

Israelis in the Digital Age 2012

Summary and Main findings

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Abstract

The "Israelis in the Digital Age-2012" survey is different from other surveys that have tested Web surfers in two main aspects: the type of questions which were asked, and the populations that were requested to answer them. Unlike most similar studies, this one took an in-depth look at specific communities such as Arab Israelis, Haredi Jews, Russian speakers and children from the age of twelve. After processing and analyzing the data, we can point to four key themes that arise from the survey.

1. The digital divide has not yet been eliminated

Hundreds of articles have been written, books published and conferences and discussions held on the subject of the digital divide in Israeli society: the gap between those who have digital access and make advanced use of it, and those who do not have access or make only basic use of it. The "Israelis in the Digital Age-2012" survey found that the gap is very much present.

Nearly 85% of Israeli citizens with an above average income are connected to the Internet, vs. only 55% of those with an income lower than the average. Among those who are connected, more than 90% of those with a higher than average income go online every day, vs. only about 75% of those with an income below the average. The survey found that less than 60% of citizens of the Arab sector are connected to the Internet, compared to 70% of the veteran Jewish sector and over 75% of more the more recent Jewish immigrants.

A digital divide exists also around additional axes, such as religiousness. Only about 7.5% of secular Jews are not connected to the Internet at all, whereas more than 58% of the "Haredim" (Ultra-orthodox Jews) are not connected to the network. Thus, the rate of those not connected to the Internet among the Haredi society is seven times higher than that among secular Jews. Finally, there is also a gap between generations: 92% of children aged 12-17 are online but only half of those 55 or older.

Although two decades have elapsed since the advent of the commercial Web in Israel, the digital divide continues to be an issue that requires active, organized and systematic initiatives on the part of policy and decision-makers in Israel.

2. Activity in niche groups is thriving

The activity of the adult Jewish population was tested over the years, in several surveys and studies. But what is the situation in groups such as Arabs and Haredim? The results of the survey raise fascinating data.

For example, it turns out that the Arab population is especially active in content sharing. 58% of surfers in the Arab sector reported they read blogs at some frequency, twice as many as in the veteran Jewish sector (26.5%). 37% of users in the Arab sector reported that they publish texts in their blogs, almost four times as many as in the veteran Jewish sector (10%).

10.5 % of the picture sharers among Internet users in the Arab sector reported that they share photos every day compared to only 3.5% of users among new immigrants who share pictures at this frequency.

The activity among the various religious groups is fascinating as well. Although only a minority among Haredi Jews are connected to the Internet (31%), those who do decide to connect to the Web do not abstain from participation in viewing and creating content. For example, almost 81% of the Haredim that are connected to the network watch videos. In comparison, only 73% of the secular public that is connected to the Internet watches video clips. Furthermore, there is no difference between secular, religious and Haredi Jews when it comes to reading blogs, but the rate of Haredim that publish texts in their blogs is slightly higher than that of religious and secular Jews who reported having blogs.

These results illustrate that different niche groups see the Web as a platform that fulfills needs not fulfilled by traditional communication platforms. They use the Internet as a tool by which to express their views and share their experiences with others.

The fact that the proportion of those connected to the Internet among niche populations is lower than that of the general population in Israel emphasizes the need for action to connect these populations, as from the moment they are connected to the Internet, not only do they not remain passive, but they become more active than the general population.

3. Activity in Social Networks eliminates age differences

The activity of children and youths in the area creation and sharing of content denotes the extent to which these new online practices have penetrated among this group. About 92% of the surfers aged 18 and under use social networks and 75% of them use them frequently.

In comparison, a survey conducted in February 2012 in the U.S. found that only 64% of American children of these ages use the services of social networks as frequently. Almost 90% of Israeli Web surfers up to age 18 watch videos, and a quarter of them upload videos. About 80% share photos.

Throughout the various digital activities tested, there is a reverse correlation between rate of participation and age: as the age rises, the rate of participation falls. However, there is one exception: heavy participants in social networks. For example, 46% of children aged 12-14 watch videos every day but only about 35% of 25-34 year olds. However, among Internet users who are active in social networks every day, the rate of daily video watchers climbs to 54% among children and to more than 56% among surfers aged 25-34.

This is not the only example. 66% of users aged 18-24 share photos at some frequency compared to 38% among surfers aged 55-64. However, among the active daily surfers in social networks, the rate of photo sharers increases to 85% among surfers aged 18-24 and it climbs to 85% among Internet users aged 55-64.

Unlike other digital activities, activity in social networks is an activity that draws the attention of surfers and encourages them to engage in additional content creation and sharing activities.

4. Hebrew-speakers want to feel at home on the Internet, too

The Internet allows citizens of the world, including residents of Israel, to be exposed to varied and rich content. However, a third of Israelis who refer primarily to sites in Hebrew when they look for information admit that even though the network offers them a great variety of content, they prefer to consume content written in Hebrew only. However, surfers whose mother-tongue is Arabic, Russian and English, refer to sites in languages other than their native languages at higher rates and higher frequencies than the Hebrew speakers.

Veteran Jews do not approach foreign websites much, even when they want to catch up on the news. Only one out of every ten veteran Jews turns to foreign sites when searching for news, compared to one out of every five Arabs or new immigrants. Even when presented with a hypothetical situation whereby language limitations could be overcome without any problem, only 16% of Hebrew-speaker said they would prefer to receive their information from foreign sites.

In the struggle between the local and the global (or the international), the first wins. Hebrew is not only a limitation but also a hard choice. Hebrew-speakers, that constitute the dominant group in Israel, are used to receiving from traditional media, content that has undergone local adaptation, "glocal" content, and they expect to receive similar treatment from the Internet. In contrast, Arab, Russian and English speakers are used to living in a bilingual world, and according to the findings of the studies in the field, they are under-represented in traditional media. Therefore they are more open to online content that is not presented to them in their mother tongue.

Main findings

General

- 70% of Israel's population age 12 and older surf the Internet.
- As the level of religiousness increases, so does the rate of people who are not connected to the Internet: only 7.7% of secular Jews are not connected to the Internet at all, compared to about 58% of Orthodox Jews (Haredim).
- Four out of ten of those asked (40.7%) who considered their income level as "far below average" are not connected to the Internet, but only one out of ten (8.7%) of those who described their income level as "far above average" are not connected to the Internet.
- Internet users aged 15-24 spend about one fifth of their Internet time surfing from their mobile phones.

Social networks

- More than half of users in Israel take active part in some social network service at least once a week.
- Nearly 70% of users aged 15-17 use some social network service every day. On the other hand, one out of ten people 65 and older use social networks every day.
- Among the new immigrant youth aged 15 to 17, not one respondent could be found who is not active in social networks.
- 81% of Web surfers aged 12-14 claimed that the reason for their use of social networks is "to keep in touch with friends." As age increased, there was a decrease in the number of surfers who specified this reason.
- As the level of education increases, the chance of daily usage of social networks decreases.
- A digital gap exists between people with a low income and those with an average income in regards to activity in social networks too.

Blog writers and readers

- One out of four teenagers aged 15-17 writes a blog.
- 20% of bloggers could not think of a reason when they were asked why they write a blog.
- The rate of secular Jews who read blogs every day (25.5%) is double the rate of Orthodox Jews who read blogs that frequently (12.5%).
- 28.3% of Arabs who reported that they write blogs do it every day. Only 12% of veteran Jews post new posts daily. 37% of blog readers in the Arab sector read blogs every day. Only 24% of blog readers in the Jewish sector, read blogs every day.

Video watching and sharing

- About 74.3% of Israeli surfers tend to watch video clips on the Internet at some frequency.
- Almost 81% of the Orthodox public that surf the Web watch video clips on the Internet compared to the 73% of the secular public.
- People in the periphery of Israel tend to watch more videos more often than in the center of the country.
- One out of every five surfers (21%) upload videos to the Internet.
- The Jewish population watches videos more than the Arab population (76% and 63%, respectively). However, while about 19% of the Jewish population that surfs the Web uploads videos, the rate of video uploaders among the Arab population is 27%.
- The daily viewing rate among heavy users of social networks is much higher in comparison to the daily video watching rate in the overall population.

Photo sharing

- One out of two Web surfers (51.4%) share photos at some frequency.
- One third of photo sharers (34%) tend to upload photos to the Web at a frequency of one up to several times a month.
- 80% of youth aged 15-17 tend to share photos.
- Boys tend to share photos more than girls.
- 10.5% of Arabs tend to share photos every day compared to only 3.6% of new immigrants.
- A digital gap exists between low and average income people in reference to photo sharing.
- The vast majority of heavy social network users share photos.

Israelis in the Global Internet

- About one-third of all Internet users whose mother tongue is Hebrew are exposed only to sites in Hebrew.
- Four out of ten surfers whose mother tongue is Russian surf mostly sites in Russian. Others turn to sites in Hebrew and English.
- As the level of religiousness increases, so does the use of automatic translation tools.
- Arabic speaking surfers indicated they seek for news at a rate three times higher (40%) than those whose mother tongue is Hebrew (13%).
- 4% of veteran Jews look for information "only or primarily in foreign sites."