



MicroModule: growth

How Fast is the Web Growing?

REVIEW Page

Below is the entire module on one page.



When attempting to estimate the growth of resources and users on the Internet, it is good to keep in mind the words 'persistent uncertainty'. Things are changing so quickly, that there are no exact numbers, only educated guesses. However, by any measure, the growth of the Internet has been explosive. The Internet is spreading faster than cable TV. Let's consider two measures of growth; the size of the collection as represented by the number of servers and pages of information on the Internet, and the number of patrons or Internet users.

A recent Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) study concluded that the size of the net itself had begun to stabilize. OCLC estimated 3,080,000 sites in June 2002. This represents a slight (1%) decrease in number when compared to the previous year. (See Figures 1 and 2.) At the same time the study found an increase in the size of each website. OCLC believes the Internet should be seen as a maturing technology, "Individuals, organizations, and businesses are no longer engaged in the rush to 'get on the Web' witnessed five to ten years ago. Most people who want to establish a Web presence have already done so. The focus now is on refining and expanding that presence, and figuring out how to utilize Web technologies effectively to fulfill mission-critical objectives." (From *Trends in the Evolution of the Public Web*. Available online at: <http://dlib.org/dlib/april03/>)

[lavoie/04lavoie.html](#).)

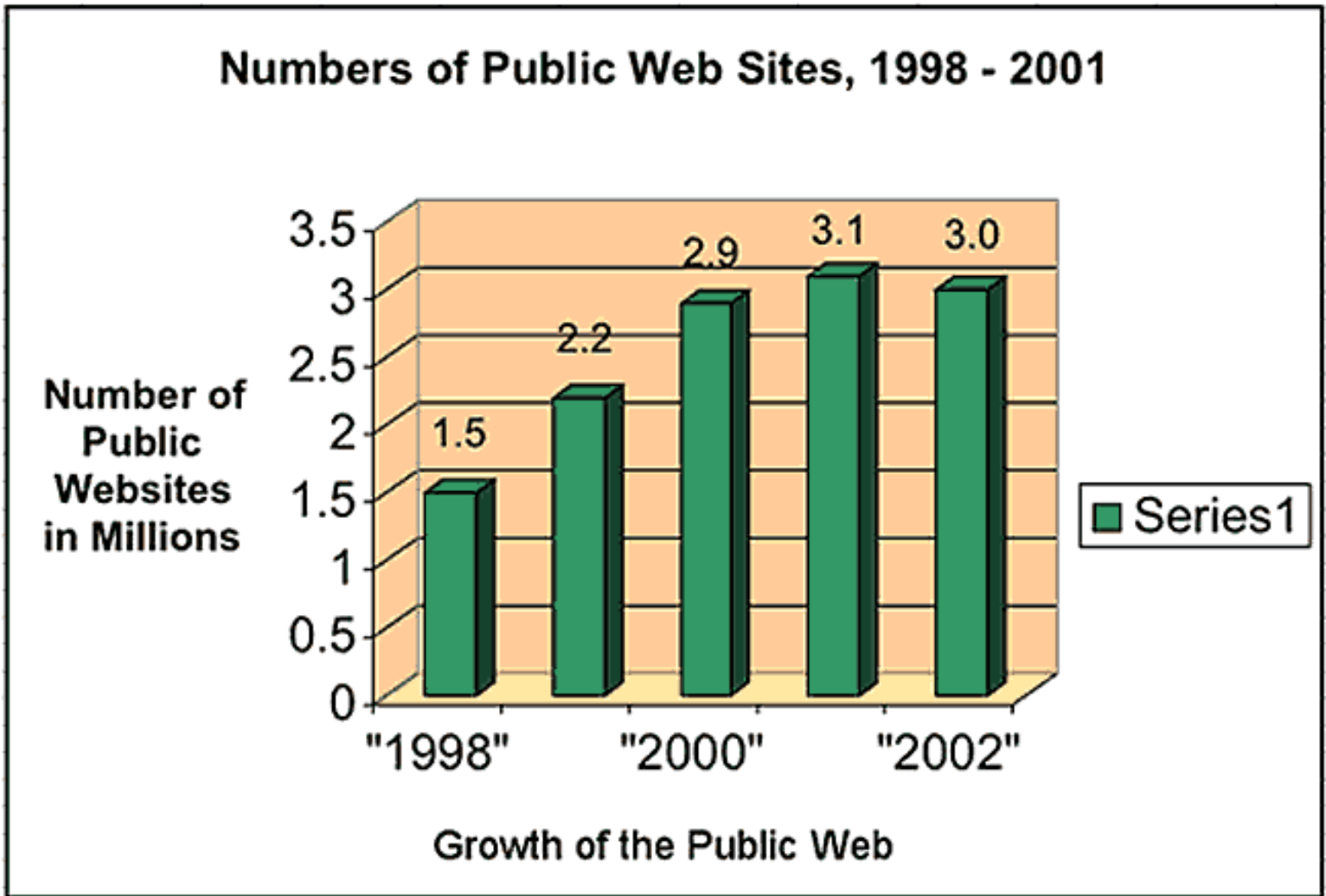


Figure 1: OCLC estimates of public websites.

Public Web Year-on-Year Growth Rates

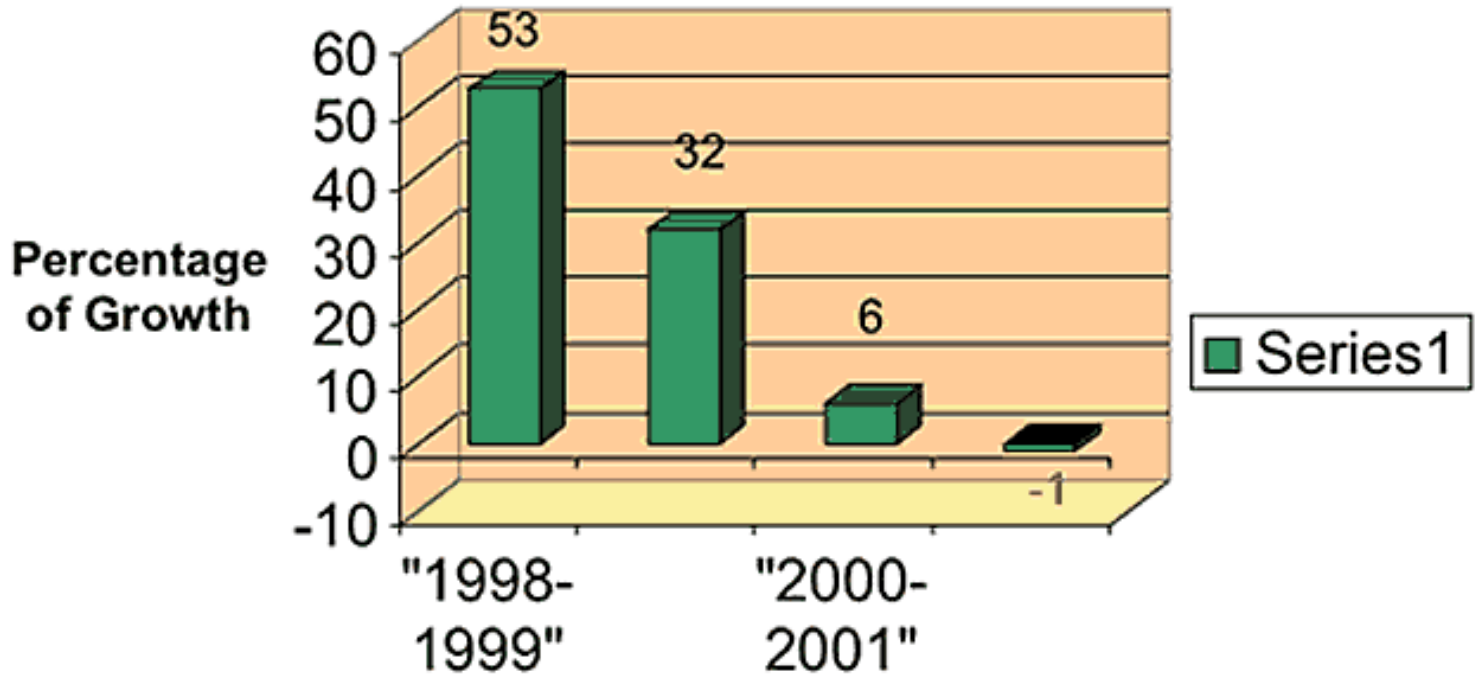


Figure 2: OCLC Estimates of the rate of growth of the public web.

So just how large is the collection of information on the web?

We estimate about 7 million new pages go online each day. We also estimate there are between 3 and 6 billion pages of information available on the public web. (For more on this topic see the IMSA Micro Module: *How Many Pages Are There On The WWW?*)

As we begin the 21st Century, we are faced with an online resource bonanza. As the collection of Internet based resources grows, so does the population of patrons. Clearly, locating and evaluating online resources is becoming a daily necessity around the globe.

A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use of the Internet, is a recent U.S. Government study that will help us understand the growth of net users. This study is available online: <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/dn/>. The study estimates that Internet use in the United States is growing at a rate of 2 million users each month. The study found that more Americans than ever (66% or 174 million) are using computers. 54% of the population (143 million Americans) used the Internet in September 2001. This was a 26% increase over August 2000. (See Figure 3.) A government census conducted in 2001, found that 46.9% of Illinois households were connected to the Internet. (Mississippi was lowest at 36.1% and Alaska the highest with 64.1%.) Clearly

many Americans are using computers and the Internet at home and at work.

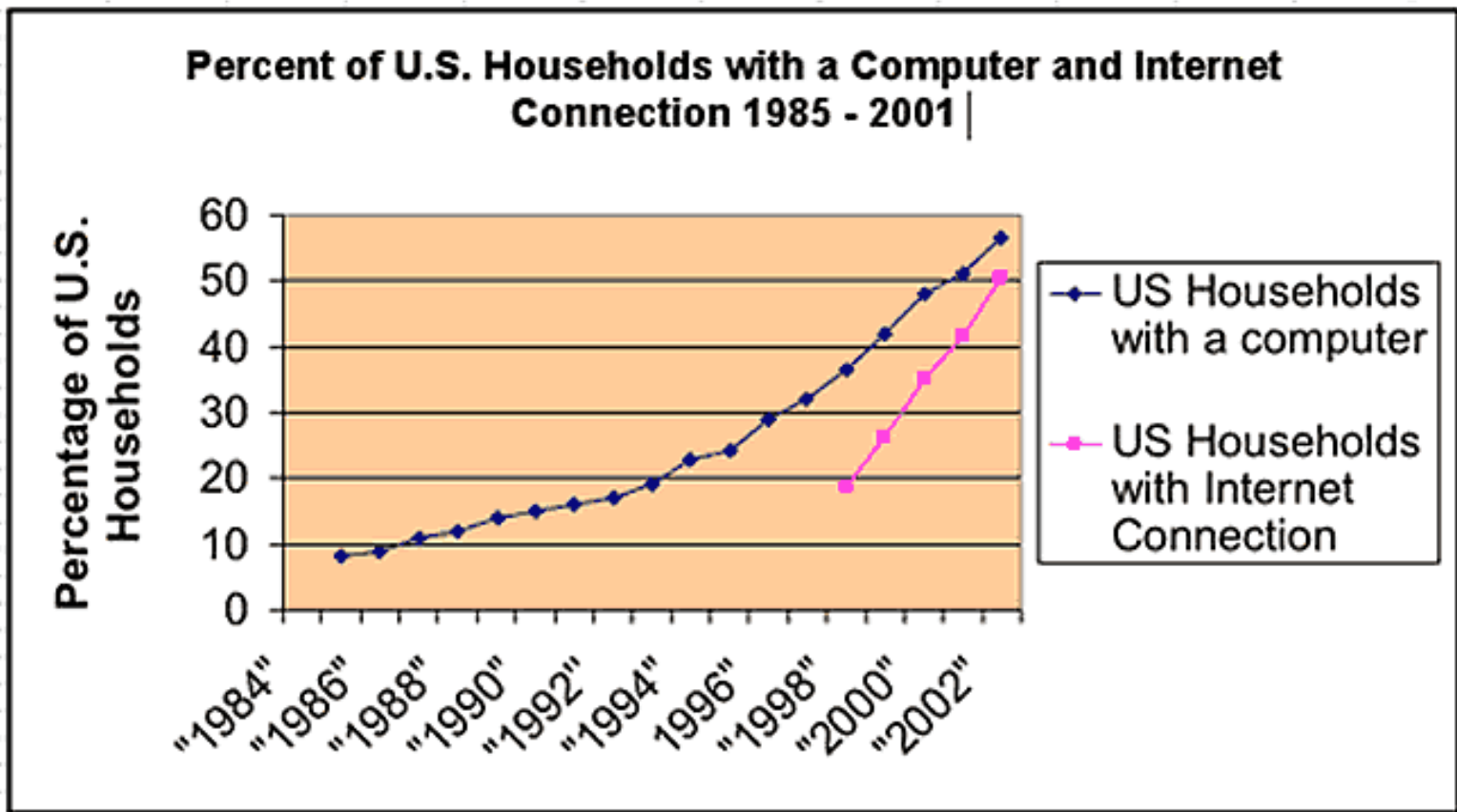


Figure 3: U.S. Department of Commerce's Census Bureau computer / Internet use estimates

Worldwide Internet use is also growing.

The CIA Fact book estimates that 655 million people now use the Internet. Marketing companies estimate between 709.1 million and 945 million people will be online by 2004. Globally, men still outnumber women when it comes to using the Net. However, data indicates that more women than men are using the Internet in the United States, with this trend beginning to occur overseas.

In the United States, children and teenagers are most likely to use the Internet and computers. As reported in *A Nation Online*, 90% of children between the ages of 5 and 17 (48 million) use computers. Also, 75% of 14 to 17-year-olds and 65% of 10 to 13-year-olds use the Internet. Logically households with children under age 18 are more likely to have Internet access than those without children (62% versus 53%).

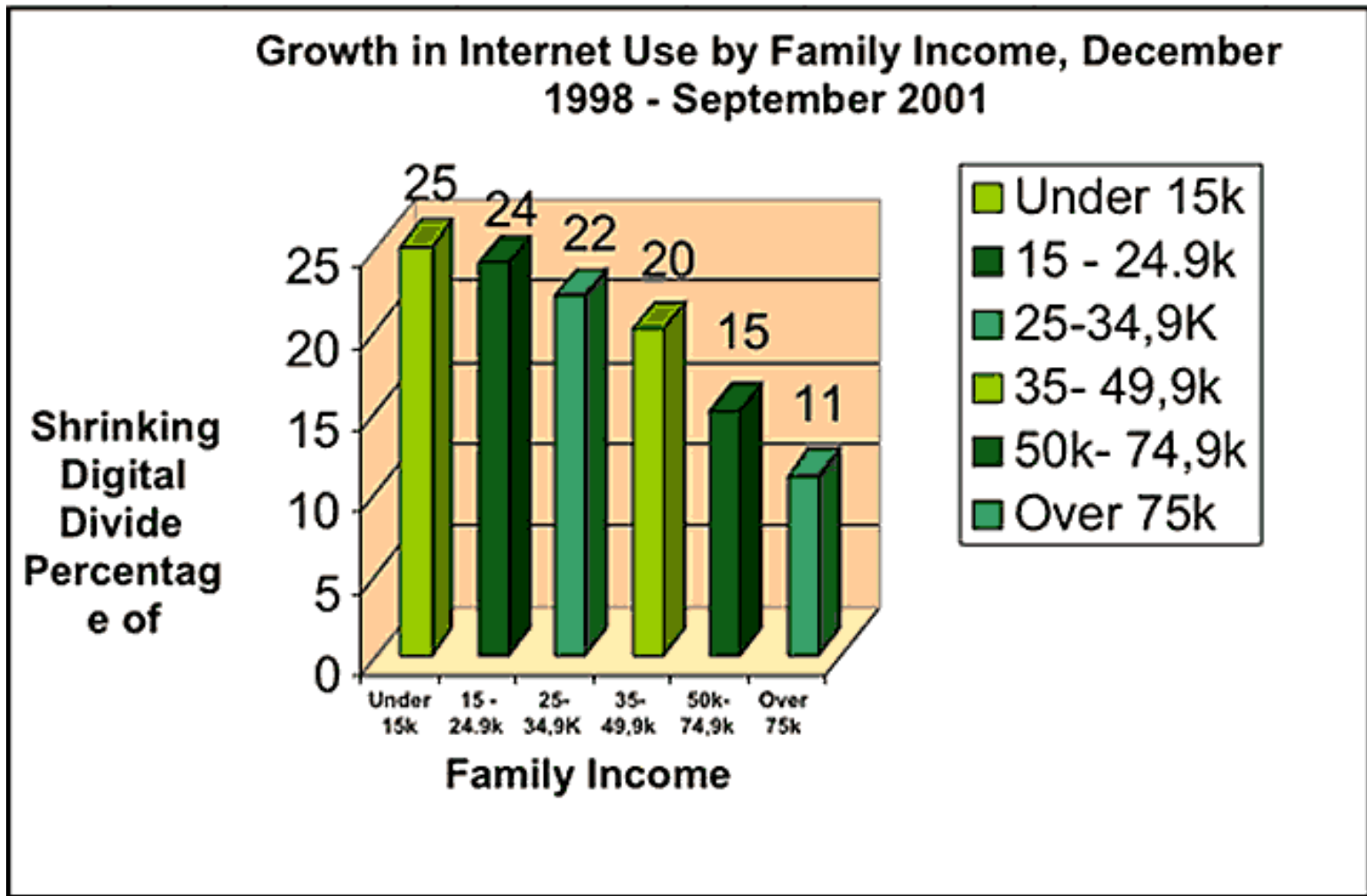


Figure 4: From *A Nation Online: Chapter 2: Computer and Internet Use*

The Digital Divide

The so-called 'Digital Divide' ? the Internet access gap between the rich and the poor, has been narrowed by the expanding presence of Internet linked computers in schools. (See Figure 4.)

A Nation Online indicates that Internet use is increasing for all Americans, regardless of income, age, education, race, ethnic background, or gender. Between December 1998 and September 2001, Internet use in the lowest-income households (those earning less than \$15,000 per year) increased at a 25% annual growth rate. Internet use in the highest-income households (those earning \$75,000 per year or more) increased at a much slower 11% annual growth rate.

During the same time period, Internet use among Blacks increased at an annual rate of 33%. For Hispanics the annual increase was 30%. Whites, Asian American and Pacific Islanders saw annual growth rates of about 20%. Internet use in rural households increased at an annual rate of 24%. The number of Internet users in rural areas is now almost even with the national average of 54%.

Not only is access rapidly growing in the US and abroad, but the quality of the Internet connection is also on the rise. 80% of Americans with home access use a dial-up modem to connect to the Internet. However, *A Nation Online* found that from August 2000 to September 2001, residential use of broadband Internet access doubled

from 4% to 11% of all individuals, and from 11 to 20% of all American Internet users. As broadband access increases, we can anticipate an increase in multi-media resources on the web.

For most users (45%) e-mail is the most popular application. (See Figure 5.) However, searching for information is on the increase. According to the study, about one-third of Americans use the Internet to search for products and service data (36%, up from 26% in 2000). 35% of Internet users are searching for health information, while 39% are making online purchases.

It is clear that the number of Internet users will continue to grow. Understanding how to use the Internet, and more specifically how to locate and evaluate resources on the Internet will be a crucial literacy for the 21st Century!

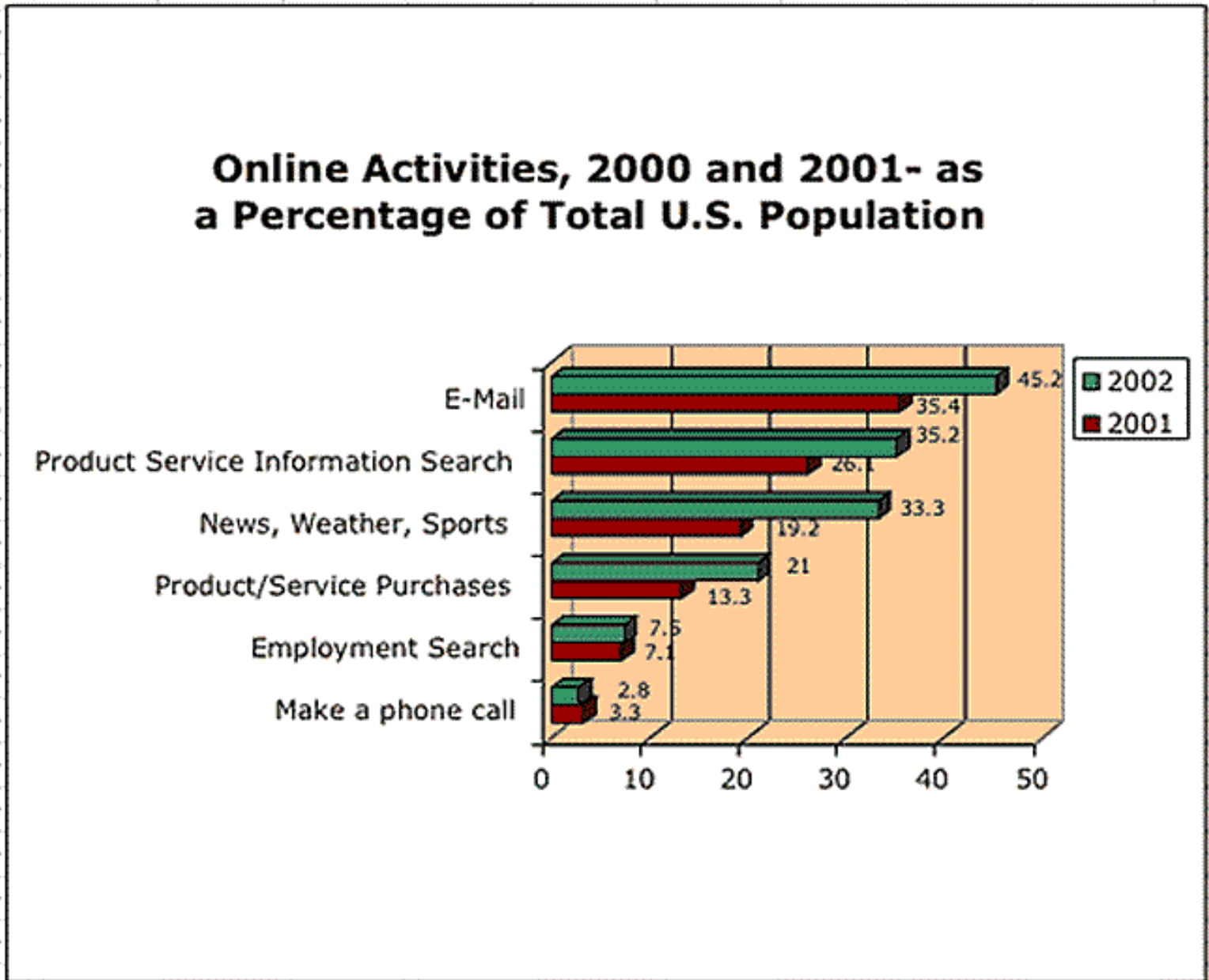


Figure 5: Online Activities, 2000 and 2001 as a Percentage of Total U.S. Population.

FAQ's



How many people are using the Internet?

In the US Government study, *A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use of the Internet*, 174 million Americans were currently online. World wide, there are an estimated 655 million Internet users.

How many new users are entering the Internet?

The number of American Internet users is growing at a rate of about 2 million a month.

Is the information content of the Internet growing?

The OCLC concludes that the size of the public Internet is beginning to stabilize. While the number of servers isn't growing as rapidly as in the early days of the net, the number of pages offered by each site is growing. Our best estimate is that there are from 3 to 6 billion pages of information available to search engines, with about 7 million new pages going online each day.

Has Internet growth changed the Digital Divide?

The Digital Divide or the Internet access gap between the rich and the poor has been narrowed in the United States by the expanding presence of Internet linked computers in schools. *A Nation Online* indicates that Internet use is increasing for all Americans, regardless of income, age, education, race, ethnic origin, or gender. Between December 1998 and September 2001, Internet use in the lowest-income households (those earning less than \$15,000 per year) increased at a 25% annual growth rate.

What are the most popular uses for the Internet?

E-mail remains the number one Internet tool and is used by about 45% of users. Searching for resources about products and services is also important to Internet users with 36% of all users seeking some form of information.

[Authored by Dennis O'Connor 2003](#)



[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4]

End of Micromodule - growth.

Return to Micromodule [List](#)