



NEWS RELEASE [2000-III-06]

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HALF OF CONSUMER E-MAIL ADDRESSES ARE
OWNED BY ONLY 19 % OF E-MAIL USERS

PHOENIX, Ariz. (July 19, 2000) – Companies relying on e-mail lists they buy for direct marketing purposes may be kidding themselves if they believe such lists enable them to reach a representative cross-section of e-mail users. According to the latest Rocky Mountain Poll, while 96 percent of Internet customers use its e-mail capabilities, half of all e-mail addresses in use in Arizona are owned by less than a fifth of people connected to the Internet. Sixty-two percent are owned by only 30 percent.

Another interesting facet of the survey, because of its counter-intuitive character, is the finding that although people of all ages and walks of life may have multiple addresses, those most likely to have them are not young, affluent computer-wise consumers, but rather consumers over the age of 54 and particularly those who say they are retired.

An intriguing aspect of these findings is the implication they have for companies trying to sell to consumers, or for that matter, doing consumer opinion and behavioral research over the Internet. E-mail lists purchased for these purposes may well contain many “junk” mailboxes, that is, addresses the owner uses to screen unwanted mail. The precision of direct marketing and research efforts will be confounded by the fact that half of their efforts may be going to as few as 20 percent of consumers.

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Similarly, it also suggests that some people with multiple addresses can have a disproportionate impact on the course of public opinion if they use their various addresses in letter campaigns to the media, elected officials, government agencies and business. It is not hard to imagine a zealous political group urging its members to “double” their influence by sending multiple e-mails under different addresses and names.

The findings outlined in this report are based on a survey of 707 adults throughout Arizona conducted on June 30 and July 1, by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona as part of the center’s independent and non-partisan Rocky Mountain Poll series begun in 1969. For more information you may visit www.brcpolls.com.

The concentration of so many e-mail addresses on the home computers of so few raises a number of interesting questions that will be addressed in our next round of surveys. For example, why do people have second and third addresses and how do they use them? Do they maintain one “personal” e-mail address that they guard carefully to protect themselves from unwanted mail, giving it only to people they know? Do they use other addresses to capture “garbage mail,” checking this mail only occasionally and when doing so, with an eye to deleting all but the most intriguing? How often do people change their addresses to protect and reassert their demand for privacy? Do those who use multiple addresses intentionally reserve some of the addresses to use when they suspect their e-mail address will be sold to business and industry?

Whatever the reasons may be, it seems very likely that e-mail address lists contain a great many “junk mailboxes.” These possibilities, along with reported growing resistance among consumers to respond to e-mail solicitations of any kind, and recently reported studies on how 85

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percent of Internet users doubt their communications are “private”¹, undoubtedly account for the growing focus of interest among direct marketers and research companies for so-called “opt-in” or “consent” e-mail.

The Rocky Mountain Poll also reveals that 84 percent of e-mail customers are using access companies that charge a fee for their services. Since this is the first time we have asked this question, we cannot tell whether the 16 percent using no-fee access providers is a growing or shrinking number, but the consensus here is that the number may be growing. The survey also reveals that these consumers are as likely as are fee-based customers to have multiple e-mail addresses.

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1. FoxNews/Opinion Dynamics Poll June 7-8, 2000

EDITOR’S NOTE: This Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona (2000-III-06), is based on 707 interviews throughout Arizona between June 30 and July 1, 2000. Where necessary, figures for age, sex, race and political party were weighted to bring them into line with their actual proportion in the population. In a sample of this size, one can say with a 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 3.7 percent of what they would have been had the entire population been surveyed. The Rocky Mountain Poll is conducted by the Behavior Research Center of Arizona and is an independent and non-partisan research program sponsored by the Center.

This statement conforms to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

ENCLOSED: Statistical tables.

STATISTICAL DATA

Behavior Research Center
 Rocky Mountain Poll - Arizona
 RMP 2000-III-06

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- A. "Do you have Internet access at home?"
- B. "Is your Internet access at home free or do you pay a fee for it?"
- C. "How many e-mail addresses, if any, do you have for your personal use?"

	A		B		C
	Yes	Free	Fee Based	Average Number of Personal E-Mail Addresses	
TOTAL	50%	16%	84%	2.4	
<u>AGE</u>					
Under 35	49	21	79	2.2	
35 to 54	59	10	90	2.1	
55+	39	19	81	3.1	
Retirees	36	10	90	3.2	
Republican	59	21	79	2.8	
Democrat	40	10	90	2.0	
Independent	67	10	90	2.4	
Not registered	37	15	85	2.2	

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