

Overall Demand For Electronic Mail

NEHST demonstrates electronic mail as a service enabling consumers to use a videotex-equipped TV to write and send electronic letters across town or across the country. The demonstration shows the service being used for personal correspondence - sending an invitation to friends to come to a party - rather than for business uses. Other uses for electronic mail, such as community bulletin boards, sending one letter instantly to many households, etc. are not demonstrated.

The research shows many consumers have trouble understanding the need for an electronic mail service, primarily because they send very few written letters now. Hence, there's a tremendous resistance to paying a fixed monthly fee for something that may only be used occasionally. Most of their personal communication is **spoken, not written**. On their own, consumers apparently can't visualize any benefits to replacing a telephone call with an electronic letter. Accordingly, demand for electronic mail is small - much smaller than for any of the other videotex services.

Figure 16 shows how few people want the service among each of the five NEHST sample groups exposed to different prices. Even among the group offered electronic mail for **free**, only 31% want the service!

