



For Immediate Release

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CANADIAN INTERNET PROJECT LAUNCHES REPORT FROM SECOND PHASE OF STUDY ON CANADIAN INTERNET HABITS

*Comprehensive Canadian research project offers insight into changing Internet habits,
media consumption, family interactions and more*

TORONTO, Ontario – Canadian Internet users are multi-tasking more and spending more time online while not dramatically changing their other media habits according to a new report released today by The Canadian Internet Project (CIP). The comprehensive survey of more than 3,100 Canadians (12 years and older), examined their use of the Internet, conventional media and emerging technologies. The second installment in this ongoing study offers insight into both new and conventional media use in Canada, as well as the socio-economic and cultural impact the Internet is having on Canadians.

CIP examines Canadians Internet usage from three different perspectives: academic, business and government. As a partner in the World Internet Project (WIP), the study also compares Canadian results to those of 13 other participating WIP countries, which also conducted research in 2007.

“Canada belongs to a world where the Internet, technology and media are central to our everyday lives,” says Fred Fletcher, Co-Investigator of CIP and University Professor Emeritus, Communication Studies and Political Science, York University. “The 2007 survey provides an unmatched analysis of Canadian online habits and how the Internet and emerging technologies are transforming lives. It is our hope that Canadian decision-makers – public and private – will use the results of this study to make more informed decisions.”

CIP conducted its first national survey in 2004 and published a baseline report, *Canada Online! A Comparative analysis of Internet Users and Non-users in Canada and the World: Behaviour, Attitudes and Trends* in 2005. The current report is even more comprehensive. Since 2004, the spread of high-speed broadband and mobile applications and services, along with innovative forms of interactive online activities and social networking, has underlined the need for longitudinal studies that assess trends and developing patterns of behaviour and attitudes over time.

There are also some important enhancements to the latest study. The 2007 questionnaire was compiled through collaboration with CIP’s 10 academic, government and industry partners. The resulting answers were then rolled into new topics and technologies within the survey. In addition, youths were included among those surveyed for the first time, with 400 respondents between the ages of 12 and 17.

“Youth and young adults are typically among the earliest adopters of new technologies, so including them in our research provides a perspective on the many changes that are taking place in society from using the Internet,” said Charles Zamaria, Principal Investigator and Project Director of CIP and a professor at Ryerson University. “As this age group grows older, so too, we predict, will the overall penetration levels, and more frequent engagement in sophisticated online activities.

“The CIP study is the most comprehensive public-access study of its kind in Canada. The 2007 data include nearly 900 variables and indices on a wide range of subjects across all media and



technologies, focusing most on changes caused by online engagement. This allows CIP to offer a sound foundation for a broad understanding of the continuing impact that traditional and new media have on our day-to-day lives.”

Internet Penetration and the Digital Divide

In comparison to the rest of the world, Canadians continue to be among the heaviest Internet users. Internet penetration increased by 6 percent to 78 percent in 2007. The average number of hours spent online also increased from 13 in 2004 to 17 hours per week in 2007. Canadian Internet users are typically very experienced and have been online for an average of nine years.

Not surprisingly, age is strongly related to Internet adoption, with younger individuals more likely to be online. Online activity is nearly universal with Canada’s youth population. At 96 percent, 12 to 17 year olds are almost all on the Internet and all those surveyed under 17 had used the Internet at one time or another. Surprisingly more than half of Canadians over 60 use the Internet regularly.

“Canada ranks number one for Internet engagement by its eldest citizens, when compared to other countries around the world participating in the WIP study,” said Professor Zamaria. “What is remarkable is that a considerable number of Canadians over 60 years are not just using e-mail or popular search engines, but they are also engaging in new and emerging activities similar to what their grandchildren are doing, such as participating in social networks, posting photographs online and so on.”

Inequalities and so-called digital divides in Internet access and usage within specific demographic sectors are lessening considerably. However, the biggest difference found in the results was a 15 percent gap between English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians – 82 percent vs. 67 percent. Part of the language divide in Internet penetration is a result of language, as English predominates on the Internet. Some of this can be attributed to the lack of technical infrastructure to provide access to the many rural areas within Quebec.

“But what we found most fascinating was the larger number of casual Internet engagers in Quebec, that is people who had been online occasionally in the year prior to the survey but did not consider themselves to be current users,” explains Professor Zamaria.

High speed broadband has transformed the online world and continues to revolutionize Internet use. Broadband access is found in 80 percent of Internet user households (or 54 percent of all Canadian homes) – an increase of 13 percent since 2004. In addition, CIP found online activities that are made easier to access using broadband have shown dramatic growth since 2004, including downloading or listening to music, watching televisions, videos or movies and playing games.

“It is the ‘always-on’ nature of broadband access, that is the distinguishing factor making broadband so transformational for Internet use,” said Dr. Fletcher.

Traditional Media versus Online Media

With the increase of time spent online, the use of traditional media has declined slightly. However, the 2007 study shows online activities appear to supplement rather than displace traditional media use.

“Conventional wisdom would suggest that Internet use has increased at the expense of traditional media,” says Professor Zamaria. “But the amount of time spent attending to conventional media by Internet users and non-users is virtually identical. In general, we found that Internet users are



not finding time to be online by taking away from their traditional media diet. In many ways, media activity just begets more media activity.”

Canadians spent an average of more than 45 hours per week consuming traditional media and engaging in live entertainment activities. There is no difference between Internet users and non-users in total time spent using these traditional media or attending entertainment events. Youth (12-17) use traditional media 40 hours per week – about 15 percent less than adults age 18 years or older.

Mass media like television, radio, newspaper and books remain popular sources of information consumption with all demographic audiences surveyed as well as Internet users and non-users. The change is coming in the behaviour of users.

Multi-Tasking and Screen Sharing

“The Internet does not demand our attention in the same way television or other media do,” says Dr. Fletcher. “Canadians seem to use the Internet casually or share time online with someone physically beside them. So it is becoming more difficult to isolate and measure specific media use for individuals as Canadians. More and more, Canadians are using many media simultaneously.”

Three in four Canadian Internet users (76 percent) say they engage in another activity while online. Multi-tasking is most common among youth (89 percent) and those aged 18-29 (91 percent). Talking on the telephone or cell phone was selected by 44 percent as the most popular activity while using the Internet followed by listening to music or the radio (35 percent) or watching television (32 percent).

Social Networking and Family Connections

The emergence of social networks is transforming the online experience. For many younger Internet users, going online is about exploring, socializing and experiencing new forms of interaction. While more than half of Internet users under 30 have visited a community or social networking site, as many as one in five Canadians over 60 have also visited these. Social networking sites have greater appeal for English-speaking Canadians (43 percent) than for French-speaking Canadians (24 percent).

Forty percent of Canadian Internet users have visited a community or social networking site and almost one in four do so at least weekly. One in four young adults (28-29) visit social networking sites daily and are the most active contributors with 29 percent uploading material on a weekly basis. The most popular social networking sites visited by Canadians include Facebook and Hi5. Nearly 40 percent of Internet users say they visit a community or social networking site to interact and socialize with family and friends.

Canadians have adopted community and social networking activities as part of their typical communication routines, shifting some interaction time from face-to-face to virtual. On average, Internet users report that they spend approximately 16.3 hours per week with family and 8.6 hours a week with friends. Heavy Internet users report spending more time with family (18 hours) and a little more time with friends (9.3 hours). Therefore increased Internet use does not seem to mean users spend less time with family and friends.

Some Internet users believe the Internet has increased their contact with family and friends but decreased their face-to-face time. One in three Canadian Internet users feel being online has increased his or her contact with others who have similar hobbies or recreational activities.

“We often think of the Internet as a conduit for information, similar to many other mass media we use on a regular basis,” said Professor Zamaria. “However, what our study demonstrates is that



the Internet is becoming a destination or a place in itself, where many visit not only for information or to be entertained, but just to be there, and to be connected and share with others. Our finding that almost three quarters of all Internet users surf online without a specific reason or destination, and more than half do so on a regular basis, supports our contention that the Internet, for many, is as much an experience, as it is a valuable source of information and entertainment.”

For the complete CIP research report and statistics, please see www.ciponline.ca.

About The Canadian Internet Project (CIP)

The Canadian Internet Project is an ongoing longitudinal study of the Internet, conventional media and emerging technologies in Canada. Results from the 2007 survey complement its benchmark study conducted in 2004. Led by Professor Zamaria of Ryerson University and Dr. Fred Fletcher, Professor Emeritus from York University, the next survey is planned for 2010. CIP examines use and non-use patterns and trends as well as Canadians’ attitudes and behaviour towards media and technology. Through CIP’s affiliation with the World Internet Project — a network of research centres in 28 countries throughout the world — Canadian media activities are presented in global perspective. Led by some of Canada’s leading researchers in this field, the public-access study provides a detailed analysis of the Internet, media and technology in Canada that will be of interest to policy makers, businesses, the media and the cultural industries. CIP member partners include: the Canadian Media Research Consortium, Government of Canada (Canadian Heritage, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat), Ontario Media Development Corporation, Telefilm Canada, Bell University Laboratories, Interactive Advertising Bureau of Canada, eBay Canada, CBC, and CRTC. For more information, please see www.ciponline.ca.

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