Wired World

A new report shows more people are online than ever before.

“Everyone who uses the Internet, please stand up!” If that message could be heard all over the world at the same time, how many people do you think would stand up?

The answer is almost two billion, or nearly one-third of all human beings on the planet. That number comes from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Since 2005, the number of people who have access to the Internet through cell phones or computer use has doubled. To have access to something is to have the ability to use it. The Internet is a communications system that connects computers around the world.

Countries in the Lead

A growing percentage of the world’s Internet users access the Internet not through their computers, but with their cell phones. According to ITU, there were an estimated 5.9 billion cell phone subscriptions in 2011. Mobile phone networks are now available to 90 percent of the world’s population.
The wealthier nations of the world have the most people using the Internet. Poorer nations have the fewest Internet users. The biggest difference in Internet use between the richest nations and the poorest nations is called the global digital divide. However, the digital divide is getting smaller. Of the 226 million new Internet users added in 2010, most (162 million) came from the world’s poorer countries.

Who are the digital leaders? Sweden comes in at number one. The country is followed by Luxembourg, South Korea, Denmark, the Netherlands, Iceland, Switzerland, and Japan. The United States comes in at 19.

**Kids Surf**

How has this rapid, or quick, growth in Internet use affected young people around the world?

Toshie Takahashi, a professor who specializes in how young people relate to the Internet, spoke to *WR News*.

“Kids can ... communicate with each other using the Internet. ... National boundaries are no barrier.” A barrier is something that blocks something else. Takahashi says there are some kids who have mixed feelings about the Internet. “It is good in that they can easily make friends, play games, and do other things with kids even on the other side of the globe. But the Internet can be harmful, they say, because it leaves them open to cyberbullying and other harmful things. In general, though, for kids, the Internet has shrunk the world. It does not seem like such a big place anymore.”

Takahashi thinks that increasing Internet use has led to a better understanding between young people worldwide. “Kids all over the world love American pop music and pop culture,” she says. “And an increasing number of American kids are ... learning about pop culture in other countries. I interviewed a U.S. teen who is fascinated with Japanese animation, for instance.” To be fascinated is to be excited about something or someone.

Takahashi says that, especially in Asia, more kids use cell phones to access the Internet than computers. “In China, for instance, they don’t have a lot of public access to the Internet, but they have a huge number of cell phones capable of downloading a lot of data quickly. In Japan, ... students research and write papers using their cell phones alone!”
Who Invented the Internet?

U.S. Department of Defense members were the first world’s “Webmasters.”

![Image of early computer](Image)

*akg-Images/Newscom*

This early computer isn’t exactly a lap top! It was built in 1945 at the University of Pennsylvania.

The department created the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET). That was a network of university and U.S. military computers. ARPANET machines could share information and “talk” to one another. By 1981, approximately 200 computers were on the network.

After the World Wide Web was created in 1991, ARPANET and other networks joined to form what we know today as the Internet.

**America, Online**

Ever wonder how the Internet works? Browse through the time line to learn about some major moments in the Internet’s history.
1969: The United States Department of Defense creates ARPANET. It lets members of the military communicate with one another.

1971: You've got mail! Computer whiz Ray Tomlinson creates the first system to send e-mails between users connected to ARPANET.

1991: British scientist Tim Berners-Lee creates the World Wide Web. It allows users to create and view Web sites that can contain pictures, videos, and sound.

1995: There are 18,000 Web sites on the Internet.

1998: Google, the most widely used search engine, is founded. A search engine allows users to search for information on the World Wide Web.

2009: There are more than 215 million Web sites on the Internet.

1. According to the passage, which of the following countries comes first on the list of digital leaders?

   A  Luxembourg  
   B  South Korea  
   C  United States  
   D  Sweden

2. The passage describes Internet use around the world. How many people around the world use the Internet?

   A  about one-half of all humans  
   B  about 200,000 humans  
   C  about one-third of all humans  
   D  about 3 million people

3. Based on the passage, why do the wealthier nations most likely have the most people using the Internet?

   A  Wealthier nations offer the Internet for free to people.  
   B  Wealthier people can afford to buy the technology to access the Internet.  
   C  It is cheaper in wealthier nations to access the Internet.  
   D  People in poorer nations do not like to use the Internet.

4. Read the following sentence: “Kids can ... communicate with each other using the Internet. ... National boundaries are no barrier.” As used in the passage, communicate means

   A  see  
   B  travel  
   C  talk  
   D  ignore

5. What is the central idea of this passage?

   A  the Internet can be accessed from anywhere in the world  
   B  how to fix the digital divide  
   C  the Internet is used by many people around the world  
   D  how the idea of the Internet was created
6. What is the global digital divide?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

7. Based on the passage, what does Toshie Takahashi most likely mean when she says that the Internet has shrunk the world?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Students in Asia use their cell phones to research and write papers ______ there isn’t a lot of public access to the Internet in those countries.

A  after  
B  but  
C  because  
D  so

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

By 1981, the U.S. Department of Defense had added 200 new computers to their network so the machines could share information.

What? the U.S. Department of Defense

(had done) What? ________________________________________________________________

When? ________________________________________________________________

Why? ________________________________________________________________
Directions: Read the vocabulary word and definition below to complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

Vocabulary Word: access (ac·cess): to get something.

10a. Read the sentences below and underline all forms of the word access.

1. Many people today have access to the Internet because it is usually available everywhere you go.
2. The library allows everyone to access books if they want to borrow them.
3. If you have access to a grocery store, it is easy for you to get food.
4. It is difficult for me to send mail because I do not have easy access to a post office.
5. In the desert, many people do not have easy access to water, so they have to walk for many miles to get it.

10b. Which object would most likely give you access to a treasure chest?

11. If the door to the kitchen is locked, do you have access to food? Why or why not?