



“As the use of information and communication technology grows, so does its impact on society. ICT empowers Europeans, through efficient healthcare, cost-effective and accessible public services, social inclusion and a higher quality of life”.

Viviane Reding Commissioner for
Information Society and Media

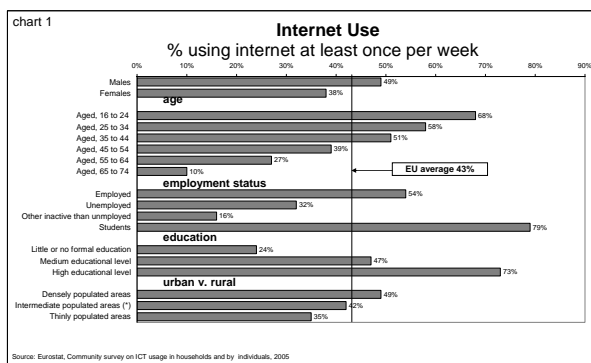


i2010
Inclusion

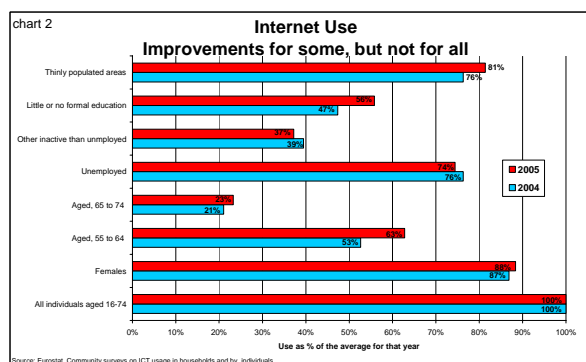
Policies and technologies that improve public services

eInclusion deals with the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to include groups of people at risk of social exclusion and aims to avoid new divides between digital "haves" and "have-nots" that present and future innovations may create.

The European Community household survey, which monitors Internet use by different socio-economic groups (chart 1), finds that **the groups most excluded from the information society are the elderly, those out of the labour force and those with a low education.** This suggests that employment is an important factor in Internet usage, as indicated by the very low rates for those of retirement age and those not in the labour force. Usage rates are marginally lower amongst women and those living in sparsely populated areas. For women, these differences are likely to be correlated with those relating to work, i.e. more women than men are not in the labour force and they also make up a higher proportion of those of post-retirement age. Low usage in sparsely populated areas may be partly due to higher rates of unemployment but there could also be other specific geographical factors.



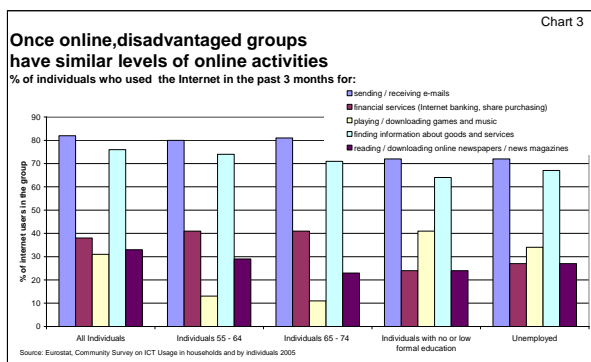
There has been some improvement in the relative position of those groups with low usage rates but not for all. (chart 2) In general, the changes over time have been small but with two exceptions: use by 55-64 year-olds (up 10% overall since 2004) and by those with little or no education (up 9% overall since 2004). The improvement is visible in all countries, but particularly large in Germany and the UK.



Socio-demographic factors carry different weights and do not evolve in the same direction or at the same speed. **Gender-related** and **geographical** differences in access and use have reduced over time. In both cases, usage rates across the EU are now close to the EU25 average (only about 5 percentage points below). Usage rates for the **elderly** have also improved, except for the population segment over 64. By contrast, socio-economic gaps, especially by **occupation**, show the least signs of reducing over time. Generally, there are strong links between **poor education, unemployment and low income**, the largest gap in 2005 being found among the low-educated and the economically inactive, which stand at less than half of the EU average Internet

usage rate. However, usage by the less-educated might be rising faster than previously thought.

One positive message identified by the Household survey results is that once online, different demographic groups perform similar online activities (chart 3).



Better public services

The EU's renewed "Lisbon" strategy emphasises the role of public services in achieving growth and competitiveness. The priorities set by the Annual Progress Report on Growth and Jobs, which measures the progress of this strategy, include sustainable public finances and better regulation to simplify administrative procedures.

All Member States have adopted an eGovernment strategy for modernising their economies and nearly all have included this in their National Reform Plans. As a result, public services have become more widely available on line and more sophisticated. By October 2004, 84% of basic public services for citizens and businesses were available online. The degree of sophistication of online public services has also increased and 40% of services are fully interactive. The impact of such strategies is visible: across the EU, half of companies and one citizen in five obtain information on public services on line and its use is growing fast among companies.

Use of online public services	EU15		EU25	
	2003	2004	2004	2005
% population (16-74)				
obtaining information	21	24	21	21
downloading official forms	10	11	10	10
sending filled forms	6	6	6	6
% enterprises				
obtaining information	44	43	45	51
obtaining forms	38	40	41	50
returning filled in forms	23	26	29	33
Full electronic case handling	12	15	16	19

Source: Eurostat, Community Surveys on ICT Usage in households, by individuals and enterprises

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