Given the core importance of last decade, technology has been developed in the access to and use of ICT by Oman’s national level, more than 90% of households possess at least one mobile phone or smart phone, while one quarter of the households own a fixed line phone. The wide use of mobile phones outweighs the need for access to and use of ICT by Oman’s population since, smart phone technology has been developed in the last decade.

Given the core importance of computers in modern society, individuals interviewed were asked whether they used at least one computer (e.g., desktop, laptop, tablet) with Omanis and non-Omanis at the same relative percentile, with no noticeable difference between urban and rural areas. Laptop computers are widely used, with no difference between Omanis and non-Omanis; three in four households own at least one laptop computer.

When focusing on the different types of computers owned by the households, it appears that in average and at the national level that tablets are the preferred choice over desktop computers. When looking at the reasons for not having a computer, the high cost of purchasing a computer is the main explanation given by half interviewed households. The second main reason is the lack of need to use computers, followed by the lack of ICT skills.

Talking about the Internet statistics within households, about 88% of households in Oman have Internet access. Consistently, with the predominance of mobile ICT devices, data on mobile phones with the data on Internet access were used to browse the Internet, an explanation that has been used to show a recent acceleration of access to and use of ICT by young population. Results showed that no consistent differences exist between Omanis and non-Omanis in Internet access. Despite the high percentage of Internet access within households, no small percentage of households who do not have Internet access due to the lack of Internet coverages (42%), the high price of services (32%), the lack of knowledge and skills (25%), the lack of need and the high cost of the equipment (25%).

Given that the main characteristic of a smartphone is that it allows the user to browse the Internet, an explanation can be found by cross-checking the data on mobile phones with the data on computer and Internet access. The data on computer and Internet access indicates that the higher number of smart phones within households can be seen as a compensation of the absence of Internet access through other devices.

Households indicators

Survey on “Access to, and Use of, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by Households and Individuals” in Oman

- 11,000 randomly selected households across the Sultanate were visited
- 83% of households own at least one computer and 80% of individuals use computers
- 80% of households have Internet access, while 67% of individuals use the Internet

For the first time in the Sultanate, the Information Technology Authority (ITA) conducted its survey on the Access to and Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by Households and Individuals 2013. The survey covered 11,000 randomly selected households across the Sultanate, with the aim of assessing the current situation and to set a benchmark for measuring the international standards on measuring ICT for development, created by the ITU-Facts for Measuring ICT for Development and the International Telecommunication Union – ITU.

The survey aimed at achieving the following objectives:
- Measure the access to and use of ICT by the households and individuals to assist in decision making and strategic plans to formulate initiatives related to ICT in households and individuals.
- Assess the digital divide.
- Provide a benchmark for international comparisons.

The survey was comprised of three main parts. The first part aims to investigate the extent of the usage of Internet, computers, cell phones in the household. The second part focuses on the relationship between the age and the nature of technology a certain user finds best to use and the use of social media. In other words, video games might be preferred by a 6-year-old child, while a teenager might more likely opt for social channels through a cell phone rather than use a personal computer or a laptop.

The third part is mainly to measure how interactive the users are in regard to the eGovernment services, as well as to know their impression about available Internet services in the Sultanate.

The data were collected using smart devices and were sent on a regular basis to the existing database at the headquarters of the company executing the project. The data was then reviewed, cleaned, and then analyzed to extract the below findings.

Individuals Indicators

Looking at Graph #2 (Indicators), a large majority of the population use computers. Only one in five males and one in four females do not use one. The use of computers varies in the business sector however depending on the degree of qualification required, which showed a strong correlation existing between the levels of education attained and the intensity of computer use. Omanis use computers more intensively used in the upper levels of education, and a more intensive use by employees of public sector and industry, with percentages reaching 90% among females interviewed. Furthermore, the highest rates of computer use are reached by students (92%), which mean that the specific policies of ICT development within the educational system have obtained positive results. The situation of access to and use of computers is quite similar between the native and expatriate populations as the analysis shows that the main location of using computer is in the household.

The main reasons for not using computers are the lack of need (83%), followed by the lack of knowledge about ICT skills (34%) and the high costs associated with not being able to afford one (23%). The lack of ICT knowledge can be overcome by ensuring that teaching ICT skills in the Oman educational system becomes a sustained policy objective, because an individual grows older, literacy represents a serious barrier to the use of computers, in addition to the lack of need.

Some employment policies should be tailored to suit work at home, and work with regard to their use of computer due to the facts that the survey shown.
- Half of job seekers in the 15-19 age range (compared to one-third of employed individuals) declare that they do not use computers due to a lack of skills.
- About 45% of the job seekers also consider the high price of equipment as a barrier.

These facts suggest that targeted ICT awareness and training programs should be designed for this segment, in order to increase their employability.

Oman and non-Omanis use computers with similar behaviors consuming mobile communication. Mobile phones are widely used. Of the approximately 80% of individuals interviewed, there was no difference between nationalities. However, the gender gap in the ownership and use of mobile phones is higher within the non-Omani population than within Omanis populations.

With regard to Individuals’ use of Internet, the Internet is frequently used by three in four individuals who browse the net on a daily basis, though no substantial differences exist between Omanis and non-Omanis. The use of computers starts earlier. Half of job seekers in the 15-19 age range (compared to one-third of employed individuals) declare to do not use computers due to a lack of skills, and....
When investigating the use of the eGovernment services, only 8% of individuals interviewed have declared they do not interact with public authorities over the Internet. Of those who indicated interaction with public authorities, the majority of these interactions mainly consist of obtaining information, as is shown in Graph #3.

More or less than half of the population surveyed has demonstrated interest for a wide number of new eServices foreseen to be implemented. Only 14% (from a multiple choice selection) declared to have more complex online based interactions like filling downloabel official forms or using online public services. The main issue of eGovernment development still remains, which is to ensure good quality of Internet connection throughout the country.

Regarding the eCommerce, results showed that the society does not seem to be interested in eCommerce-related services. Raising awareness of online shopping is very important as 85% of those interviewed indicated they have never bought or ordered anything over the internet.

Survey on “Access to, and Use of, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by Households and Individuals” in Oman

eGovernment Services

When investigating the use of the eGovernment services, only 8% of individuals interviewed have declared they do not interact with public authorities over the Internet. Of those who indicated interaction with public authorities, the majority of these interactions mainly consist of obtaining information, as is shown in Graph #3.

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Feedback on Internet Speed & Price

An explanation to some facts mentioned above can be found in Graph #5, which shows the feedback on internet speed and price. More than two in three Internet users declare that the Internet speed is too slow and that the price is too high.