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Telecommunication Statistics and Data Unit

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## Gender and ICT statistics

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The availability of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) statistics showing a breakdown by gender at the country level is limited, indeed almost non-existent. Examining the availability of overall ICT statistics helps explain this. First, not many government organizations collect national ICT statistics in a consistent and regular manner. Of those government agencies that compile statistics, most do not provide a breakdown by gender. Second, traditional ICT statistics are either obtained from telecommunication organizations (e.g., telephones) or estimated based on shipment data (e.g., personal computers). These organizations have their own operational or analytical reasons for maintaining the data and gender is not one of them. Also in some cases, gender disaggregated statistics are not intuitively logical. Where disaggregation is available, it is usually by sector rather than sex (e.g., business, government, home or education). Therefore, it is safe to say that until primary ICT data collectors see market value in obtaining gender disaggregated statistics, the data will not be widely available.

The International Telecommunication Union collects and disseminates a number of ICT statistics that are widely used by the research and development community. It obtains these data from government communication agencies or telecommunication operators. Gender specific statistics have been difficult to

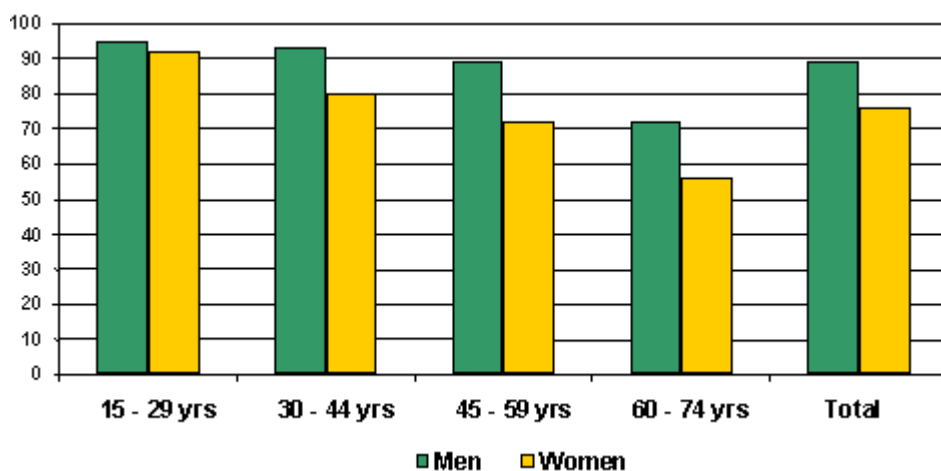
	1999	2000
Number of countries reporting total telecom employees	195	164
Per cent of total	86%	73%
Number of countries reporting female telecom employees	68	53
As a percent of those reporting total telecom employees	35%	32%
Percentage of telecom employees that are female (weighted average)	29%	29%
Percentage of telecom employees that are female (simple average)	33%	31%

Source: ITU.

obtain for the reasons cited above. The ITU has begun to ask for what appeared to be a straightforward and easily obtainable statistic: the number of female telecommunication employees in a country. The results are interesting as they illustrate not only the difficulty of obtaining a simple gender statistic but also show the wide variation in the data from an analytical perspective (see Table 1). Only one third of countries were able to provide the number of female telecommunication employees. While many developing nations were unable to provide the data, surprisingly some developed nations such as the France, Germany, Japan and the United States also did not have a breakdown

of telecommunication employees by sex. Of those nations that were able to provide a breakdown, the values range from 77 per cent in Azerbaijan to six per cent in Qatar. In general members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) tended to have the highest levels of female telecommunication staff while Gulf States tended to have the lowest. Though no detailed research has been done to analyze why, some initial ideas spring to mind. The CIS nations tend to have high levels of female literacy and education. At the same time, they have fairly old telephone networks which may require more operator intervention. Telephone operators tend to be women. In the case of the Gulf States, traditional cultures has usually resulted in few woman working.

**Figure 1: Possesses mobile phone in autumn 2000, by sex and age, Finland**



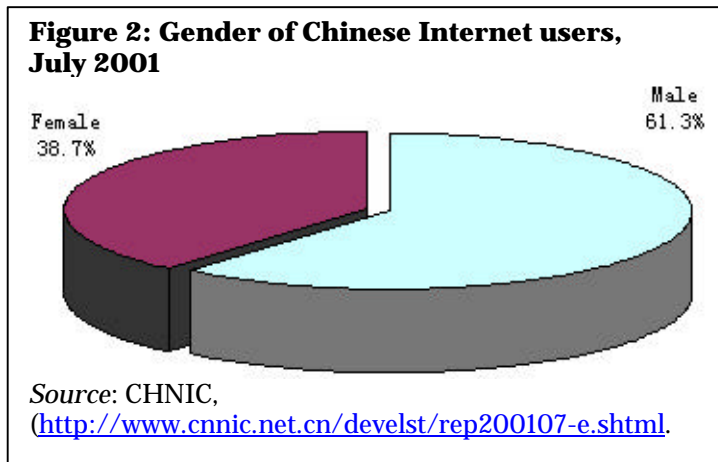
Source: Statistics Finland,

[www.stat.fi/tk/yr/tietoyhteiskunta/matkapuhelin\\_oma\\_kuvasivu\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/tk/yr/tietoyhteiskunta/matkapuhelin_oma_kuvasivu_en.html)

A few nations, primarily developed, do have some interesting gender statistics regarding ICT access and use. For example, Statistics Finland provides a breakdown of mobile phone use by gender (see Figure 1). Mobile phone ownership tends to be equal between sexes among the young but a gap grows with age.) Unfortunately these type of studies are very rare but the Statistics Finland case does illustrate that the data could be obtained through surveys.

One area where disaggregated ICT statistics are available for larger countries is Internet penetration. This is partly because this kind of data is easier to obtain through the use of web-based surveys. In other words, an Internet user will have access to the World Wide Web and can access and fill out an online form. This data is available in both surveys carried out by national agencies as well as market research companies. For example, the China Internet Network Information Center (CHNIC) compiles a breakdown of Chinese Internet users by sex every six months (See Figure 2). It appears that there may be more national surveys carried out by smaller organizations where this data is available but it requires extensive research. Nielsen, the market research firm, also provides a breakdown of Internet users by sex, although only for larger economies that it studies (See Table 2).

In general, not much information beyond a breakdown of user by sex is available on Internet usage in most countries. Thailand is an exception where the NECTEC compiles an annual publication on the profile of Internet users in the country NECTEC (Internet User Profile of Thailand 2000. 2001). There is an entire section devoted to gender giving for example a breakdown of online purchases by sex and other interesting information.



Though the overall availability of gender disaggregated ICT statistics is limited, there are certain data or countries where this type of information is available. For example, in the area of Internet access, a number of country and industry surveys provide a breakdown of user by sex. This clearly demonstrates that it is possible to obtain this type of data. One reason that the Internet user data is more available is that web-based surveys

**Table 2. Female composition of Internet universe; At-home, May 2001**

Country	% Female
USA	52
Canada	51
Australia	48
New Zealand	46
Finland	46
South Korea	45
Sweden	45
Denmark	45
Ireland	45
Hong Kong	44
Norway	43
Singapore	42
Brazil	42
Taiwan	41
UK	41
Netherlands	41
Spain	40
France	39
Germany	37
Italy	37

are often used. This type of survey could be implemented in more countries if there was greater awareness of the importance and if resources were available. One proposal for improving gender statistics regarding Internet usage would be to install a web-based system in a pilot country and monitor the results. It might also be instructive to examine how national statistical agencies such as Statistics Finland are carrying out gender-based ICT surveys and use the experience to design a tool kit that could then be implemented in other countries. There are also a number of surveys that have been carried out showing breakdowns of ICT usage by sex but that are not easily accessible. A project could be implemented that would do web-based research to uncover and document these studies.

Source: Nielsen//NetRatings.  
<http://www.eratings.com/news/20010628.htm>