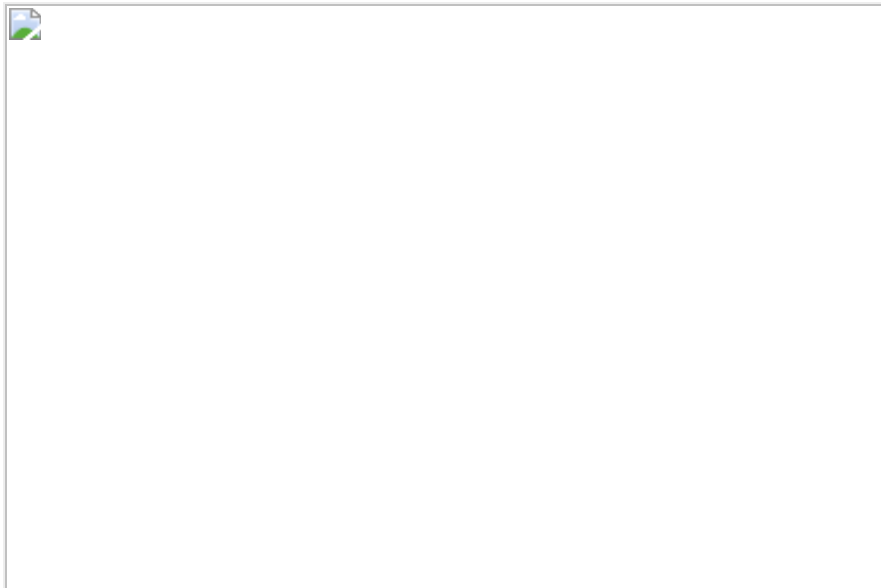


Silicon Valley Media Companies Are Killing The Internet With Their Crime And Stupidity

The internet – not as great as we all thought it was going to be, eh?

Number of netizens in favor of the web drops, according to latest US study

By [Kieren McCarthy](#) in [San Francisco](#) 88  [Reg comments](#) [SHARE](#) ▼



Society is slowly souring on the internet, according to the latest research by Pew.

While a majority of us still think that the global communications network has, on balance, been a positive thing, that number has slipped significantly in the past four years.

Back in 2014, when Pew last asked roughly 2,000 adults across the entire United States, 76 per cent of them said the internet held a net positive benefit for them personally. In the [latest survey](#), however, that has dropped to 70 per cent.

Old people have soured the most: 64 per cent now say the internet is mostly a good thing for society but that has fallen from 78 per cent just a few years ago. Young-uns remain more positive - but even so that figure for 18-29 year olds has fallen from 79 to 74 per cent.

Reflecting the ever-growing issue of a national digital divide, those that are more educated and affluent are most positive about the internet. College graduates give the internet an 81 per cent thumbs up; those without a high school diploma, just 65 per cent, with 17 per cent of them saying the impact has been mostly bad.

"Positive views of the internet are often tied to information access and connecting with others," says Pew, "negative views are based on a wider range of issues."

What are those issues? Isolation, says a quarter of those who are down on the net. And the subject du jour – fake news – is making 16 per cent of people unhappy. Other concerns include the impact on children, a greater opportunity for illegal activity and privacy concerns.

However just five per cent of people were worried about sensitive personal information, which is somewhat amazing given the series of highly public failure from companies like [Facebook](#) to adequately protect that data.

On the plus side

It's not all bad news though.

There is still a clear majority of people who feel positively about the internet and those that are actively unhappy about it has remained unchanged at 15 per cent. People love the ready access to information that the internet has made possible and of course the ability to stay in touch with friends and family.

Internet

What is stark in the survey is how much smartphones have become essential everyday tools in our modern lives. A fifth of Americans say they access the internet only through their phones these days i.e. they don't have a broadband connection at all – a seven per cent jump from four years ago.

But, again, that figure points to the dangerous imbalance in digital access across the US: Pew notes that "those who rely on their smartphones for home internet service are disproportionately less likely to have attended college compared with those with traditional broadband service. They also report living in lower-income households."

In other words, poor folk are using their phones to access the internet. Nearly a third of Americans in low-income households (under

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\$30,000 a year) only access the internet through their phones. And that drops to almost zero when you hit high-income households.

The policy implications are clear which makes all the more disturbing that federal regulator the FCC is actively trying to undermine the federal Lifeline program that provides subsidized broadband to low-income households. Poor people getting shafted is as American as apple pie.

The same impact is seen by those living in rural areas: far more people outside big cities rely on their phone for internet access. Again, a clear policy issue that the FCC is failing to adequately address thanks in some part due to its [terrible data](#) on broadband access.

As for the holdouts: 11 per cent say they do not use the internet at all. No internet, no email, nothing. Presumably this is the pool for all future jurors. ®