurance companies and stockbrokers. A total of 54 percent trust charities and other nonprofit organizations, while 47 percent say they trust the federal government at least most of the time. The remarkably low trust ratings for Web sites suggest the sites have much work to do if consumers are going to rely on these sites as they already do on these other types of organizations.

Given that users choose to go to particular sites online, one might expect that those who are more familiar with these Web sites would find them more credible. If this were not the case, why would the users return to sites they do not find credible? The survey provides some support for this thesis, but this should not provide much comfort to the sites. Even those with the most experience with the Internet and with particular types of sites still do not provide high ratings to those types of sites. For example, 31 percent of those online three years or more say they trust the e-commerce sites. This is not much of a positive rating, even if it is higher than the 21 percent trust figure from those who have been online less than six months.

Three groups that could be judged most experienced with e-commerce sites express similarly low levels of trust of such sites: Those who visit e-commerce sites (33%), use a credit card online (34%), or have given personal information to sites (32%).² Of course, those who have not engaged in these behaviors are even less likely to express high levels of trust: 18 percent of those who have not visited e-commerce sites; 19 percent of those who have not used a credit card online; and only 21 percent of those who have not given personal information to Web sites. Looking at users by their Internet Service Provider (ISP), AOL and MSN subscribers are slightly more distrusting of e-commerce sites than others. For example, 67 percent of AOL subscribers express low levels of trust in e-commerce sites, while a similar 71 percent of MSN users express such a low level. These compare with the 52% of AT&T subscribers who express low levels of trust and 60 percent of Earthlink subscribers.

Similar patterns overall exist for Web sites that offer consumer advice. Long-time Internet users (those with more than three years online) trust these sites slightly more (35%) than those online less than six months (25%). Using a particular type of site is no guarantee of credibility for those sites. Less than half of those who say they go to consumer advice sites (43%) say they trust those sites most of the time. And 54 percent say they trust the advice sites only some

² Where a difference between two percentages in the report is discussed as significant, the difference has been tested and found to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Where percentages are not described as different or are described as similar (as in the sentence to which this is a footnote), there is **no** statistically significant difference between the percentages at the 95% confidence level.

of the time or less. There is no significant variation in trust of consumer advice sites by ISP.

There is a substantial overlap between those who find e-commerce sites credible and those who find consumer advice sites credible, but not as much as might be hypothesized. Of the group who says they trust *e-commerce* sites, only 53 percent also say they trust the consumer advice sites. Conversely, of the group that says they trust *consumer advice* sites, only 46 percent also say they trust e-commerce sites.

Credibility and trust online are the product of many factors, including each person's overall view of the world and the level of trust of people in general. These overall perceptions have a clear impact online. Only 42 percent of online users say that most people can be trusted. A bare majority of online users (51%) believe you can't be too careful in dealing with people. And five percent say that it depends on the situation.

Trust is related to a variety of factors among the public at large³ and among online users⁴. The most experienced Internet users generally trust people more than novice users. Those who have been online for more than three years split on this measure of trust (48% most can be trusted, 45% can't be too careful) while those with less than six months of experience are more likely to distrust people (28% most people can be trusted, 66% can't be too careful). Those who visit e-commerce sites trust people more than those who don't (44% v. 35% most people can be trusted), and those who use a credit card online display more trust than those who don't (46% v. 34%). And users who know what browser cookies are and have them *enabled* on their computers are slightly more trusting (47% most can be trusted v. 45% can't be too careful) than those who know what cookies are and have them *disabled* on their computers (39% most can be trusted v. 54% can't be too careful).

³ For a discussion of trust among the general public, particularly with regard to government, see *Deconstructing Distrust*, a publication of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, Washington, D.C., 1998.

⁴ For an examination of privacy online and its relationship to trust, see *Trust and Privacy Online: Why Americans Want to Rewrite the Rules*, a report of the Pew Internet and American Life Project, August, 2000, Washington, D.C., http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/pdfs/PIP_Trust_Privacy_Report.pdf.

What is Important for All Sites

Online users' low ratings of Web site credibility do not stand in the way of people going online and using the variety of sites on the World Wide Web. But credibility stands tall among the nine key reasons that users go to one Web site and not to another.

Much has been written about Internet users caring a great deal about a Web site being easy to navigate and frequently updated. After all, finding the information easily and being able to deliver up-to-date information are two of the greatest strengths of the Internet. But this survey demonstrates that users care as strongly about the credibility of the information on the site as they do about the key logistical issues. The survey asked each of the users:

“Thinking about the various kinds of Web sites you have visited online, here are some reasons given for going to particular sites. For each, I'd like to know how important this is for you when you decide to visit a Web site...”

Four in five users (80%) say that being able to trust the information on a site is *very* important to them as they decide to visit a Web site. And 14 percent say it is somewhat important. Only four percent say it is not too important or not important at all. That puts credibility right up with ease-of-use at the top of the users' list: An identical 80 percent say that it is *very* important that the site be easy to navigate. (See *Table 1: Nine Factors in Deciding to Visit a Web Site, page 8.*)

The next two factors high on the users' list of importance are another pairing of Web site logistics and credibility. More than two-thirds of users (68%) say being able to identify the sources of information on a site is *very* important. Given the incredible diversity of information online, users are looking for source identification to support their credibility judgments on sites. The logistical factor that ranks in this second group is freshness. Sixty-five percent of users say that knowing the Web site is updated frequently is *very* important in their decisions.

	VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT TOO IMPORTANT	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT
The site is easy to navigate and to find what you want	80	16	2	1
Being able to trust the information on a Web site	80	14	3	1
Being able to easily identify the sources of information on a Web site	68	25	4	2
Knowing the Web site is updated frequently with new information	65	28	4	2
Being able to find out the important facts about a Web site	50	36	8	4
Knowing who owns the Web site	32	33	22	12
What businesses and organizations financially support the site	24	37	27	11
The site displays seals of approval from other groups	19	41	26	12
The site displays awards and certificates from other groups	9	30	36	23

The impressive reality of these findings is further strengthened by the fact that these opinions are strongly held across groups and across the varieties of experience with the Internet. There is not much variation by age, race, income, or education. And the variations that do exist are overshadowed by the fact that three-quarters or more of each group take the same position. For example, of those age 18-49, 82 percent say trusting the information is *very important*, compared with 75 percent of those age 50 and older. Eighty-one percent of whites, the same percentage of African-Americans and 77 percent of Hispanics say trusting the information is *very important*.⁵ Trusting content also rates as more important among those who use a credit card online (83%) than those who do not (75%). While the exact patterns among groups differ, overall the variations are small in comparison with the strength of opinion.

On this list of nine factors, the fifth most important one covers a great deal of ground: half of the users (50%) think it is *very important* to be able to find out the important facts about the Web site. Thirty-six percent say it is *somewhat important*, with 12 percent attaching little importance to such information. This general question is explored in more depth in the next two sections on e-commerce sites (See *Big Demands for E-commerce Sites*, page

⁵ The differences among the racial and ethnic groups are not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

10); on news and information sites (See *Give Us Information We Can Believe*, page 13) and search engines (See *The Special Case of Search Engines*, page 17).

Less important to Internet users are some of the financial issues with Web sites and how the site has been rated by other organizations. Majorities of users think these issues are important, but at levels that rank them at the low end of the nine factors that were tested. About a third of users (32%) say who owns a site is *very* important, with another third (33%) saying it is somewhat important. About one in four users (24%) say knowing which businesses and organizations support a site is *very* important, while 37 percent say it is somewhat important.

A Web site's display of seals of approval from third parties is far down the list of items that the users say are important. Only 19 percent say it is *very* important to see such seals, while 41 percent say it is somewhat important. Thirty-eight percent see no importance in such seals of approval.

A site's display of awards and certificates also doesn't buy much with users. Only one in ten (9%) find it *very* important and less than a third (30%) find it even somewhat important. A majority (59%) do not find it important.

One possible reason for this lack of importance is the proliferation of seals of approval, certificates and awards in the early days of the Web. The ease with which sites could obtain seals of approval in the early days may have debased their value for those with the broadest experience with the Web. This thesis draws some support from the fact that the importance of seals of approval declines somewhat with experience. Twenty-nine percent of those with less than six months experience say the seals are *very* important, a number that declines to 15 percent among those who have been online more than three years. At this point in the Internet's development, what is clear is that the power of seals of approval – which can be impressive in other contexts – has not yet moved online.

Big Demands for E-commerce Sites

When it comes to sites that sell to consumers, users are crystal clear and united. They want to know their money and their information is being handled with the greatest amount of discretion. And they want to know what to do and who to contact if things go wrong.

Internet users were asked about six types of information and policies that some e-commerce sites display:

“Now thinking specifically about Web sites where you can spend money – whether to buy a product, such as a book or a toy, or to make a travel reservation or spend money in other ways. For each, I’d like to know how important it is to you that this information be on the site and easy to find...”⁶

The users lined up behind all six: they want a statement cataloging all fees associated with a transaction; a statement of how the site will use their credit card and other personal information; an explanation of when to expect delivery of products; a statement of the site’s policies for returning unwanted items; a listing of how to reach the site’s staff with any problems; and the site’s privacy policy. In fact, six in ten users (59%) find all of these *very* important and an additional 23% picked five out of six as *very* important.

Nearly everyone online (95%) believes in the top-line importance of having a statement of all fees they will be charged when buying from a site, including shipping costs, transaction and handling fees. This demand rates highly across all groups, from those on the Internet more than three years (96%) to those online for less than six months (90%). While one would expect a statement of fees to be important to those who say they go to e-commerce sites (96%), it is also *very* important to those who do not go to such sites (91%). Those online believe a statement of how the site will use personal and credit card information is also rated highly (93% *very* important). Slightly more of those who use their credit card online (95%) find this *very* important compared to those who don’t (90%).

⁶ See complete question wording in Appendix: Final Topline Results, page 38.

About nine in ten online users want an explanation of when to expect delivery of goods or confirmation of reservations (89% *very important*) and a statement of the site's policies for returning unwanted items or canceling

Table 2: Six Factors in Choosing an E-commerce Web Site

	<u>VERY IMPORTANT</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT</u>	<u>NOT TOO IMPORTANT</u>	<u>NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT</u>
A statement of all fees that you will be charged for using the site, including shipping costs, transaction fees and handling fees	95	3	*	1
A statement of how the site will use your name, address, credit card number and other personal information you provide	93	4	1	1
An explanation of when you can expect delivery of your products or confirmation of your reservations	89	9	1	1
A statement of the site's policies for returning unwanted items or canceling reservations	88	8	1	2
The email address, street address or telephone number where you can reach the site's staff about any problems	81	14	2	2
The site's privacy policy	76	18	4	2

reservations (88% *very important*). As one would expect, such policies are even more important among those who visit e-commerce sites, with 91 percent saying it is *very important* to be told when to expect delivery, compared with 84 percent of those who do not go to such sites. Similarly, 92 percent of those who use a credit card online say that e-commerce sites' return policies are *very important*, compared with 82 percent of those who do not use a credit card online.

Resonating slightly less with those online – but still of major importance – are the site's listing an email address, street address, or phone number to reach the site's staff about any problems (81% *very important*) and the site's displaying its privacy policy (76% *very important*). There are no significant differences on the importance of a site's privacy policy between those who visit or trust e-commerce sites and those who don't visit or don't trust e-commerce sites. Not surprisingly, those users who read most privacy policies find them more important (91%) than those who look at only some or none of them (68%).

User Demands Consistent Across Types of Sites

One measure of the strength of opinions is the consistency of the opinions across various groups. Looking at users' views of e-commerce sites, the user experience may vary from site to site and from one type of site to another. Those variations in experiences might create variations in expectations and consumer demands. But this is not the case for e-commerce sites.

Whether the user reports going to health sites, financial sites, travel sites or consumer advice sites, the opinions are strong and the demands for the sites' performance consistent. Each of the groups (which are, of course, overlapping) feels the same way about the importance of various factors in deciding which site to go to buy products or services. No significant differences exist in what percentage find each item *very* important among users of these different types of sites. For example, 96 percent of those who have visited each type of site say it is *very* important that the site post a statement of all fees for using or ordering from the site.

	VISIT HEALTH SITES	VISIT FINANCIAL SITES	VISIT TRAVEL SITES	VISIT CONSUMER ADVICE SITES
A statement of all fees that you will be charged for using the site, including shipping costs, transaction fees and handling fees	96	96	96	96
A statement of how the site will use your name, address, credit card number and other personal information you provide	94	94	94	95
An explanation of when you can expect delivery of your products or confirmation of your reservations	92	90	92	92
A statement of the site's policies for returning unwanted items or canceling reservations	91	89	91	90
The email address, street address or telephone number where you can reach the site's staff about any problems	81	82	83	81
The site's privacy policy	75	74	75	75
<i>Number of cases in group</i>	<i>n=681</i>	<i>n=718</i>	<i>n=939</i>	<i>n=565</i>
The results from each group based on type of site were tested for statistical significance against the results from each of the other groups. For each row, numbers in bold are significantly greater than the numbers in <i>italics</i> at a 95% confidence level. Numbers in normal font are not significantly different from any other numbers on a row.				

Give Us Information We Can Believe

News and information sites are right at the top of the list along with e-commerce sites as the destinations that Web users are most likely to say they visit, with about three-quarters of the users (73%) saying they have visited such sites in the past several months.

But the expectations for a news and information site are different from those of an e-commerce site. While it is no surprise that users have uniformly strong opinions about the financial policies on e-commerce sites, views about news and information Web sites are more nuanced. News and information sites are also somewhat different from other Web sites because of their still-limited role in the news-delivery system in the United States.

As has been the case for years, Americans are more likely to say they get most of their news from television than from any other source, despite the growth of the Internet.⁷ About two-thirds say they get their news from television (67%), with 15 percent saying newspapers or magazines. Ten percent say they get their news from radio and only five percent say they get their news from the Internet. Especially in times of major news developments – such as the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 – the public still turns to television.⁸

The old-line institutions of newspapers and television news are trusted far more than e-commerce sites or consumer advice sites. On the list of organizations, 58 percent say they trust the news media, while 41 percent say they have low levels of trust in the media. (See *Figure 1, Page 4.*) With many online news sites closely related to well-known print and broadcast news organizations, other research has found that there is little difference in the public's perception of the credibility of these online offshoots of the media, when compared to the parent news organizations.⁹

The basic credibility issues for news and information sites started with the basic issues for all sites. Being able to trust the information on a site ranks at the top of users' lists for all sites, not just news sites. And being able to identify the

⁷ See *Internet Sapping Broadcast News Audience*, a report by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, Washington, D.C., June 2000.

⁸ See *The Commons of the Tragedy: How the Internet was used by millions after the terror attacks to grieve, console, share news, and debate the country's response*, a report of the Pew Internet and American Life Project, October, 2001, Washington, D.C., http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/pdfs/PIP_Tragedy_Report.pdf

⁹ A telephone survey for ScreamingMedia.com by Princeton Survey Research Associates. n=1,232 adults, April 12-20, 2000. See also *Internet Sapping Broadcast News Audience*, footnote 7.

sources of information on a site is a key factor in credibility for all sites, not just those providing news and information.

A list of six possible factors in news and information credibility was posed to the Internet users. Two factors stand out almost equally: clear labeling of advertising and the site's privacy policy.

Fifty-nine percent of the users say that the clear distinction between ads and news content is *very* important, and 25 percent say somewhat important. Fourteen percent say it is not important. Support for this division within the news site is uniform across groups, with some variations. For example, it is a little more important for those who rely on newspapers than for those who rely on television for news (91% important v. 83%). And it is a little less important for those who go online only from work (47% *very* important) compared with those who go online only at home (62%) or from both locales (60%).¹⁰

Table 4: Six Factors in Choosing News, Information Web Sites

	VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT TOO IMPORTANT	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT
The site's privacy policy	65	22	8	4
Advertising is clearly labeled as advertising and distinguished from news and information on the site	59	25	10	4
Email addresses for the editor or people responsible for the content on the site	36	39	16	7
A prominently displayed page for corrections and clarifications	34	45	13	6
A page that lists the editor or people responsible for the content on the site, like the masthead on a print publication	30	37	22	10
The financial relationships the site has with other sites or other businesses	22	42	24	10

A news site's privacy policy is also important, with 65 percent saying it is *very* important and 22 percent saying somewhat important. Again, the variations among various groups of users are not large, although those who rely on television for news are slightly more likely to mention this as *very* important. Sixty-nine percent of those who rely on television for news rate a news site's

¹⁰ Eighty-five percent of users report going online from home, and 53 percent report going online from work. Taken together, 43 percent say they go online from work and home, 42 percent say they go online only from home and 11 percent report going online only from work. Among all users, 65 percent say they spend most of the time online from home.

privacy policy as *very* important, compared to 55 percent of those who rely on newspapers.

Users want to make sure that news sites fix their mistakes in a way that the average surfer can find. Nearly eight in ten users (79%) say that a prominently displayed page for corrections and clarifications is important, with 34 percent saying it is *very* important and 45 percent saying somewhat important.

Looking for those who are responsible for the content of news and information sites is next on the users' list. Sixty-seven percent say it is important that the sites have a page that lists the editor and those responsible for the site, a page much like a print publication's masthead. And 75 percent want the site to list the email address of the editor or others responsible for the site, so that users can reach them if they choose to do so. Once again for these views, most demographic groups among users share these positions with roughly equal intensity.

And finally, most users say that disclosing the financial relationships a news site has with other businesses is significant. Sixty-four percent say it is important, with 22 percent calling it *very* important and 42 percent somewhat important. Thirty-four percent say it is not important. The relatively small group who rely on newspapers for their news are more likely to say it is important than those who rely on television (73% v. 62%). *(For a discussion of user views of the financial relationships that search engines sometimes have, see the section, The Special Case of Search Engines, page 17.)*

Few Group Differences On News Site Issues

Internet users' views of what is important on news and information sites are strong and consistent. One measure of that consistency is how little variation exists in attitudes among the groups of users who visit various types of sites. For example, there is no statistically significant difference in the demands for a privacy policy among those who visit news sites (64%), entertainment sites (62%) and sports sites (62%). In similar fashion, there are no significant differences among these groups on the necessity of email addresses for editors, a page listing people responsible for content, a page for corrections, and the financial relationships the sites has with others. Only on one factor are there slight differences among these groups: more users of news sites (61%) than sports sites (55%) believe it is *very* important to clearly establish the distinction between content and advertising.

Table 5: Important Factors in Choosing News Sites, By Sites Used (% Saying Very Important Among Those Visiting Each Type of Site)			
	VISIT NEWS SITES	VISIT ENTERTAINMENT SITES	VISIT SPORTS SITES
The site's privacy policy	64	62	62
Advertising is clearly labeled as advertising and distinguished from news and information on the site	61	57	55
Email addresses for the editor or people responsible for the content on the site	37	36	34
A prominently displayed page for corrections and clarifications	35	34	32
A page that lists the editor or people responsible for the content on the site, like the masthead on a print publication	32	29	29
The financial relationships the site has with other sites or other businesses	22	20	23
<i>Number of cases in group</i>	<i>n=1,104</i>	<i>n=778</i>	<i>n=601</i>
The results from each group based on type of site were tested for statistical significance against the results from each of the other groups. For each row, numbers in bold are significantly greater than the numbers in <i>italics</i> at a 95% confidence level. Numbers in normal font are not significantly different from any other numbers on a row.			

The Special Case of Search Engines

Search engines provide a special case of Web sites, for they are often the switching stations that users take to move from one site to another, particularly when the user is unsure of where to surf next.

Search engine sites are *very* frequently visited, with nine in ten users overall (87%) saying that they have done so recently. Many novices (those who have been online less than six months) report using such sites (73%), while almost all of those who have been online at least three years (91%) do so.

Despite so many people using search engines and despite their importance online, most users express ignorance of the practice of many of these engines taking fees to list some sites more prominently than others in their search results. Only four in ten (39%) Internet users have heard of this practice and only 43 percent of those who use the search engines. The more experienced users (those online three years or more) show more awareness of this practice (46%) than those online for six months or less (24%).

After being told that some search engines take these fees, a solid majority (80%) say it is important for search engines to tell users about their fee deals, including 44 percent who say it is *very* important. There is no difference between the novice users (79% important) and the most experienced users (77%). Those who use search engines feel strongly as well (81% important). And the strength of this opinion is evident among those who visit news sites (80%) as well as those who frequent e-commerce sites (79%).¹¹

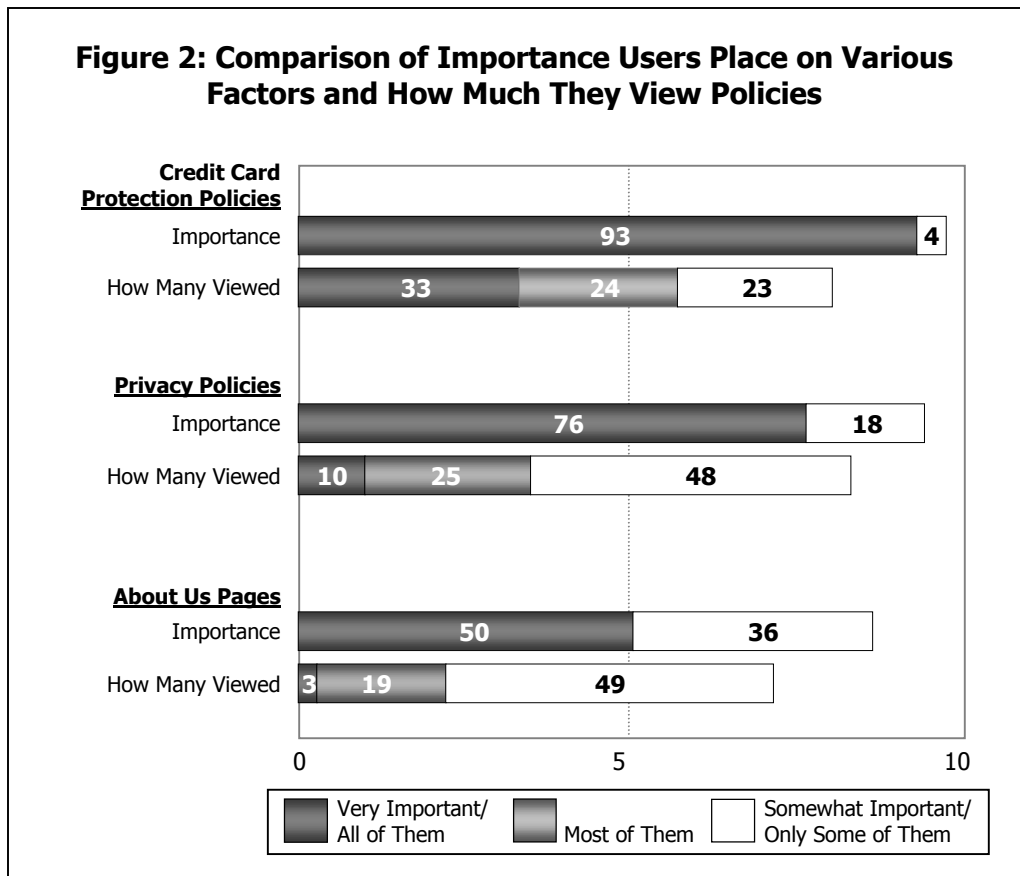
The combination of users' low level of knowledge of search engine practices and their strong demand that search engines should come clean leaves users splintered about how to react. About one in three (30%) say they are less likely to use a search engine if they know it is taking money from other sites for higher placement in the results. A small minority (10%) would be more likely to use the site if it revealed the financial arrangements. Given the complicated situation, a majority (56%) say it would make no difference to them.

¹¹ The attitudes of the groups mentioned in this paragraph are not statistically different from one another.

Credibility and Behavior Online

Internet users say they want privacy policies, credit card protection policies, and access to important facts about who runs a site. But do users actually look at the information that sites do provide?

For many users, the answer is yes, as far as reading the policies that are designed to protect their credit card information. Almost six in ten (57%) read all or most of these policies. Another two in ten (23%) read some of the policies. Eighteen percent say they read none of the policies. Predictably, those who use a credit card on the Internet read these policies more often (91% at least some of the time) than those who don't use a credit card online (59%). However, at least three in ten (33%) of those who use their credit cards online do not examine most of the policies that protect them. Those who have been online at least three years read at least some of these policies (85%), more than those online for six months or less (57%).



About as many users report reading privacy pages of sites (83%) as report reading credit card policy pages (80%). But users read the privacy policies much less *frequently* than they read credit card protection policies. For example, only three in ten users (35%) read all or most of privacy policies, compared with the 57 percent who read all or most credit card policies. Those who have been online at least three years read some of these policies more than those online for six months or less (87% v. 66%). Those who use a credit card online read privacy pages somewhat more than those who don't use their credit card in that venue (87% v. 75%).

Fewer of those online read "About Us" pages that usually list who owns and runs a site. About seven in ten (71%) say they have read at least some of these pages, but some users are more conscientious about this than others. Only two in ten (22%) say they read all or most of these, while half (49%) look at only some of them. Twenty-eight percent report not reading such pages. More of those who have been online at least three years read at least some of these pages (75%), compared with those online for six months or less (58%).

Checking Policy Pages By Usage of Different Sites

Different types of sites require varying levels of information from their users. For example, a financial site might ask for a substantial amount of detail about a person's finances to open a brokerage account. A news and information site might only ask for a user's email address to send a newsletter. These varying information demands by sites could create varying attitudes among those who use the sites and varying behaviors by the users of information available on the sites.

Looking at the broad groups of those who visit e-commerce sites and those who do not, there are some differences in behavior. For example, those who go to e-commerce sites read at least some privacy policies more than those who do not visit such sites (86% v. 72%). Visitors to news sites (77%) and e-commerce sites (76%) read at least some "About Us" pages more than those who don't go on news sites (57%) or e-commerce sites (58%).

Such broad-brush differences are not the case when looking at those who report visiting various types of sites within the broad e-commerce and news groupings. Those who visit various types of sites do not report varying patterns of readership of credit card policies, for example. As the table (*Table 6: Viewing Web Site Policies, Information By Site Usage*, page 20) shows, those who visit health, finance, travel, and consumer advice sites as well as those who visit

news, entertainment, and sports sites all look at credit protection policies at roughly the same rate. Just over one-third of the users of each type of site report reading all of the policies (39% for health sites, for example). And about a quarter report reading most of the policies (25% for health site users).

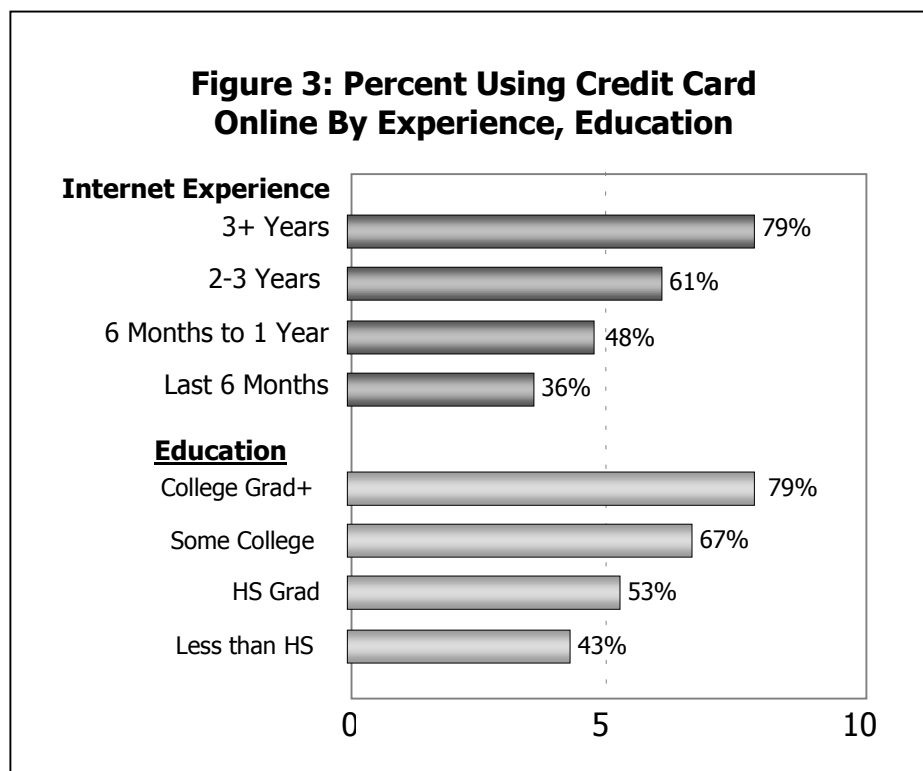
Similarly, the percentages among each group are in the same range for reading privacy policies, with some minor variations. For example, users of consumer advice sites are slightly more likely to look at an "About Us" page than those who visit travel sites (25% most of the pages v. 20%), and those who visit travel sites are more likely to ignore those pages (25%) than those who visit health (21%), finance (21%), or consumer advice (17%) sites.

	HEALTH	FINANCE	TRAVEL	CONSUMER ADVICE	NEWS	ENTER- TAINMENT	SPORTS
Credit Card Protection Policies							
All	39	35	35	35	35	34	35
Most	25	27	26	28	25	26	26
Some	21	25	25	24	24	23	24
None	13	12	13	12	15	16	15
Privacy Policies							
All	12	10	10	10	11	10	10
Most	27	27	27	28	25	26	26
Some	51	52	49	52	50	50	50
None	<i>10</i>	11	14	<i>10</i>	14	14	14
About Us Pages							
All	4	3	4	3	4	4	4
Most	22	21	20	25	22	21	22
Some	52	55	51	56	51	53	52
None	<i>21</i>	<i>21</i>	25	<i>17</i>	23	23	23
<i>Number of cases in group</i>	<i>n=681</i>	<i>n=718</i>	<i>n=939</i>	<i>n=565</i>	<i>n=1,104</i>	<i>n=778</i>	<i>n=601</i>
The results from each group based on type of site were tested for statistical significance against the results from the other groups. For each row, numbers in bold are significantly greater than the numbers in <i>italics</i> at a 95% confidence level. Numbers in normal font are not significantly different from other numbers on a row. The Health, Finance, Travel and Consumer Advice subgroups were tested against each other. The News, Entertainment and Sports subgroups were tested against each other.							

Credit Card Use, Personal Information Online

Credit cards are widely used online, but users are not feeling particularly secure as they do so.

Nearly two-thirds of users (65%) have used their credit card online, but 35 percent have not done so. This is one dimension where there are major differences among groups. Those who have been online more than three years are much more likely to have used their card online (79%), compared to those online six months or less (36%). Those users who have attended or graduated from college use their cards more freely than those who never attended college (73% v. 51%). About twice as many e-commerce visitors (75%) use their card online as opposed to those who don't visit these sites (37%). But the use of credit cards is not related in simple ways to other attitudes. For example, the difference in credit card use between those who trust e-commerce sites (77%) and those who do not trust such sites (63%) is real but not large. The highest reported rates of credit card use come from AT&T subscribers (84%) and Earthlink subscribers (83%). Slightly fewer AOL subscribers (69%) have used their credit card online. Sixty-five percent of MSN users report using their credit card on the Web.¹²



¹² There is not statistically significant difference between the percentage of AOL users and MSN users on this question.

Those who use a credit card on the Internet do not feel secure. More than six in ten (65%) worry a lot or somewhat that someone might obtain their credit card number and misuse that information. This worry is particularly acute among people who have not attended college (74%) compared to those who have attended or graduated from college (61%). Those who have been online more than three years show less concern (61%) than those who have been online for six months or less (75%). Visitors to e-commerce sites worry about this to a similar degree as those who don't (64% v. 69%).

Most Internet users are not averse to giving their email address, name, or other personal information to a Web site in order to access it. More than seven in ten (73%) have done this. Like credit card use, willingness to provide personal information differs strongly by Internet experience. Most of the experienced users (those online at least three years) have given out this type of information (84%) while just under half (47%) of those online for six months or less have done the same. People who don't go on e-commerce sites show more reluctance to give personal information (only 50% have done so) compared to those who visit these sites (81% have done so).

A major mechanism for tracking users online – and major concern for privacy advocates – is the use of browser “cookies.” These are small files placed by a Web site on a computer's disk drive. These allow the site to recognize when a user comes back to the site another time and to store information about what that user did on the site. Sites that require user names and passwords sometimes store that information in the cookies as well.

Online users split on their knowledge of cookies: about half (49%) know what they are and half (49%) do not. A strong relationship exists between the knowledge of cookies and a user's experience online. A solid majority (63%) of those online for three or more years have heard of cookies, compared to 23 percent of the most novice users (online six months or less). AOL subscribers are the least likely to know what a cookie is (44%), while AT&T users (65%) and Earthlink users (62%) are the most likely to know. A total of 54 percent of MSN users know what a cookie is.

Of those who know what an Internet cookie is, seven in ten (69%) have their browsers set to accept the cookies. More of those online three years or more (72%) have their browsers set to accept cookies than those online for six months or less (56%). Trust also plays a role in this difference. Those who trust

e-commerce sites (74%) are more likely to accept cookies than those who show less trust (66%). In contrast to the pattern by ISP on knowing about cookies, those who subscribe to MSN are the least likely to have their browsers set to accept cookies. Only 54 percent of the knowledgeable MSN users say their browsers accept cookies, compared with 71 percent of the knowledgeable AOL users, and 75 percent each of the knowledgeable AT&T and Earthlink users.

Those who know what a cookie is and have cookies enabled on their browser have a significantly different view on privacy and credit card protection than those who don't have them enabled or do not know about cookies. More than eight in ten (84%) of those who have cookies enabled use a credit card online compared to slightly more than half (55%) of those who don't allow cookies. More than nine in ten (90%) have provided personal information to Web sites, while just 65% of those who don't have cookies enabled have done the same. Those with cookies enabled are more likely to look at all of credit card protection policies compared with those whose browsers do not accept cookies (40% vs. 30%). The difference on privacy policies is not as great, but slightly more of those who have cookies enabled look at some of these policies compared with those not using cookies (53% vs. 46%).

Table 7: Online Behavior By Knowledge, Use of Browser Cookies		
	HAVE ENABLED	NOT ENABLED/ DON'T KNOW
Use a Credit Card Online		
Yes	84	<i>55</i>
No	<i>15</i>	44
Provide Personal Information		
Yes	90	<i>65</i>
No	<i>10</i>	35
Read Credit Card Protection Policies		
All	40	<i>30</i>
Most	28	<i>22</i>
Some	<i>23</i>	<i>23</i>
None	<i>9</i>	23
Read Privacy Policies		
All	<i>11</i>	<i>10</i>
Most	<i>27</i>	<i>24</i>
Some	53	<i>46</i>
None	<i>9</i>	20
The results from each group based on use of cookies were tested for statistical significance against the results from the other group. For each row, numbers in bold are significantly greater than the numbers in <i>italics</i> at a 95% confidence level. Numbers in normal font are not significantly different from any other number on a row.		

Some Differences By Type of Sites

Similar percentages of those who use health, finance, travel, and consumer advice sites use a credit card online and provide personal information to Web sites. In the same manner, there is no variation among those who use different types of news sites (news, entertainment and sports) in terms of using a credit card online and giving personal information to sites. More people who visit finance (42%) and consumer advice (43%) sites have cookies enabled on their computer than those who visit travel sites (36%). No difference exists on this measure among people who visit news, entertainment, and sports sites.

Table 8: Online Behavior, Use of Cookies By Site Usage

	HEALTH	FINANCE	TRAVEL	CONSUMER ADVICE	NEWS	ENTER- TAINMENT	SPORTS
Use a Credit Card Online							
Yes	72	76	74	72	68	66	69
No	28	23	25	27	31	34	31
Provided Personal Information							
Yes	79	83	79	82	78	79	75
No	20	17	21	18	21	21	24
Have Cookies Enabled							
Yes	41	42	<i>36</i>	43	39	38	41
No/Don't Know	59	<i>58</i>	64	<i>57</i>	61	62	59
<i>Number of cases in group</i>	<i>n=681</i>	<i>n=718</i>	<i>n=939</i>	<i>n=565</i>	<i>n=1,104</i>	<i>n=778</i>	<i>n=601</i>
The results from each group based on type of site were tested for statistical significance against the results from the other groups. For each row, numbers in bold are significantly greater than the numbers in <i>italics</i> at a 95% confidence level. Numbers in normal font are not significantly different from other numbers on a row. The Health, Finance, Travel and Consumer Advice subgroups were tested against each other. The News, Entertainment and Sports subgroups were tested against each other.							

Still Looking For Credibility

Internet users are concerned as they confront the vast array of sites on the World Wide Web. The Consumer WebWatch survey finds few users say they can trust the Web sites that have products for sale or sites that offer advice about products and services.

The users' low ratings of Web site credibility do not stop them from searching out the best and most reputable sites. Indeed, credibility is the key. Users are demanding Web sites that offer credible information backed up by clear identification of the sources of that information.

From the veteran UNIX guru hands to the new AOL subscriber, users want the Web sites they visit to provide clear guideposts to allow them to judge the site's credibility. For example, users want to know who runs the site and how to reach those people.

In the eyes of consumers, all sites are not equal. For sites where consumers can spend money, expectations are just about as high as they can be for security, responsiveness and privacy. For news and information sites, users are also demanding clear lines between news and advertising. For search engines, there is a particular credibility problem. Users are largely unaware that search engines are often being paid to push other sites in their search results. And users demand to be told.

The Internet is a part of everyday life in America. Users are looking for Web sites to adhere to practices that will make the new online institutions as credible as the offline institutions that Americans rely on each day.

APPENDICES

Appendix: Survey Methodology Report

Summary

The survey is based on telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 1,500 adult Internet users living in continental United States telephone households. The interviews were conducted in English by SRBI of New York, NY, from December 20, 2001 to January 7, 2002. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is $\pm 3\%$.

Design and Data Collection Procedures

Sample Design

The sample was designed to generalize to the U.S. adult population of Internet users. The telephone sample was provided by Survey Sampling, Inc. (SSI) according to PSRA specifications. The sample was drawn using standard list-assisted random digit dialing (RDD) methodology. Every active block of telephone numbers (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained one or more residential directory listings is equally likely to be selected; after selection two more digits are added randomly to complete the number. This method guarantees coverage of every assigned phone number regardless of whether that number is directory listed, purposely unlisted, or too new to be listed. After selection, the numbers are compared against business directories and matching numbers are purged.

Contact Procedures

Interviews were conducted during the period December 20, 2001 to January 7, 2002. As many as 10 attempts were made to contact every sampled telephone number. Sample was released for interviewing in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger sample. Using replicates to control the release of sample ensures that complete call procedures are followed for the entire sample. It also ensures that the geographic distribution of numbers called is appropriate.

Calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chance of making contact with potential respondents. Each household received at least one daytime call in an attempt to find someone at home. In each contacted household, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest male currently at home. If no male was available, interviewers asked to speak with the oldest female at home. This systematic respondent selection technique has been shown to produce samples that closely mirror the population in terms of age and gender.

Internet users were identified at the beginning of the interviews. For weighting purposes, respondents who were not Internet users were asked the demographic questions only.

Weighting and Analysis

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to compensate for patterns of nonresponse that might bias results. The entire interviewed sample of all adults (both Internet users and non-users) was weighted to match national parameters for sex, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and region (U.S. Census definitions). These parameters came from a special analysis of the March 2001 Current Population Survey (CPS) that included all households in the continental United States that had a telephone. After the entire sample was weighted to national parameters, the non-Internet users were purged from the data.

Weighting was accomplished using Sample Balancing, a special iterative sample weighting program that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables using a statistical technique called the *Deming Algorithm*. Finally, weights were *trimmed* to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results. The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the national population.

Effects of Sample Design on Statistical Inference

Post-data collection statistical adjustments require analysis procedures that reflect departures from simple random sampling. PSRA calculates the effects of these design features so that an appropriate adjustment can be incorporated into tests of statistical significance when using these data. The so-called "design effect" or *deff* represents the loss in statistical efficiency that results from a disproportional sample design and systematic non-response. PSRA calculates the composite design effect for a sample of size n , with each case having a weight, w_i as:

$$deff = \frac{n \sum_{i=1}^n w_i^2}{\left(\sum_{i=1}^n w_i \right)^2} \quad \text{formula 1}$$

In a wide range of situations, the adjusted *standard error* of a statistic should be calculated by multiplying the usual formula by the square root of the design effect (\sqrt{deff}). Thus, the formula for computing the 95% confidence interval around a percentage is:

$$\hat{p} \pm \left(\sqrt{deff} \times 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{n}} \right) \quad \text{formula 2}$$

where \hat{p} is the sample estimate and n is the unweighted number of sample cases in the group being considered.

The survey's *margin of error* is the largest 95% confidence interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample—one around 50%. For example, the margin of error for the entire sample of Internet users is $\pm 3\%$. This means that in 95 out of every 100 samples drawn using the same methodology, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than three percentage points away from their true values in the population. It is important to remember that sampling fluctuations are only one possible source of error in a survey estimate. Other sources, such as respondent selection bias, questionnaire wording and reporting inaccuracy, may contribute additional error of greater or lesser magnitude.

Response Rate

Table 1 reports the disposition of all sampled telephone numbers ever dialed from the original telephone number sample. The *response rate* estimates the fraction of all eligible respondents in the sample that were ultimately interviewed. The response rate for this survey is calculated by taking the product of three component rates:¹³

Contact rate – the proportion of working numbers where a request for interview was made – of 64 percent¹⁴;

Cooperation rate – the proportion of contacted numbers where a consent for interview was at least initially obtained, versus those refused – of 62 percent; and

Completion rate – the proportion of initially cooperating and eligible interviews that were completed – of 99 percent.

Thus, the response rate for this survey was 40 percent.

¹³ PSRA's disposition codes and rate formulas are consistent with standards of the American Association for Public Opinion Research.

¹⁴ We assume that 75 percent of cases that result in a constant disposition of "No answer" over 10 or more attempts are actually not working numbers.

Table 1: Final Disposition Report

Total Numbers dialed	12,125		
Called business	1,195		
Computer fax	559		
Other not-working	1,652		
Additional projected NW	<u>1,449</u>		
Working numbers	7,270	60.0%	Working Rate
No answer	431		
Busy	52		
Answering machine	359		
Callbacks	1,336		
Other non-contacts	<u>413</u>		
Contacted numbers	4,679	64.4%	Contact Rate
Initial Refusals	370		
Second Refusals	<u>1,429</u>		
Cooperating numbers	2,880	61.6%	Cooperation Rate
Non-Internet HH	1,042		
No adult in HH	31		
Language barrier	<u>304</u>		
Eligible numbers	1,503	52.2%	Eligibility Rate
Interrupted	<u>3</u>		
Completes	1,500	99.8%	Completion Rate
		39.5%	Response Rate

Appendix: Final Topline Results

Consumers Union Web Credibility Project

January 2002

January 17, 2002
 Princeton Survey Research Associates
 for Consumers Union Web Credibility Project

Final results based on N=1500 online users

Interview dates: December 20, 2001 – January 7, 2002

Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on the full sample of Internet users

Q1 Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today?¹⁵

[Results based on all adults, n=2,542]

	<u>SATISFIED</u>	<u>DIS-SATISFIED</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW/REFUSED</u>
Current	59	27	14
Oct 2001	60	31	9
August 2001	44	45	10
Feb 2001	53	38	10

Q2 In general, where do you get MOST of your news, weather, and sports — from television, from newspapers or magazines, from the Internet, or from radio?

[Results based on all adults, n=2,542]

	<u>TELEVISION</u>	<u>NEWS-PAPERS OR MAGAZINES</u>	<u>INTERNET</u>	<u>RADIO</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW/REFUSED</u>
Current	67	15	5	10	1	3
Feb 2001 ¹⁶	66	18	8	6	1	1

¹⁵ The past results are from surveys for the Pew Internet and American Life Project. The interviewing dates and sample sizes for the polls were: October 2001, October 2–7, 2001, n=692; August 2001, August 13 – September 10, 2001, n=2,247; and February 2001, February 1 – March 1, 2001, n=2,096.

¹⁶ Results from a survey for the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, February 14–19, 2001, n=1,513, with the wording “How have you been getting most of your news about national and international issues...from television, from newspapers, from radio, from magazines, or from the Internet?”

Q3 Do you use a computer at your workplace..., at school..., at home..., or anywhere else ... on at least an occasional basis?¹⁷

[Results based on all adults, n=2,542]

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
Current	65	34	*
Aug 2001	66	34	0
Feb 2001	65	35	0

Q4 Do you ever go online to access the Internet or World Wide Web or to send and receive email?¹⁸

[Results based on all adults, n=2,542]

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
Current	57	43	*
Sept 2001	55	45	0
Feb 2001	53	47	*

All questions from Q5 – Q26 are based on Internet users [N = 1500] unless otherwise noted.

Q5 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?¹⁹

	MOST CAN BE TRUSTED	CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL	IT DEPENDS	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
Current	42	51	5	2
May-June 2000	33	60	4	2

¹⁷ The past results are from surveys for the Pew Internet and American Life Project. The interviewing dates and sample sizes for the polls were: August 2001, August 13 – September 10, 2001, n=2,247; and February 2001, February 1 – March 1, 2001, n=2,096.

¹⁸ The past results are from surveys for the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, September 2001, September 12–19, 2001, n=2,039; and from polls for the Pew Internet and American Life Project, February 2001, February 1 – March 1, 2001, n=2,096.

¹⁹ The past results are a survey for the Pew Internet and American Life Project, May 19 – June 21, 2000, n=1,017.

Q6 Now I'm going to ask you about various organizations and types of organizations. How much of the time do you think you can trust *[Insert Item. Read And Rotate]* to provide information that is accurate and not misleading...just about always, most of the time, only some of the time or almost never?

	<u>JUST ABOUT ALWAYS</u>	<u>MOST OF THE TIME</u>	<u>ONLY SOME OF THE TIME</u>	<u>ALMOST NEVER/ NEVER</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED</u>
a. The federal government in Washington	7	40	39	12	2
b. Large corporations	3	29	52	14	3
c. Charities and other nonprofit organizations	8	46	38	7	1
d. Small businesses	9	59	28	3	2
e. Newspapers and television news	10	48	36	5	1
f. Financial companies such as banks, insurance companies and, stock brokers	10	45	37	7	1
g. Health care companies	5	34	44	14	3
h. Web sites that offer products or services for sale	3	26	50	14	6
i. Web sites that provide advice to consumers about which products or services to buy	4	29	50	9	8

Q7 As I read a list, please tell me if you have done any of the following in the past several months when you have gone online. (First/Next) In the past several months, have you visited... [*Insert Item. Read And Rotate*]

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
a. A news Web site	73	27	*
b. An entertainment Web site	53	46	*
c. A sports Web site	40	60	*
d. A Web site that offers products or services for sale	75	25	*
e. The Web site of a business or corporation	68	31	*
f. The Web site of a non-profit, such as a charity, school or interest group	41	58	1
g. A health or medical Web site	44	55	*
h. A website devoted to finances, such as stocks, banking or insurance	47	53	*
i. A travel-related Web site	62	38	*
j. A Web site that provides advice to consumers about which products or services to buy	37	63	*
k. Subscription Web sites	18	81	1

Q8. In the past several months, have you gone online [*Insert Item*]?

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
a. From home	85	15	0
b. From work	53	46	*
c. From school	16	84	*
d. From another location	27	73	*

Q8Q9 Of the places you have gone online in the past several months, where would you say you spend the most time online?²⁰

%	65	At home
	23	At work
	3	At school
	5	At another location
	3	Home/work equally
	1	Don't know/Refused

Q10 About how often do you go online ...several times a day, once a day, several times a week, or once a week or less?

%	35	Several times a day
	23	About once a day
	24	Several times a week
	18	Once a week or less
	*	Never
	*	Don't know/Refused

Q11 When did you first start going online: was it within the last six months, a year ago, two or three years ago, or more than three years ago?

%	7	Within the last six months
	14	A year ago
	34	Two or three years ago
	44	More than three years ago
	*	Don't know/Refused

Q12 Have you ever provided your email address, name, or other personal information to a Web site in order to access the site, order a product or receive a newsletter?²¹

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
Current	73	26	*
May-June 2000	54	45	1

²⁰ These results are based on the responses to both questions Q8 and Q9. People who answered yes to only one of the four items in Q8 were not asked Q9. But they are included in the results based on the sole place they say the go online.

²¹ The May-June 2000 results are from a survey for the Pew Internet and American Life Project, May 19 – June 21, 2000, n=1,017 and the question wording was, “Have you ever provided your real email address, your real name, or other personal information at a Web site in order to use the site?”

Q13 Thinking about the various kinds of Web sites you have visited online, here are some reasons given for going to particular sites. For each, I'd like to know how important this is for you when you decide to visit a Web site. First, *[Insert item. Rotate]* how important is this to you about a Web site... very important, somewhat important, not very important or not important at all?

	<u>VERY IMPORTANT</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT</u>	<u>NOT TOO IMPORTANT</u>	<u>NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED</u>
a. Being able to trust the information on the Web site	80	14	3	1	1
b. Knowing the Web site is updated frequently with new information	65	28	4	2	*
c. Knowing who owns the Web site	32	33	22	12	1
d. The site is easy to navigate and to find what you want	80	16	2	1	1
e. Being able find out the important facts about the Web site.	50	36	8	4	2
f. Being able to easily identify the sources of information on the site	68	25	4	2	1
g. What businesses and organizations financially support the site	24	37	27	11	2
h. The site displays awards and certificates from other groups	9	30	36	23	2
i. The site displays seals of approval from other groups	19	41	26	12	2

Q14 Now thinking **specifically** about news and information Web sites, here is a short list of information and features that are available on some sites. For each, I'd like to know how important it is to you that this information be on the site and easy to find. First, *[Insert Item]* how important that this information be available on the site ... very important, somewhat important, not very important or not important at all?

	<u>VERY IMPORTANT</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT</u>	<u>NOT TOO IMPORTANT</u>	<u>NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED</u>
a. A page that lists the editor or people responsible for the content on the site, like the masthead on a print publication	30	37	22	10	1
b. Email addresses for the editor or people responsible for the content on the site	36	39	16	7	1
c. A prominently displayed page for corrections and clarifications	34	45	13	6	1
d. The site's privacy policy	65	22	8	4	1
e. The financial relationships the site has with other sites or other businesses, if any	22	42	24	10	1
f. Advertising is clearly labeled as advertising and distinguished from news and information on the site	59	25	10	4	1

Q15 Now thinking **specifically** about Web sites where you can spend money – whether to buy a product, such as a book or a toy, or to make a travel reservation or spend money in other ways. For each, I'd like to know how important it is to you that this information be on the site and easy to find. First, *[Insert Item]* how important that this information be available on the Web site?

	<u>VERY IMPORTANT</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT</u>	<u>NOT TOO IMPORTANT</u>	<u>NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED</u>
a. The email address, street address or telephone number where you can reach the site's staff about any problems	81	14	2	2	1
b. A statement of the site's policies for returning unwanted items or canceling reservations	88	8	1	2	1
c. The site's privacy policy	76	18	4	2	1
d. A statement of how the site will use your name, address, credit card number and other personal information you provide	93	4	1	1	1
e. A statement of all fees that you will be charged for using the site, including shipping costs, transaction fees and handling fees	95	3	*	1	1
f. An explanation of when you can expect delivery of your products or confirmation of your reservations	89	9	1	1	1

Q16 Have you ever used your credit card to buy something on the Internet?²²

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
Current	65	35	*
May-June 2000	48	52	*

Q17 When you do this, how much, if at all, do you worry that someone else might get your credit card number — a lot, some, not very much, or not at all?²³

Based on Internet users who have used their credit card to buy something on the Internet [N = 1005]

	A LOT	SOME	NOT VERY MUCH	NOT AT ALL	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
Current	25	40	25	10	*
May-June 2000	18	36	28	18	0

Q18 Thinking now about all the Web sites you visit, on how many of the Web sites have you ever gone to the "about us" pages, that is pages about who runs the site, who owns the site, and so on ...all of them, most of them, only some of them, or none?

%	3	All of them
	19	Most of them
	49	Only some
	28	None
	1	Don't know/Refused

Q19 Again thinking now about all the Web sites you visit, how many of the Web sites' privacy policies have you read ... all of them, most of them, only some of them, or none?

%	10	All of them
	25	Most of them
	48	Only some
	17	None
	1	Don't know/Refused

²²The May-June 2000 results are from a survey for the Pew Internet and American Life Project, May 19 – June 21, 2000, n=1,017.

²³ The May-June 2000 results are from a survey for the Pew Internet and American Life Project, May 19 – June 21, 2000, with a sample size of 489 Internet users who used their credit card online.

Q20 And of all the Web sites you visit that sell products or services, how many of the Web sites' policies on protecting your credit card information have you read ... all of them, most of them, only some of them, or none?

%	33	All of them
	24	Most of them
	23	Only some
	18	None
	1	Don't know/Refused

Q21 Now a few questions about some Internet topics that sometimes come up. Not everyone will have heard about these. Do you happen to know what an Internet "cookie" is?²⁴

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
Current	49	49	2
May-June 2000	43	56	1

Q22 Is your browser set to accept cookies, or not?²⁵

Based on Internet users who know what an Internet "cookie" is [N = 755]

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
Current	69	22	9
May-June 2000	65	24	11

Q23 Have you ever used an online search engine to help you find information on the Web?²⁶

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
Current	87	12	1
Aug 2001	82	17	*

²⁴ The May-June 2000 results are from a survey for the Pew Internet and American Life Project, May 19 – June 21, 2000, n=1,017.

²⁵ The May-June 2000 results are from a survey for the Pew Internet and American Life Project, May 19 – June 21, 2000, n=434 Internet users who know what "cookies" are.

²⁶ The August 2001 results are from a survey for the Pew Internet and American Life Project, August 13 – September 10, 2001, n=2,247.

Q24 Have you heard or read about search engines being paid fees to list some sites more prominently than others in their search results?

%	39	Yes
	60	No
	1	Don't know/Refused

Q25 If a search engine is being paid to list other sites more prominently, how important is it to you that the search engine tells you about this policy in the search results or an easy-to-find page on the site. Would you say it is very important, somewhat important, not very important or not important at all?

%	44	Very important
	36	Somewhat important
	11	Not too important
	7	Not important at all
	2	Don't know/Refused

Q26 If a search engine clearly tells you in the search results that some sites are displayed prominently because they paid, would you be more likely to use that search engine, less likely to use it or would it not make any difference?

%	10	More likely
	30	Less likely
	56	No difference
	4	Don't know/Refused

Appendix: Profile of the Online Population

This survey confirms the status of the Internet as a mainstream part of the Americans' every day lives. Here are the relative sizes of various demographic groups in the survey, for all those interviewed, for Internet users and for non-users. These numbers are similar to those found in other surveys. For specifics on the weighting of this data, which has an impact on these demographic numbers, please see the **Appendix: Survey Methodology Report**.

	% All Adults	% Internet Users	% Non Users
Sex			
Male	48	51	44
Female	52	49	56
Age			
18-29	20	27	12
30-49	40	49	29
50-64	20	18	22
65+	16	4	31
Education			
Less than HS	14	6	27
HS Graduate	32	26	40
Some College/Vocational	26	32	18
College Graduate	15	20	7
Post Graduate	9	14	3
Race			
White, Non-Hispanic	74	78	69
Black, Non-Hispanic	11	8	15
Hispanic	10	10	11
Other	5	4	5
Income			
<\$30,000	28	20	39
\$30,000-\$49,999	20	23	15
\$50,000-\$74,999	12	17	6
\$75,000+	16	24	5
Internet Experience			
Within the last six months		7	
A year ago		14	
Two or three years ago		34	
More than three years ago		44	