Banking, shopping, and job hunting online

Patricia Reaney, Reuters

Banking and keeping track of finances, shopping and searching for jobs are the main tasks of Internet users around the globe, according to a new international survey.

Nearly 60 percent of people in 24 countries used the web to check their bank account and other financial assets in the past 90 days, making it the most popular use of the Internet.

Shopping was not far behind at 48 percent, the Ipsos poll for Reuters showed, and 41 percent went online in search of a job.

"It is easy. You can do it any time of the day and most of the transactions don't have fees," said Keren Gottfried, research manager for Ipsos Global Public Affairs, about banking online.

Swedes were the biggest online bankers with almost 90 percent of adults using e-banking. But it has also caught on in a big way in France, Canada, Australia, Poland, South Africa and Belgium, where about 75 percent of people bank online.

But the Germans and Britons take the top prize for shopping on the web. Seventy-four percent of people in both countries have bought something online in the past three months, followed by 68 percent of Swedes, 65 percent of Americans and 62 percent of South Koreans.

"It is telling that the top four countries are all traditionally developed western countries," said Gottfried. "It's really been under 10 years that this technology has been around."

Almost half of people around the world have shopped online and an even bigger number, 61 percent, search the web for information about products they are thinking about buying.

Online shopping was the least popular in Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Hungary and Russia, where 28 percent or fewer people buy online.

And in an indication of how far things have changed from looking for work in the classified ads in newspapers, 41 percent of people said they used the Internet to search for work.

Poles were the most likely to log on to look for a job, with 61 percent searching online for work, followed by Hungarians, South Africans and Mexicans. But only 17 percent of Japanese and a quarter of South Koreans and French have chosen the web for their job search.

Gottfried said the findings shadow very closely the number of people who said they knew someone who has lost or is looking for a job.

"For almost all of them (countries) it mirrors who has the most job anxiety," she explained.

Older people, between 50-64, with higher incomes and education were the most likely to do their banking online, the poll showed. Online shoppers were also better educated and bigger earners.

But about half of online job searchers were under 35 years old, unmarried and had smaller incomes.

Ipsos interviewed a total of 19,216 adults in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United States.

(Reporting by Patricia Reaney; editing by Paul Casciato)

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