Pew Internet
Pew Internet & American Life Project

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Search Engine Use 2012

Even though online Americans are more satisfied than ever with the performance of search engines, strong majorities have negative views of personalized search results and targeted ads

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http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Search-Engine-Use-2012.aspx

Summary of findings

Search engines remain popular—and users are more satisfied than ever with the quality of search results—but many are anxious about the collection of personal information by search engines and other websites.

Most search users disapprove of personal information being collected for search results or for targeted advertising

The Pew Internet & American Life survey in February 2012 included several questions probing how respondents feel about search engines and other websites collecting information about them and using it to either shape their search results or target advertising to them. Clear majorities of internet and search users disapprove of these practices in all the contexts we probed.

Specifically, the survey posed the following choices to search engine users:

65% say…	It's a BAD thing if a search engine collected information about your searches and then used it to rank your future search results, because it may limit the information you get online and what search results you see
29% say…	It's a GOOD thing if a search engine collected information about your searches and then used it to rank your future search results, because it gives you results that are more relevant to you
73% say they would…	NOT BE OKAY with a search engine keeping track of your searches and using that information to personalize your future search results because you feel it is an invasion of privacy
23% say they would…	Be OKAY with a search engine keeping track of your searches and using that information to personalize your future search results, even if it means they are gathering information about you

All internet users were posed the following choice regarding targeted advertising:

68% say…	I'm NOT OKAY with targeted advertising because I don't like having my online behavior tracked and analyzed
28% say…	I'm OKAY with targeted advertising because it means I see advertisements and get information about things I'm really interested in

Overall views of search engine performance are very positive

For more than a decade, Pew Internet data has consistently shown that search engine use is one of the most popular online activities, rivaled only by email as an internet pursuit. In January 2002, 52% of *all Americans* used search engines. In February 2012 that figure grew to 73% of *all Americans.* On any given day in early 2012, more than half of adults using the internet use a search engine (59%). That is double the 30% of internet users who were using search engines on a typical day in 2004. And people's frequency of using search engines has jumped dramatically.

Moreover, users report generally good outcomes and relatively high confidence in the capabilities of search engines:

- 91% of search engine users say they always or most of the time find the information they are seeking when they use search engines
- 73% of search engine users say that most or all the information they find as they use search engines is accurate and trustworthy
- 66% of search engine users say search engines are a fair and unbiased source of information
- 55% of search engine users say that, in their experience, the quality of search results is getting better over time, while just 4% say it has gotten worse
- 52% of search engine users say search engine results have gotten more relevant and useful over time, while just 7% report that results have gotten less relevant

These findings are a backdrop for the ongoing policy debates about privacy, collection of personal information online, and the enthusiasm for targeted search and targeted advertising among companies. They also arise as Google implements a new privacy policy in which information about users' online behavior when they are signed into Google's programs can be collected and combined into a cohesive user profile. This includes material from Google's search engine, the Google+ social networking site, YouTube video-sharing site, and Gmail.

Most internet users say they do not know how to limit the information that is collected about them by a website

Just 38% of internet users say they are generally aware of ways they themselves can limit how much information about them is collected by a website. Among this group, one common strategy people use to limit personal data collection is to delete their web history: 81% of those who know ways to manage the capture of their data do this. Some 75% of this group uses the privacy settings of websites to control what's captured about them. And 65% change their browser settings to limit the information that is collected.[1]

[1] There are a range of other strategies that users can employ, including the deletion of cookies and the use of anonymyzing software and proxies that were not part of this survey.

Overall, search users are confident in their abilities

Most search users say they are confident in their own search abilities, and find what they are looking for most of the time. More than half of search users (56%) say they are *very* confident in their search abilities, while only 6% say they are not too or not all confident. And the vast majority of search users report being able to find what they are looking for always (29%) or most of the time (62%).

Positive search experiences are more common than negative experiences

Asked about different experiences they have had using search engines, more users report positive experiences than negative. They said in their use of search engines they had:

- learned something new or important that really helped them or increased their knowledge (86% of search users have had this experience)
- found a really obscure fact or piece of information they thought they would not be able to find (50%)
- gotten conflicting information in search results and not been able to figure out what is correct (41%)
- gotten so much information in a set of results that you feel overwhelmed (38%)
- found that critical information is missing from search results (34%)

Google continues to be the most popular search engine, by a wide margin

Google continues to dominate the list of most used search engines. Asked which search engine they use most often, 83% of search users say Google. The next most cited search engine is Yahoo, mentioned by just 6% of search users. When we last asked this question in 2004, the gap between Google and Yahoo was much narrower, with 47% of search users saying Google was their engine of choice and 26% citing Yahoo.

About the survey

These are the findings from a survey conducted from January 20-February 19, 2012 among 2,253 adults age 18 and over, including 901 cell phone interviews. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error for the full sample is plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Main findings

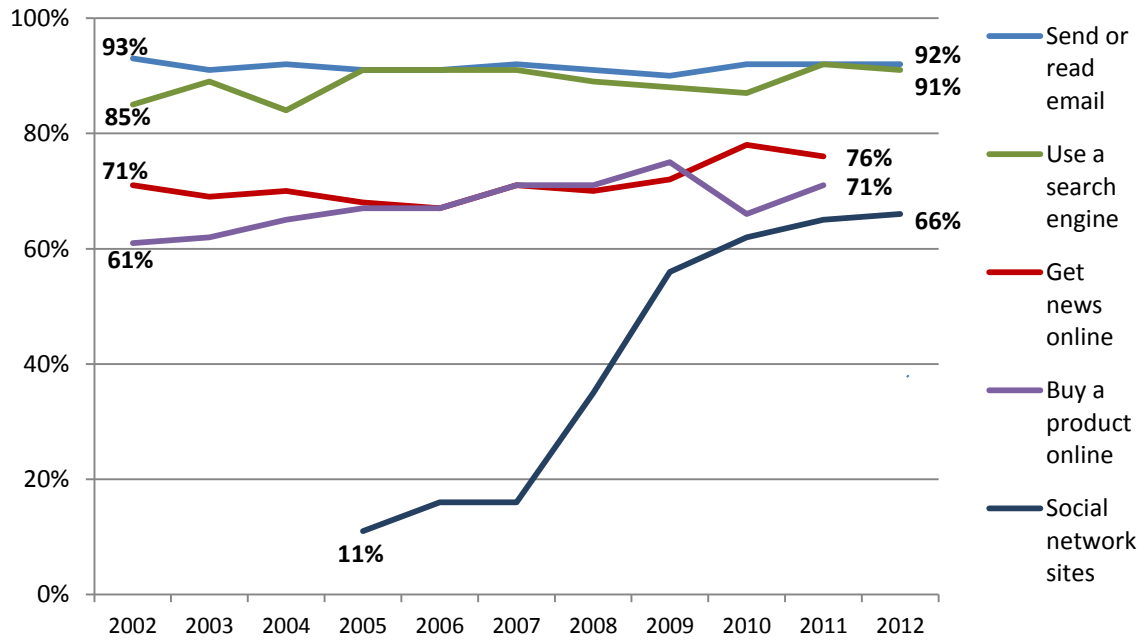
Search engine use over time

A February 2012 Pew Internet survey finds that 91% of online adults use search engines to find information on the web, up from 84% in June 2004, the last time we did an extended battery of survey questions about people's search engine use. On any given day online, 59% of those using the Internet use search engines. In 2004 that figure stood at just 30% of internet users.

As early as 2002, more than eight in ten online adults were using search engines, and as we noted in an August 2011 report[2], search is only rivaled by email both in the overall percent of internet users who engage in the activity and the percent of internet users doing it on a given day. The table below shows how search compares over time with some other popular online activities.

Over time, search has remained one of the most popular internet activities

% of internet users who do each activity



Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project tracking surveys, 2002-2012. Social network site use not tracked prior to February, 2005. For more activity trends, go to pewinternet.org. "Get news online" and "buy a product online" have not yet been asked in 2012 surveys.

[2] See "Search and Email Still Top the List of Most Popular Online Activities," available at http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Search-and-email.aspx

Search is most popular among young adult internet users, those who have been to college, and those with the highest household incomes. These same groups—the young, college-educated, and affluent—are also most likely to report using a search engine "yesterday." And while white and black online adults are more likely than Hispanics to report using search overall, white online adults stand out from all others as more likely to use search on a given day.

Who uses search?

% of online adults in each group who use search engines

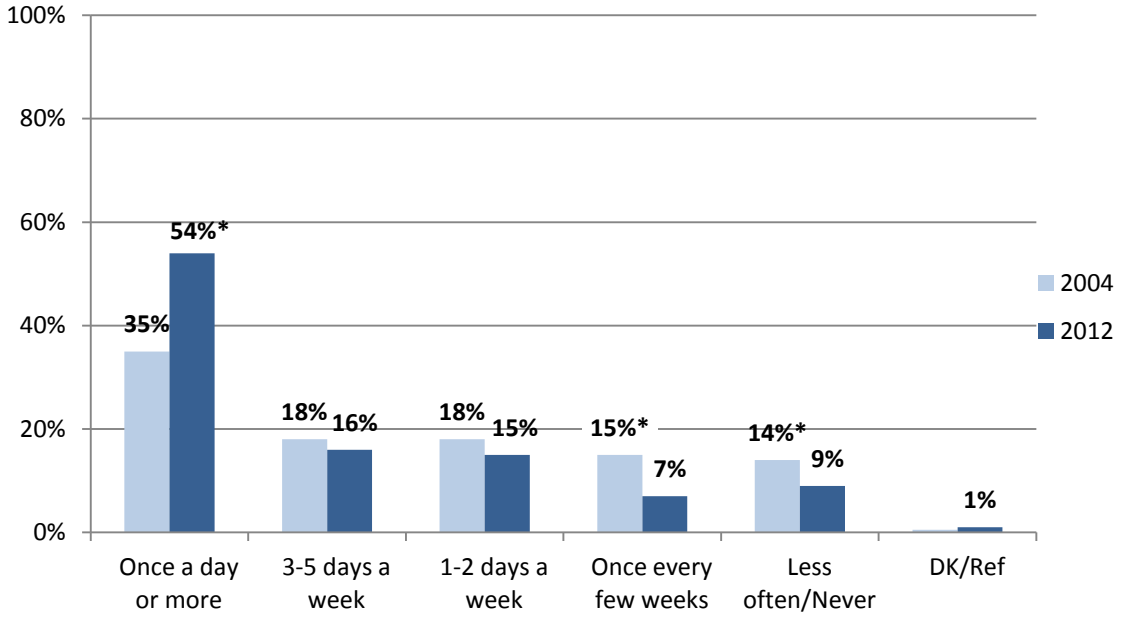
	% of each group who ever use search engines	% of each group who used a search engine yesterday
All online adults	91%	59%
Gender		
Male	90	59
Female	92	60
Race/Ethnicity		
White	93*	63*
African American	89*	44
Hispanic	79	44
Age		
18-29	96	66*
30-49	91	65*
50-64	92	52*
65+	80	38
Education		
Some high school	78	34
High school	88*	45*
Some college	94*	65*
College graduate	95*	74*
Household income		
< $30,000	84	45
$30,000 - $49,999	93*	54*
$50,000 - $74,999	97*	66*
$75,000+	95*	76*

***** Denotes statistically significant difference with other rows in that category
Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Winter 2012 Tracking Survey, January 20-February 19, 2012. N=2,253 adults age 18 and older, including 901 cell phone interviews. Interviews conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for internet users.

Asked how often they use a search engine to find information online, just over half of all search engine users (54%) say they do this at least once a day, a significant increase over 2004.

Search users are turning to search engines more frequently

% of adult search users who use a search engine to find information….



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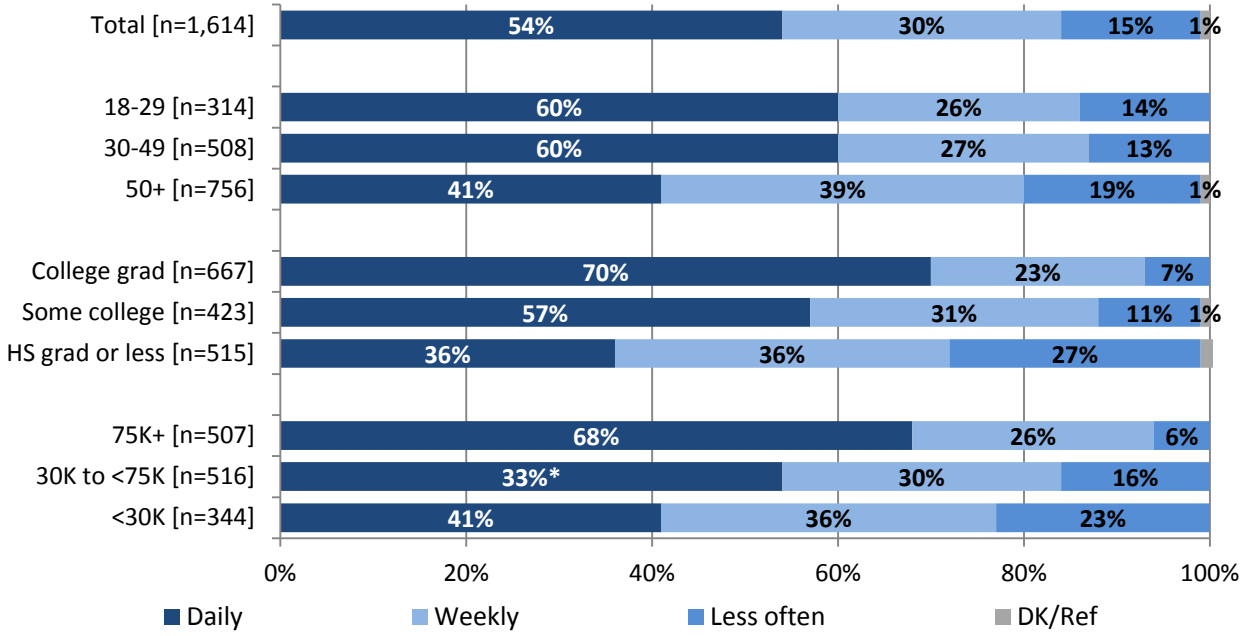
Frequency of search engine use varies by age, education and income, with adults under age 50 and those with more education and higher household incomes using search more frequently than others.

Daily searching is most common among younger, more educated and more affluent search engine users

Frequency of search engine use among each group of search users….



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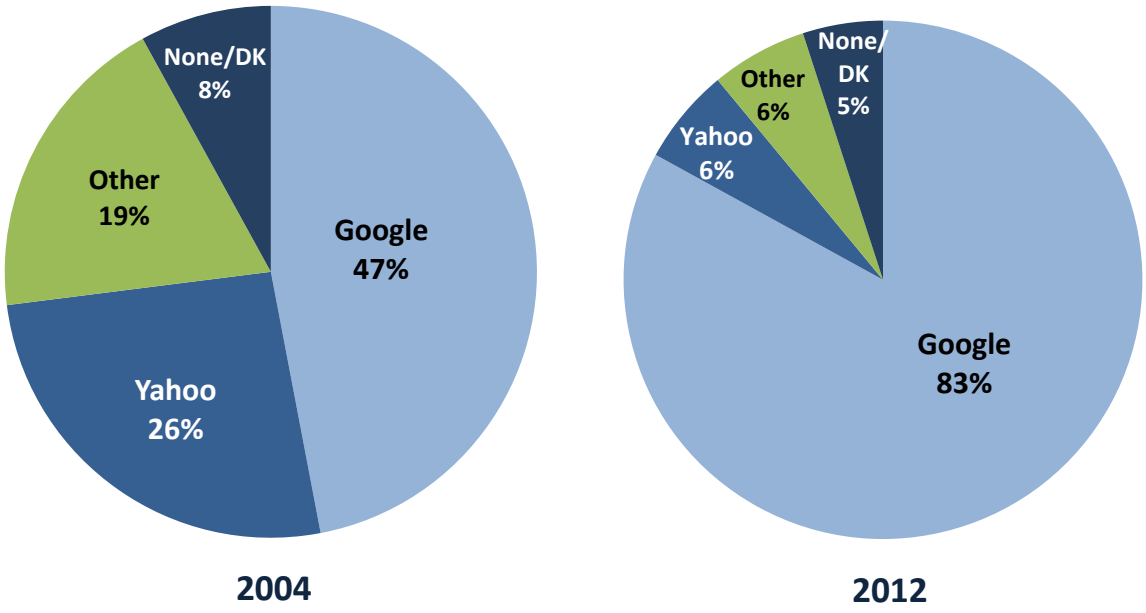
Google is far and away the most popular search engine

Among search engine users, Google dominance continues and it is far and away the search engine they report using most often. Fully 83% of searchers use Google more often than any other search engine. Yahoo is a very distant second at just 6%. In 2004, the gap between these two search leaders was much narrower. At that time, 47% said that Google was the search engine they used most often while 26% named Yahoo.

Google is far and away the search engine of choice, preferred by 83% of search users

% of search users who answered the question: Which search engine do you use MOST OFTEN?



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Quality of information

Fairly large majorities of search engine users express confidence in these tools and the results they generate. Not only does a majority believe that search engines are fair and unbiased, they also believe that most results are accurate and trustworthy. And most say that the quality and relevance of search results has been improving over time or has not changed, while very few see the quality and relevance of results declining.

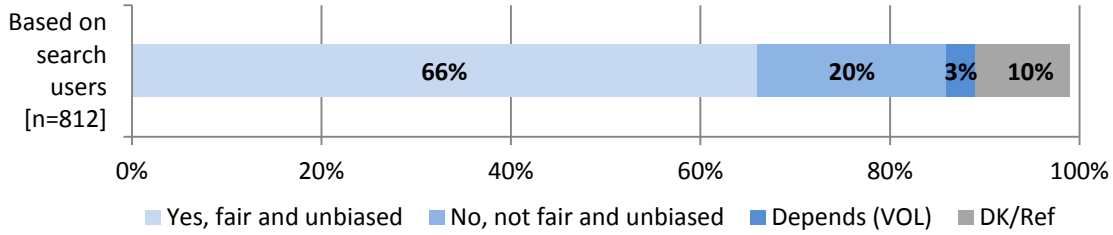
Bias and accuracy

There continues to be widespread faith in search results, and perceptions of fairness and bias have not changed at all over the past eight years. Roughly two-thirds of searchers (66%) say search engines are a fair and unbiased source of information. In 2004, 68% of search users said that search engines were a fair and unbiased source of information.

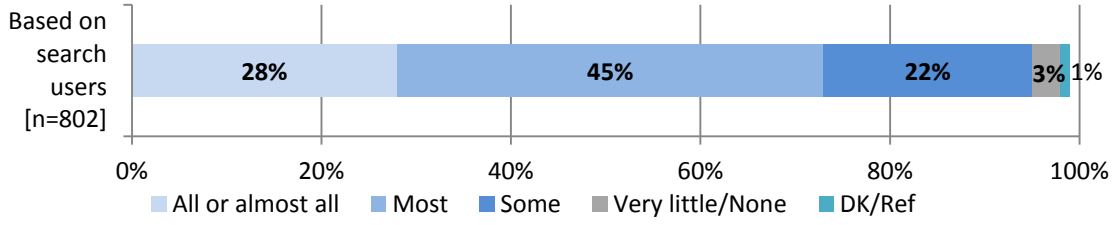
Asked how much of the information they get in search results is accurate or trustworthy, 28% say all or almost all and another 45% say most.

Most adult search engine users have faith in the fairness and accuracy of their results

In general, do you think Internet search engines are a fair and unbiased source of information, or do you think search engines are NOT a fair and unbiased source?



In general, how much of the information you find using search engines do you think is accurate or trustworthy?



Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Winter 2012 Tracking Survey, January 20-February 19, 2012. N=2,253 adults, age 18 and older, including 901 cell phone interviews. Interviews conducted in English and Spanish.

Younger search engine users have more faith in the results they get. 72% of 18-29 year-olds say that search engines are a fair and unbiased source, compared with 65% of 30-49 year-olds, 67% of 50-64 year-olds, and just 54% of search users age 65 and older.

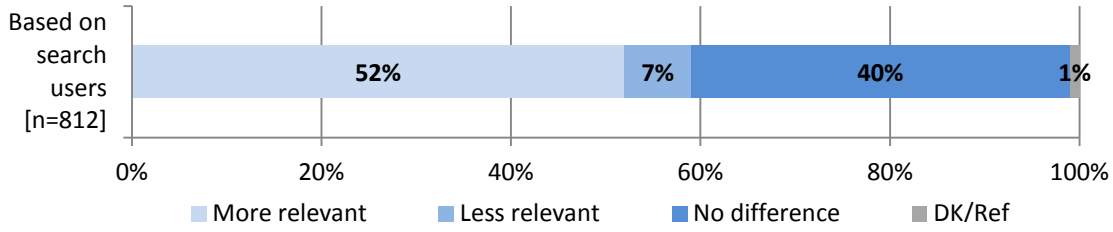
Where accuracy and trustworthiness are concerned, women are slightly more likely than men (76% v. 69%) to feel that all or most of the results they get are accurate and trustworthy. Search users living in the highest income households are also slightly more likely than others to believe that all or most of their results can be trusted.

Relevance and quality over time

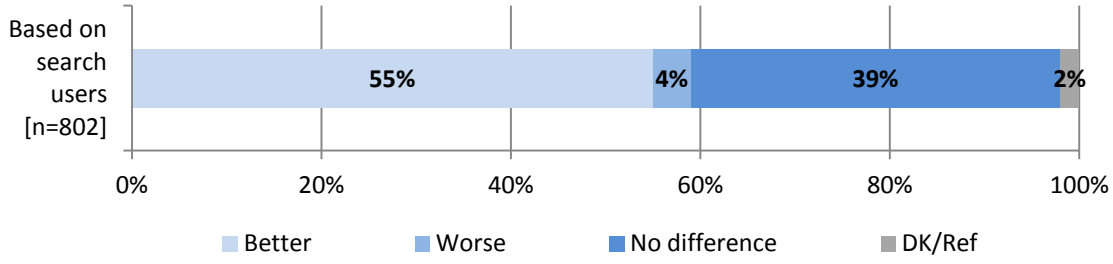
Half of adult search users (52%) say search results have gotten *more relevant and useful* over time, while just 7% see them as getting less relevant or useful. The remaining 40% see no change over time. A similar question about changes in the *quality* of information over time yields similar results. Just over half of adult search users (55%) say that in their experience the quality of search results has gotten better over time, while 4% say the quality has gotten worse.

Most adult search engine users say the relevance and quality of results are improving over time

Overall, in your experience, are search engine results getting MORE relevant and useful over time, LESS relevant and useful, or have you not seen any real difference over time?



Overall, in your experience, is the QUALITY of the information you get using search engines getting BETTER over time, WORSE over time, or have you not seen any real difference?

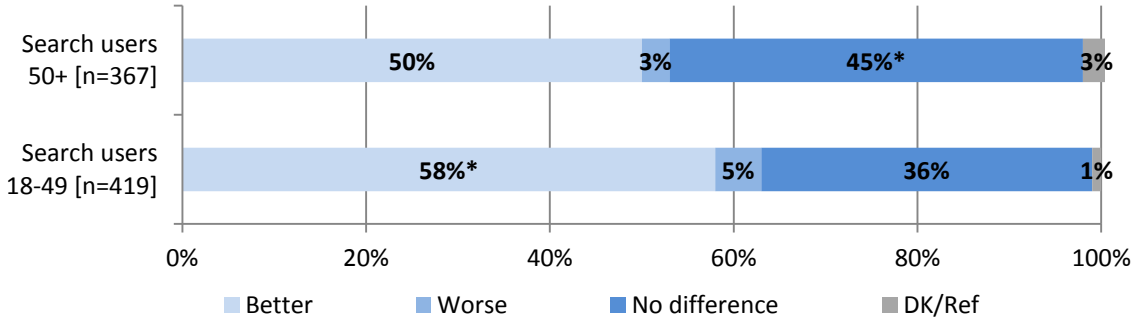


Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Winter 2012 Tracking Survey, January 20-February 19, 2012. N=2,253 adults, age 18 and older, including 901 cell phone interviews. Interviews conducted in English and Spanish.

Adult search users under age 50 are slightly more likely than older search users to feel the quality of search results is improving over time. Older adult search users, in contrast, are more likely to see no difference in quality. There are no notable demographic differences where perceptions of relevance are concerned.

Search users under age 50 are slightly more likely to say the quality of results is improving over time

Overall, in your experience, is the QUALITY of the information you get using search engines getting BETTER over time, WORSE over time, or have you not seen any real difference?



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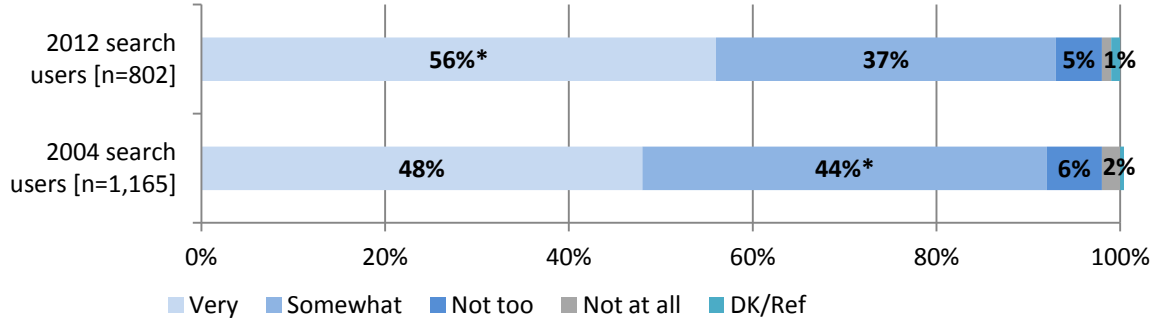
Searchers' experiences and perceptions of their own abilities

Search engine users not only have confidence in the information they get using these tools, they also have confidence in their own search abilities and report finding what they are looking for most or all of the time.

In 2012, just over half of search users (56%) say they are *very confident* in their search abilities, which is a small but significant increase over 2004 when 48% felt this confident. Another 37% of search users today describe themselves as *somewhat* confident, with fewer than one in ten saying they are *not too* or *not at all* confident in their ability to use search engines to find information online.

Search users are only slightly more confident in their search abilities than they were in 2004

How CONFIDENT do you feel about your own searching abilities when using a search engine to find information online?



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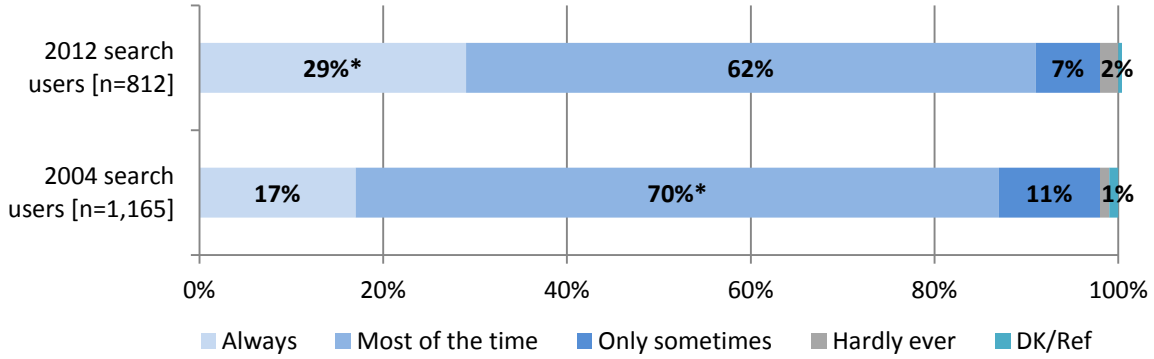
Search users under age 50 are more likely to say they are *very* confident in their search abilities when compared with those age 50 and older (64% v. 40%), as are search users who have some college education when compared with those who do not (64% v. 45%). And while 68% of adults living in households with incomes of $75,000 or greater say they are *very* confident in their ability to find information online using search engines, the same is true of only about half of adults in all other income ranges.

In addition to expressing more confidence, search users in 2012 are also slightly more likely than they were in 2004 to say that they *always* find the information they are looking for. While 29% of search engine users today say this is the case, just 17% reported the same in 2004. Still, in both 2012 and 2004, the majority of search users say they find what they are looking for *most* of the time, but not always.

While there are few notable demographic effects in terms of one's perception of their ability to find what they are looking for, the one group that stands out in this regard is adults living in the lowest income households. This group is more likely than any other to say they *always* find what they are looking for, with 37% reporting this.

Search users in 2012 are more likely to report always finding the information they are searching for

When you use a search engine to look for information online, how often do you actually FIND the information you're looking for?



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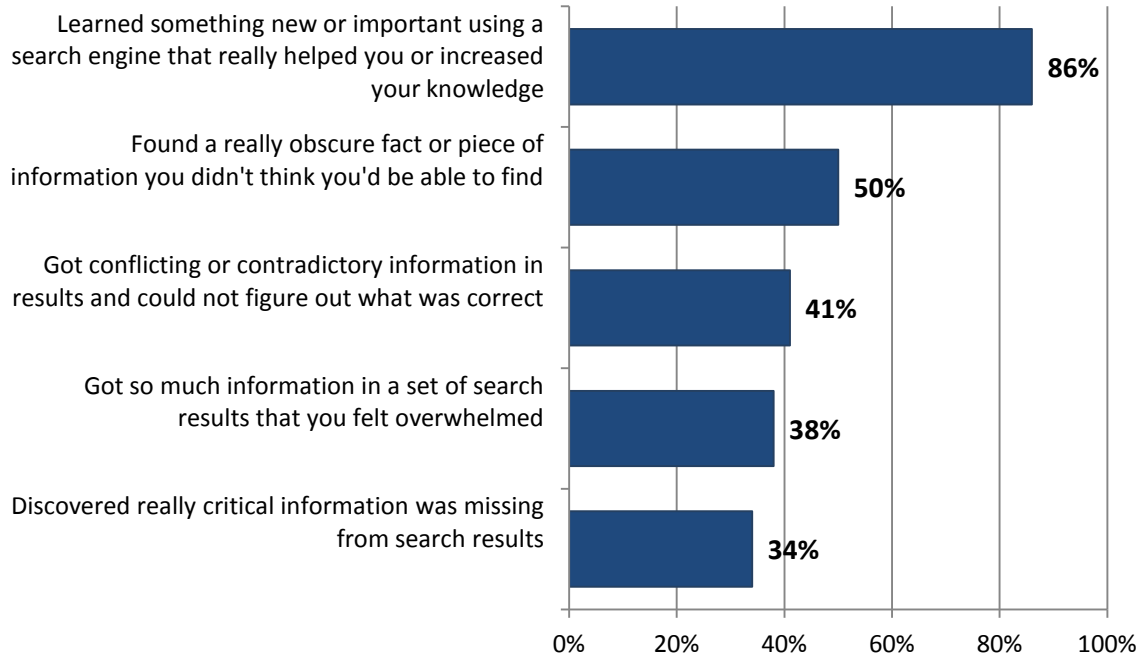
More search users report more positive experiences than negative experiences

Given the largely positive view of the quality of information search engines yield, and their own search abilities, it is not surprising that many search users report positive experiences using these tools. More than eight in ten searchers say they have learned something new or important using a search engine that really helped them or increased their knowledge. And half say they were able to find a really obscure fact or piece of information using a search engine.

Yet despite these positive occurrences, many respondents also report having experienced the downside of search. Four in ten searchers say they have gotten conflicting or contradictory search results and could not figure out what information was correct. About four in ten also say they have gotten so much information in a set of search results that they felt overwhelmed. About one in three have had the experience of discovering that really critical or important information was missing from search results they got.

More adult search users report positive experiences than negative experiences

% of adult search engine users who have experienced each of the following…



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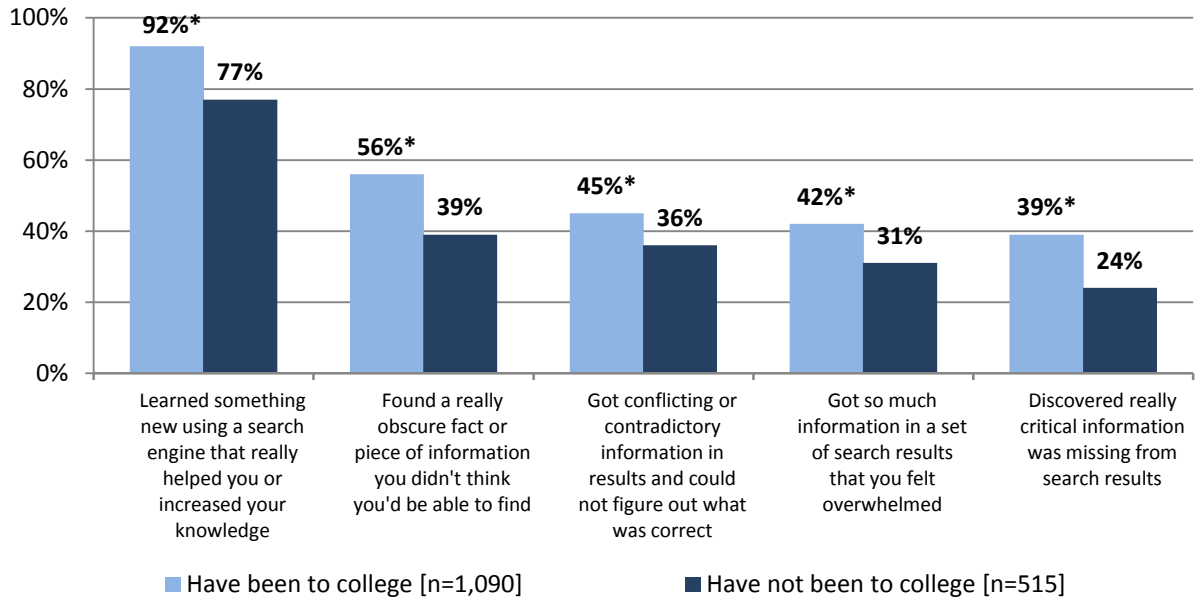
The experiences search engine users report vary slightly by education level, sex, and age. For example, college educated search engine users are more likely than those with less education to report having all five of the experiences asked about in the survey. And men are more likely than women to report finding obscure facts via search engines, getting conflicting information, and discovering that critical information is missing from their results.

College educated search users are more likely to report having both positive and negative experiences

% of each group who have experienced each of the following…



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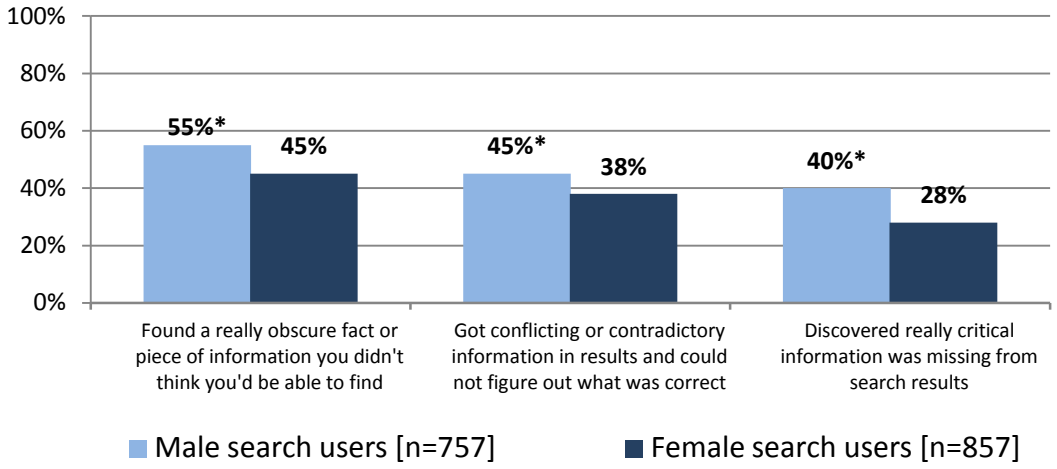
Among adult search users, one's experiences using search engines also vary by age. Adults age 30-49, for example, are more likely than both their older and younger counterparts to report finding obscure information using search engines. Young adults, in contrast, are most likely to report getting conflicting or contradictory information in a set of results. The oldest adults, those age 50 and older, are most likely to report feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information in search results and least likely to report finding that critical information was missing from their search results.

Male search users are more likely to report missing or conflicting information, but also finding obscure information

% of each group who have experienced each of the following…



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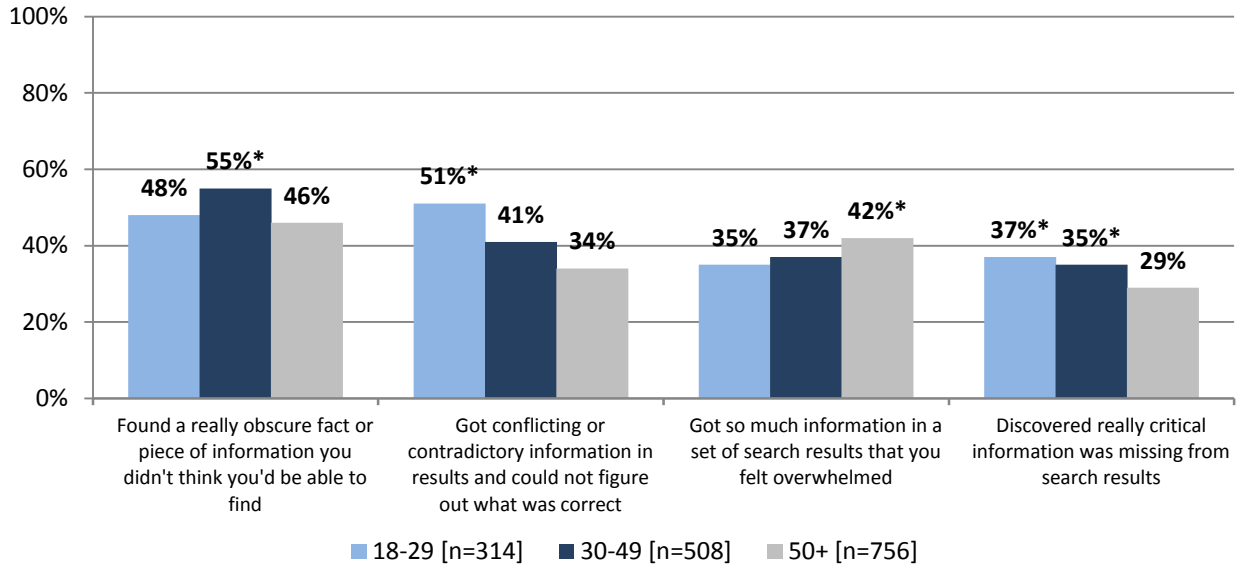
Some search users' experiences vary by age

% of each group who have experienced each of the following…



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Most have negative views of search engines and other sites collecting information about them

The survey asked respondents their views of search engines and other websites collecting information about them and using it to either shape their search results or target advertising to them. Overall, attitudes toward these practices are mixed, but the majority of internet and search users express disapproval.

This is especially relevant as Google implements a new privacy policy in which information about an individual's online behavior when they are signed in on any of Google's sites (including its search engine, Google+ social networking site, YouTube video-sharing site, and Gmail) can be collected and combined into a cohesive user profile. As the firm put it in a blog post:

> "If you're signed in to Google, you expect our products to work really beautifully together. For example, if you're working on Google Docs and you want to share it with someone on Gmail, you want their email right there ready to use. Our privacy policies have always allowed us to combine information from different products with your account—effectively using your data to provide you with a better service. However, we've been restricted in our ability to combine your YouTube and Search histories with other information in your account. Our new Privacy Policy gets rid of those inconsistencies so we can make more of your information available to you when using Google."[3]

The company argues that the value of these user profiles is their ability to signal to marketers which products are likely to appeal to different individuals, thereby allowing them to target online advertising to those most likely to find it relevant and purchase products. Some privacy and consumer advocates argue that many consumers do not want to have personal information about them collected and that profiling process is often confusing to consumers, who don't know how they are being tracked and what profiling procedures determine what ads they see.

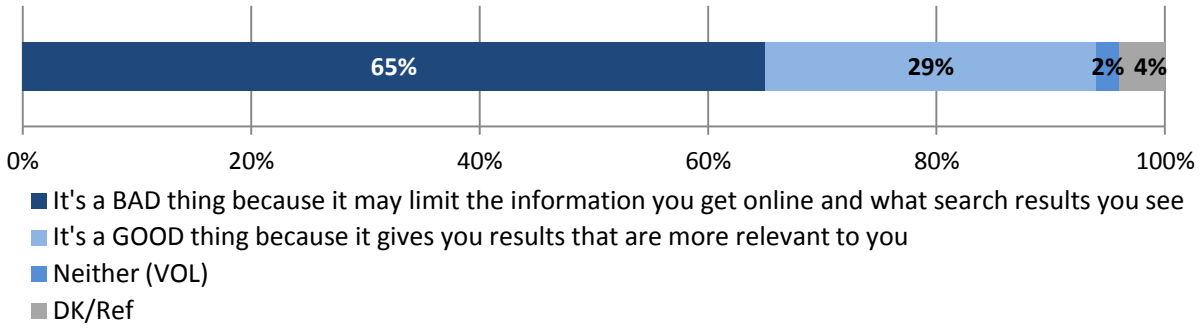
Our questions were designed to test these arguments. Two different questions probed searchers about whether they think it is okay for search engines to use information about them to rank their future search results. In the first version of the question, two-thirds of searchers feel it is a bad thing if a search engine collected information about their searches and then used it to rank their future search results, because it may limit the information you get online and what search results you see. Some 29% view the practice of tailoring search results favorably.

[3] See: http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2012/02/googles-new-privacy-policy.html

Two-thirds of search users view personalized search results as a bad thing

If a search engine kept track of what you search for, and then used that information to personalize your future search results, how would you feel about that?

based on search users [n=812]



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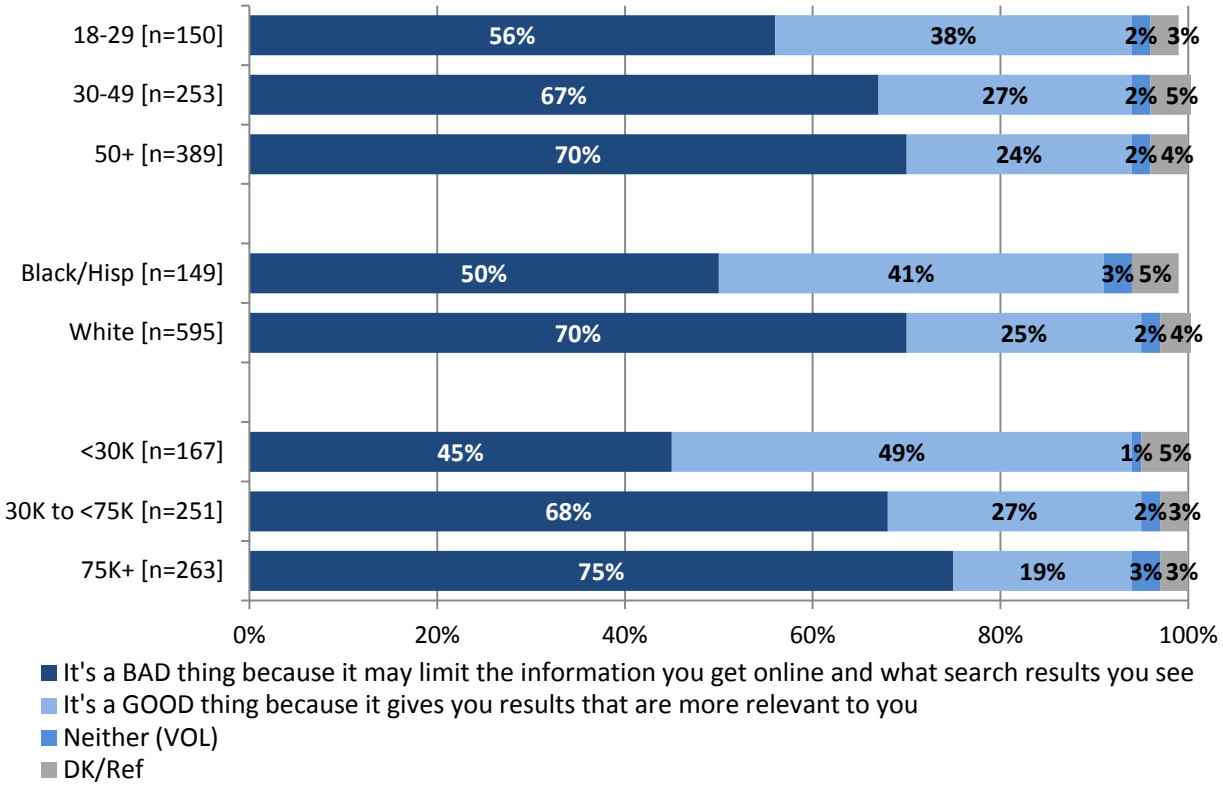
Search users' views of search engines collecting information about them vary slightly by age, race/ethnicity, and income. Younger search users (age 18-29) tend to view the practice more favorably, as do African-American/Hispanic adults when compared with white search users. Search users in the lowest income category (household income less than $30,000 annually) are also more likely than higher income search users to say the practice of personalizing search results based on collected information about users is a good thing.

Perceptions of personalized search results vary by age, race/ethnicity, and income

If a search engine kept track of what you search for, and then used that information to personalize your future search results, how would you feel about that?



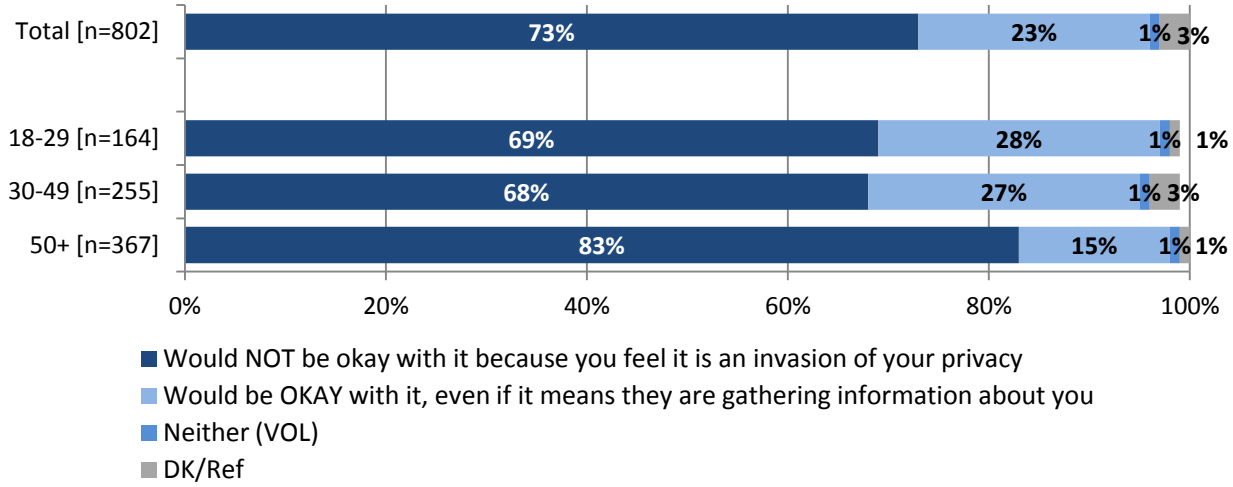
Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Winter 2012 Tracking Survey, January 20-February 19, 2012. N=2,253 adults, age 18 and older, including 901 cell phone interviews. Interviews conducted in English and Spanish.

A different version of the question asking about personalized search results yields even more negative views. Almost three-quarters of searchers say they would NOT BE OKAY with a search engine keeping track of their searches and using that information to personalize their future search results because they see it as an invasion of privacy. This view holds constant across most demographic groups, with the exception of those age 50 and older, who are especially likely to view the practice negatively.

Three-quarters of search users say collecting user information to personalize search results is not okay

If a search engine kept track of what you search for, and then used that information to personalize your future search results, how would you feel about that?

Based on search users [n=802]



Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Winter 2012 Tracking Survey, January 20-February 19, 2012. N=2,253 adults, age 18 and older, including 901 cell phone interviews. Interviews conducted in English and Spanish.

Targeted advertising: 59% of internet users have noticed it, but most don't like it

In addition to asking search users about personalized search results, all internet users were asked whether they had noticed ads being targeted to them online and more broadly, their opinion of targeted advertising. A majority (59%) say they themselves have noticed targeted advertising online – specifically, they have noticed advertisements online that are directly related to things they had recently searched for or sites they had recently visited.

Who experiences targeted advertising online?

Have you, personally, ever noticed advertisements online that are directly related to things you have recently searched for or sites you have recently visited, or has this never happened to you?

	% of each group answering "yes"
All online adults [n=1,729]	**59%**
Gender	
Male [n=804]	62*
Female [n=925]	56
Race/Ethnicity	
White [n=1,229]	62*
African American [n=172]	51
Hispanic [n=184]	46
Age	
18-29 [n=316]	62*
30-49 [n=532]	62*
50-64 [n=521]	56*
65+ [n=320]	47
Education	
Some high school [n=108]	38
High school [n=465]	44
Some college [n=447]	64*
College graduate [n=698]	73*
Household income	
<$30,000 [n=390]	48
$30,000-$49,999 [n=290]	57
$50,000-$74,999 [n=250]	67*
$75,000+ [n=523]	69*

Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Winter 2012 Tracking Survey, January 20-February 19, 2012. N=2,253 adults, age 18 and older, including 901 cell phone interviews. Interviews conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for total internet users. An asterisk (*) indicates a significant difference across groups at the .95 confidence level.

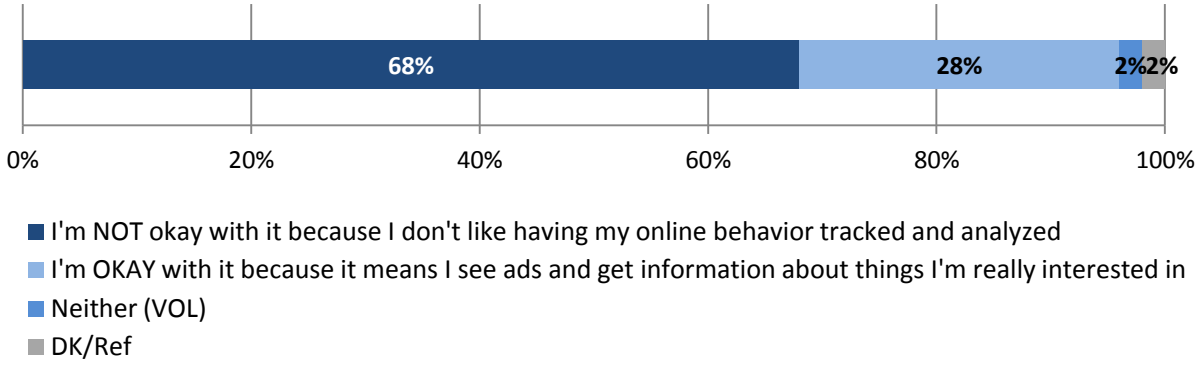
The demographic groups most likely to report noticing targeted advertising online are men, white internet users, those under age 65, those who have been to college, and those living in higher income households. Three-quarters (73%) of college graduates have noticed online ads related to things they recently searched for or sites they recently visited, significantly higher than online adults with lower educational attainment. Likewise, online adults living in households with annual incomes of $75,000 or greater are also especially likely to notice such ads, with 69% reporting having this experience.

Internet users were then asked how they feel about the practice of online targeted advertising. Roughly two-thirds of internet users (68%) have an unfavorable view of the practice, saying they are not okay with targeted advertising because they do not like having their online behavior tracked and analyzed. Some 28% said they are okay with targeted advertising because it means they see advertisements and get information about things they are really interested in.

Two-thirds of internet users view online targeted advertising negatively

Which of the following statements comes closest to how you, personally, feel about TARGETED ADVERTISING being used online – even if neither is exactly right?

Asked of adult internet users [n=1,729]



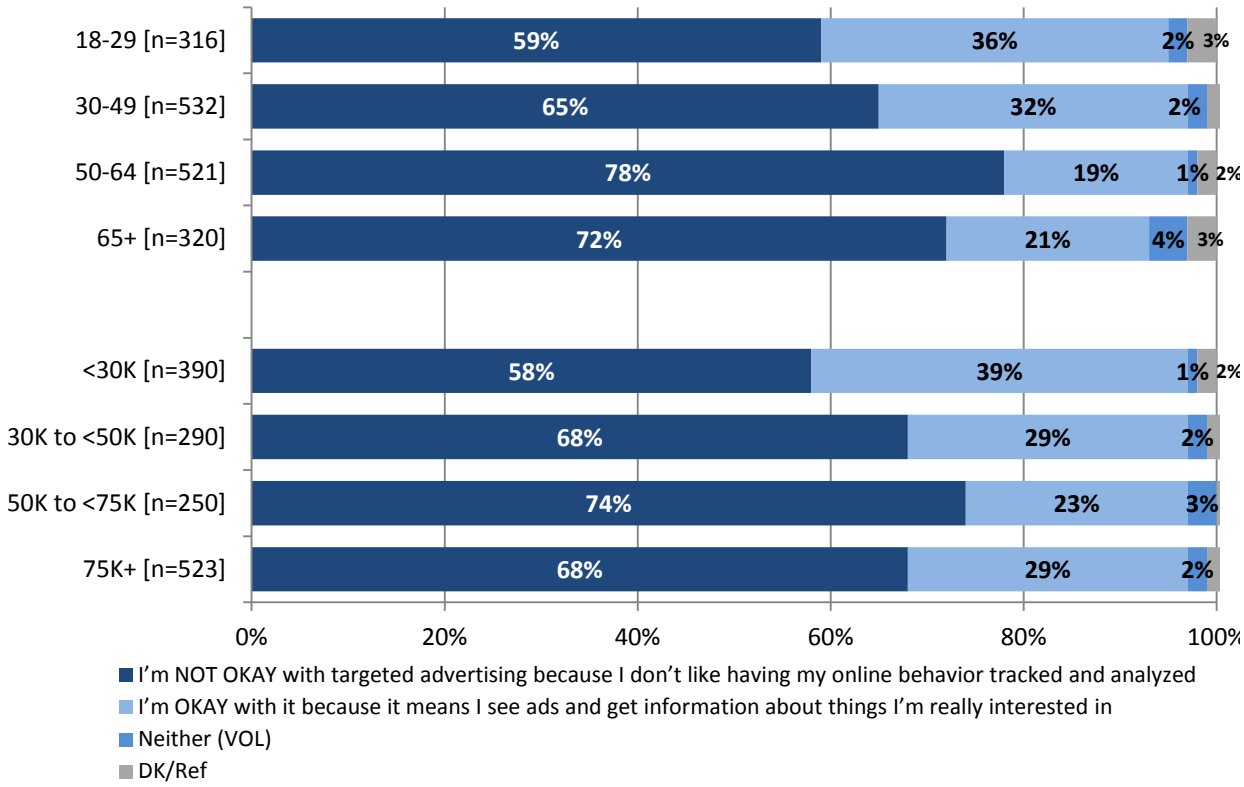
Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Winter 2012 Tracking Survey, January 20-February 19, 2012. N=2,253 adults, age 18 and older, including 901 cell phone interviews. Interviews conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for internet users.

While a majority of every demographic group says they are not okay with online targeted advertising, younger internet users and those in the lowest income households are more likely than others to view the practice favorably. Yet, even among those groups, almost six in ten say they are not okay with targeted ads because they do not like having their online behavior tracked and analyzed.

Views of targeted advertising vary by age and income

Which of the following statements comes closest to how you, personally, feel about TARGETED ADVERTISING being used online – even if neither is exactly right?

Asked of adult internet users [n=1,729]



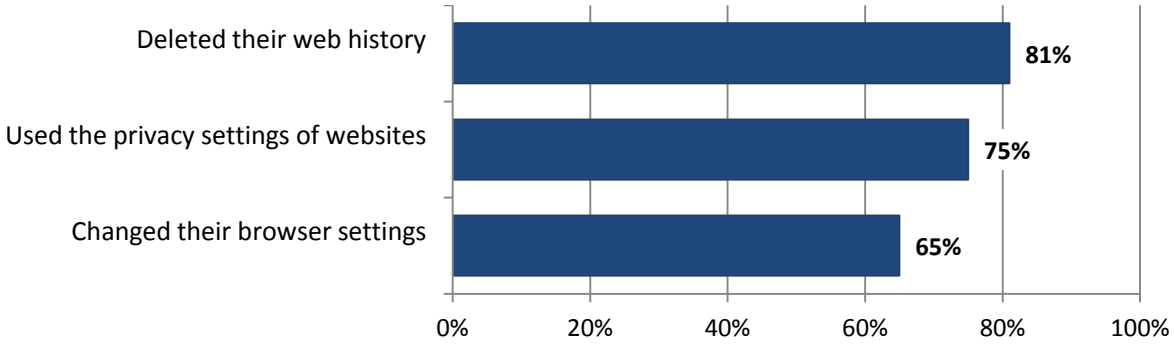
Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Winter 2012 Tracking Survey, January 20-February 19, 2012. N=2,253 adults, age 18 and older, including 901 cell phone interviews. Interviews conducted in English and Spanish.

Most internet users say they do not know how to limit the information that is collected about them by a website

Just 38% of internet users say they are generally aware of ways they themselves can limit how much information about them is collected by a website. Among this group, one common strategy people use to limit personal data collection is to delete their web history: 81% of those who know ways to manage the capture of their data do this. Some 75% of this group uses the privacy settings of websites to control what's captured about them. And 65% change their browser settings to limit the information that is collected.[4]

Just 38% of online adults say they are aware of ways to limit how much personal information websites can collect about them

The percent of those who are aware of ways to limit information who have done each of the following…



Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Winter 2012 Tracking Survey, January 20-February 19, 2012. N=2,253 adults, age 18 and older, including 901 cell phone interviews. Interviews conducted in English and Spanish.

Online men are significantly more likely than women to report knowing ways to limit how much personal information websites can collect about them, as are white online adults when compared with African-Americans and Hispanics. Moreover, online adults who have been to college and those under age 50 are more likely than other online adults to report knowing how to do this.

[4] There are a range of other strategies that users can employ, including the deletion of cookies and the use of anonymyzing software and proxies that were not part of this survey.

Who knows how to limit websites' access to their personal information online?

Are you aware of any ways internet users like yourself can limit how much personal information websites collect about you, or are you not aware of any ways to do this?

	% of each group answering "yes"
All online adults [n=1,729]	**38%**
Gender	
Male [n=804]	42*
Female [n=925]	35
Race/Ethnicity	
White [n=1,229]	41*
African American [n=172]	34
Hispanic [n=184]	27
Age	
18-29 [n=316]	41*
30-49 [n=532]	42*
50-64 [n=521]	34*
65+ [n=320]	27
Education	
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College graduate [n=698]	44*
Household income	
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$75,000+ [n=523]	44*

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Methodology

This report is based on the findings of a survey on Americans' use of the Internet. The results in this report are based on data from telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International from January 20 to February 19, 2012, among a sample of 2,253 adults, age 18 and older. Telephone interviews were conducted in English and Spanish by landline (1,352) and cell phone (901, including 440 without a landline phone). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 2.3 percentage points. For results based Internet users (n=1,729), the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.7 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting telephone surveys may introduce some error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all adults in the continental United States who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. Both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC (SSI) according to PSRAI specifications. Numbers for the landline sample were selected with probabilities in proportion to their share of listed telephone households from active blocks (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained three or more residential directory listings. The cellular sample was not list-assisted, but was drawn through a systematic sampling from dedicated wireless 100-blocks and shared service 100-blocks with no directory-listed landline numbers.

New sample was released daily and was kept in the field for at least five days. The sample was released in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger population. This ensures that complete call procedures were followed for the entire sample. At least 7 attempts were made to complete an interview at a sampled telephone number. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making contact with a potential respondent. Each number received at least one daytime call in an attempt to find someone available. For the landline sample, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest adult male or female currently at home based on a random rotation. If no male/female was available, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest adult of the other gender. For the cellular sample, interviews were conducted with the person who answered the phone. Interviewers verified that the person was an adult and in a safe place before administering the survey. Cellular sample respondents were offered a post-paid cash incentive for their participation. All interviews completed on any given day were considered to be the final sample for that day.

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to compensate for sample designs and patterns of non-response that might bias results. A two-stage weighting procedure was used to weight this dual-frame sample. The first-stage corrected for different probabilities of selection associated with the number of adults in each household and each respondent's telephone usage patterns.[5] This weighting also adjusts for the overlapping landline and cell sample frames and the relative sizes of each frame and each sample.

[5] i.e., whether respondents have only a landline telephone, only a cell phone, or both kinds of telephone.

The second stage of weighting balances sample demographics to population parameters. The sample is balanced to match national population parameters for sex, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region (U.S. Census definitions), population density, and telephone usage. The Hispanic origin was split out based on nativity; U.S born and non-U.S. born. The White, non-Hispanic subgroup is also balanced on age, education and region. The basic weighting parameters came from a special analysis of the Census Bureau's 2011 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) that included all households in the United States. The population density parameter was derived from Census 2000 data. The cell phone usage parameter came from an analysis of the July-December 2010 National Health Interview Survey.[6] Following is the full disposition of all sampled telephone numbers:

Sample Disposition

Landline	Cell	
33,732	22,499	Total Numbers Dialed
1,396	274	Non-residential
1,483	47	Computer/Fax
8	----	Cell phone
14,936	8,237	Other not working
3,094	467	Additional projected not working
12,815	13,474	Working numbers
38.0%	59.9%	Working Rate
1,031	156	No Answer / Busy
4,290	5,288	Voice Mail
40	16	Other Non-Contact
7,454	8,014	Contacted numbers
58.2%	59.5%	Contact Rate
513	1,256	Callback
5,491	5,273	Refusal
1,450	1,485	Cooperating numbers
19.5%	18.5%	Cooperation Rate
67	41	Language Barrier
----	524	Child's cell phone
1,383	920	Eligible numbers
95.4%	62.0%	Eligibility Rate
31	19	Break-off
1,352	901	Completes
97.8%	97.9%	Completion Rate
11.1%	10.8%	Response Rate

[6] Blumberg SJ, Luke JV. Wireless substitution: Early release of estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, July-December, 2010. National Center for Health Statistics. June 2011.

The disposition reports all of the sampled telephone numbers ever dialed from the original telephone number samples. The response rate estimates the fraction of all eligible respondents in the sample that were ultimately interviewed. At PSRAI it is calculated by taking the product of three component rates:

- Contact rate – the proportion of working numbers where a request for interview was made
- Cooperation rate – the proportion of contacted numbers where a consent for interview was at least initially obtained, versus those refused
- Completion rate – the proportion of initially cooperating and eligible interviews that were completed

Thus the response rate for the landline sample was 11 percent. The response rate for the cellular sample was 11 percent.

Survey questions

Winter Tracking Survey 2012

Final Topline 02/22/2012

Data for January 20–February 19, 2012

Princeton Survey Research Associates International for
the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project

Sample: n=2,253 national adults, age 18 and older, including 901 cell phone interviews
Interviewing dates: 01.20.2012 – 02.19.2012

Margin of error is plus or minus 2 percentage points for results based on Total [n=2,253]
Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on internet users [n=1,729]
Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on cell phone owners [n=1,961]

Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on SNS users [n=1,047]
Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on SNS or Twitter users [n=1,062]

Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on Total who use search engines [n=1,614]
Margin of error is plus or minus 4 percentage points for results based on Form A who use search engines [n=812]
Margin of error is plus or minus 4 percentage points for results based on Form B who use search engines [n=802]

INTUSE Do you use the internet, at least occasionally?

EMLOCC Do you send or receive email, at least occasionally?[7]

	USES INTERNET	DOES NOT USE INTERNET
Current	80	20
December 2011	82	18
August 2011	78	22
May 2011	78	22
January 2011[i]	79	21
December 2010[ii]	77	23
November 2010[iii]	74	26
September 2010	74	26
May 2010	79	21
January 2010[iv]	75	25
December 2009[v]	74	26
September 2009	77	23
April 2009	79	21
December 2008	74	26
November 2008[vi]	74	26
August 2008[vii]	75	25
July 2008[viii]	77	23
May 2008[ix]	73	27

[7] Prior to January 2005, question wording was "Do you ever go online to access the Internet or World Wide Web or to send and receive email?"

April 2008[x]	73	27
January 2008[xi]	70	30
December 2007[xii]	75	25
September 2007[xiii]	73	27
February 2007[xiv]	71	29
December 2006[xv]	70	30
November 2006[xvi]	68	32
August 2006[xvii]	70	30
April 2006[xviii]	73	27
February 2006[xix]	73	27
December 2005[xx]	66	34
September 2005[xxi]	72	28
June 2005[xxii]	68	32
February 2005[xxiii]	67	33
January 2005[xxiv]	66	34

INTUSE/EMLOCC continued...

INTUSE/EMLOCC continued...

	USES INTERNET	DOES NOT USE INTERNET
Nov 23-30, 2004[xxv]	59	41
November 2004[xxvi]	61	39
June 2004[xxvii]	63	37
February 2004[xxviii]	63	37
November 2003[xxix]	64	36
August 2003[xxx]	63	37
June 2003[xxxi]	62	38
May 2003[xxxii]	63	37
March 3-11, 2003[xxxiii]	62	38
February 2003[xxxiv]	64	36
December 2002[xxxv]	57	43
November 2002[xxxvi]	61	39
October 2002[xxxvii]	59	41
September 2002[xxxviii]	61	39
July 2002[xxxix]	59	41
March/May 2002[xl]	58	42
January 2002[xli]	61	39
December 2001[xlii]	58	42
November 2001[xliii]	58	42
October 2001[xliv]	56	44
September 2001[xlv]	55	45
August 2001[xlvi]	59	41
February 2001[xlvii]	53	47
December 2000[xlviii]	59	41
November 2000[xlix]	53	47
October 2000[l]	52	48
September 2000[li]	50	50
August 2000[lii]	49	51
June 2000[liii]	47	53
May 2000[liv]	48	52

YEST1NW Did you happen to use the internet YESTERDAY?[8]

Based on all internet users [N=1,729]

	YES, USED INTERNET YESTERDAY	NO, DID NOT USE INTERNET YESTERDAY	DON'T KNOW[9]	REFUSED
Current	82	18	*	0
August 2011	76	23	*	0
May 2011	77	22	*	0
November 2010	76	24	*	*
September 2010	76	24	*	0
May 2010	78	22	*	0
January 2010	72	27	*	0
December 2009	71	28	1	*
September 2009	73	27	*	*
April 2009	73	26	1	*
December 2008	72	28	*	--
November 2008	72	27	*	--
August 2008	72	27	1	--
July 2008	71	28	1	--
May 2008	70	30	1	--
April 2008	72	28	*	--
December 2007	72	27	*	--
September 2007	68	32	*	--
February 2007	69	31	*	--
December 2006	65	34	*	--
November 2006	64	36	*	--
August 2006	66	34	*	--
April 2006	66	33	*	--
December 2005	63	36	*	--
September 2005	65	34	*	--
February 2005	60	40	*	--
January 2005	58	42	*	--
November 2004	61	39	*	--
June 2004	53	46	1	--
February 2004	55	44	*	--
November 2003	54	45	*	--
July 2003	52	47	1	--
June 2003	55	44	*	--
May 2003	58	42	*	--
March 3-11, 2003	60	40	0	--
February 2003	60	40	*	--

YEST1NW continued...

[8] Prior to January 2005, question wording was "Did you happen to go online or check your email **yesterday**?"
[9] For this question and many others throughout the topline, results for "Don't know" often reflect combined "Don't know" and "Refused" percentages. DK and REF are reported separately where available.

YEST1NW continued…

	YES, USED INTERNET YESTERDAY	NO, DID NOT USE INTERNET YESTERDAY	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
December 2002	56	44	*	--
November 2002	57	43	*	--
October 2002	57	43	0	--
September 2002	58	42	*	--
July 2002	53	47	*	--
March/May 2002	57	43	*	--
January 2002[10]	59	41	*	--
Dec. 17-23, 2001	58	42	*	--
Nov. 19-Dec. 16 2001	60	40	*	--
Oct. 19-Nov. 18 2001	61	39	*	--
Oct. 8-18 2001	51	49	1	--
October 2-7 2001	56	43	1	--
Sept 20-Oct 1 2001	57	42	1	--
Sept 12-19 2001	51	49	*	--
August 2001	56	44	*	--
February 2001[11]	59	41	*	--
Fall 2000[lv]	56	44	*	--
August 2000	50	50	*	--
June 2000	52	48	*	--
May 2000	55	45	0	--
March 2000[lvi]	60	40	*	--

WEB1 Next... Please tell me if you ever use the internet to do any of the following things. Do you ever use the internet to...[INSERT; RANDOMIZE]? / Did you happen to do this yesterday, or not?[12]

Based on all internet users [N=1,729]

	TOTAL HAVE EVER DONE THIS	DID YESTERDAY	HAVE NOT DONE THIS	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
Use an online search engine to help you find information on the Web					
Current	91	59	8	1	0
May 2011	92	59	8	*	0
May 2010	87	49	12	*	*
April 2009[13]	88	50	12	*	0
May 2008	89	49	10	*	--
December 2006	91	41	9	1	--
August 2006	88	42	11	*	--
Dec 2005	91	38	9	1	--

[10] Internet user defined as Q5=1 and Q6=1 from Aug. 2001 until Jan 2002.
[11] Internet user for Feb. 2001 defined as Q5=1 and (Q6=1 or Q6A=1-7).
[12] Prior to January 2005, question wording was "Please tell me if you ever do any of the following when you go online. Do you ever…?/Did you happen to do this yesterday, or not?" Unless otherwise noted, trends are based on all internet users for that survey.
[13] In April 2009, item was asked only of Form B internet users [N=879].

September 2005	90	41	9	*	--
June 2004	84	30	16	*	--
June 2003	89	31	10	1	--
Jan 2002	85	29	14	1	--

Q32 Next, I have a few questions about how you use online search engines... First, how often do you use search engines to find information online? Several times a day, about once a day, 3-5 days a week, 1-2 days a week, once every few weeks, or less often?

Based on those who use search engines

	CURRENT		JUNE 2004[14]
%	37	Several times a day	23
	17	About once a day	12
	16	3 to 5 days a week	18
	15	1 to 2 days a week	18
	7	Once every few weeks	15
	8	Less often	14
	1	Never (VOL.)	n/a
	*	Don't know	*
	*	Refused	--
	[n=1,614]		[n=1,165]

Q33 Which search engine do you use MOST OFTEN? [PRECODED OPEN-END]

Based on those who use search engines

	CURRENT		JUNE 2004[15]
%	83	Google	47
	6	Yahoo Search	26
	3	Bing	n/a
	*	AOL	5
	*	Ask	2
	*	Lycos	n/a
	*	MyWebSearch	n/a
	0	Dogpile	n/a
	0	WebCrawler	n/a
	2	Other (SPECIFY)	12
	1	None/Don't use any regularly (VOL.)	1
	3	Don't know	7
	*	Refused	--
	[n=1,614]		[n=1,165]

[14] In June 2004, question was asked of internet users who use search engines.
[15] In June 2004, question was asked of internet users who use search engines.

Q34a In general, do you think Internet search engines are a fair and unbiased source of information, or do you think search engines are NOT a fair and unbiased source?

Based on Form A respondents who use search engines

	CURRENT		JUNE 2004[16]
%	66	Yes, they are a fair and unbiased source of information	68
	20	No, they are NOT a fair and unbiased source of information	19
	3	Depends (VOL.)	5
	9	Don't know	8
	1	Refused	--
	[n=812]		[n=1,165]

Q34b In general, how much of the information you find using search engines do you think is accurate or trustworthy? Would you say... [READ 1-5]

Based on Form B respondents who use search engines [N=802]

	CURRENT	
%	28	All or almost all
	45	Most
	22	Some
	2	Very little
	1	None at all
	1	(DO NOT READ) Don't know
	*	(DO NOT READ) Refused

Q35a When you use a search engine to look for information online, how often do you actually FIND the information you're looking for? [READ 1-4]

Based on Form A respondents who use search engines

	CURRENT		JUNE 2004[17]
%	29	Always	17
	62	Most of the time	70
	7	Only some of the time	11
	2	Hardly ever	1
	1	(DO NOT READ) Don't know	1
	0	(DO NOT READ) Refused	--
	[n=812]		[n=1,165]

Q35b How CONFIDENT do you feel about your own searching abilities when using a search engine to find information online? [READ 1-4]

Based on Form B respondents who use search engines

CURRENT	JUNE 2004[18]

[16] In June 2004, question was asked of internet users who use search engines.
[17] In June 2004, question was asked of internet users who use search engines.
[18] In June 2004, question was asked of internet users who use search engines.

%	56	Very confident	48
	37	Somewhat confident	44
	5	Not too confident	6
	1	Not confident at all	2
	*	(DO NOT READ) Don't know	*
	*	(DO NOT READ) Refused	--
	[n=802]		[n=1,165]

Q36 Thinking about recent searches you have done online using a search engine... Have you ever... [INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE], or has this never happened?

Based on those who use search engines [N=1,614]

	YES, HAS HAPPENED	NO, HAS NOT HAPPENED	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Discovered that really critical or important information was missing from the search results you got	34	64	2	*
b. Learned something new or important using a search engine that really helped you or increased your knowledge	86	13	1	0
c. Gotten so much information in a set of search results that you felt overwhelmed	38	61	*	*
d. Gotten conflicting or contradictory search results and could not figure out what information was correct	41	57	1	*
e. Found a really obscure fact or piece of information using a search engine that you didn't think you'd be able to find	50	49	1	*

Q37a Overall, in your experience, are search engine results getting MORE relevant and useful over time, LESS relevant and useful, or have you not seen any real difference over time?

Based on Form A respondents who use search engines [N=812]

	CURRENT	
%	52	MORE relevant and useful
	7	LESS relevant and useful
	40	No difference over time
	1	Don't know
	*	Refused

Q37b Overall, in your experience, is the QUALITY of the information you get using search engines getting BETTER over time, WORSE over time, or have you not seen any real difference?

Based on Form B respondents who use search engines [N=802]

	CURRENT	
%	55	Quality getting better

4	Quality getting worse
39	No difference in quality over time
2	Don't know
*	Refused

Q38a If a search engine kept track of what you search for, and then used that information to personalize your future search results, how would you feel about that? Would you say... [READ AND ROTATE 1-2]?

Based on Form A respondents who use search engines [N=812]

	CURRENT	
%	65	It's a BAD thing if a search engine collected information about your searches and then used it to rank your future search results, because it may limit the information you get online and what search results you see (OR)
	29	It's a GOOD thing if a search engine collected information about your searches and then used it to rank your future search results, because it gives you results that are more relevant to you (OR)
	2	(DO NOT READ) Neither of these
	3	(DO NOT READ) Don't know
	1	(DO NOT READ) Refused

Q38b If a search engine kept track of what you search for, and then used that information to personalize your future search results, how would you feel about that? Would you...[READ AND ROTATE 1-2]?

Based on Form B respondents who use search engines [N=802]

	CURRENT	
%	73	NOT BE OKAY with a search engine keeping track of your searches and using that information to personalize your future search results because you feel it is an invasion of privacy (OR)
	23	Be OKAY with a search engine keeping track of your searches and using that information to personalize your future search results, even if it means they are gathering information about you (OR)
	1	(DO NOT READ) Neither of these
	2	(DO NOT READ) Don't know
	1	(DO NOT READ) Refused

Q39 As you may know, businesses sometimes use TARGETED ADVERTISING to reach online consumers. Targeted advertising uses information about a person's online behavior collected by websites and search engines to determine what advertisements that person will see online.

Have you, personally, ever noticed advertisements online that are directly related to things you have recently searched for or sites you have recently visited, or has this never happened to you?

Based on all internet users [N=1,729]

	CURRENT	
%	59	Yes, I've noticed this
	39	No, this hasn't happened to me
	2	Don't know
	*	Refused

Q40 Which of the following statements comes closest to how you, personally, feel about TARGETED ADVERTISING being used online – even if neither is exactly right? [READ AND ROTATE 1-2]

Based on all internet users [N=1,729]

	CURRENT	
%	68	I'm NOT OKAY with targeted advertising because I don't like having my online behavior tracked and analyzed (OR)
	28	I'm OKAY with targeted advertising because it means I see advertisements and get information about things I'm really interested in (OR)
	2	(DO NOT READ) Neither of these
	1	(DO NOT READ) Don't know
	1	(DO NOT READ) Refused

Q41 Are you aware of any ways internet users like yourself can limit how much personal information websites collect about you, or are you not aware of any ways to do this?

Based on all internet users [N=1,729]

	CURRENT	
%	38	Yes, aware of ways to do this
	60	No, not aware of any ways to do this
	1	Don't know
	*	Refused

Q42 Have you, personally, done any of the following to limit the information websites gather about you? (First,/Next,) How about...[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE]? Have you done this, or not?

Based on those who are aware of ways to limit personal information collected by websites [N=633]

	YES, HAVE DONE THIS	NO, HAVE NOT DONE THIS	DON'T KNOW	REFUSED
a. Changed your browser settings	65	33	2	*
b. Deleted your web history	81	18	*	*
c. Used the privacy settings of websites	75	24	1	*

[i] January 2011 trends based on the Pew Internet Project/Project for Excellence in Journalism/Knight Foundation "Local News survey," conducted January 12-25, 2011 [N=2,251, including 750 cell phone interviews].

[ii] December 2010 trends based on the Social Side of the Internet survey, conducted November 23–December 21, 2010 [N=2,303, including 748 cell phone interviews].

[iii] November 2010 trends based on the Post-Election Tracking Survey 2010, conducted November 3-24, 2010 [N=2,257, including 755 cell phone interviews].

[iv] January 2010 trends based on the Online News survey, conducted December 28, 2009 – January 19, 2010 [N=2,259, including 562 cell phone interviews].

[v] December 2009 trends based on the Fall Tracking "E-Government" survey, conducted November 30 – December 27, 2009 [N=2,258, including 565 cell phone interviews].

[vi] November 2008 trends based on the Post-Election 2008 Tracking survey, conducted November 20-December 4, 2008 [N=2,254].

[vii] August 2008 trends based on the August Tracking 2008 survey, conducted August 12-31, 2008 [N=2,251].

[viii] July 2008 trends based on the Personal Networks and Community survey, conducted July 9-August 10, 2008 [N=2,512, including 505 cell phone interviews]

[ix] May 2008 trends based on the Spring Tracking 2008 survey, conducted April 8-May 11, 2008 [N=2,251].

[x] April 2008 trends based on the Networked Workers survey, conducted March 27-April 14, 2008. Most questions were asked only of full- or part-time workers [N=1,000], but trend results shown here reflect the total sample [N=2,134].

[xi] January 2008 trends based on the Networked Families survey, conducted December 13, 2007-January 13, 2008 [N=2,252].

[xii] December 2007 trends based on the Annual Gadgets survey, conducted October 24-December 2, 2007 [N=2,054, including 500 cell phone interviews].

[xiii] September 2007 trends based on the Consumer Choice survey, conducted August 3-September 5, 2007 [N=2,400, oversample of 129 cell phone interviews].

[xiv] February 2007 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted February 15-March 7, 2007 [N=2,200].

[xv] December 2006 trends based on daily tracking survey, conducted November 30 - December 30, 2006 [N=2,373].

[xvi] November 2006 trends based on Post-Election tracking survey, conducted Nov. 8-Dec. 4, 2006 [N=2,562]. This includes an RDD sample [N=2,362] and a cell phone only sample [N=200]. Results reflect combined samples, where applicable.

[xvii] August 2006 trends based on daily tracking survey, conducted August 1-31, 2006 [N=2,928].

[xviii] April 2006 trends based on the Annual Gadgets survey, conducted Feb. 15-Apr. 6, 2006 [N=4,001].

[xix] February 2006 trends based on the Exploratorium Survey, conducted Jan. 9-Feb. 6, 2006 [N=2,000].

[xx] December 2005 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 31, 2005 [N=3,011].

[xxi] September 2005 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted Sept. 14-Oct.13, 2005 [N=2,251].

[xxii] June 2005 trends based on the Spyware Survey, conducted May 4-June 7, 2005 [N=2,001].

[xxiii] February 2005 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted Feb. 21-March 21, 2005 [N=2,201].

[xxiv] January 2005 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted Jan. 13-Feb.9, 2005 [N=2,201].

[xxv] November 23-30, 2004 trends based on the November 2004 Activity Tracking Survey, conducted November 23-30, 2004 [N=914].

[xxvi] November 2004 trends based on the November Post-Election Tracking Survey, conducted Nov 4-Nov 22, 2004 [N=2,200].

[xxvii] June 2004 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted May 14-June 17, 2004 [N=2,200].

[xxviii] February 2004 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted February 3-March 1, 2004 [N=2,204].

[xxix] November 2003 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted November 18-December 14, 2003 [N=2,013].

[xxx] August 2003 trends based on 'E-Government' survey conducted June 25-August 3, 2003 [N=2,925].

[xxxi] June 2003 trends based on 'Internet Spam' survey conducted June 10-24, 2003 [N=2,200].

[xxxii] May 2003 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted April 29-May 20, 2003 [N=1,632].

[xxxiii] March 3-11, 2003 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted March 3-11, 2003 [N=743].

[xxxiv] February 2003 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted February 12-March 2, 2003 [N=1,611].

[xxxv] December 2002 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted Nov. 25–Dec. 22, 2002 [N=2,038].

[xxxvi] November 2002 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted October 30-November 24, 2002 [N=2,745].

[xxxvii] October 2002 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted October 7-27, 2002 [N=1,677].

[xxxviii] September 2002 trends based on daily tracking survey conducted September 9-October 6, 2002 [N=2,092].

[xxxix] July 2002 trends based on 'Sept. 11th-The Impact Online' survey conducted June 26-July 26, 2002 [N=2,501].

[xl] March/May 2002 trends based on daily tracking surveys conducted March 1-31, 2002 and May 2-19, 2002.

[xli] January 2002 trends based on a daily tracking survey conducted January 3-31, 2002 [N=2,391].

[xlii] December 2001 trends represent a total tracking period of December 1-23, 2001 [N=3,214]. This tracking period based on daily tracking surveys conducted December 17-23, 2001 and November 19-December 16, 2001.

[xliii] November 2001 trends represent a total tracking period of November 1-30, 2001 [N=2,119]. This tracking period based on daily tracking surveys conducted October 19 – November 18, 2001 and November 19 – December 16, 2001.

[xliv] October 2001 trends represent a total tracking period of October 1-31, 2001 [N=1,924]. This tracking period based on daily tracking surveys conducted September 20 – October 1, 2001, October 2-7, 2001, October 8-18, 2001, and October 19 – November 18, 2001.

[xlv] September 2001 trends represent a total tracking period of September 1-30, 2001 [N=742]. This tracking period based on daily tracking surveys conducted August 13-September 10, 2001, September 12-19, 2001 and September 20 – October 1, 2001.

[xlvi] August 2001 trends represent a total tracking period of August 12-31, 2001 [N=1,505]. This tracking period based on a daily tracking survey conducted August 13-September 10, 2001.

[xlvii] February 2001 trends based on a daily tracking survey conducted February 1, 2001-March 1, 2001 [N=2,096].

[xlviii] December 2000 trends based on a daily tracking survey conducted December 2-22, 2000 [N=2,383].

[xlix] November 2000 trends based on a daily tracking survey conducted November 2, 2000 – December 1 [N=6,322].

[l] October 2000 trends based on a daily tracking survey conducted October 2 – November 1, 2000 [N=3,336].

[li] September 2000 trends based on a daily tracking survey conducted September 15 – October 1, 2000 [N=1,302].

[lii] August 2000 trends based on a daily tracking survey conducted July 24 – August 20, 2000 [N=2,109].

[liii] June 2000 trends based on a daily tracking survey conducted May 2 – June 30, 2000 [N=4,606].

[liv] May 2000 trends based on a daily tracking survey conducted April 1 – May 1, 2000 [N=2,503].

[lv] Fall 2000 figures based on a daily tracking survey conducted September 15 – December 22, 2000 [N=13,342].

[lvi] March 2000 figures based on a daily tracking survey conducted March 1 – March 31, 2000 [N=3,533].