

**For immediate release -- May 19, 2000**

**PEW INTERNET TRACKING REPORT**

**The Love Bug: Few Take an Online Sick Day Due to Virus**

The “Love Bug” virus, which interrupted online life in many places around the world in the first week of May, afflicted a surprisingly small number of American Internet users, according to a poll conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life Project. In a tracking poll conducted the day the virus struck and one week thereafter, 15% of American adults who use email reported that they received the email containing the ILOVEYOU virus. Four percent of email users opened the file, thereby infecting their computer. Even though a small proportion of users received the Love Bug email, approximately 12 million Americans received the email and more than 3 million email users activated the virus.

The virus did not depress online activity in the United States. On Thursday, May 4, the day the Love Bug struck in the United States, 26% of all Americans went online to send or read email, which is normal for an average day. The Pew Internet and American Life Project’s May 10 report “Tracking Online Life: How Women Use the Internet to Cultivate Relationships with Family and Friends” found that on a typical day, 28% of all Americans and 60% of all Internet users go online to check email and engage in at least one activity on the Web. For the months of March and April, this represents 55 million Americans emailing on an average day. Overall, 84 million people, or 45% of all Americans, are email users.

Experienced Internet users—those who have been online for more than 3 years—were much more likely to receive the Love Bug virus than new users—those who have been online for less than 6 months. Among experienced users, 24% received the email, and 6% were infected. In contrast, 10% of new users received the email and 3% were infected.

The rapid transmission of the virus and the alarm over it, along with its prevalence among experienced users, underscores the strength of network effects in the digital economy. The virus began in the Philippines and was particularly damaging to many European businesses and governments caught blindsided. TIME Magazine reported that the virus afflicted as many as 70% of computers in Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, and that the servers at the British Parliament were shut down. By the morning of May 4 in the United States, word of the virus’ threat was pervasive in many work places—this in spite of the fact that only about 1 in 7 American email users got the ILOVEYOU email and roughly 1 in 25 opened it. The virus does not appear to have kept people away from their email, possibly because of high levels of awareness among individuals and security companies.

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Email Users and the Love Bug	Percent	Number (in millions)
Yes, got the Love Bug email	15%	12
<i>Did infect computer</i>	4%	3
<i>Did not infect computer</i>	11%	9
No, did not get the Love Bug email	83%	70
Don't Know/Refused	2%	2

### Tracking online life: Methodology and results

This report is built on the findings of an innovative tracking survey of Internet activities, which was designed to get an accurate reading on the impact of the Internet on Americans' lives. Running continually since March 1, 2000, the daily poll has asked thousands of Internet users not only about what they have ever done online, but also about what they did "yesterday." Using a daily sample design, this approach measures the scope of Internet activities more accurately than conventional surveys because it focuses on activities that are fresh in respondents' minds. It also provides new insights into the range of online behavior that occurs daily. From May 5 to 14, the tracking poll interviewed 743 adults, including 357 email users, asking whether email users had received the ILOVEYOU virus email. The margin of error for the results of this question is plus or minus 6 percentage points.