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# Survey: Net Nurtures Communities

By Paul Eng [ABCNEWS.com](#)

**According to a survey, Pew Internet pollsters found that 84 percent of the respondents use the Internet to contact or get information from a group.**



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There was a dire prediction a few years ago that the Internet would turn users into isolationists, content to sit in front of the glow of their computer monitors. But a new survey says that prediction never came true.

The survey, released today by the Pew Internet and American Life Project in Washington, D.C., says the Net is becoming a hot bed of social activity — some of which may lead to greater interaction in the offline world as well.

According to the telephone survey conducted in January and February, Pew Internet pollsters found that 84 percent of the respondents use the Internet to contact or get information from a group.

John Horrigan, senior researcher and author of the survey, says this means more people go online to connect with others of similar interests than those who go online to shop or for general news and information from so-called portal sites like Yahoo!

"The communications aspects of the Internet is really one of the most striking things that draws people to it," said Horrigan. "People seem to be very adept at using the Internet to talk amongst themselves."

And according to Horrigan's research, these so-called cyber groupies are an active bunch, with each user joining four online communities or groups on average. But most — 79 percent — of these online socialites remain active in at least one group.

Both professional and hobby groups are the most popular types of online communities — each used by 50 percent of the respondents. Sports fan communities followed at 31 percent. Rounding out the top five groups were entertainment fan groups and local community groups — each with 29 percent.

### More than Just Online Activism

Horrigan notes that cybergroup activities make "real world" differences as well. Fifty-six percent of participants

said they join a group such as a fraternal organization after initial contact over the Internet. And of those with ties to local community groups, Horrigan says 29 percent use e-mail to contact local leaders and other members.

"It might be hard to go down to a meeting at the local civics organization," said Horrigan. "But with e-mail you can keep track of what's going on with leaders."

The survey results were gathered from 3,002 adults, 1,697 of whom were Internet users. The margin of error for the Internet usage portion is plus or minus 2 percentage points.

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