



Americans Are Pro-Technology—On The Surface

Dan Ness, Principal Analyst, MetaFacts, October 30, 2004

Americans tend to be pro-technology—but that statement hides a lot of variation. Some of the variation is predictable—older people don't like technology as much as younger ones, and low-income people don't like it as much as their affluent neighbors. The West likes technology more than the other regions. But within those observations lie some surprises. For instance, Montana and Wyoming, while adjacent, are poles apart. Factory workers like technology more than lawyers.

Why is this important?

Wherever or whoever they are, those with pro-technology attitudes buy vastly more technology products than those with anti-technology leanings.

These insights into pro-and anti-technology attitudes are derived from the latest research from MetaFacts, Inc., involving analysis of answers to six questions from 32,130 PC users and non-users. These questions centered on their attitudes about keeping up with the latest technology, staying with the tried and true, and their electronics buying experiences. A cluster analysis revealed three different segments, two of which were more pro-technology than an anti-technology segment. On the whole, MetaFacts found that Americans lean toward technology, with 36.7 percent of households preferring not to stay with the tried & true and claiming long electronics shopping experience, indicating they were pro-technology. Meanwhile, 32.5 percent were also positive on technology, and more strongly than other Americans expressed an urgency to keep up with technology changes even before they felt the need. The remaining 30.9 percent revealed anti-technology attitudes, also preferring to hold off on purchases until prices dropped.

Regional attitudes were about what you'd expect. The Mountain and Pacific regions showed a significant leaning toward technology, while the central regions generally leaned away. New England and the South Atlantic regions were solidly in the middle. But when the responses were broken down to the state level, there was less of a pattern. Ranked by state, Wyoming, Delaware, New Mexico, and New Hampshire are the most pro-technology, while Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas and Montana are the most anti-technology. But with neighbors like Montana and Wyoming at polar extremes, it is clear that a geographic perspective—while illuminating—is not by itself sufficient for understanding American technology attitudes. You have to dig deeper into the demographics. (In case you were wondering, Oakland, San Diego, Salt Lake City, Denver and Rochester have the most pronounced pro-technology attitudes of the top 50 metropolitan areas in the U.S. Meanwhile, Cleveland, Columbus, Bergen/Passaic, NJ, and Fort Worth are the most technologically conservative.)

In terms of household income, those with lower incomes leaned away from technology—except those in the lowest range, where the pro-and anti-technology attitudes pretty much balanced out. The respondents started leaning toward technology after making at least \$50,000 a year. But above \$60,000 they leaned to the middle until they started making above \$150,000. The most affluent were firmly pro-technology.

In terms of lifestyle and life stage, older people were more anti-technology than younger ones, and DINKs (double income no kids) were particularly pro-tech. Single parents were more pro-technology than working couple parents, who were solidly in the comfort zone. SINKs (Single income no kids) were firmly in the comfort zone, as were traditional families of all incomes.

Single-income households leaned toward technology while double-income households were in the mid-range comfort zone. The unemployed were anti-technology. Households with children were rooted in the comfort zone.

Examination of the occupations of the respondents, however, showed the most dramatic splits—and surprises. It may come as no shock to learn that those in engineering and the sciences leaned toward technology by a rate of three to one. Less extreme were the pronounced pro-technology attitudes of the technicians, administrators, government officials, and general office workers. Oddly, lawyers and judges had a pronounced anti-technology attitude, also sadly shared by teachers, librarians, bankers and nurses. Solidly in the comfort level were writers, artists, cashiers, factory workers, janitors—and, weirdly, computer scientists. (Presumably, they are too busy tinkering with it to love it.) Some occupations showed odd splits between the extremes, such as farmers and fishermen, police, and athletes. Apparently, an active life makes you feel passionately one way or the other about technology.

When grouped in industry sectors, on average those in manufacturing were strongly pro-technology, while those in industrial and financial jobs and trades were anti-technology. Those in the government and services sectors were fairly evenly split. When these were broken into verticals, strong pro-technology attitudes were found in data processing (no surprise there) and (more surprisingly) among those involved in lodging, printing, metal fabrication, and transportation. Evidently those people appreciate what computers can do for them. More surprising were the anti-technology leanings of those involved in banking, insurance, and local government. Emphatically in the comfort zone were those involved in telephony and broadcasting, plus doctors, dentists and veterinarians. Postal and delivery workers were oddly split between the extremes.

The size of the enterprise that the respondent worked for also had a consistent effect on technology attitudes. Those in small enterprises (less than 20 people) had clear anti-technology attitudes. Then their attitudes switched to pro-technology when they worked for enterprises with 20-100 people. Above 100 people the trend became increasingly anti-technology until the enterprise reached 1000 people, when it swung the other way. (It may be that those in mid-range enterprise have more control of their desktops, and therefore appreciate computers more.)

Of great interest to marketers was the fact that the survey also showed that respondents with pro-technology attitudes bought technology products at about twice the rate of those with anti-technology attitudes. This was especially the case with personal video recorders, portable MP3 players, handheld GPS devices, premium cable TV, digital cable TV, satellite radio, digital camcorders, hands-free cellular phones, and in-car DVD or VCR players. And let's not forget fax machines. In terms of computer peripherals, the pro-technology people were up to four times more likely to own certain items, such as USB hubs and external hard drives. Additionally, when asked about what purchases they planned to make within the next 12 months, the pro-technology crowd had twice the plans of the anti-technology crowd.

Occupations with Pro-Technology Attitudes	Occupations With Anti-Technology Attitudes
<p style="text-align: center;">Construction Trades Precision Trades Office Equipment Operators Food-Beverage Servers Delivery people Government administrators Engineers Technicians</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Farming & Fishing Police/Fire/Military Nurses Clerks Insurance, Real Estate, Securities Lawyer & Judges Teachers & Librarians</p>

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