
Press release

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY OWNERSHIP AND USAGE

Digital Market Barometer: the 2021 edition includes press readers' habits, environmental issues and the impact of the Covid-19 crisis

Paris, 1 July 2021

Today, Arcep, the Economic Council (CGE) and France's National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (ANCT), are publishing the findings of the Digital Market Barometer, an annual survey on the adoption of digital tools and how their use has evolved over time.

Print vs. digital, subscription vs. single issue buys: the study detail press readers' habits

76% of respondents stated they had read one or several press articles in the past 12 months. Readers of print copies remain the majority, despite a decrease in physical print sales: 63% of those polled read print copies, compared to 56% for the digital version. In many instances, however, the two media are combined: more than half (56%) of press readers read both the print and digital versions of their favourite publications. A very large percentage of respondents (81%) read the print version of the newspapers and magazines they subscribe to, whereas on the digital versions most readers (52%) read only the free articles. When it comes to paying to read press publications, most readers opt for a subscription rather than buy individual issues or articles, with a sizeable gap between digital press readers who opt for a subscription (86%) versus readers of the print version who choose to subscribe (64%).

Smartphone use increased yet again in 2020. The 2021 edition looks at their environmental footprint

The 2021 edition of the Digital Market Barometer has taken an especially keen interest in the environmental issues surrounding smartphones. While smartphones have become an indispensable part of French people's daily lives (84% of people ages 12 and up use one: +7 points YoY), they represented 11% of the digital environmental footprint in 2019, according to a Senate report on digital technology's environmental footprint. The Barometer reveals that a very large majority of smartphone users (84%) say they have owned their phone for less than three years, but the adoption of second hand devices still only represents 17% of all the smartphones that are owned. The 2021 edition of the Barometer also examines the reasons why users switch to a new smartphone. While there are multiple reasons, most of the people queried (37%) say they replaced their old smartphone because it no longer worked properly, or because the operating system was no longer being updated.

Impact of the Covid-19 crisis: a surge in digital use and skyrocketing online shopping

The Covid-19 crisis, and especially the different lockdowns, drove up digital traffic and the need to use digital devices: remote working, online schooling, interpersonal relationships, entertainment, shopping, etc. Regardless of the type of device (smartphone, tablet, computer, landline phone, smart speaker) the percentage of people who use them climbed significantly, especially for tablets (58% of people queried use one, +17 points), smart speakers (24%, +13 points) and computers (88%, +12 points). Among this last group, there was a massive need for daily use, with 66% of people saying they used their computer every day (+19 points), spurred by the widespread adoption of remote working and remote learning, particularly during the successive lockdowns.

If, since 2017, smartphones have steadily become users' preferred device for accessing the internet, 2020 saw computers overtake them slightly – being preferred by 43% of respondents (+12 points compared to 2019) versus 41% for the smartphone (- 10 points).

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The need to communicate resulted in massive use of calling services, both landline and mobile, but also in the use of communication software: 79% of smartphone owners used instant messaging and 67% used calling apps. The daily frequency of use nevertheless decreased with the arrival of new users: to keep in touch with the outside world during the pandemic, far more seniors downloaded these apps but did not use them on a regular basis.

The Covid-19 crisis also drove up online shopping, hence parcel shipments: 76% of the French population ages 12 and up say they made at least one purchase online during the past 12 months, compared to 62% in 2019. Among these users, half shopped online at least once a month (+13 points in two years).

Methodology

Conducted by the CREDOC research centre devoted to the study and observation of living conditions, the survey polled a representative sample of 4,029 people, ages 12 and up, who were interviewed by phone and online.

“Achieving digital sustainability” a new regulatory chapter

In December of last year, Arcep published its progress report on “Achieving digital sustainability”, which defined the main digital environmental issues and challenges, and set down 11 proposals to combine increased use of digital tech and decreasing its environmental footprint. All of these proposals include measuring the digital environmental impact, which is vital to ensuring public authorities’ ability to better monitor the situation.

Associated documents:

- [Infographics: main findings for 2021, at a glance \(in French\)](#)
- [Presentation: slides, graphics and figures presented at the press conference](#)
- [Media kit: summary of the survey, with an introductory editorial by Cédric O, Secretary of State for the Digital Transition and Electronic Communications](#)
- [The complete survey \(in French\)](#)
- [OPEN DATA: complete Digital Market Barometer datasets since 2007 available at: data.gouv.fr](#)

Arcep at a glance

The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Communications, Postal Affairs and Print Media Distribution (Arcep), a neutral and expert arbitrator with the status of independent administrative authority (IAA), is the architect and guardian of internet, fixed and mobile telecoms and postal networks in France.

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