



Internet to Reach 3 Billion Users but Majority Still Not Online

Internet Society Report Sees Significant Barriers to Connecting the World's Population to the Internet

Study Shows Non-Internet Users Fall Into Distinct Groups with Unique Challenges

Washington, DC and Geneva, Switzerland – June 9, 2014 – The Internet Society has launched its first annual report on the state of the Internet globally. The *Global Internet Report*, <https://www.internetsociety.org/global-internet-report>, finds that while the number of Internet users globally is expected to soon pass three billion, there are still significant challenges that must be addressed in order to ensure that the world's population is connected to the Internet.

“Progress towards the Internet Society’s vision that ‘The Internet is for Everyone’ is happening quickly around the globe, as the Internet is expected to reach 3 billion users by early next year,” said Internet Society President and CEO Kathy Brown. “However, much development work still remains to bring the economic and social benefits of the Internet to all people and to make sure everyone has quality access. We hope that this annual new series of reports contributes to how we all focus on the challenges to bring the benefits of the Internet to everyone.”

In the inaugural *Global Internet Report*, Internet Society Chief Economist Michael Kende identifies the significant benefits that the open Internet brings to those already online and the two distinct groups of non-Internet users. For a significant group of non-Internet users, it is commonly understood that access is not yet available, or it is available but unaffordable. However, less understood is that in many countries, an even larger number of non-users cite other reasons such as lack of interest or understanding, rather than income or availability. Each group has a different set of barriers that must be overcome in order for them to gain access.

The affordability of Internet services clearly has a significant impact on service uptake. The UN Broadband Commission has said that entry-level broadband service should not cost more than 5% of average monthly income by the end of 2015. While the overall majority of countries measured for 2012 have reached this target, the majority of developing countries have not. There are still countries today where the cost of broadband is greater than the average income of its citizens, and others where seeming affordability is masked by deep income inequality, putting the Internet out of reach for many.

The second major group of non-Internet users consists of those who could go online, but choose not to due to a lack of locally relevant content and applications. This lack ultimately stems from a combination of economic and political factors.

“We traditionally interpret the ‘digital divide’ as those without Internet access because of a lack of availability or affordability, but we now see evidence of many who could have access and choose to not go online,” said Mr. Kende. “As a result, when considering how to increase Internet penetration, it is

important to differentiate between those who have access but lack interest, from those who don't have access.”

The lack of interest can have many sources. Many governments use their blocking and filtering powers to restrict access to content they deem undesirable. Sometimes, this activity is in line with religious or social norms in the country. However, a growing number of countries are more interventionist, blocking social and news content in a politically motivated manner. In addition, based on licensing agreements, not all content is available in all countries, which has an impact on the ability of the users to access content of interest.

Another significant issue limiting Internet participation, according to the study, is the availability of locally-relevant content. English-speaking Internet users are currently over-represented by a wide margin. While 27% of Internet users are classified as primarily English speaking, more than 55% of websites offer content primarily in English. By comparison, Chinese speakers make up 25% of Internet users, but only 3.3% of websites offer content primarily in Chinese.

Finally, the report highlights issues that impact existing users. Revelations about massive global surveillance are raising basic questions about trust and privacy online. Further, Internet resilience to large-scale disruptions, caused by accidents or government actions, is impacted by the diversity of interconnections between national infrastructure and international data carriers. Addressing these issues will not just help to promote and preserve the open Internet for those online, but also increase the interest and willingness of non-Internet users to go online.

About the Internet Society

The Internet Society (www.internetsociety.org) is the trusted independent source for Internet information and thought leadership around the world. It is also the organizational home of the Internet Engineering Task Force. With its principled vision and substantial technological foundation, the Internet Society promotes open dialogue on Internet policy, technology, and future development among users, companies, governments, and other organizations. Working with its members and Chapters around the world, the Internet Society enables the continued evolution and growth of the Internet for everyone.

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