

Sexual Orientation A Factor in Web Usage

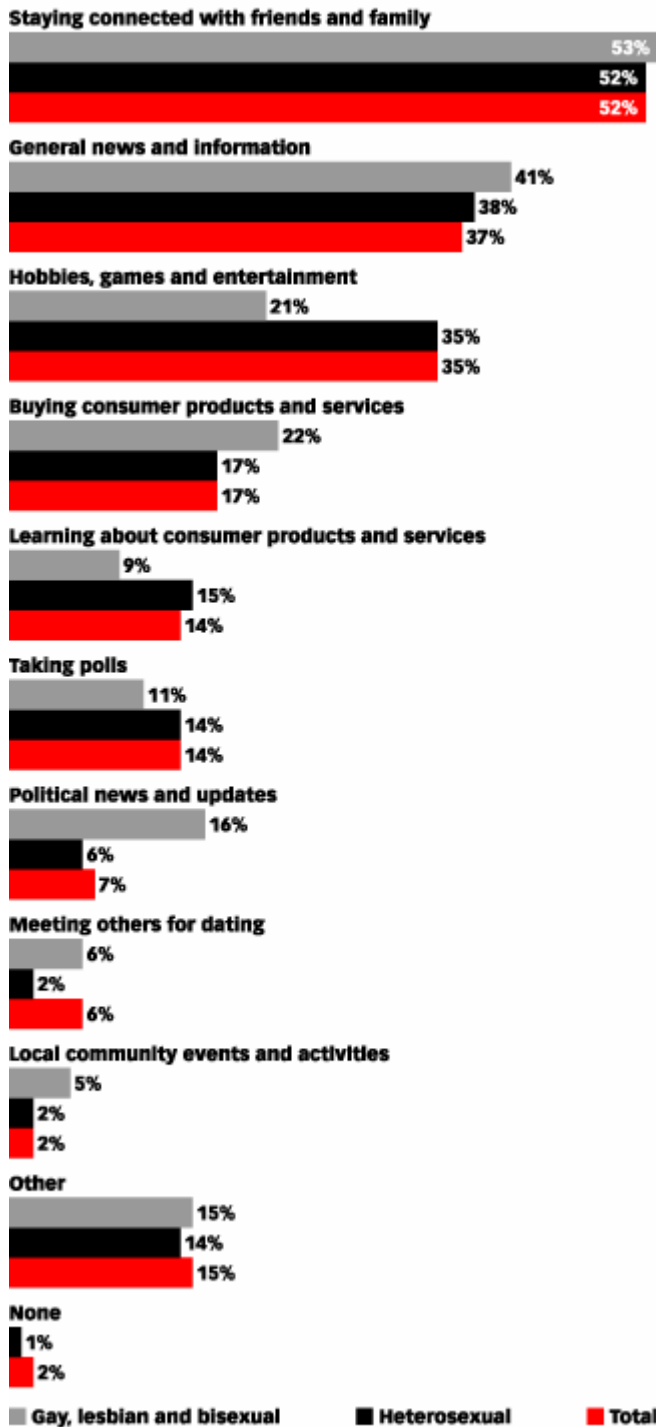
May 17, 2004

A recent poll by [Harris Interactive](#) comparing the Web usage of heterosexual and gay, lesbian and bisexual (GLB) adults in the US finds there are many similarities between the two groups – just over 50% of respondents from both use the Net to stay connected with family and friends. There are, however, some significant differences, especially in terms of visiting political and travel-related sites.

The findings are from a Harris Interactive Poll conducted for Witeck-Combs Communications. A nationwide cross section of 3,698 adults ages 18 and older were surveyed online between March 18 and 29 2004; 231 identified themselves as GLB. Figures for age, sex, race, education, region and household were weighted to bring them into line with actual population proportions.

The poll indicated that heterosexual and GLB respondents rank "staying connected with family" and "general news and information" as their top online activities. While both groups rank "hobbies, games and entertainment" as their third favorite set of online activities, 35% of heterosexuals specifically cite this group of activities whereas 21% of their GLB counterparts do as well. Another notable difference was a preference among GLBs for political news and updates.

Online Activities of Adults in the US, by Sexual Orientation, March 2004 (as a % of respondents)



Source: Harris Interactive, May 2004

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Polling done about respondents' travel planning showed GLB adults are more apt to use the Internet to book their accommodations, with 33% using travel sites like Orbitz and Expedia and just 25% of heterosexuals using such sites. Heterosexuals show a greater propensity to call hotels' toll free numbers than GLB adults, with 21% and 12%, respectively. Both groups are just as likely to visit hotel Web sites. Finally, and not surprisingly, 15% of GLB respondents have booked accommodations through a gay and lesbian Web site. In fact, this is the second most prevalent method used by the GLB group.

Most Frequently Used Method of Booking Hotel Reservations among Online Adults in the US, March 2004 (as a % of respondents)

	Gay, lesbian and bisexual	Hetero-sexual	Total
A mainstream travel-related Web site (i.e., Orbitz, Expedia, Travelocity)	33%	25%	25%
Hotel's toll-free telephone number	12%	21%	20%
The hotel's official Web site	14%	17%	16%
Travel agent	2%	7%	7%
Do it myself/call myself	1%	2%	2%
Travel coordinator at my place of work	1%	1%	1%
Yellow pages/find one when I get there	*	1%	1%
A gay and lesbian Web site where I can make travel plans (i.e., Gay.com, Planetout.com, gaytravel.com)	15%	–	1%
Friends/relatives/personal experience	–	1%	1%
AAA/travel club	*	*	*
I do my research/Internet/travel mags, etc.	*	*	*
Through timeshare	–	*	*
Depends	–	*	*
Through airline	–	*	*
Don't travel/don't stay in hotels	–	*	*
Other	1%	1%	1%
None	21%	24%	25%
Not applicable	–	*	*

Note: *less than 0.5%
Source: Harris Interactive, May 2004

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The study also found that a larger percentage of GLB respondents have been influenced in their purchasing decisions by online advertising. Fully 42% of GLB adults say that online ads help them opt for one product or service over another, as compared to 35% of heterosexual adults. Conversely, 65% of heterosexuals say they are not influenced by online advertising, with 58% of GLB respondents who say the same.

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