

Who's getting hooked online?

Internet use survey reveals wide web of reasons for clicking on

As technology in the field advances, the Internet is exerting an increasingly profound impact upon the lives of the Chinese. According to the China Internet Network Information Centre, the number of Internet users in China had reached 68 million by the end of July this year. This has led to public concern, and some of the major questions asked involved how the Internet will affect children's studies, lives and health. Three specific Internet user surveys, one covering 12 cities around China, one focusing on adolescent Internet users and a case report covering five small cities, were released last week by the Centre for Studies in Social Development with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). China Daily staff reporter YU NAN shares some of the survey findings with readers.

The Internet has made life better. According to an Internet user survey by researchers from CASS, at least 25 per cent of urban adults in China have ventured online, and the majority of them said going online has improved their lives. This is one of the findings of a survey of 2,457 Internet users and 1,484 non-users between the ages of 17 and 60 in 12 cities in China.

The study, titled "2003 China 12 Cities: Internet Use and Impact Survey Report," has been recognized by some as one of the best guides to Internet use released in the country so far. An English version of the report will be published in New York in October.

During the survey, the researchers focused on the opinions and online habits of 3,941 respondents — both Internet users and non-users — who mirror the nation's ethnic, economic and geographic makeup.

The researchers found that while over 60 per cent of the surveyed Internet users said the Web helped them with their studies and jobs, 33.7 per cent said it made no difference. Only 4 per cent said their study and work habits deteriorated.

"The survey uncovered a surprising optimism about the effect of the Internet by the University of California in Los Angeles in 1999.

Access to information

Fifty-two per cent of respondents described the Internet as an important source of information, and over 40 per cent said they regard the Internet as a place for playing games, gathering and chatting.

Surfing and browsing websites, reading news and dealing with e-mail are the three major online activities of Chinese Internet users, followed by downloading and searching for music, chatting, playing games and downloading software.

The hours spent on the Internet have taken over the time formerly devoted to other media such as newspapers and magazines and television, Guo and his colleagues discovered.

"The biggest gap in media use

between users and non-users is the amount of television viewing time," said Guo. But users spend more time reading books and listening to music than non-users, he added.

Users reported an average of 12.47 hours online per week in the 12 cities this year.

Differences in television viewing become even more pronounced as Internet experience increases.

Users with five or more years of Internet experience spend 20 per cent less time watching television or videos, but twice as much listening to music, while the time used watching other media remains the same with Internet users with only one year's experience.

Guo and his partners also found that 53.7 per cent of users believed that most or all of the information online is reliable and accurate. Non-users reported much lower levels of belief in the reliability and accuracy of the information on the Internet.

The study also shows the Internet is a catalyst for creating and maintaining friendships and has shattered stereotypical images of an isolated, socially alienated Internet hermit surfing for friends online.

Internet users meet an average of six friends per week, and for non-users, 4.81. The number 6.71.

"We also find that people going online are more willing to call home than non-users," Guo said.

Most respondents agree that since starting to use the Internet they have increased the number of people with whom they stay in contact, especially with colleagues, friends and schoolmates. The function of communication with family and business remains less than 10 per cent.

The survey showed that China's three NASDAQ listed companies — Sina Corp, Sohu.com and Netease.com — are the three most popular Internet service providers in the country. Sina still holds the top position. Yahoo.com and 21cn.com are listed fourth and fifth respectively.

"The longer people use the Internet, the more positive

their evaluation of the Internet. And non-users show less trust of the Internet than users," Guo added.

As far as satisfaction with Internet service is concerned, users reveal that they are most satisfied with the amount of useful information available online. The second-highest level of satisfaction was with the ease of finding information online as well as with the ease in communicating with other people on the Internet.

Covering various cities

Guo and his colleagues began to conduct the annual survey in 2001 and focused on China's biggest cities — Beijing and Shanghai, and provincial capitals — Guangzhou, Chengdu and Changsha.

This year, they added to the list two more provincial capitals — Xi'an and Shenyang, plus five county-level cities — Nanhai in Guangdong Province, Yima in Henan Province, Jimo in Shandong Province, Guangshui in Hubei Province, and Fengnan in Hebei Province.

Guo said they added small cities to the survey because Internet users are no longer concentrated only in big or medium-sized cities, Guo said.

For instance, Nanhai, a small but rich city in Guangdong Province came up with the highest Internet-user rate — 35.6 per cent, followed by Shanghai, Guangzhou and Beijing, the latter three all rates over 30 per cent.

Shenyang, capital of Northeast China's Liaoning Province, has the lowest rate, 21 per cent.

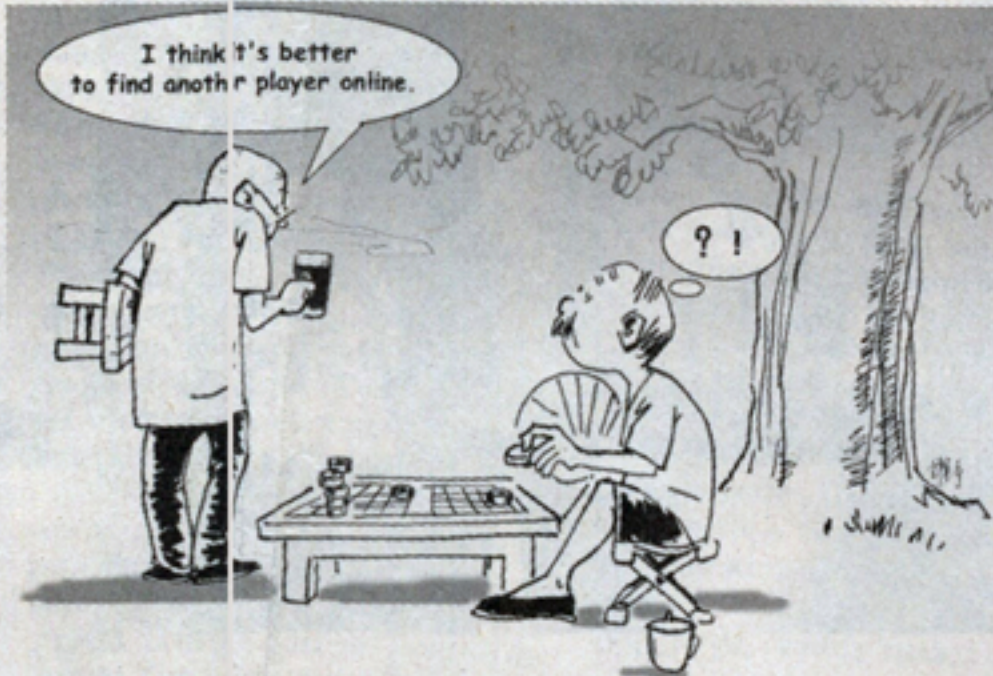
Besides geographic differences, factors like education, income, gender, age, careers and family are also influencing the use of the Internet, according to the survey. The 35-60 age group accounted for only 19 per cent.

Ninety per cent of those with college degrees or higher go online, while only 20 per cent of those with less than a middle school diploma are Internet users.

Discrepancy also appears between people with overseas relatives and those without. Only 56.2 per cent of the latter went online, 22 per cent less than of the former.

The relationship between personal income and the use of Internet was relatively hard to define, but the main trend remained the same — the higher the income, the higher the rate of going online, said Guo.

"About 80 per cent of those with monthly income over 1,500 yuan (US\$181) go online, although students without in-



Where do people go online?

Home, Internet bars, the office and school occupy the first four places among the choices of the Internet access locations. Less than 7 per cent of users use the cell phone as one of their Internet access.

"Because few libraries in China offer free Internet service, the rate of people going online in libraries is very low," said Guo.

Internet shopping remains at the bottom of the list of online activities. On 17 per cent of users have done so.

The users surveyed are least satisfied with the availability of goods and services on the Internet.

The types of products purchased online widely, ranging from books, computer equipment, sports, entertainment, travel arrangements, cosmetics and

than 10 per cent of such purchases.

The top two reasons for low purchase rate over the Internet are concerns about deception or credit card fraud.

Non-users express more worries than users.

The surveyed non-users cited a range of reasons for not going online. Among them, 56.1 per cent said they do not have a computer, while 41.2 per cent said they don't know how to use the Internet.

Lack of interest in the Internet is the third most cited issue. Two other relatively frequent responses were "I am too busy and have no time," and "too expensive."

A wide variety of other less-frequently cited reasons for not using the Internet include inadequacy of current computer, fear of technology, concerns about privacy and security, and worries about viruses.

Internet good for adolescents

Children in the big cities in China are growing up with the Internet as part of their daily lives.

Compared with other countries in the "World Internet Project" initiated by the University of California in Los Angeles in 1999, China exerts much more energy on exploring how going online affects adolescent's use of their time, schoolwork, personalities and friendships, said Bu Wei, a sociologist specializing in media impact on adolescents.

In the latest 70-page survey conducted under Bu's guidance, researchers found that teenagers are "amazingly mature in their judgement of choices related to the Internet."

"Parents are always worried about the bad effects the Internet may have on their children," Bu said. "However, children are not passive facing the Internet.

They will choose what to do online according to their personal needs, value and personalities."

The survey showed that the Internet is more like an equal partner rather than a "teacher." For instance, 31.7 per cent of teenage users said the Internet was a "friend,"

31.1 per cent said "assistant," 31.4 per cent said "game fellow," but only 5.8 per cent said it was a "teacher."

By the end of July this year, of the 68 million Internet users in China, users below the age of 18 made up 17.1 per cent, according to sources from the China Internet Network Information Centre.

Bu and her co-researcher Liu Xiaohong conducted their survey in two municipalities — Beijing and Shanghai, and five provincial capital cities — Guangzhou in Guangdong Province, Chengdu in Sichuan Province, Changsha in Hunan Province, Xining in Qinghai Province and Hohhot in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

Participating in the survey were 3,400 students in middle and primary schools, and there were 3,375 valid samples, according to Bu.

The 63.3 per cent juvenile Internet user rate is much higher than that of adults. In Guangzhou, the former is 73.3 per cent, while the latter is only 34.30 per cent.

Among the cities surveyed, Changsha has a 78.4 per cent Internet-user rate among teenagers, the highest of all cities surveyed.

Only in Xining was there a percentage below 50 — 37.1 per cent.

Over half of the teenage Internet users usually go online at home, and they prefer Internet bars, homes of relatives and friends, school and their parents' office in that descending order.

In Guangzhou, 91.5 per cent of juvenile users go online at home, the highest rate among the seven cities.

"That's because Guangzhou has the highest number of household computers and home Internet access," said Bu.

Over two-thirds of the juvenile users agreed or strongly agreed to the following statements: "I love the Internet," "The Internet makes my life more interesting," "It's easy to learn how to go online," "I feel very comfortable when going online."

The Internet is not perceived by most teenage users as having an effect on school grades. The time spent on homework and sports by teenage Internet users is more than that spent by non-users, but users spend less time sleeping.

Some 65 per cent of adolescent users said they went online for the sake of communication,

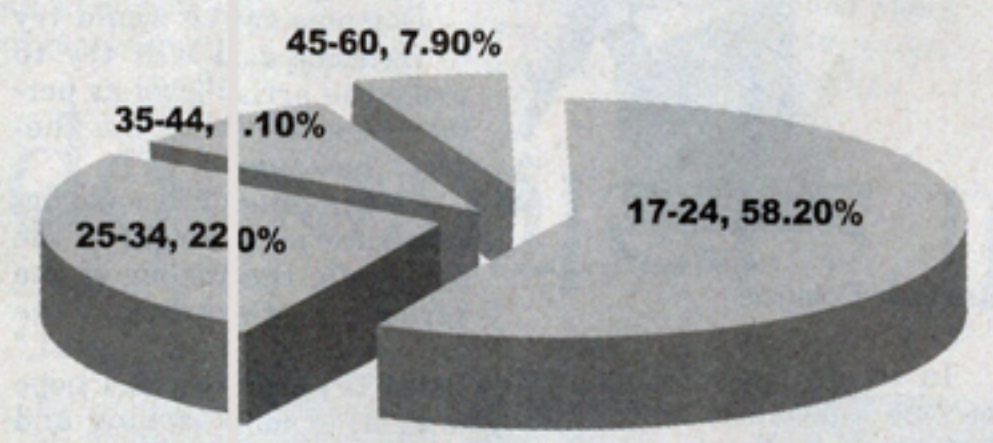
Internet users go: Internet use is highest among those aged between 17 and 34 years, who made up 81 per cent of the respondents, according to surveys by researchers from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

followed by motives such as school work, company, to shake off loneliness and for entertainment.

Even though respondents consistently said that online access is a powerful tool for information gathering, it ranks only fifth among the list of sources of information for teens. School, family, friend, books ranked first to fourth respectively.

"Teens with less television, read few newspapers, books and magazines and listen to less radio after starting to use the Internet, but they listen more to MP3 players and MP3 recorders," said Bu.

When asked choose between TV and the Internet, 68 per cent chose the Internet and 32 per cent



NOTES From staff reports

BEIJING

Fashion critics

The Chinese Fashion Designers Association set up a critics committee in Beijing early this month. Wang Qing, chairman of the Association, serves as its head.

The committee is composed of critics, columnists and photographers from 29 fashion magazines, newspapers and TV programmes.

Theme of the year

Star TV's Channel V revealed its theme of the year for 2003-04 — "signal campaign" — early this month in an open-air party in Beijing.

By promoting music and various signals as a world language, Channel V aims to build a boundless global village of music.

One of the most popular music channels covering the Asia-Pacific area, Channel V features a different theme for every year and all programmes and events for the year follow the theme.

Channel V, in its 10th year as an entertainment channel, has set up a "V Club" on the website www.vchinese.com.cn so that fans can communicate with the VJ of each programme online.

New agency

The giant Poly group, which includes the Poly Culture and Arts Co Ltd, Poly Theatre, Poly Art Museum, Poly Advertising Co Ltd, and Oriental Dragon Film Co Ltd, announced the launching of Poly Entertainment Agency last week in Beijing.

The first contracted artists include pop singers Mao Amin, Yin Yang and Zhang Meng, violinist Lu Siqing and actor Shao Bing.

On September 25, the company will release Mao's new album "Happiness" which has 11 songs including the hit title track.

The pop singer has not released new albums due to certain personal reasons for a long time. So both she and the new company hope it will be a hit CD and revive her position in Chinese pop scene.

WHAT'S ON

Acrobatic & Magic Shows
 Chaoyang Theatre specializes in Acrobatics by top acrobatic artists from all over the country.
 Time: 7:15-8:30 pm, nightly
Magic Shows
 Time: 6:00-7:00 pm; 7:30-8:30 pm, nightly
 Venue: Chaoyang Theatre, 36 Dongsanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang District, Beijing
 Telephone: 6507-2421, 6507-1818

EXHIBITION

Group show: The Wanfung Art Gallery is holding a group exhibition of paintings.

On display are at least 100 works by more than 20 young, middle-aged and veteran artists. Among them are the masters of Chinese ink painting Qi Baishi and Zhang Daqian; specialists in Chinese ink figure painting Hu Yongkai, Wang Mingming, Liang Yan

and Shen Daohong; Chinese ink landscape painters Du Yingqiang, Feng Linzhang and Liu Maoshan; bird and flower painters Feng Dazhong, Lin Decai and Liu Jibiao; realist watercolour painters Huang Youwei and Yu Jiantao; and oil painters Ai Xuan, Liu Baomin, Xiao She and Xin Yi.
 Time: 10 am-5:30 pm until September 30
 Place: 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng District, Beijing
 Tel: 6523-3320

BRIDGE (By Phillip Alder)

partner's suit. If you have not supported your partner's suit, lead your lowest card. (Normally one leads a high card from a suit without an honor; here, though, if you lead high, partner will think you have a doubleton.) But if you have supported, so that partner knows you have length, lead high.

Then it depends on the bidding. If you have not supported your partner's suit, lead your lowest card. (Normally one leads a high card from a suit without an honor; here, though, if you lead high, partner will think you have a doubleton.) But if you have supported, so that partner knows you have length, lead high.

This agreement should make the defense easy in today's deal. North's three-spade raise is game-invitational. It is an overbid, given the dubious value of the heart queen, but five-card trump support tends to make players optimistic.

If West passed throughout, he should lead the heart two. East will win with the 10, cash the heart ace,

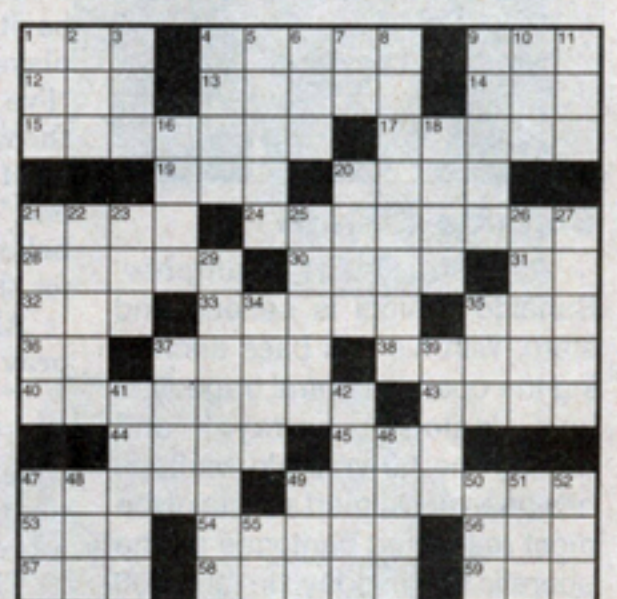
tricks. If West raised to two hearts (I would have), he should lead the heart nine, and the defense should follow the same course (although East might shift to diamonds at trick two).

Finally, with four cards in the suit, follow the three-card-lead rules and hope for the best!

North			
♠ J 9 8 5 2			
♥ Q 8 4			
♦ 10 9			
♣ A Q 7			
West			
♠ 3			
♥ 9 5 2			
♦ A J 4 3			
♣ 8 6 5 3 2			
East			
♠ Q 4			
♥ A K J 10 7			
♦ Q 7 6 5			
♣ J 4			
South			
♠ A K 10 7 6			
♥ 6 3			
♦ K 8 2			
♣ K 10 9			
Dealer: East			
Vulnerable: East-West			
South West North East			
1 ♠ Pass/2 ♠ Pass			
4 ♠ Pass Pass			
Opening lead: ??			

CROSSWORD (No 7001)

- ACROSS**
 1 Yek!
 4 Range
 9 Distress call
 12 Meadow plant
 13 Summer flower
 14 Very small
 15 Went for a job
 17 Courage
 19 Electees
 20 Shake up
 21 TV hookups
 24 Sightseers
 28 Declaim
 30 Airport exit
 31 "Hey!"
 32 Famous mummy
 33 Jules — of sci-fi
 35 Luxury resort
 36 Bradley or Sneed
 37 Ordered
 38 Hinder
 40 Raze
 43 Four-posters



- 44 Touch
 45 Moon, poetically
 47 Light wood
 49 Used TNT
 53 Flock member
 54 Overdue
 56 Nurses org.
 57 Windy City

- trains
 23 Ship deserter
 25 People out?
 26 Entered data
 27 Rises rapidly
 29 Weigh
 34 Revise
 35 Sault — Marie
 37 Cuts short
 39 Diminishes
 41 Stags and rams
 42 Wrestlers' grips
 46 Jokester
 47 Quilting social
 48 Leather-working tool
 49 Halter
 50 Little kid
 51 Map dir.
 52 Smidgen
 55 Little Rock's st.

Solution to No 7000

I	R	S	M	E	O	W	A	P	S	E	
D	A	H	O	A	T	H	M	I	T	T	
O	R	A	T	O	R	I	O	E	N	Y	A
L	E	G	A	L	S	A	A	B			
W	A	G	T	A	P	E	S				
U	P	O	N	A	V	I	V	O	R	E	
R	U	B	Y	L	A	C	M	L	L	E	
S	R	I	L	A	N	K	O	L	E	S	
A	E	S	O	P	Y	L					
U	N	D	O	B	A	I	Z	E			
T	I	E	S	E	X	P	O	R	T	E	
V	O	L	T	M	E	S	A	E	R	E	
S	U	M	S	I	N	I	T	M	O	N	