

**PEW INTERNET PROJECT DATA MEMO**

**BY:** Director Lee Rainie (202-419-4500)

**RE:** Use of webcams

**DATE:** June 2005

*16% of internet users have viewed a remote person or place using a web cam*

One out of six American adult internet users (16%) have gone online to view another person or a place via a web cam. That translates into roughly 21 million people who have viewed material on web cams. And on any given day, about two million internet users are checking out remote places or people by using webcams.

These findings about web cam watching come from a nationwide phone survey of 1,450 internet users by the Pew Internet & American Life Project conducted between February 21 and March 21 this year. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus three points.

This is the first time the Project asked about use of web cams in its surveys, so it is not possible to analyze the level of growth these figures represent. However, it is likely that use of web cams has grown in recent years for several reasons: Web cams are relatively cheap – a decent cam unit can be purchased for under \$30 – and easy to set up. The spread of broadband makes it ever easier to display and access images from web cams on computers. Indeed, 19% of those with broadband at home have checked out web cam images, compared to 13% of those who have dial-up at home.

Moreover, there are growing numbers of ways that people and organizations use web cams. Web cams allow users to capture digital video and immediately transmit it over the internet. They can be used for video chats and conferencing. They have been used in reality TV shows, to view remote and environmentally important locales, to increase surveillance of city streets and factories, to allow home buyers to view construction progress, to permit commuters to check out traffic hotspots, and in communications between U.S. military personnel in Iraq and their families. Webcams have also been used in collaborative contexts—connecting doctors, students, musicians and archaeologists across the globe—and in monitoring political candidates' events.

The use of web cams appeals to all kinds of internet users. Online men are more likely than online women to have viewed images from web cams: 19% of men with internet

access have done so, compared to 13% of wired women. Another way to describe the gender gap is to say that 60% of those who have viewed web cam material are men.

However, there are no noteworthy differences in the use of web cams in other demographic categories: minorities who use the internet are just as likely as whites to have viewed web cam images; internet users in their 50s and those in their 20s watch web cams in equal proportion; those online with graduate degrees and those with high school educations are equally interested in web cam viewing; those who live in relatively well-off households are as likely as those who live in homes with less income to have looked at web cam images; and non-parents are as likely as parents to have viewed web cam material.

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The Pew Internet & American Life Project is a non-profit initiative of the Pew Research Center, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts to explore the impact of the internet on children, families, communities, health care, schools, the work place, and civic/political life. The Project is non-partisan and does not advocate for any policy outcomes. For more information, please visit our website: <http://www.pewinternet.org/>.

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Data for February 21 – March 21, 2005

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

Sample:  $n = 2,201$  adults 18 and older

Interviewing dates: 02.21.05 – 03.21.05

Margin of error is plus or minus 2 percentage points for results based on the full sample [ $n=2,201$ ]

Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on internet users [ $n=1,450$ ]

- Q6a** Do you use the internet, at least occasionally?  
**Q6b** Do you send or receive email, at least occasionally?<sup>1</sup>

	USES INTERNET	DOES NOT USE INTERNET
Current	67	33
January 2005	66	34
November 23-20, 2004	59	41
November 2004	61	39
May/June 2004	63	37
February 2004	63	37
November 2003	64	36
July 2003	63	37
June 2003	62	38
April/May 2003	63	37

- WEB1** Please tell me if you ever use the internet to do any of the following things. Do you ever use the internet to.../Did you happen to do this **yesterday**, or not?<sup>2</sup>  
**Based on internet users [N=1,450]**

	total have ever DONE THIS	DID YESTERDAY	have not done this	don't know/ refused
View live images online of a remote location or a person, using a webcam				
Current	16	2	84	*

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<sup>1</sup> 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?” In February 2005 Tracking, half the sample was asked old Q6 and half was asked new Q6a and Q6b. Current results are for both forms combined. Throughout the current topline, total internet users are defined as those who answered yes to Q6 or Q6a or Q6b.

<sup>2</sup> 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?” In February 2005 Tracking, half the sample was asked old WEB1 and half the sample was asked new WEB1. Current results are for both forms combined.