

# Web Browser & Operating Systems Trends

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## Operating Systems & Web Browser Trends<sup>1</sup>

### Operating Systems

#### Summary

The Windows operating system is still, by far, the most popular operating system (OS) with approximately 87% of the market. Mac and Linux come in a distant second and third respectively. However, Windows' share of the operating system market continued to trend down overall in 2011. Windows 7, launched in October 2009 continued to gain share, but largely from Windows Vista and XP. Mobile and tablet systems also continued their strong growth throughout 2011.

Top 3 Operating Systems		
1	Windows	86.67%
2	Mac	10.62%
3	Linux	2.65%

#### Windows

Prior to the launch of Windows 7 in October 2009, usage stats for Windows' top three operating systems broke out as follows<sup>2</sup>: Windows XP - 66%, Windows Vista - 20%, and Windows 7 (in beta) - 2%. As of the end of 2011, Windows 7 is the top Windows operating system at 40.23% of the market, closely followed by Windows XP at 38.91%. Windows Vista's user base, which never did surpass that of its predecessor Windows XP, is now down to just over 7.44%.

The next major release of Windows, Windows 8 is still pre-beta. A [developer preview](#) of new features in September 2011, highlighted a Touch-First user Interface, live roaming on the cloud to sync key content (photos, email, etc...), as well as improvements in performance, security, privacy and system reliability.

Top 3 Windows Versions		
1	Windows 7	40.23%
2	Windows XP	38.91%
3	Windows Vista	7.44%

## Mac OS X and iOS

Macs represent just over 10% of the operating system market, which includes the numerous versions of Mac OS X as well as Apple's mobile iOS. While this still represents a much smaller market share compared to the one held by Microsoft Windows, Mac use is a significant market force and has been trending up for the past few years, driven in part by the huge popularity of iPhones and iPads.

Apple released its newest operating system, Mac OS X Lion, on July 20, 2011 to generally favourable reviews. With Lion, the interface of OS X moved closer to what iPhone/iPad users are familiar with in Apple's mobile iOS. Apple also changed its distribution method and terms for Lion. Though now also available on a thumb drive, Lion OS X was initially offered only as a digital download through the Mac App store. The download was offered at a much lower price point than would be normal for such a major revision (under \$30 in Canada).

2011 was a big year for the Apple OS. A little less than a year after Apple's iPad debuted in 2010, the iPad 2 was released in March 2011. Apple's co-founder, chairman and visionary died October 5, prompting outpourings of sympathy and tributes as well as speculation about the impact that Steve Jobs' death would have on the future of Apple innovation. A few weeks later, Apple's 5<sup>th</sup> generation iPhone - the iPhone 4S - was released, introducing among other features, SIRI voice recognition.

Mac OS X and iOS	
Mac OS X	7.81%
iOS (includes iPhone, iPad, iPod)	2.80%
<b>Total OS X and iOS</b>	<b>10.62%</b>

## Mobile OS

Worldwide there are 5.3 billion mobile subscribers, which means that a large % of the world's population now owns a mobile device of some sort. (Source: [dotMobi](#)). According to [Facebook's own statistics](#), there are more than 350 million active users, accessing Facebook through their mobile devices.

With strong growth in both the tablet (iPad, Playbook), and the smartphone (iPhone, Blackberry, Android) market, the use of mobile devices is expanding hourly. Research published by Net Application on their [NetMarketShare](#) website shows that browsing on Mobile and Tablet devices is up from 3.88% in February 2011 to 7.67% by the end of 2011.

Differences in the way online research sources report on usage for mobile devices make averaged or consensus market share % difficult to estimate. However, all the sources we reviewed showed iOS (iPhone, iPad, iPod), in the top position. ([NetMarketShare](#) shows iOS at 52.10% of the mobile market as of the end of December 2011).

Android, Blackberry, Java ME and Symbian OS are the top contenders for the remaining positions as top Mobile OS. Android is consistently well head of Blackberry. For example, [W3 Counter](#) shows Android as 1.64% of the total OS market and Blackberry at less than half that, at 0.68% for December 2011.

## Browser Usage

### Summary

Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser (IE) is still the most widely used browser, representing approximately 34% of the market. However, market share for IE has been declining relative to other browsers, notably Firefox and Chrome over the past several years. While the market share of Apple's Safari browser has remained relatively stable around 5 percent, there has been a big shift in usage to Google's relatively new browser, Chrome, which has gone from less than 10% share just over a year ago to over 25% share at the end of 2011.

Top 4 Browsers		
1	Internet Explorer	34.42%
2	Firefox	26.36%
3	Chrome	25.21%
4	Safari	4.87%

### Internet Explorer

There are currently 4 versions of Internet Explorer (IE) in wide usage, IE6, IE7, IE8 and IE9.

Despite its age and a number of security and technical issues the 10 year old IE 6 browser continued to hold onto a respectable percentage market share well into 2011. Microsoft has been trying to get users to upgrade to newer versions of IE for years. They've gone so

far as to create a web site, [www.ie6countdown.com](http://www.ie6countdown.com) with the goal of “watching Internet Explorer 6 usage drop to less than 1% worldwide.”

On January 3, 2012, Roger Capriotta, Director of Internet Explorer Marketing, announced on the [Exploring IE](#) blog that according to data from [Net Applications](#) IE6 usage is now under 1% in the U.S. However, as of the end of December 2011, the [countdown](#) still showed the use of the IE6 browser at 7.7% worldwide and at 1.4% in Canada.

IE8, available since March 2009, is the top IE browser, though not the newest. At almost 18% of the total browser market IE8 has surpassed IE7, which is now down to just under 5% and Windows newest browser IE9, which is still under 9%.

IE9 features support for HTML 5, CSS3, and is faster than previous versions of IE. However, IE9 is only available for Windows Vista and Windows 7 users. This means that users with Windows XP and prior operating systems cannot upgrade to IE9, limiting access to this browser.

IE10 is in the works but is currently only available as a [developer preview](#).

Top 3 Internet Explorer Versions		
1	Internet Explorer 8	17.90%
2	Internet Explorer 9	8.12%
3	Internet Explorer 7	4.78%

## Firefox

Firefox (PC and Mac) is approximately 28% of the total browser market. The estimates for Firefox usage vary fairly significantly depending on whose statistics you trust. [W3 Schools](#) web site which has by its own admission a fairly ‘tech savvy’ research base, reports Firefox use at just over 34%. For the same period, [NetMarketShare](#), a more ‘corporate’ research organization, reports it at 19.11% (includes Firefox versions up to 9).

Both published web stats and informal, anecdotal evidence suggest that Firefox was trending up overall over the past few years. However, Firefox lost ground in 2011 with increased competition, particularly Google’s Chrome browser now in version 16.

Mid 2011 Firefox moved to a Rapid Release Process, bringing out new versions of the browser every 6 weeks. Though the move was controversial, the goal was to deliver new

capabilities to users faster. Mitchell Baker, Chair of the Mozilla Foundation, put it this way on his [blog post](#): “A browser is the delivery vehicle for the Internet. And the Internet moves very, very quickly.”

As of this writing Firefox is at version 9, which came out December 20, 2011. However, there are more than 9 versions of Firefox in wide usage.

Top 2 Firefox Versions		
1	Firefox 8	16.71
2	Firefox 3.6	4.82%

## Chrome

Chrome, currently on version 16, is the newest of the major browsers. Owned by Google and available for Windows, Mac and Linux operating systems, Chrome has had a stellar rise to more than 25% market share in just a few years.

One key feature of Chrome is its automatic update system, which updates the browser version automatically, frequently and invisibly to the user. From a developer perspective, this makes it a challenge to test a web site with all versions of the browser, but at the same time, makes it largely unnecessary. Chrome users will always be browsing the web with the most recent version of the browser.

Other features of Chrome that have fueled its rising popularity include its speed and ease of use, the option to customize the browser with themes, and the ‘omnibox’ that allows user to type in web addresses or search terms in one place. Chrome also offers an ‘Incognito’ mode for users that don’t want to have their site visits recorded in the browser history.

## Safari

Browser market share statistics track Safari browser total market share at approximately 4.87% of the total market. Safari’s relatively small market share total includes more than 10 versions of the browser including a Windows version of this primarily Mac identified browser. It is worth noting that Safari is now lagging behind Google’s much newer Chrome browser in terms of popularity.

However, Safari is the web browser for Apple’s rapidly growing and popular iPhone and iPad, making Safari a leading browser in the smartphone and tablet PC categories.

## Primary Sources:

[NetMarketShare](#)

[W3 Counter](#)

[W3 Schools](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, statistics are an average based on available online sources as of the end of December, 2011, primarily [W3 Counter](#), [W3 Schools](#), and [NetMarketShare](#) . All statistics should be taken as estimates of general trends and relative market share of major players rather than exact market share calculations. The author recommends consulting the above sources directly for more detailed information and statistics.

<sup>2</sup> These statistics are an average based on available online sources as of September 30, 2009, primarily [W3 Counter](#), [W3 Schools](#), and [NetMarketShare](#)