

**Internet Use in Hong Kong:
The 2008 Annual Survey Report
(Jan 2009)**



Web Mining Lab
Dept of Media & Communication
City University of Hong Kong
<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>
<http://weblab.com.cityu.edu.hk>

PART I. EXPLANATORY NOTES

1. Internet Users: The survey is the 9th annual survey of Hong Kong Internet Project (HKIP). The target population of the report is those regular residents between 18 and 74 years old who speak Chinese (including Cantonese, Mandarin and other Chinese dialects). The term “Internet users” follows the definition of World Internet Project (WIP), which was worded as “Are you using the Internet?”. This definition allows comparisons of the results from the current survey with those from the 2000-2007 surveys. If any of the data reported here are cited, please indicate the particular definition used in the report.
2. Networked Computers: the term refers to desktop computers and notebook computers at home that were connected to the Internet. Other Internet-ready handheld devices, such as PDAs or mobile phones, are not included.
3. The survey was funded by the Center for Communication Research, City University of Hong Kong and by an Earmarked Competitive Research Grant (CERG CityU 1456/06H) from the Hong Kong SAR Research Grants Council. The survey was implemented by Professor Jonathan Zhu. The report, however, doesn't represent any viewpoint of the funding agency or the University. All the data were collected up to December 31, 2008.

PART II. SURVEY FINDINGS

1. Overall Internet Use in Hong Kong

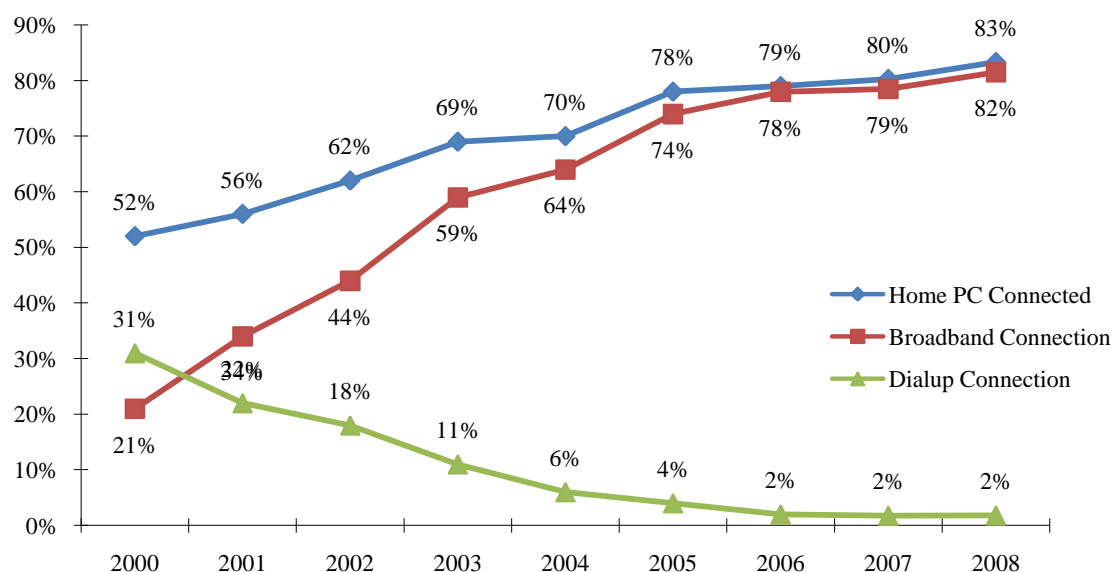
1.1 Number of Internet Homes

Table 1. Internet Homes

Total Homes (000)	Online Home PCs (000)	Dialup Homes (000)	Broadband Homes* (000)
2,298	1,910	40	1,870
% of Total Homes	83%	2%	81%
% of Internet Homes	100%	2%	98%

*“Broadband Homes” refers to those using ADSL or cable modem to connect to the Internet, excluding those using ISDN (treated as “Dialup Homes”) or mobile phones to go online.

Figure 1. Internet Connections at Home in Hong Kong



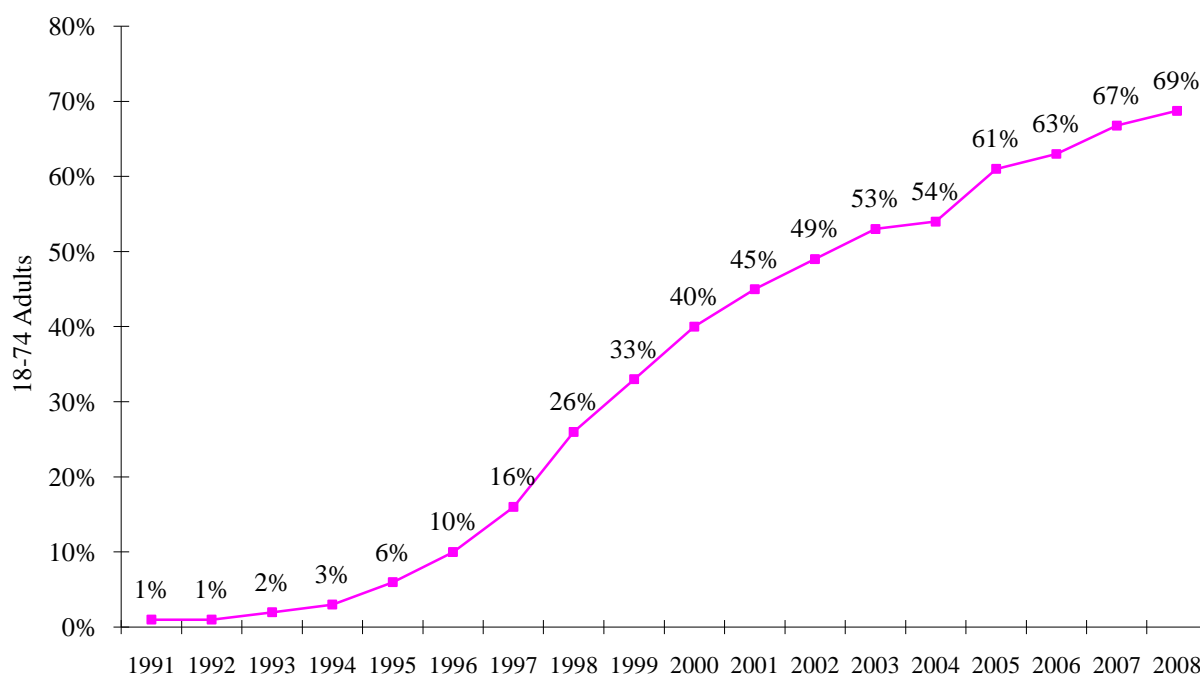
Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

The percentage of networked homes in Hong Kong has demonstrated a stable but slow trend of increase, which has climbed from 80% in 2007 to 83% in 2008. The increase was mainly caused by the increase of homes with broadband connection to the Internet (from 79% in 2007 to 82% in 2008). The rate of homes connecting to the Internet via dialup method has remained at 2% in the recent three years.

1.2 Number of Internet Users

There were 3.65 million Internet users in Hong Kong at the end of 2008, who account for 68.7% of the corresponding population (i.e., 5.31 million regular residents) between 18 and 74. With sampling error considered, the actual number of Internet users may vary from 3.56 millions to 3.74 millions.

Figure 2. Annual Growth of Internet Users in Hong Kong



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

2. Online Behavior and Perceptions of Internet Users

2.1 Individual Characteristics

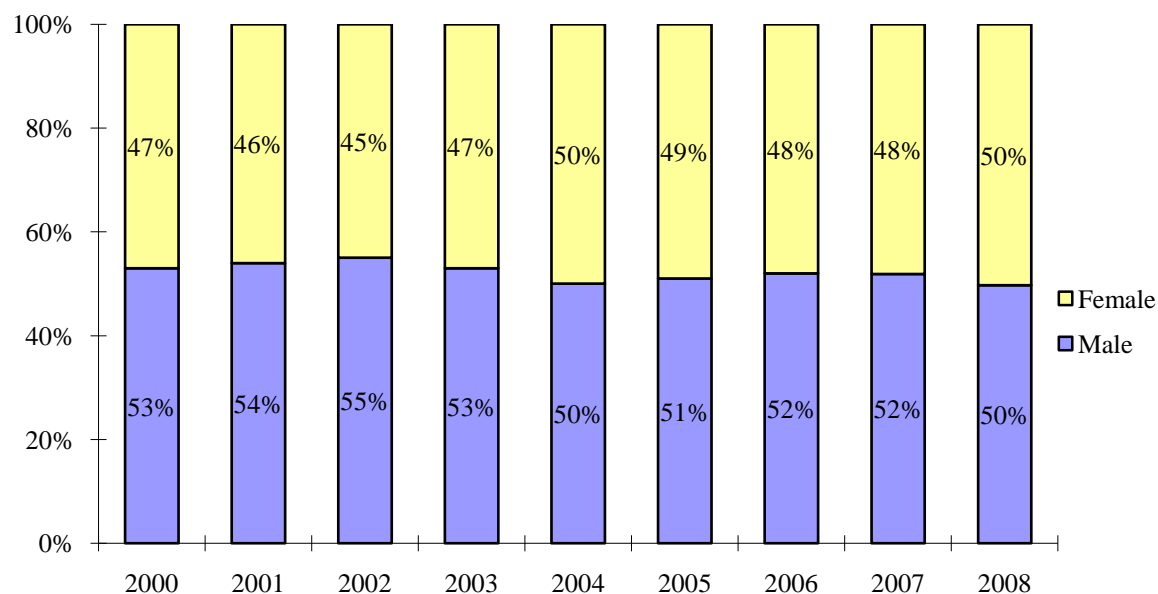
1. Sex Distribution: Of the Internet users, 52.5% are male and 47.5% female. Trends in the sex distribution of Internet users from 2000 to 2008 are shown in Table 2 and Figure 3.

Table 2. Sex and Internet Use

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Composition of the Users									
Male	53%	54%	55%	53%	50%	51%	52%	52%	50%
Female	47%	46%	45%	47%	50%	49%	48%	48%	50%
Penetration Rate in the Population									
Male	44%	50%	53%	54%	57%	66%	69%	74%	73%
Female	38%	39%	42%	43%	51%	57%	57%	61%	65%

Note: For “Composition of the Users”, percent of male = number of male users/total number of users; percent of female = number of female users/total number of users. For “Penetration Rate in the Population”, percent of male = number of male users/number of male respondents; percent of female = number of female users/number of female respondents.

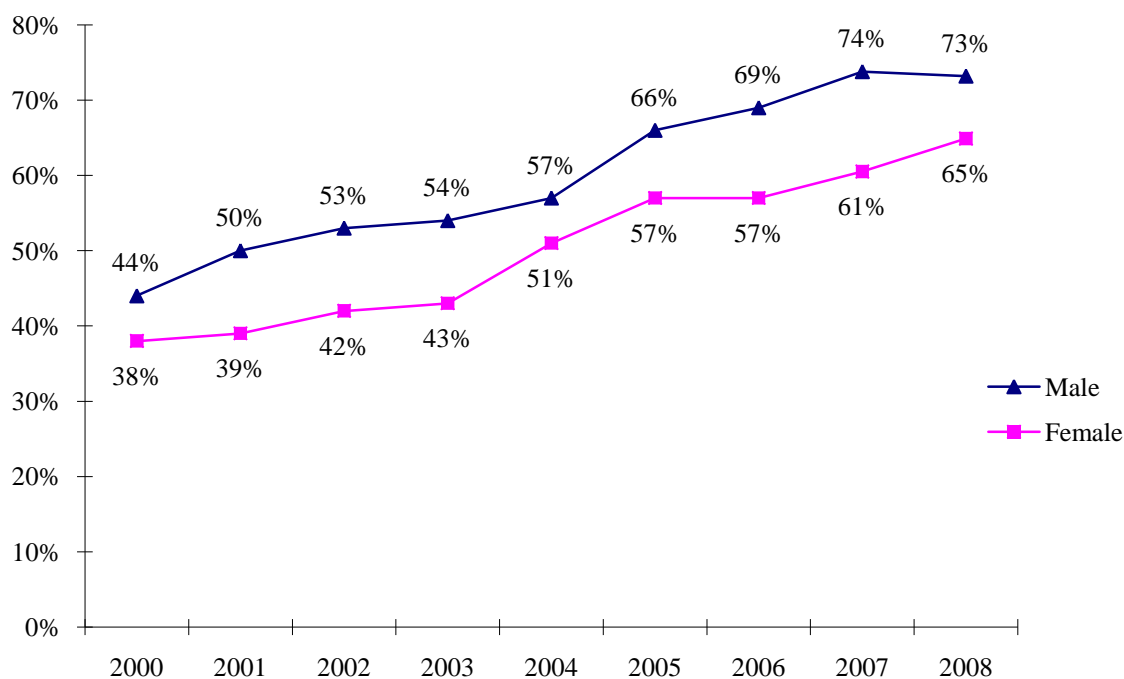
Figure 3. Sex Composition of Internet Users



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

In terms of penetration rate, users account for 73.2% of the corresponding male population and 64.9% of the corresponding female population. There is a difference of 8% between the sexes, which is smaller than that from 2005 to 2007, as shown in Figure 4. The average growth rate of female users in these nine years is 6.9%, which is slightly higher than that of male users (6.6%).

Figure 4. Penetration Rate of Internet Use by Sex



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

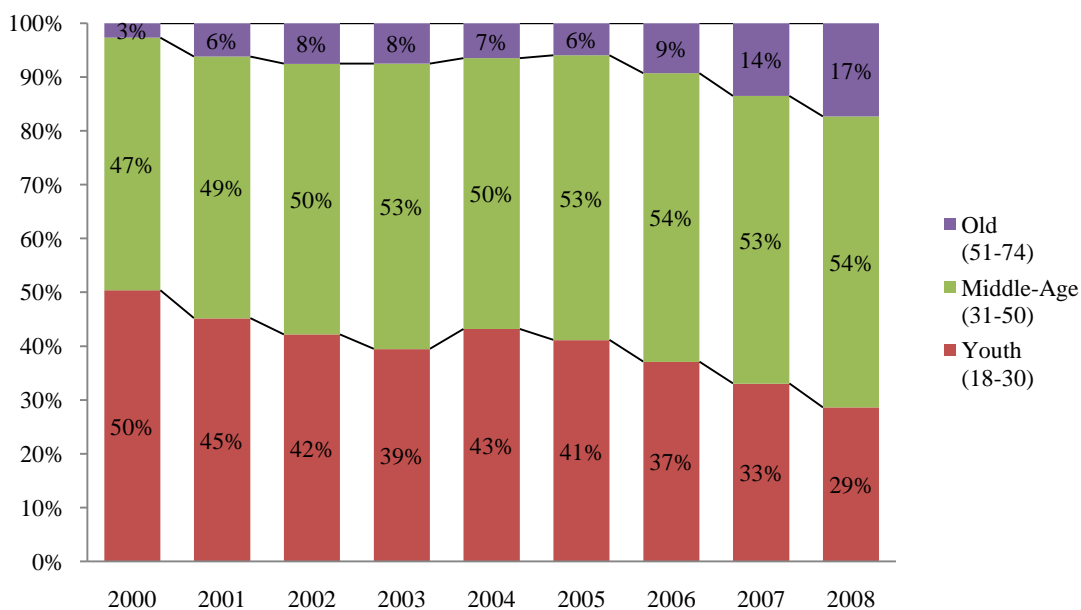
2. Age Distribution: As shown in the first row of Table 3.

Table 3. Age and Internet Use

	18~24	25~30	31~35	36~40	41~50	51~60	61~74
Composition of the Users	15%	14%	13%	14%	27%	14%	4%
Penetration in the Population	99%	96%	89%	87%	75%	48%	17%

As shown in Figure 5, middle-age users (31~50) are the major segment of Internet users in Hong Kong, which accounts for 54% of the Internet users in 2008 and is higher than the shares of youth (18~30, 29% in 2008) and old people (51~74, 17% in 2008).

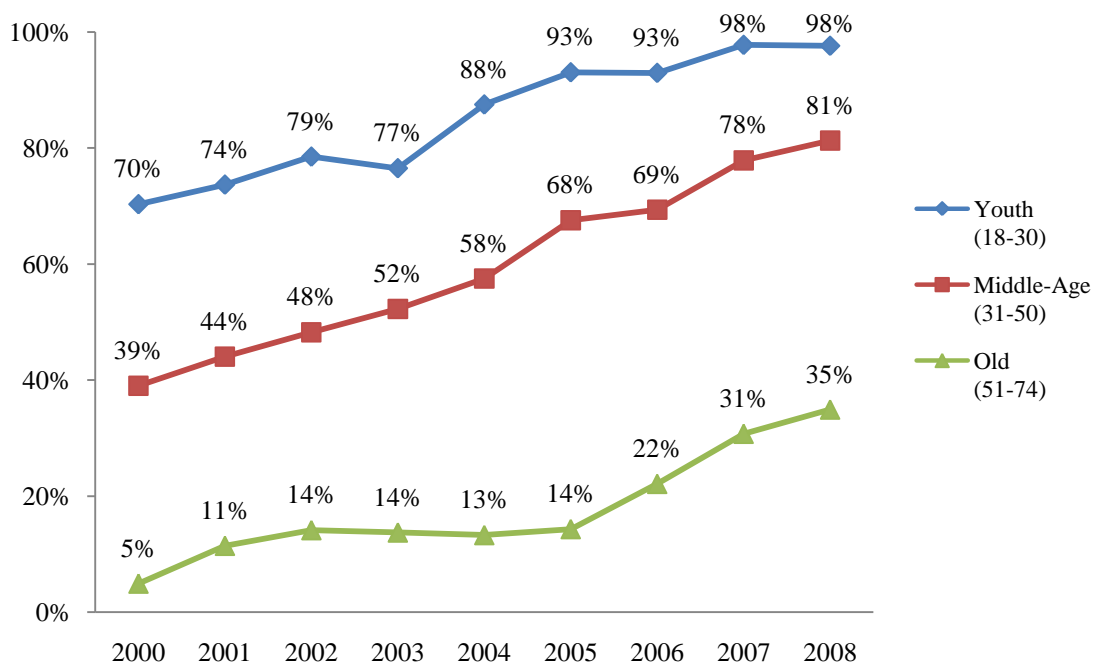
Figure 5. Age Composition of Internet Users



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

As shown in Figure 6, the penetration rate in the youth group has almost reached the saturation point, which is much higher than that in the middle-age group and that in the old group. The penetration rate in middle-age group has increased from 78% in 2007 to 81% in 2008 but, the penetration rate in the old people group has increased even faster. The digital gap between different age groups has narrowed down over time.

Figure 6. Penetration Rate of Internet Use by Age Groups



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

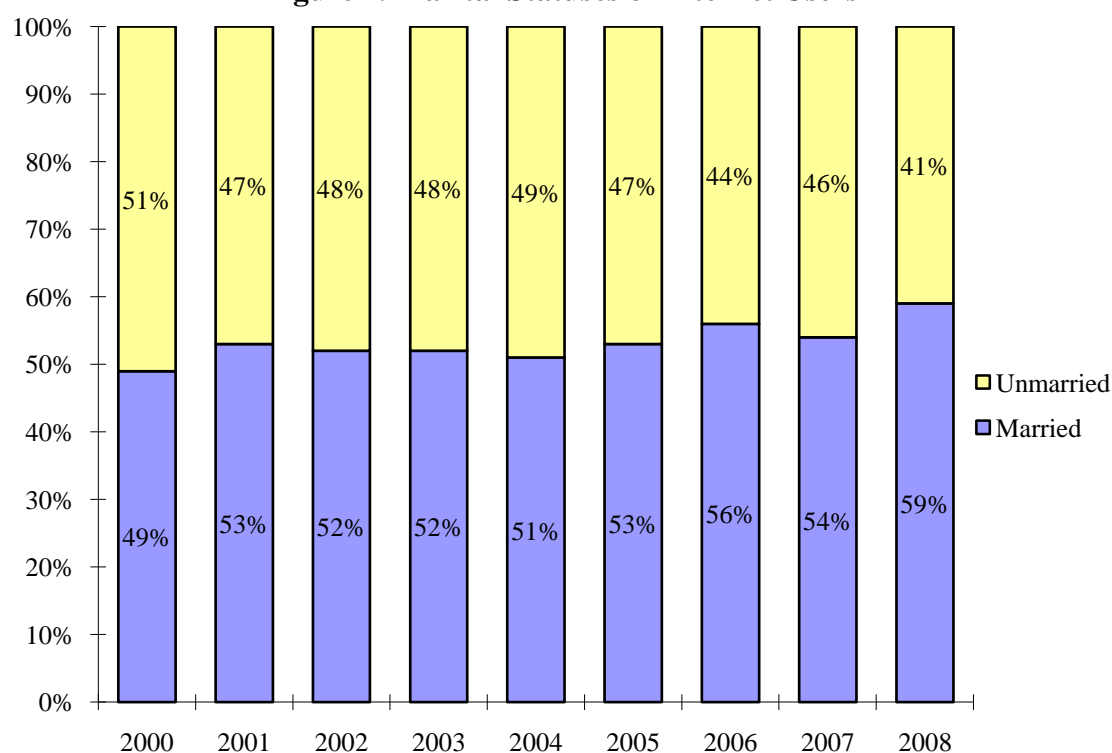
3. Marital Status: Of the Internet users, 41% are unmarried (including singles, divorced and widows) and 59% married.

Table 4. Marital Status and Internet Use

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Composition of the Users									
Married	49%	53%	52%	52%	51%	53%	56%	54%	59%
Unmarried	51%	47%	48%	48%	49%	47%	44%	46%	41%
Penetration Rate in the Population									
Married	30%	36%	36%	37%	42%	50%	52%	57%	61%
Unmarried	65%	61%	64%	67%	74%	86%	86%	86%	85%

As shown in Figure 7, in 2008, 59% of Internet users in Hong Kong are married, which represents the largest share over the nine years under study.

Figure 7. Marital Statuses of Internet Users

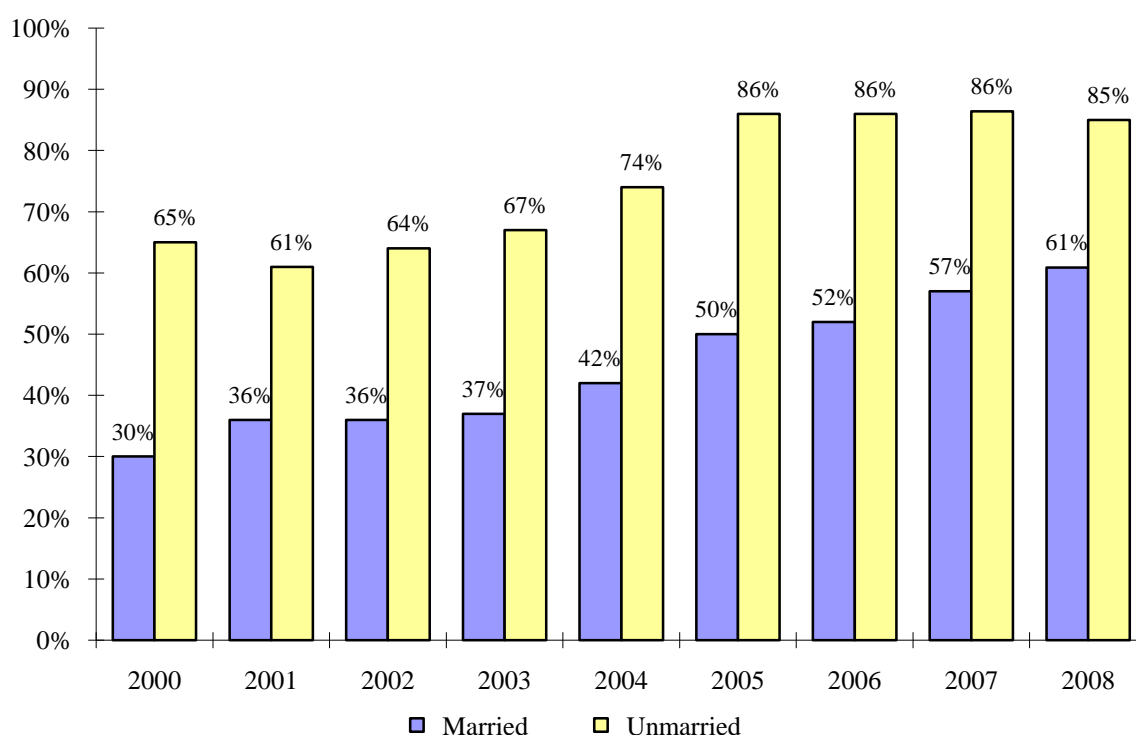


Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

In terms of penetration rate, users have always accounted for about 85% of the corresponding unmarried population in the recent four years, whereas the rate of users in the married population has increased stably, from 50% in 2005 to 52% in 2006, 57% in 2007 and 61% in 2008, which narrows the gap between the unmarried and married populations from 36% in

2005 to 34% in 2006, 29% in 2007 and 24% in 2008, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Penetration Rate of Internet Use by Marital Status



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

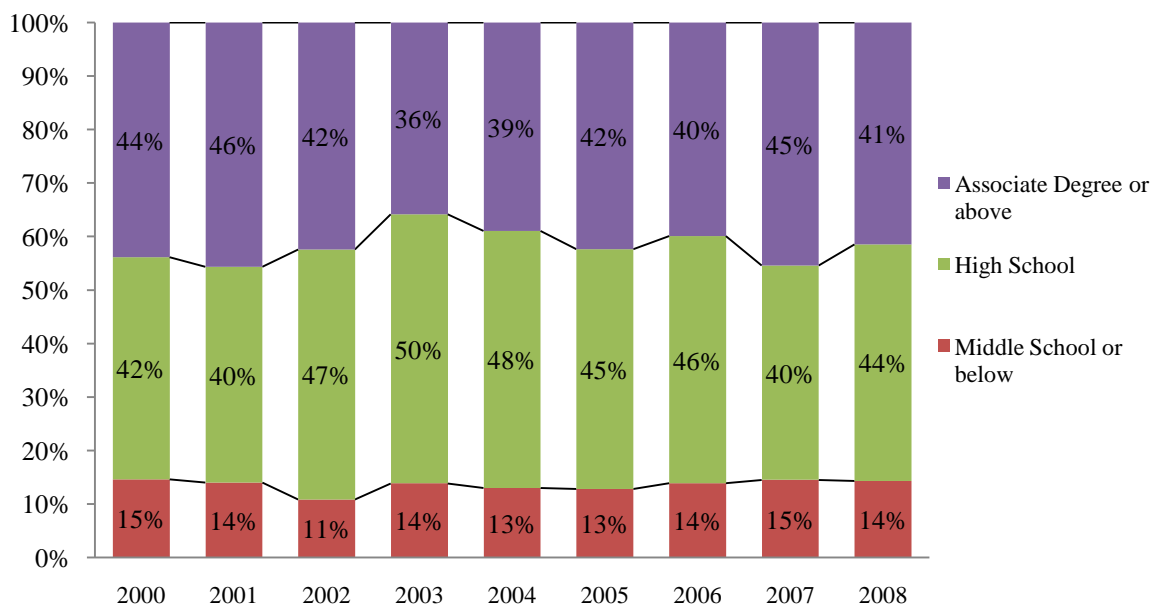
4. Education Levels of Internet Users: as shown in the first row of Table 5.

Table 5. Education and Internet Use

	Middle School or below	High/Technical School	Associate Degrees	University Degree	Postgraduate Degree
Composition of the Users	14%	42%	13%	27%	6%
Penetration Rate in the Population	29%	79%	97%	97%	95%

As shown in Figure 9, the distribution of education levels of Internet users in Hong Kong has remained stable across nine years. Internet users who have the highest level of education (i.e., associate degree or above) and have the middle level of education (i.e., high school) have consistently accounted for 40%~45% of all Internet users, respectively.

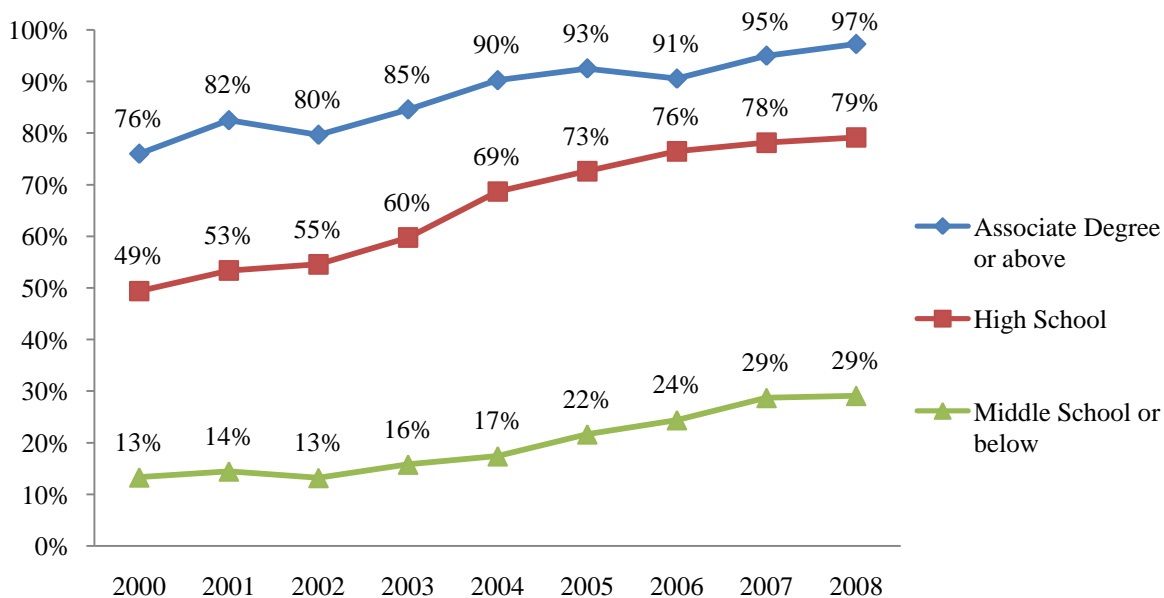
Figure 9. Educational Composition of Internet Users



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

As shown in Figure 10, the penetration rate in the group with the highest level of education has almost reached 100% in recent years, much higher than that in the two groups with less education. The penetration rate in the group with the middle level of education has increased from 49% in 2000 to 79% in 2008, whereas the penetration rate in the group with the least education has increased from 13% in 2000 to 29% in 2008.

Figure 10. Penetration Rate of Internet Use by Education Level



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://new media.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

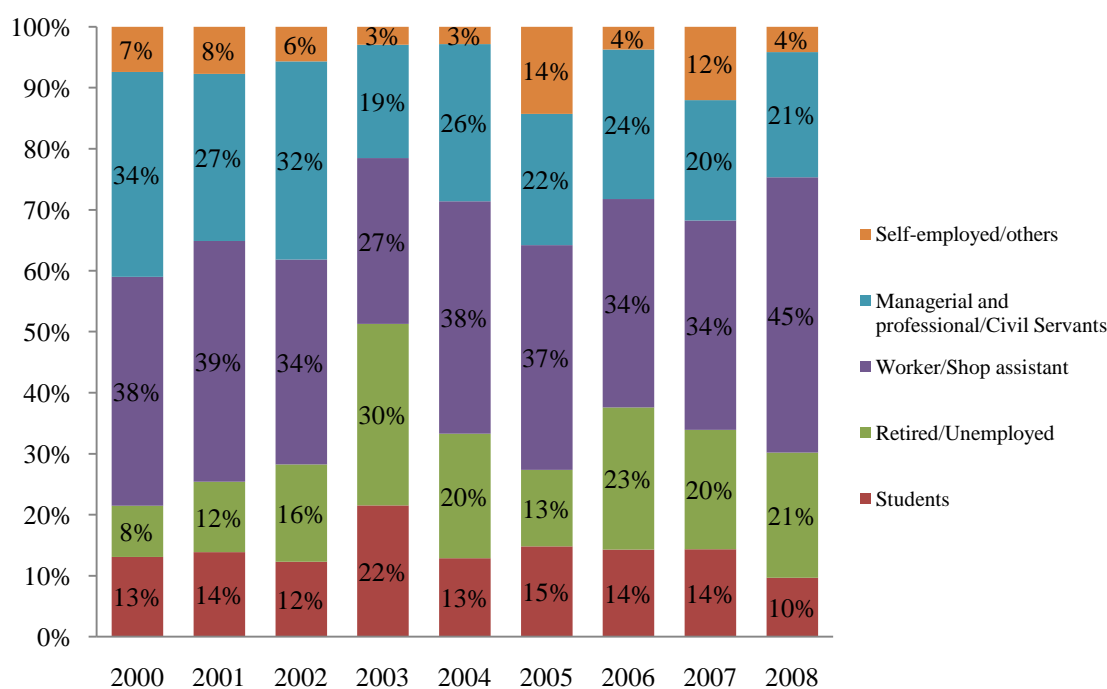
5. Occupational Distribution: as shown in the first row of Table 6.

Table 6. Occupation and Internet Use

	Civil Servants	Managerial & Professional	Worker & Shop Assistant	Self Employed	Students	Retired & Unemployed
Composition of the Users	4%	17%	45%	4%	10%	21%
Penetration Rate in the Population	86%	95%	77%	91%	100%	41%

Figure 11 shows the occupational distribution of Internet users in Hong Kong from 2000 to 2008.

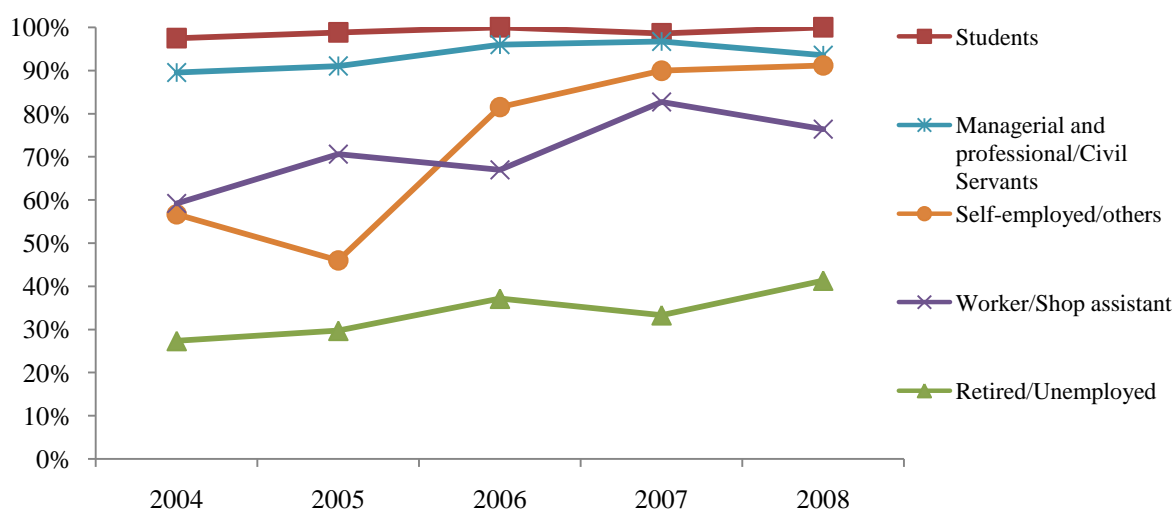
Figure 11. Occupational Composition of Internet Users



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

In terms of penetration rate, as shown in Figure 12, almost every student has used the Internet for years. The rate among managerial or professional people and civil servants has grown above 95%. The rate among retired/unemployed people has also increased rapidly, which is consistent with the fast increase in the penetration rate among old people mentioned above.

.Figure 12. Penetration Rate of Internet Use by Occupation



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

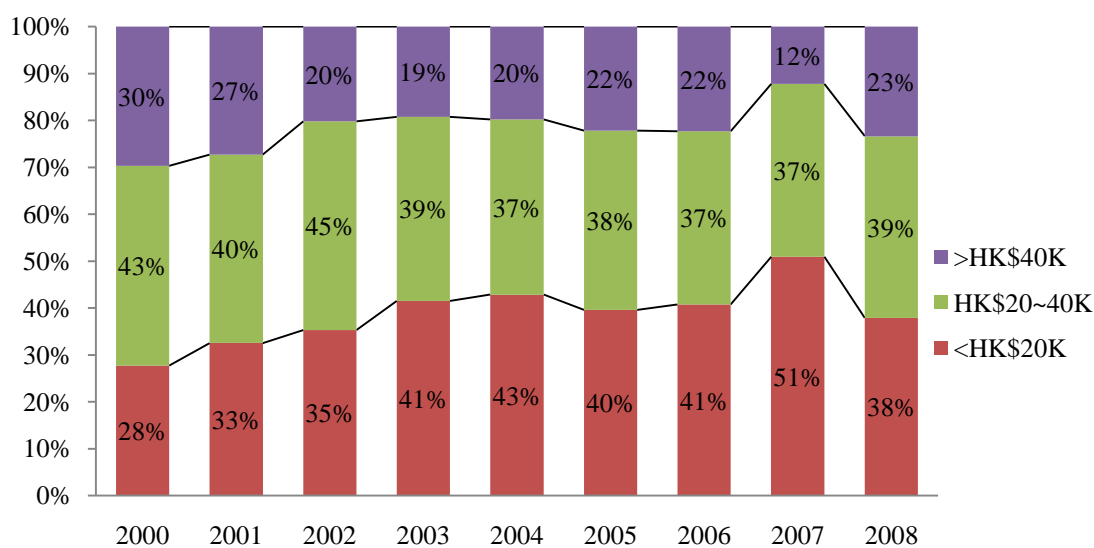
6. Household income: as shown in the first row of Table 7.

Table 7. Household Income and Internet Use

	<HK\$10K	HK\$10~ 20K	HK\$20~ 30K	HK\$30~ 40K	>HK\$40K
Composition of the Users	9%	29%	25%	14%	23%
Penetration Rate in the Population	32%	68%	82%	88%	94%

Figure 13 shows the distribution of monthly household income of Internet users in Hong Kong from 2000 to 2008.

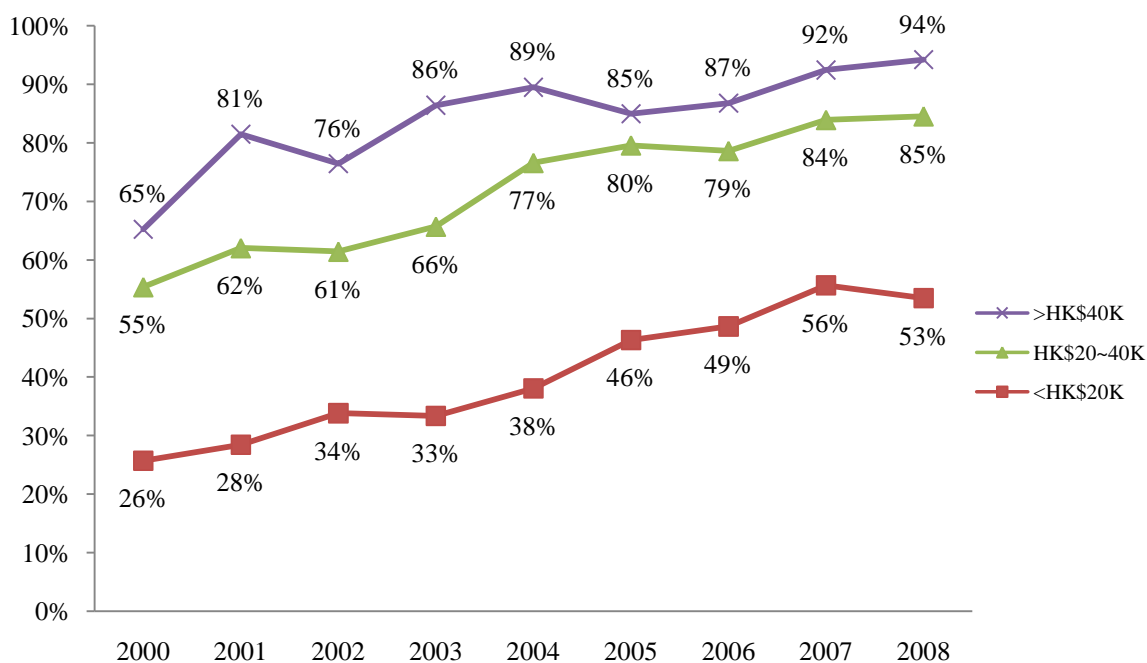
Figure 13. Household Income Composition of Internet Users



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

As shown in Figure 14, the penetration rate in the group of highest income (i.e., HK\$40,000 or above per month) has reached about 95%, which is much higher than that in the groups with lower income. Although the penetration rate in the group with the lowest income (i.e., HK\$20,000 or less per month) is significantly below anyone else, it has nevertheless increased from 26% in 2000 to 53% in 2008.

Figure 14. Penetration Rate of Internet Use by Household Income



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

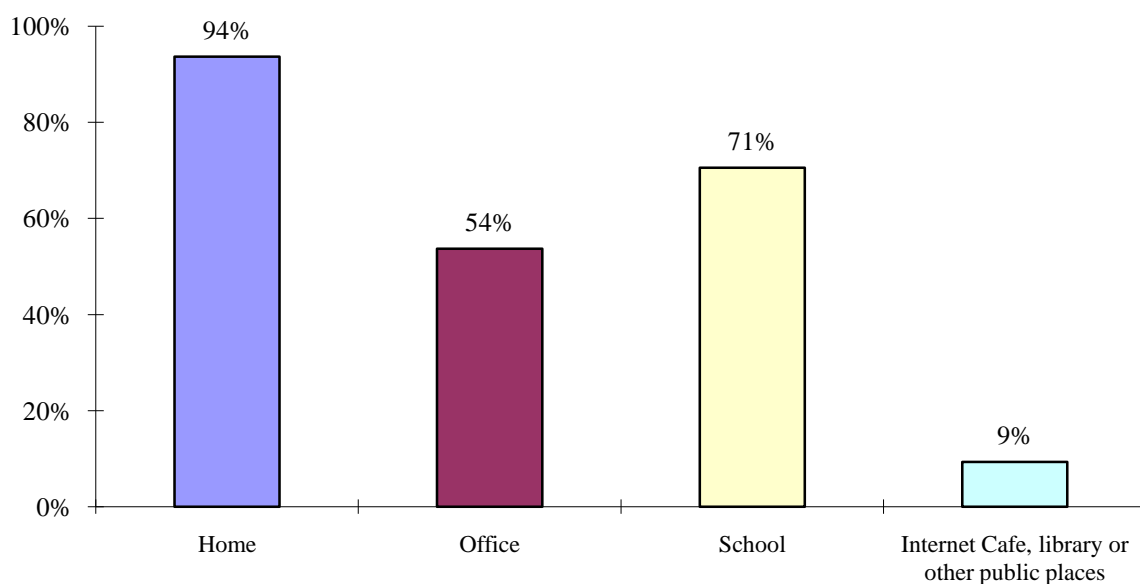
2.2 Internet Usage and Online Behavior

1. Places to get online (multiple selections permitted): shown in Table 8 and Figure 15.

Table 8. Where Users Use the Internet

Home	Office (non-students)	School (students)	Internet Café Library & Other Public Places
94%	54%	71%	9%

Figure 15. Where Users Use the Internet



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

2. Online history (the number of years since the beginning of Internet use)

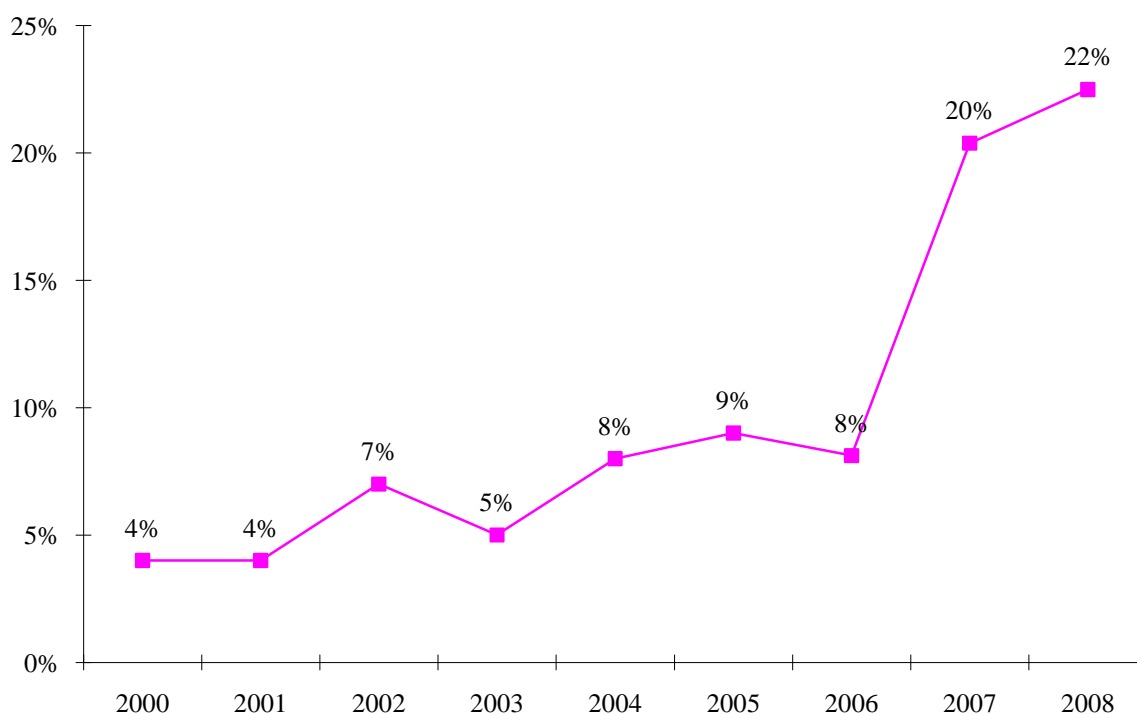
- 2 years or fewer 5%
- 2~4 years 6%
- 5~7 years 13%
- 7 years or more 76%

3. Methods of Internet connection (multiple selections permitted):

	2007	2008
▪ Telephone dialup	9%	6%
▪ Broadband	76%	82%
▪ Cable Modem	8%	14%
▪ Wireless (including WLAN, GPRS, WAP, EDGE, 3G, and HSDPA)	20%	22%
▪ Don't know	5%	5%

The 2007 survey found a big jump in the adoption rate of wireless connection from 8% in 2006 to 20% in 2007, which made the wireless connection the second most popular method of connection next to broadband. The adoption rate of wireless connection has since increased continuously to 22% in 2008, as shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16. Use of Wireless Connection to the Internet



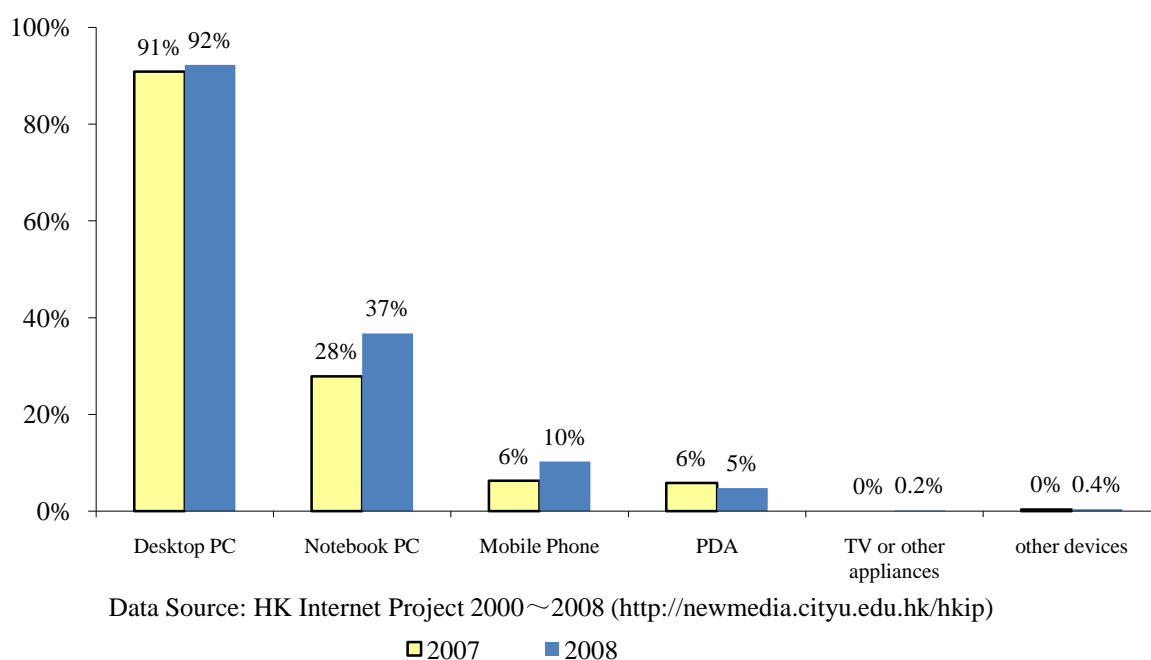
Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

4. Devices for Internet connection (multiple selections permitted):

	2007	2008
▪ Desktop PC	91%	92%
▪ Notebook PC	28%	37%
▪ Mobile Phone	6%	10%
▪ PDA	6%	5%
▪ TV or other appliances	0%	0.2%
▪ Other devices	0%	0.4%

As shown in Figure 17, the rate of using desktop PCs to get online has remained at 90% in 2007 and 2008. The use of PDAs has also remained unchanged (at about 5%). The use of notebook computers has substantially increased from 14% in 2006 to 28% in 2007 and 37% in 2008, whereas the use of mobile phones has also grown from 6% in 2006 and 2007 to 10% in 2008.

Figure 17. Devices Used to Get Online



5. Average number of hours on Internet use per week: 19 hours per user

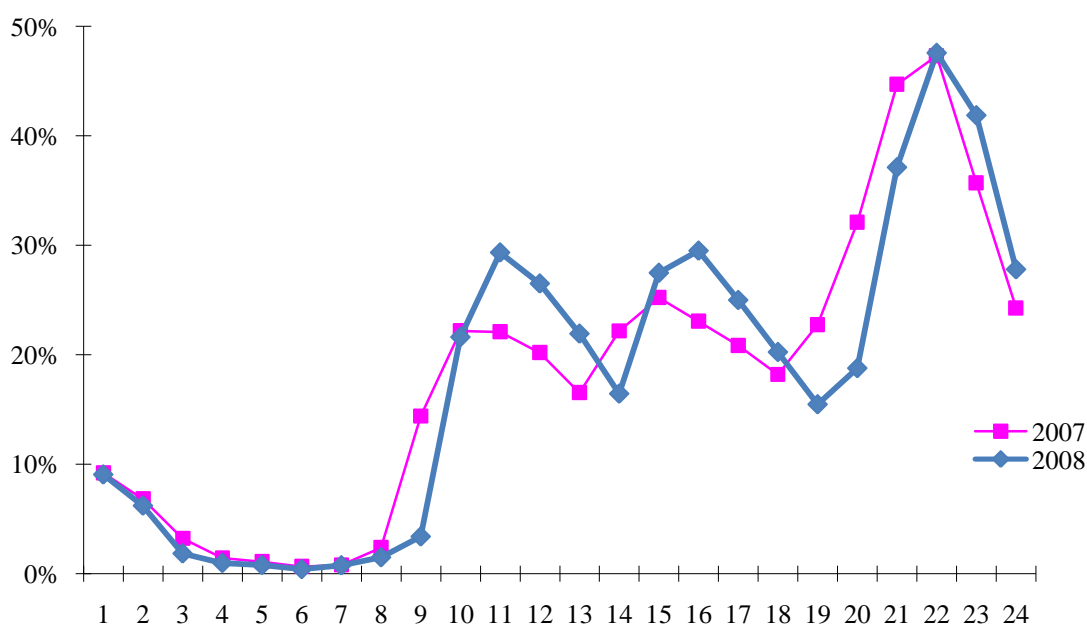
6. Time of the day using the Internet (multiple selections permitted):

Table 9. Daily Cycle of Online Activities

1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00	5:00	6:00
9%	6%	2%	1%	1%	0%
7:00	8:00	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00
1%	1%	3%	22%	29%	27%
13:00	14:00	15:00	16:00	17:00	18:00
22%	16%	27%	30%	25%	20%
19:00	20:00	21:00	22:00	23:00	24:00
15%	19%	37%	48%	42%	28%

As shown in Figure 18, the peak hours in the morning and the afternoon in 2008 have been moved one hour later as compared with those in 2007, whereas the peak hours during the evening in 2008 are almost the same as those in 2007.

Figure 18. Time Distribution of Internet Use in the 24-hour Cycle



Data Sources: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

7. Primary purposes for Internet use (multiple selections permitted):

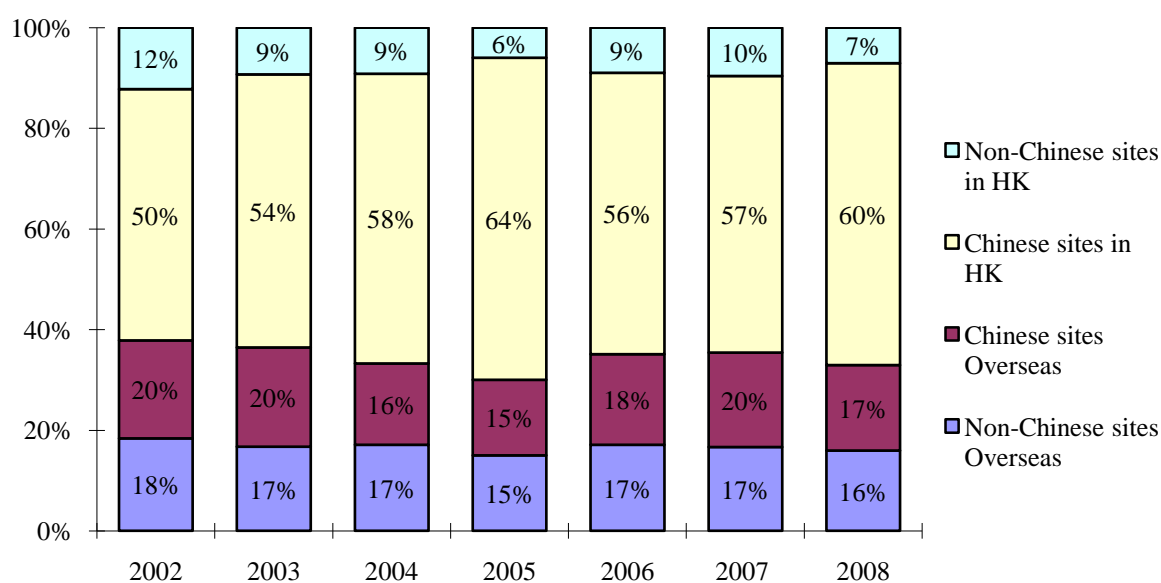
▪ Information acquisition (e.g., search and web browsing)	85%
▪ Leisure and entertainment	36%
▪ Communication (e.g., e-mail, IM, SMS, chat, etc.)	31%
▪ Study	9%
▪ Online banking, trading, payment, etc.	10%
▪ Getting free resources (e.g., free e-mail accounts, storage, downloads)	6%
▪ Making friends (e.g., alumni sites)	1%
▪ Online shopping	5%
▪ Others	3%

8. Average time spent on websites in different languages:

▪ Chinese websites in Hong Kong:	60%
▪ Non-Chinese websites in Hong Kong:	7%
▪ Chinese websites overseas:	16%
▪ Non-Chinese websites overseas:	17%

The share has remained stable across nine years, as shown in Figure 19. Local websites in Chinese are the first choice (60%). Overseas websites in both Chinese and non-Chinese are the second choices (each accounts for about one-sixth), whereas local websites in non-Chinese language account for the least share (less than 10%).

Figure 19. Online Time by Website of Different Languages



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

2.3. Nonusers of Internet in Hong Kong

1. Reasons for not using the Internet (multiple selections permitted):

Lack of Online Skills (total 63.2%)

- Don't know how to use/Fear of or confused by Internet technology 53.4%
- Language problem/Don't know English 9.8%

Lack of Facilities or Resources (total 18.9%)

- No computer/phone line, or computer without modem, or computer not good enough 14.8%
- Too expensive 3.6%
- Transmission speed too slow 0.3%
- Frequent interruption, busy signals, difficult to login 0.2%

Lack of Time or Interest (total 37.0%)

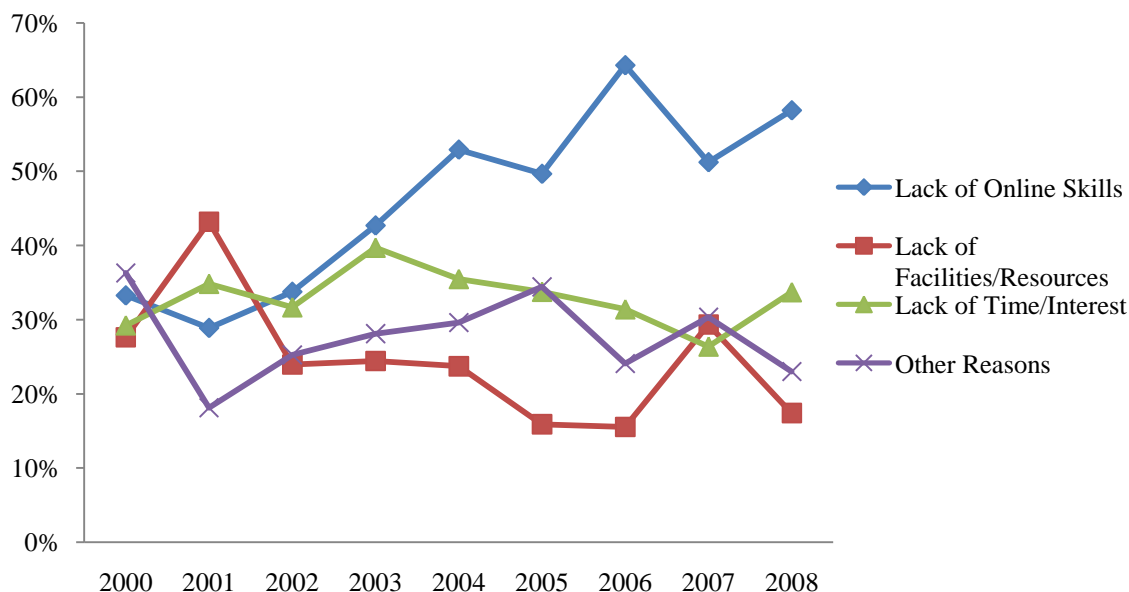
- Feel the Internet useless/no such need 14.4%
- No interest 12.9%
- Too busy to have time 9.7%
- Too scarce of useful websites/information 0.0%

Other Reasons (total 23.0%)

- Too old/young, health problems 10.9%
- Other difficulties 3.4%
- No particular difficulty 3.4%
- Don't know 3.4%
- Concerns about online security 1.1%
- Worry about bad influences on children 0.6%
- Concerns about breach of privacy 0.2%
- Too many viruses 0.0%

As shown in Figure 20, lack of online skills has become the primary obstacle for nonusers to adopt the Internet in recent years.

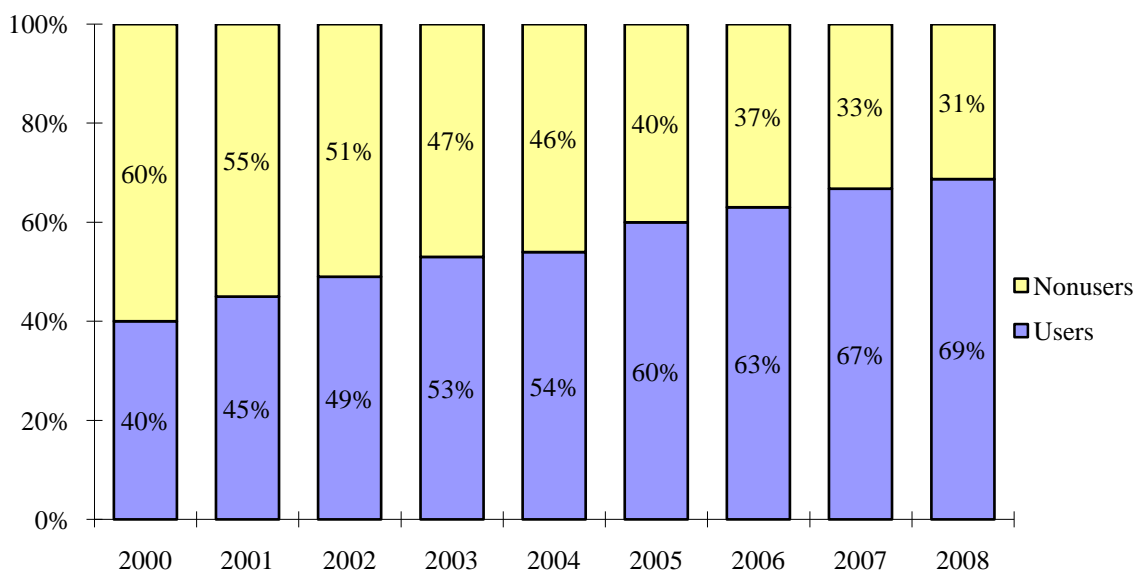
Figure 20 Obstacles for Nonusers to Use the Internet



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk>)

2. As shown in Figure 21, the proportion of the adult population (18-74) in Hong Kong being Internet users has grown from 40% in 2000 to 45% in 2001, 49% in 2002, 53% in 2003, 54% in 2004, 60% in 2005, 63% in 2006, 67% in 2007 and 69% in 2008, at the annual growth rate of 7.0%. Meanwhile, the proportion being nonusers has declined from 60% in 2000 to 55% in 2001, 51% in 2002, 47% in 2003, 46% in 2004, 40% in 2005, 37% in 2006, 33% in 2007 and 31% in 2008, at the annual reduction rate of 7.8%.

Figure 21. Rise of Users and Fall of Nonusers from 2000-2008



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

2.4 Perceptions of the Internet between User and Nonusers

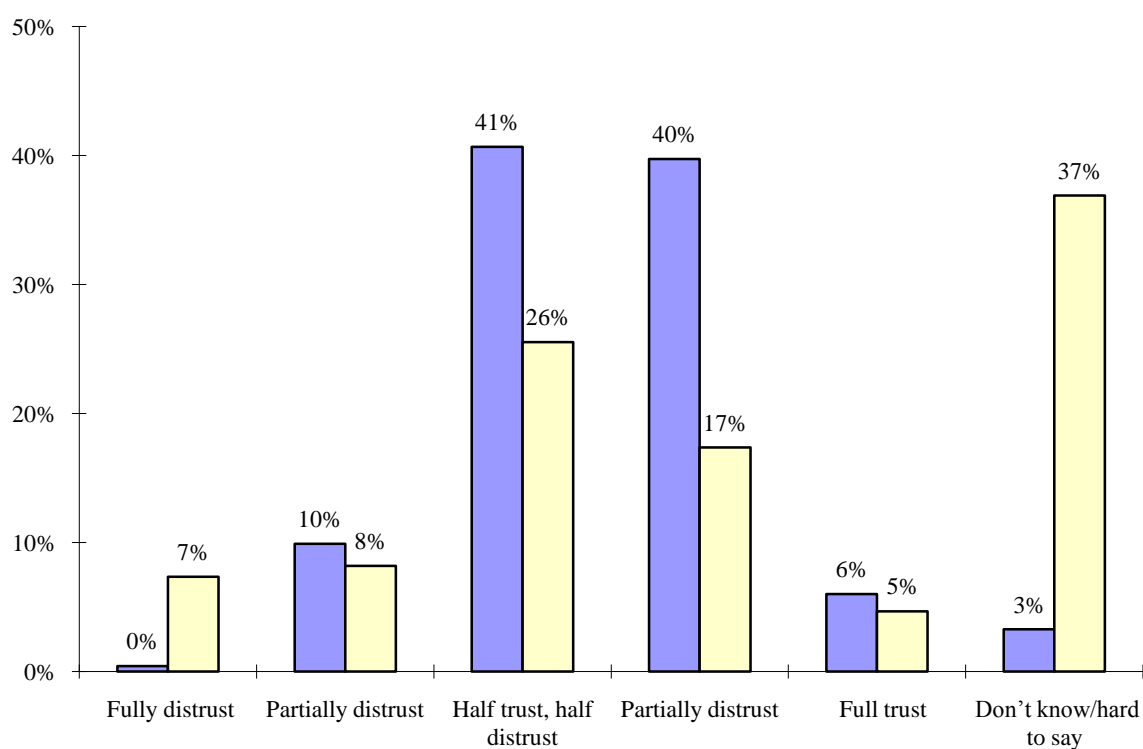
1. Do you trust the Internet (shown in Table 10).

Table 10. Trust in the Internet between Users and Nonusers

	Users	Nonusers	Total
▪ Fully distrust	0.4%	7%	3%
▪ Partially distrust	10%	8%	9%
▪ Half trust, Half distrust	41%	26%	35%
▪ Partially trust	40%	17%	31%
▪ Full trust	6%	5%	5%
▪ Don't know/hard to say	3%	37%	16%

As shown in Figure 22, Internet users are more positive about the Internet than are the nonusers because the proportions holding a modest degree of trust in the Internet (“Partially trust” and “Half trust and half distrust”) are significantly larger among the users than those among nonusers.

Figure 22. Trust in the Internet between Uses and Nonusers



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

■ Users □ Nonusers

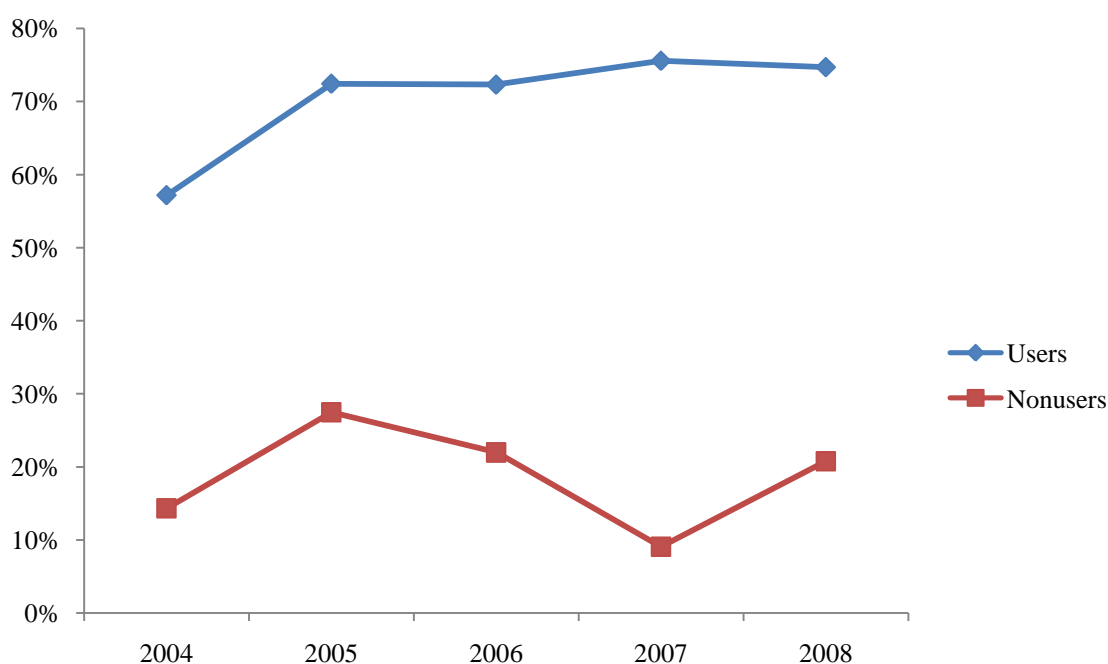
2. Importance of the Internet in life, work or study (shown in Table 11):

Table 11. Perceived Importance of the Internet between Users and Nonusers

	Users	Nonusers	Total
▪ Highly important	38%	5%	25%
▪ Partially important	39%	13%	29%
▪ Half important, Half unimportant	17%	28%	21%
▪ Partially unimportant	5%	20%	11%
▪ Highly unimportant	0%	19%	7%
▪ Don't know/Hard to say	0%	15%	6%

As shown in Figure 23, in comparison with Internet nonusers, most Internet users agree that Internet is important to their life and work or study, whereas the percentage of nonusers who regard Internet not important is much higher than that of Internet users.

Figure 23. Perceived Importance of the Internet between Users and Nonusers



Data Source: HK Internet Project 2000-2008 (<http://newmedia.cityu.edu.hk/hkip>)

PART III. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

1. Study Population

The target populations for the current study is those regular residents between 18 and 74 years old who speak Chinese (including Cantonese, Putonghua and other dialects) and live in Hong Kong with a residential phone line. This definition follows World Internet Project (WIP) practice and had been used continuously in our annual surveys from 2000 to 2007. The results can be compared with our previous surveys in 2000-2007.

2. Sampling Method

Sample Size: 1,461 residents were successfully interviewed in the survey, resulting in a sample size comparable to each provincial sample in the corresponding survey by [CNNIC](#). The sample size gives a sampling error of 2.6% at the 95% confidence level.

Sampling Procedure: As in the eight previous surveys, random digital dialing (RDD) method was used to generate the sample. First, over 10,000 telephone numbers were randomly created by a computerized program. Those numbers were contacted. When proven to be a residential number, a person between 18 and 74, speaking Chinese, regularly living the residence, with the last birthday among other qualified members, was selected for interview. The same phone number/individual was called back up to five times at different times of different days if no one was at the contacted telephone number, the chosen individual was not at home or unavailable for interview.

Survey Response Rate: Calculated by [Response Rate Formulae 3](#) (RR3) of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), the response rate of the current survey is 29.4%, which is approximate to the previous surveys in 2000-2006 (i.e., 38%、35%、36%、33%、41%、33% and 30%, respectively), and higher than that in 2007 (23%).

Weighting Method: Before analyzed, the data were weighted against Hong Kong Population Census Estimates, June 2008, in terms of cross-distribution of age and sex. Consequently, the distribution of sex and age of the current sample resembles that of the population.

Data Cleaning: The report above contains several average numbers, such as the average online time per user. As widely known, average numbers are vulnerable to extremely large or small values in the data. We have therefore followed the customary practice in data

processing: excluding extreme values (defined as larger than 3 standard deviations from the mean in either direction). Averages calculated from the adjusted data are generally about 10% smaller than the averages of the original data.