THE INTERNET, MEDIA AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES:
Uses, Attitudes, Trends and International Comparisons

CANADA ONLINE!

YEAR TWO HIGHLIGHTS, 2007
An Ongoing Study by the Canadian Internet Project

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Welcome to ***Canada Online! The Internet, Media and Emerging Technologies: Uses, Attitudes, Trends and International Comparisons*** — a summary of the 2007 results and findings from the second major report of the ongoing Canadian Internet Project (CIP).

The goal of CIP is to present a snapshot — an informed Canadian perspective — of the ways our world has been transformed by the adoption of the Internet, the maintenance of a traditional media diet, and the continuing proliferation of emerging technologies. Exploring the interrelationship between these three elements and their assimilation into the everyday lives of Canadians — sometimes ubiquitous and seamless, at other times relentless and disruptive — tells much about the behaviour and attitudes of Canadians in the context of the changing media environment. It is our hope to facilitate dialogue about the many issues raised by these transformations.

Compared to most other countries around the world, Canada has one of the highest levels of Internet penetration and broadband access. Canadians have swiftly and effortlessly adopted new technologies and applications, and at the same time, have maintained a strong appetite for traditional media, finding ways to supplement rather than replace their existing media diet with newer media and activities through multi-tasking and concurrent use. The Internet, technology and media influence and shape the behaviour, attitudes and daily lives of Canadians like no other cultural, social, political or economic element in society. It is vital, therefore, that industry, the cultural sector, policy makers, content and service producers and the public have the best possible information about Canadians' relationship to the Internet, technologies and media to accurately assess and respond to the impact of the rapidly changing media environment.

CIP conducted its first national survey in 2004 and published its baseline report, *Canada Online! A Comparative Analysis of Internet Users and Non-users in Canada and the World: Behaviour, Attitudes and Trends,* in 2005. That report quickly became one of the most comprehensive sources of information and analysis about the Internet, emerging technologies and media use in Canada. It provides a wide-ranging assessment of Canadian behaviour and attitudes related to both conventional and newer media, and discusses the potential impacts of changing consumption patterns on the everyday lives of Canadians. It also places Canada in international perspective, comparing Canadian results with those of other countries. The scope and depth of the CIP surveys and results are unmatched.

As promised in the initial, benchmark study, CIP followed up the 2004 survey with an even more comprehensive questionnaire in 2007. This current report is based on an examination of these two national surveys. In 2004, 3014 telephone interviews were conducted with Canadians 18 years and older, and in 2007, 3,150 telephone interviews were conducted with Canadians 12 years and older. In both cases, respondents — Internet users and non-users — were probed about their motives, attitudes and media use patterns. The resulting data sets, along with the international data compiled by the World Internet Project (WIP), of which CIP is a member, allow investigation of differences over time. As Canada belongs to a world where the Internet, technology, and media are central to our cultural, social, economic and political lives, independent analysis of the implications of these developments is fundamental.

As we wrote in 2004, *"The key objective of this research project is to understand how our lives are being transformed by the emergence of new digital content and distribution channels."*

Since 2004, the spread of high-speed broadband, mobile applications and services, along with innovative forms of interactive online activities, has underlined the need for longitudinal studies that help us understand adoption patterns and the effect of utilization.

CIP surveys have large samples, as well as specialized sub-samples, which support unique forms of analysis. In 2007, the average length of a respondent interview was 38 minutes overall (45 minutes for Internet users and 19 minutes for Internet non-users); these interviews provide the data for the thorough and far-reaching analysis presented here. The benchmarks established in the first survey allow us to identify and analyze trends and changes in the use patterns and perceptions of both old and new media, comparing 2004 to 2007.

Overall, the 2007 data comprise nearly 900 variables and indices on a wide range of subjects, including information on how often Internet users undertake online activities and the impact of various levels of Internet engagement on traditional media use. The study provides important data on ownership and use of digital devices, including those that deliver mobile Internet access. CIP offers a sound foundation for a broad understanding of the continuing impact that traditional and newer media have on our day-to-day lives.

Among several changes from the 2004 study, the 2007 iteration of CIP has two special features and innovations:

- along with a sample of 2,750 randomly selected respondents 18 years and older, a youth sample of 400 respondents aged 12–17 was included

- a panel of nearly 400 respondents interviewed in the 2004 survey were re-interviewed in 2007, creating a longitudinal panel that will provide for further trend analysis in the future.

Inclusion of the youth sample allows for a comparison of responses from this age group to those of parents with children of the same age and younger, and to look more closely than was possible in 2004 at the groups most likely to be early adopters of emerging technologies and new online applications — youth, young adults and students.

As a research program, CIP has a number of distinctive features:

- CIP is constituted as an active consortium of ten institutional partners representing academic, government and industry constituencies, each of which contributed sector-specific issues for analysis and directly participated in the design and development of the questionnaire.

- CIP is an ongoing, longitudinal research project that assesses trends and developing patterns of behaviour and attitudes over time.

- CIP uses a comprehensive survey that provides unmatched detail on important aspects of the attitudes and media use patterns — online and offline — of Canadian Internet users.

- CIP provides detailed and innovative analysis of media use and attitudes of Canadians who were not using the Internet at the time of the survey, with attention to their reasons for not being online and their views on the Internet.

- CIP presents an analysis of how non-users and occasional users compare with light, moderate and heavy users.

- CIP analyzes changes in consumption patterns of the Internet across a wide range of activities and applications.

- CIP examines attitudes towards the Internet as compared to traditional media.

- CIP compares Canadian media use across a range of demographic, behavioural and attitudinal variables and indices with that of other countries participating in the 2007 WIP study.

CIP is a partner in the World Internet Project (WIP) — an academic consortium of research centres in more than two dozen countries around the world. All WIP members ask a subset of approximately 30 common questions in their national surveys, from which more than 85 variables and indices have been created for international comparisons. Currently, there are 28 countries participating in the WIP study, of which 13 members conducted a survey in 2007. The CIP full report presents selected data from these surveys comparing Canada to a diverse group of countries that includes some of the earliest adopters of new media. WIP will be releasing its first comprehensive international comparative report in fall 2008.

As the founder of WIP, Dr. Jeffrey Cole (USC Annenberg School of Communications, Center for the Digital Future), observed in the first US–WIP report published in 2001, *Surveying the Digital Future, 2001,*

> *Had this type of research been conducted on the evolution of television as it emerged in the late 1940's, the information would have provided policy makers, the media, and ultimately historians with invaluable insights about how broadcasting has changed the world. Our objective is to ensure that the World Internet Project and its yearly reports capitalize on the opportunity that was missed as television evolved. This way we can better understand the effects of the Internet as it grows, and not as a postscript after it has already matured.*

It is our sincere hope that ongoing reports from CIP will achieve these goals.

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Highlights

The Canadian Internet Project (CIP) provides comprehensive information on how Canadians use the Internet, emerging technologies and traditional media, and how they feel about them. As an ongoing longitudinal study, CIP compares patterns and trends over time. In this instance, we present a comparison of data obtained from our inaugural survey in 2004 with our recent findings from 2007. To place overall patterns of consumption in context, respondents surveyed were also asked about household and personal access to digital devices and their use of and attitudes towards traditional media. Levels of analysis include all Canadians — Internet users and non-users — as well as a number of demographic and behavioural subgroups. In its examination of the relationships between media use and attitudes, the CIP study provides important information about both the expectations Canadians have about Internet use and their reasons for going online. Drawing on the data collected by the World Internet Project (WIP), some key aspects of Internet use in Canada are presented within an international context.

These highlights present an overview of the study's major findings and draw attention to some of the most important implications of the results. In general, our analysis demonstrates the extent to which the Internet, technology and traditional media continue to be extremely important in the everyday lives of a majority of Canadians. Collectively, they are used for staying informed, exploring the world, seeking out entertainment and play, as well as staying connected with others. More and more, the Internet is also being used for both formal and informal research and learning. The dramatic increase since the CIP 2004 study in time spent on entertainment-related activities and social engagement, especially among youth, has important implications for both online and offline culture, as does the increase in the use of novel and interactive applications online. The inter-relationship between the use of both older and newer media and technologies as demonstrated by usage patterns indicates that simple explanations of adoption and displacement are invalid.

Internet Penetration

Canadians continue to be among the world's most frequent and heaviest Internet users. Nearly nine in ten Canadians 12 years and older (88%) have been online at some time in their lives, and close to four in five are current users (78%), having used the Internet within the three months previous to the survey. Penetration levels are high and increasing, particularly among traditionally marginalized social groups.

- Internet penetration levels in Canada increased from 72% to 78% from 2004 to 2007
- Across life stage categories in Canada, 95% of students, 87% of employed citizens and 47% of retired individuals use the Internet
- Age is strongly related to Internet adoption — the younger the individual, the more likely she/he is to be online
- Internet use is almost universal among those 12–17 years of age (96%)
- While 22% of adult parents (18+) do not use the Internet, many of them report having youth aged 12–17 in their households who use the Internet (87%), as well as children aged 11 or younger who use it (21%)
- Half of Canada's most elderly population — 60 years and older — are online (51%), which exceeds national adoption levels for all ages in many other countries around the world
- Canadian Internet users are very experienced, having been online for an average of approximately nine years

- Most Canadians online are heavy Internet users — 40% use the Internet 15 hours or more each week
- Youth and younger individuals (aged 12–29) are the heaviest Internet users among all Canadians
- In 2007, Canadian Internet users spent an average of 17 hours per week online, a substantial increase from 2004 (13 hours per week)

Digital Divides

Inequalities in access to and use of the Internet remain in specific demographic sectors, most notably, a 15% gap in adoption levels between English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians (82% versus 67%). However, across most other subgroups and categories studied, these divides are diminishing in Canada.

- Canadians with higher income, education and professional status are more likely to be online than are more marginalized groups, though gaps have decreased from 2004 to 2007
- Internet use among the lowest education demographic has increased from 48% in 2004 to 56% in 2007
- In terms of access, the gender gap has almost disappeared (80% of males are online compared to 77% of females) but, in general, males more actively engage in a greater diversity of activities and applications while online than do females
- Within Canada, gaps in Internet use across income levels have diminished greatly; lower income households have shown the largest increase in home Internet use compared to all other income categories (59% of individuals with household incomes less than $40k use the Internet)
- While the language and regional divide for current French-speaking Internet users in Quebec compared to English-speaking Internet users in the rest of Canada has increased from 8% in 2004 to 15% in 2007, the gap is much smaller for those who have been online in the past year (Anglophones: 85% versus Francophones: 77%); this suggests there are more intermittent or occasional users in Quebec than in other provinces or regions
- Regionally, the Prairie provinces have experienced the most dramatic growth in Internet penetration, increasing from 69% in 2004 to 81% in 2007
- Growth and proliferation of Internet adoption in smaller towns and villages is much stronger than in larger cities, reflecting improvements in access

Locations and Devices Used for Internet Access

Canadians online predominantly use the Internet from home (94% of all Internet users) and mostly from a wired PC (90%).The high and growing level of home use, compared to work (43%), school (20%), public places (16%) and other locations (home of friend or relative: 26%, other: 2%) demonstrates an important shift in Internet consumption patterns, from instrumental to social, from information oriented to entertainment oriented.

- The greatest increase in time spent online occurred in the home environment, representing 60% of the total time spent online by Canadians (an increase of three hours per week from 2004, for a total amount of time online from home of just under 11 hours per week in 2007)

- Only one-third of Canadians use wireless devices, such as a wireless PC or mobile device, to go online (32%) and just over one in ten access the Internet through cell phones (13%)
- While Internet access from wireless devices and in public locations is relatively low, youth and young Canadians (aged 12–29) are increasingly making use of wireless and mobile technology to access the Internet from locations outside their homes
- Overall, time spent online using mobile and wireless technology has increased, from 1.6 hours per week in 2004 to 2.6 hours per week in 2007

Canadians Not Online

Even though most Canadians identify themselves as current Internet users, it is noteworthy that more than one in five remain offline. Internet non-users have decreased from 28% of Canadians in 2004 to 22% in 2007. The CIP data indicate that most non-users are offline by choice, rather than because they can't afford it or lack access.

- Of all Canadians, 12% have never used the Internet
- One in ten Canadians (10%), representing nearly half of all Internet non-users, have previously used the Internet but currently do not[1]
- Almost one-half of those not online (41%) plan to use the Internet in the future; most of these current non-users intend to be online within six months
- The most common reasons given for not using the Internet are a lack of interest, a sense that the Internet is not useful, confusion about technology, and a lack of understanding about how to operate technology required to access the Internet
- Affordability was not a frequently cited reason for not using the Internet — only 9% of all non-users claimed cost was why they were not connected
- Demographically, non-users are more frequent among Anglophones than among Francophones, more numerous in Quebec and Ontario than in other provinces, more likely to be female than male, more often residents of smaller than larger communities, and more likely to be older and retired citizens than younger Canadians, students or employed
- Four distinct subgroups of Internet non-users were identified, each with distinct demographic attributes, behaviours and attitudes:
    - Casual engagers (30% of all non-users): current non-users who used the Internet in the past and plan to be online again in the future
    - Departed users (16% of all non-users): those who used the Internet in the past but do not plan to do so in the future
    - Expected converts (11% of all non-users): those who have never used the Internet but likely will in the future
    - Hard core non-users (43% of all non-users): those who have never used the Internet and have declared they will not in the future
- Casual engagers (6% of all Canadians) are current non-users who continue to use the Internet intermittently
- Departed users and hard core non-users exhibit the least comfort with technology compared to all Canadians; this is a principal reason for their non-engagement online
- Hard core non-users display the highest level of engagement with and reliance on conventional media, such as television, radio, newspapers and books
- Casual engagers form a larger proportion of the non-user group in 2007 than they did in 2004

[1] CIP defines a current Internet user as a respondent who had used the Internet in the three months previous to when the survey was conducted.

- The number of non-users who have never used the Internet and do not intend to in the future decreased from 18% of the entire population in 2004 to 12% in 2007
- Hard core non-users tend to be considerably older than the general population and it is likely that this category will diminish in size over time

Access to Broadband and Mobile Connectivity

The diffusion of high-speed broadband connections is important because broadband access greatly alters patterns of Internet use and the diversity of activities and applications users engage in while online. The fact that a majority of Internet users now use a broadband gateway to go online indicates that Canada has reached a "tipping point" beyond which high-speed and ubiquitous access will become the norm.

- Broadband access is found in 80% of Internet user households or 54% of all Canadian homes, which represents an increase of 13 percentage points since 2004
- High-speed connectivity to the Internet is evenly divided between cable (37%) and high-speed ADSL telephone services (36%)
- Slightly more than 15% of Internet users maintain a low-speed telephone connection at home
- The heaviest and the most experienced Internet users are more likely than the average user to have a high-speed connection
- Those who use broadband spend twice as much time online (20.5 hours per week) as do those without broadband (10.7 hours per week)
- Online activities that are made easier to access using broadband have shown dramatic growth since 2004, including downloading or listening to music, watching television, videos or movies, and playing games
- Internet access via mobile devices and satellite transmission is growing steadily in popularity, but the wired computer via either a cable or telephone hookup continues to be the main conduit for Internet connectivity
- Nearly half of heavy Internet users make use of wireless connections, mostly as a supplement to wired access
- As mobile devices become more common, a proliferation of content and services designed specifically for small screens, shaping the nature of both text and image, can be expected

Household Technology and Devices

Canadians are early adopters and heavy users of many household devices — both established and emerging technologies. However, mobile use of the Internet has been somewhat slow to develop.

- One in three Internet users (32%) makes use of some type of wireless device
- Heavy and more experienced Internet users, as well as wealthier and younger users, are more likely to use wireless devices than are any other group
- More than eight in ten Canadian households have at least one computer (83%); almost all Internet users have access to a computer at home (97%)
- Multiple computer (two or more) households have increased significantly between 2004 (25%) and 2007 (40%)
- While 96% of Canadians use a traditional wired telephone for an average of 3.5 hours per week, nearly one in five (18%) report that the Internet has largely or completely replaced its use for communication

- Canadians own a wide range of information and communication technologies (ICTs); the more popular devices include VCR/DVD players (94%), MP3 players (46%) and video game consoles (41%)
- Less common ICT appliances owned by Canadians are PVRs (29%) and PDAs (13%)
- Nearly one-quarter of Canadian households have an HDTV receiver (24%), while just 18% possess a set-top box capable of receiving an HD signal
- Compared to non-users, Internet users are more frequent and heavier users of virtually all communication devices
- Media use begets more media use; those who spend more time online use all other media and technologies more than do those who spend less time online
- New devices, like Slingboxes and Apple TV (3% penetration rate in Canada), are at the beginning of the adoption cycle and are more likely to be present in households with youth or younger adults
- From 2004 to 2007, there was modest but steady growth in the adoption of most ICTs; ownership of MP3 players grew most dramatically (from 18% to 45% of households)

Cell Phone Use

While penetration levels of cell phones are substantial, with seven in ten Canadian households possessing at least one, adoption rates for multi-function applications provided by cell phones and mobile devices have not increased as greatly. Except among youth (12–17), for the Canadian population Internet and other cell phone applications remain at comparatively lower levels than in many other countries.

- Cell phones are used in 71% of Canadian households
- Voice communication is the most commonly used cell phone application (2.5 hours per week)
- Other popular applications for cell phone users include text messaging (44%) and taking photographs (36%) while less common applications include downloading music (10%) and watching videos or television (3%)
- While overall only 13% of those with cell phones use Internet applications, twice as many youth (27%) engage in online activities from mobile devices
- Youth (12–17) use numerous cell phone applications, including text messaging, taking pictures, downloading ringtones or music, playing games, and watching videos or television, twice as often as do adult cell phone users

Traditional Media Use

As time spent online has increased, use of traditional media has declined slightly. In particular, television viewing has declined since 2004, though the decline has been the same for Internet users and non-users. For the most part, online activities appear to supplement rather than displace traditional media use. In general, new media applications and activities are being added to an existing media diet that includes substantial time spent with conventional media, even for youth and younger Internet users.

- Overall, Canadians spend just over 45 hours per week consuming traditional media and engaging in live entertainment activities, as defined across a constructed index of selected media created by CIP
- There is no difference between Internet users and non-users in total time spent using traditional media

- Internet users spend on average 17 hours per week online, representing 28% of the Internet user's media diet — an increase of seven percentage points from 2004
- Heavy Internet users also tend to consume traditional media to a large degree
- Youth (12–17) use traditional media 40 hours a week, 15% less than do adults (18 years or older) at 46 hours per week; much of this time is made up by greater use of the Internet
- Youth and younger Canadians (12–29) use the Internet more and older Canadians use traditional media more; however, youth and younger Canadians still consume high levels of all media including traditional media
- From 2004 to 2007, traditional media use for adults declined by 13%, or five hours per week (50 hours to 45 hours)
- Overall traditional media use declined in similar proportion for Internet users and non-users between 2004 and 2007
- Television continues to be the predominant traditional medium; Internet users spend 21% of their traditional media diet watching television while non-users spend 29% of their media diet watching television
- Television viewing by Internet users (9.7 hours per week) compared to non-users (13.2 hours per week) shows the largest difference in time spent for any traditional medium between these two subgroups (3.5 hour gap)
- In an average week, youth spend much more time listening to music than do adults (9.9 hours compared to 6.6 hours per week), while adults spend more time watching television than do youth (11.3 hours compared to 7.6 hours per week)
- The media use behaviour of Canadians is evolving towards increased concurrent activities and multi-tasking across several platforms and media; it is therefore becoming more difficult to isolate and measure specific media use as Canadians, more and more, attend to many media simultaneously
- Penetration levels and time spent remain high for the most common mass media, such as television, radio, newspapers and books, across all demographic categories and for both Internet users and non-users
- While most Internet users do not feel being online has reduced their consumption of the most common traditional media, between 18% and 25% perceive that it has
- The overall pattern of media use by Canadians supports the notion that Internet activity augments traditional media, as opposed to displaces it

Multi-tasking and Screen Sharing

Media use behaviour of Canadians is evolving towards increased concurrent activities and multi-tasking across several platforms and media. Even more than other media, the Internet appears to be used both casually and experientially, not demanding the focused attention that some other media do. As well, Internet users often share time online with someone physically beside them. It is becoming more difficult to isolate and measure specific media use for individuals as Canadians, more and more, attend to many media simultaneously, often in the company of others.

- Three in four Canadian Internet users (76%) simultaneously engage in another activity while online; one-third, or 36%, report doing so most of the time
- Multi-tasking is most common among youth (89%) and those aged 18–29 (91%); more than half of Internet users from both these age segments report doing so often
- The most popular activities undertaken by Internet users while online are talking on the telephone or cell phone (44%), listening to music or the radio (36%) and watching television (32%)

- Using the Internet has become both a virtually social phenomena (demonstrated by the proliferation of engagement through online social networking) and a physically social activity (73% of those who use the Internet "screen share" or engage online with someone sitting beside them; one in ten users do so often)

Attitudes Towards Technology and the Media

Canadians demonstrate general comfort with technology, which is reflected in their swift adoption of new applications, devices and new media. However, Canadian Internet users are quite sceptical about the security of financial information online and about the reliability of the information they find there.

- Most Canadians are comfortable with new technologies, especially youth and younger, more experienced and frequent Internet users
- Early adopters of new devices and those most engaged with the Internet report higher levels of comfort with technology than do others
- All Canadians, including Internet users, are concerned about the security of financial information online and express an ongoing scepticism about the reliability of information on the Internet
- Heavier and more experienced Internet users are more confident than are other Canadians about online security and the reliability of online information
- Newspapers are considered the most reliable source of information of all media, even by those who are comfortable online
- Canadians regard television as the best source of entertainment compared to other media
- Canadians in general rely more heavily on interpersonal sources for their information and entertainment than on any media source (66% regard interpersonal sources as important for information while 76% regard them as important for entertainment)
- From 2004 to 2007, the number of Canadians who regard the Internet as important for entertainment increased substantially
- The Internet has become a dominant place for social interaction and creative expression, particularly for youth and youth adults (12–29)

Internet Activities — Information, Entertainment and Learning

Internet users continue to undertake a diverse array of utilitarian and search functions while online. Seeking information — whether for facts, learning or entertainment — continues to be a predominant reason for going online. However, going online for fun and leisure also grew considerably from 2004 to 2007.

- Downloading and listening to music online is the most popular entertainment-related activity, undertaken by more than half of all Internet users (56%); this activity is more prominent among youth (86%) than among adults (52%)
- Other popular online entertainment activities include visiting television program websites (46%), playing games (43%), downloading or watching videos (40%) and listening to the radio (39%)
- Youth are twice as likely as adults to use the Internet for many entertainment activities such as playing games (85% versus 37%), downloading or watching videos (79% versus 35%) and downloading or watching movies (39% versus 18%)

- The most popular information-related activities include checking maps or addresses (82%), looking for news (79%), and checking weather or traffic conditions (71%); one-third of those online attend to these activities on a daily basis
- Other prominent information-seeking activities undertaken at least occasionally by two in three Internet users include looking for medical, health or travel information, and various entertainment-related searching (for movies, concert and performing arts schedules, books, information on authors and cultural events, and so on)
- Experienced, heavy Internet users with higher levels of education are the most likely among all Canadians to visit information-related sites
- Access to broadband and being of a young age are two important predictors for increased entertainment-related engagement online
- Almost one in five Internet users (18%) engage in formal distance online learning
- Most Canadians online (77%) browse the Internet at times without a specific purpose or destination in mind; almost half do so regularly, indicating that non-specific Internet use and the experience of just being online and connected is also very important to Canadians (especially younger and heavier users)

News and News-related Information Online

News and news-related information seeking continues, along with communication, to be among the most predominant uses of the Internet.

- Canadian Internet users make frequent use of search engines and many use them as home pages (first page viewed when online) on their personal computers (57% use a search engine daily or several times a day)
- The three most popular home pages for personal computers are Google, MSN and Yahoo; together, they comprise 61% of the home pages accessed by Canadian Internet users
- Most Canadian Internet users (79%) regularly go online to look for local, national or international news
- A majority of Internet users (78%) feel offline printed newspapers are still a trusted source of news
- Almost half of all Internet users have downloaded or read a newspaper online; 24% do so on a weekly or more frequent basis
- Younger Internet users (18–29) spend less time than do older users reading traditional printed newspapers, but more frequently visit news sites online
- The most popular Canadian news sites visited by Internet users are cbc.ca (19%), ctv.ca (7%) and globeandmail.com (7%)
- The most popular news websites for English-speaking Internet users are cbc.ca (23% of Anglophone news users), MSN (14%) and CNN (12%)
- The most popular news websites among Francophone Internet users are Radio-Canada (25%), Canoe (25%) and Cyberpresse (13%) — all Quebec-based websites
- The news websites favoured by youth (aged 12–17) are not significantly different from those preferred by adults
- Online newspapers have appeal for all age groups, especially younger users, but do not seem to be replacing printed versions

Information Versus Entertainment Online

While the Internet has long been established as a conduit for information, overall, entertainment-related activities and engagement has increased dramatically since 2004.

- On average, Canadian Internet users spend 60% of their time online for information purposes and 40% of their time engaged in entertainment-related activities
- Age is closely related with the types of activities undertaken online: the information-to-entertainment ratio for youth Internet users (12–17) is 40:60, while for elderly Canadians (60+) the ratio is 68:32
- Overall, 53% of Internet users spend the majority of their time online for information purposes, 28% spend the majority of their time predominantly for entertainment, and 19% spend equal time online for information and entertainment reasons
- The perception that the Internet is not important for entertainment has declined substantially, from 55% in 2004 to 39% in 2007

Internet Applications

While established communication and information-oriented activities continue to be popular, the range of applications and activities engaged in online continues to grow. Canadian Internet users, especially younger users and those who spend more time online, participate in a wide variety of activities.

- E-mail remains the most frequently used online communication application for all Internet users (95%), and is used daily or more frequently by 79% of those online
- Internet users spend an average of 4.4 hours per week reading and writing e-mail
- Text messaging via mobile phones is an important emerging communication application for youth (77%) and those aged 18–24 (89%)
- Instant messaging (57%) and participation in chat rooms online (17%) continue to proliferate, and are nearly as popular as e-mail for youth (85% and 35% respectively) and for young adults (aged 18–29) (84% and 21% respectively)
- Youth online use blogs (48%) and wikis (30%) at more than twice the average rate of adult Internet users (24% and 14% respectively)
- Telephony on the Internet has remained stable among adult Internet users since 2004 (13%); however, substantially more youth (24%) and young adults (17%) now use telephone-related technology online
- iTunes is one of the most popular e-commerce music sites; it is used by one in five of all Internet users (22%), most of whom are youth (35%) and young adults (31%)
- One in four adults visits music downloading sites other than iTunes (25%), whereas 55% of youth and 47% of young adult Internet users do so
- Canadian Internet users were adopting newly introduced applications at the time of the survey, including Skype (8%), virtual world sites (5%) and Joost (1%); penetration levels for these new applications were much higher for youth and younger adults (12–29) than for the rest of the population
- Various simple forms of online creative expression, such as posting photographs and videos, creating websites and sending original creations, are increasingly popular activities, especially among Internet users under 30 years of age
- Posting photos is the most common form of shared creative expression by those online (33%)
- In 2007, 20% of all Internet users reported having a personal website compared to only 1% in 2004

- The heaviest users of most Internet applications — new and old— are in the 18–29 age group
- Most applications, aside from e-mail, chat rooms and virtual world sites, are more popular with males than with females
- Almost all of the online activities examined — both information and entertainment related — showed significant increases in participation rates over the past few years; some, like accessing news online, increased only marginally, while others, such as attending online auctions or downloading movies, increased dramatically

Community and Social Engagement

The Internet provides countless opportunities to interact with others. For many younger Internet users, going online is as much about exploring, socializing and experiencing new forms of interaction as it is about sending targeted communications, seeking information or working. New and innovative forms of Internet engagement are increasingly being added to the existing foundation of instrumental uses.

- Many Canadian Internet users (40%) have visited a community or social networking site, and almost one in four do so at least weekly
- While more than half of Internet users under 30 have visited a community or social networking site, as many as one in five elder Canadians (60 years and older) has also done so
- One in four young adults (18–29) visit social networking sites daily
- Young adults are also the most active contributors to these sites (as opposed to just visitors); 29% upload material on a weekly basis
- Social networking sites have greater appeal for English-speaking Canadians (43%) than for French-speaking Canadians (24%)
- The most prevalent reasons for visiting community and social networking sites are to interact or socialize with family and friends (38%), to share and obtain information (24%), and for general entertainment and fun (15%)
- Internet users under 45 and females visit social networking sites primarily to socialize; older users and males do so predominantly to obtain and share information
- Youth (12–17) visit community and social networking sites mostly to socialize and for fun

Downloading and Streaming Content Online

Downloading and live streaming of various media have increased dramatically. As adoption of broadband increases, so too do the diversity of sources and forms of content accessed, most notably among young Internet users.

- Downloading and streaming by all Internet users of music (56%), online videos (40%), movies (20%) and television (17%) is growing rapidly, especially among younger users who reported, in most cases, double the amount of engagement compared to other users
- Online games have broad appeal: 37% across all Internet user age groups have played games online
- As broadband use and Internet speeds increase, downloading content for later use as opposed to streaming content in real time is increasing as well, particularly among youth and younger Internet users (12–29)
- Almost half of all Internet users (47%) have downloaded content free-of-charge and potentially illegitimately, when knowing similar content for a fee was available online

- While only 13% of Canadian Internet users have paid to download content online, nearly 70% are willing to accept advertisements along with the content
- The most popular downloaded content paid for by users was music (57%) followed by games (8%) and videos (7%)
- File sharing has been used by 23% of Internet users, but the incidence is much higher among the most active users
- Podcast downloading activities remain low, undertaken by only 16% of Internet users (5% do so at least once a week)
- Only 15% of Internet users read books online and less than 4% do so regularly (at least once a week)

Impact of the Internet on Family, Friends and Other Contacts

Canadians, particularly those under age 30, 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 an average of 16.3 hours per week with family and 8.6 hours per week with friends
- Compared to other Internet users, heavy Internet users report spending more time with family (18 hours per week) and a little more time with friends (9.3 hours per week), suggesting that Internet use may not be displacing time with friends and family
- Most Internet users do not think that being online has had an impact on their contact with friends and family
- Those who do perceive an impact believe that the Internet has increased their contact with friends and family, but decreased their face-to-face time, especially with family; this may account for the extra time spent engaged online
- English-speaking users are much more likely than French-speaking users to use the Internet to increase their contacts with family, friends and others who share their interests
- One in three Canadian Internet users (30%) feels being online has increased her/his contact with others who have similar hobbies or engage in similar recreational activities
- More Internet users report that the Internet has decreased time spent with those of similar political interests (14%) or religious beliefs (15%) than report it has increased time spent with these contacts (10% and 8%, respectively)

Perception of Parents Versus that of Youth and Children

Adult perceptions about the online activities of the children and youth in their household reveal, among other things, some concerns but also considerable confidence in the ability of those in the 12–17 age group to browse safely. In many cases, adult perceptions contradict reported online behaviour and practices of youth themselves, who are even more confident about their ability to browse safely.

- Adults are much more likely than are youth to worry about Internet safety issues but are generally confident that their children aged 12–17 have the necessary skills to browse the Internet safely
- Although socializing when online is usually seen as a virtual phenomenon, screen sharing — being online with others present — is fairly common, especially among younger Internet users
- Adults report a much higher level of monitoring and participating in the online activities of teenagers than the youth themselves report

- Adults significantly underestimate the time youth in their household spend online (adult perception: 11.9 hours per week; youth report: 16.3 hours per week)
- More adults than youth agree that youth need the Internet for social acceptance (23% of adults versus 9% of youth)
- A higher proportion of adults than youth perceive that the Internet is reducing youth's other important activities (35% of adults versus 22% of youth)

Civic Engagement and Government Online

Public use of e-government services is high and growing but civic engagement remains low. The flow of information is primarily government to public.

- Use of e-government services is relatively high and growing; more than 60% of Canadian Internet users have accessed government information online
- Civic engagement is low; fewer than one in five has communicated with an elected official or civil servant
- Civic engagement is strongly related to frequency of Internet use and social engagement online
- Canadians are not convinced of the empowerment potential of the Internet; only one in four thinks the Internet can give them more political power or influence on government
- Canadians show a strong interest in voting online (69% of Internet users)
- The majority of non-users (58%) feel more government control over the Internet is necessary, while among Internet users a plurality are opposed (44%)
- There have been modest increases in the use of government services online between 2004 and 2007, mostly in submitting forms and applications on the Internet
- The biggest increases in civic engagement and e-government are among groups whose usage was previously low; political information seeking has increased dramatically among Francophones and females

Canadian Culture Online

As the Internet provides unprecedented access to global sources, Canadians are divided in their opinions about the value of, quality of and need for Canadian content online. Cultural specificity of online content and services may be declining in importance.

- Canadians maintain moderate to high levels of consumption of various cultural content and services from offline as well as online media
- There has been a striking increase in the use of the Internet to look for cultural information (about concerts, movies, authors, and so on), from one in four in 2004 to two in three in 2007
- A majority of Internet users (60%) go online at least sometimes to access Canadian content and 17% do so often — twice as many as in 2004
- Groups more likely than average to look for Canadian content online include the most experienced Internet users, the most frequent users, and those who visit and contribute to social networking sites
- Close to half of all Internet users (46%) feel it is important to obtain information from Canadian sources, while less than one-quarter (25%) feel that it is important to obtain entertainment from Canadian sources
- Principal reasons for not seeking out Canadian content online given by those who are not inclined to do so are lack of interest and feeling that selection based on origin of content is neither relevant nor useful

- Canadians rely greatly on media that typically contain significant amounts of cultural content, spending an average of 11 hours per week watching television and the same amount of time engaged in online activities from home
- Entertainment activities attractive to younger Internet users are playing video games (23% at least weekly), downloading or listening to music (54% at least weekly) and watching videos (38% at least weekly)
- Online use of entertainment and cultural information has increased considerably since 2004
- Interest in Canadian content specifically has slightly declined since 2004, but opinion on the desirability of Canadian content online has remained stable
- In 2007 Canadian Internet users were less positive about the quality of Canadian cultural content online then they were in 2004, but perceptions of the availability and accessibility of content have improved since 2004

Consumer Behaviour on the Internet

The volume of online commerce continues to grow in Canada even though the percentage of those active in the online marketplace has not changed much since 2004.

- Nearly half of Canadian Internet users have purchased a product or service online (48%) and more than one in three reported buying something online within the month previous to the survey (38%)
- More than one-third of those who bought something online (or 15% of all Internet users) had made more than one purchase within the month prior to when the survey was conducted
- Looking online for information on products and services is the most popular e-commerce activity (77% of Internet users), indicating broad awareness of the online marketplace
- Three of every four Internet users who conduct online product research actually buy from a local retailer (77%)
- Books, stocks and bonds, clothes, music and travel arrangements are the most frequently purchased goods and services online
- Impediments to online shopping include concern about security of financial information and worries about offshore vendors
- Concern about security of financial information has declined slightly for both Internet users and non-users since 2004
- More experienced, more frequent users, and those most comfortable with new technologies are least concerned about security for online commerce, but concern remains quite high across most demographic categories
- A majority of online purchasers prefer Canadian vendors specifically (59%), while three in ten use Canadian and American sites equally (31%)
- Only 13% of those online have paid to download content from the Internet
- Almost half of all Internet users (47%) have found ways to download content available for a fee online without paying for it
- The most commonly downloaded item is music (57%)
- Of all Internet users, 23% reported that they download from a file-sharing service
- Nearly seven in ten Internet users are willing to accept advertising online
- Since 2004, the percentage of users buying online has not changed a great deal, but there has been a considerable increase in the amount and frequency of online commerce
- Visiting online auction sites, such as eBay, has increased substantially from 2004 (13%) to 2007 (46%)

International Comparisons

For most of the international comparative measures examined from the WIP study, Canada ranked relatively high in percentage of Internet users accessing online activities and services. However it is not in as strong a position as it was in 2004, as Internet use in other countries catches up with consumption levels in Canada.

- Canada remains among world leaders in Internet penetration, experience online and broadband access
- Except for gender, digital divides — age, education and income — remain important in Canada and elsewhere
- Older and lower income Canadians — though much less likely to be online than younger and wealthier Canadians — are much more likely to be online than are their counterparts in many other countries
- With more than half (51%) of those over 60 years of age online, Canada ranks first among WIP countries in Internet access for the elderly
- Canadians spend more time online at work than do those in many other countries
- Canadians are more sceptical about the reliability of information online than are residents of other countries and are below average among WIP countries in regarding the Internet as an important source of information
- Canadian Internet users rank above average among users in WIP countries with respect to regarding the Internet as an important source of entertainment
- Compared to inhabitants in other countries surveyed by WIP, Canadians spend an average amount of time with both online and offline media
- Canadians are relatively heavy consumers of news online and are relatively frequent users of e-mail and instant messaging (IM) compared to other countries
- Relative to the residents of other WIP countries, Canadians are fairly frequent non-specific browsers online and often multi-task while online
- Canadian Internet users are more likely than Internet users in other countries to report that their time online has reduced time spent with family and, to a lesser extent, friends
- Canadians are not frequent bloggers
- Canadians are quite active in the online marketplace, but are no longer the leaders they were in 2004, except in online banking
- Canadians are more likely to express concern about the financial security of online purchasing than are consumers in most other countries

Reflections

By any measure, Internet penetration in Canada is very high and likely to remain so. Once online, few Canadians abandon the Internet and only about one in ten is currently a hard core non-user who has never been online and never will be, a group that is mostly over 60 years of age. For Canadians under 30, Internet use is almost universal and, as this group grows older, the Internet will become even more pervasive than it is today.

The proliferation of new online activities over the past decade has been even more impressive than the high penetration rate. As this report demonstrates, the transformational aspects of the Internet are dramatic and affect many aspects of everyday life, from work patterns to new forms of creative expression and socializing. Yet, in the midst of the rapid adoption of new technologies and activities, interpersonal sources remain important for both information and entertainment, and traditional media continue to attract the attention of most Canadians.

Here we present ten overarching observations derived from our analysis. Our focus is on the nature of Internet engagement or life online. Analysis of more specific aspects of Internet use and online activities is presented in detail in our report.

The Internet has become an essential aspect of everyday life for most Canadians.

For most of us, the integration of the Internet into our daily lives has been seamless and, for many, transformative. It has become a principal conduit for information, entertainment, learning, social interaction and networking for Internet users from all walks of life. Its influence is inescapable. For heavy Internet users, now a substantial proportion of Canadians, the online world may well be more important than the moving images on television that transformed life in the last half of the previous century. For some, it has even become addictive.

Although Internet penetration is reaching saturation, frequency of use and time online will continue to increase substantially. For those who are online, most are online a lot. We expect the strong growth reported here to continue as broadband connectivity expands, new and attractive services are introduced and users of all ages become more comfortable with and aware of the vast range of activities available online. Indeed, many users are inventing their own online activities.

High-speed broadband has transformed the online world and continues to revolutionize Internet use.

While high-speed access has enabled many uses to expand, it is the “always-on” nature of broadband connectivity that has caused the most significant shift in perception and behaviour. A majority of Canadians — proportionally more than in most other countries — have access to high-speed broadband. While access to broadband does not affect use of the most basic Internet services, like e-mail, it has profound effects on time spent online and the range of services used, which in turn affects dependency on the Internet**.** Not only are broadband users much more likely than non-broadband users to engage in more technologically advanced online services, such as video downloading and sophisticated interaction and networking, they also use more applications and they use them more often. More generally stated, high-speed broadband has changed how we view the Internet and what we expect from it.

Internet users (and non-users) are not all alike.

Internet users vary substantially in their use of the Internet and, more importantly, how they relate to it. As suggested above, the Internet plays a much different role in the lives of light versus heavy users. In fact, light users (those who are online fewer than two hours per week) are quite similar in their Internet use patterns to respondents who defined themselves as non-users but in fact go online from time to time. This latter group, termed “casual engagers,” drop in and out of the online world, partly for reasons of access (but not cost), but mainly because they regard the Internet as a service to be used as needed. Like light users, casual engagers tend to go online primarily to seek information and communicate with others. The existence of this group is an important reminder that engagement with the Internet varies according to not only standard demographic variables but also perceptions of the value of the Internet.

Mobile and wireless Internet access is not yet a major portal to the online world for Canadians.

As part of the conquest of time and space, mobile Internet access has the potential to change the way many Canadians engage with the online world. In Canada, however, wireless devices are, for the most part, nominal extensions of the wired PC, and Internet access via cell phones and other wireless devices remains quite limited. Part of the encumbrance lies with age. Current penetration levels among younger Canadians will certainly increase mobile and wireless connectivity over time. However, it may also be that there are culturally specific causes for lack of uptake of wireless and mobile devices for Internet connectivity. Nevertheless, overall time spent online using wireless and mobile devices has almost doubled between the 2004 and 2007 CIP surveys, as mobile devices become more common and more convenient, particularly among younger Canadians. We expect a proliferation of new content and services designed for smaller screens over time.

The Internet is seen as a destination in itself.

The Internet began as a channel for specific purposes, primarily for communication and information seeking. Our findings suggest that more and more Canadians venture online primarily for engagement and interaction, using the Internet as a location to visit or an experience to undertake. Fact finding has been replaced with exploration and discovery of place — a virtual journey or adventure. The Internet has evolved into more than just another medium. It is as much a place and destination as anything else.

The most enthusiastic adherents to this new culture, primarily younger Internet users, spend significant amounts of their online time browsing without a specific goal or purpose, visiting and contributing to blogs or social networking sites more or less spontaneously, and sharing information and expression of both a personal and more formal nature. The majority of Canadian Internet users browse the Internet without a specific purpose in mind, most doing so regularly. Interestingly, screen sharing or browsing and/or virtually connecting online with others with someone physically alongside has become a common practice, particularly for youth. The Internet has evolved from a utilitarian tool and functional medium to a destination in itself — simply put, a place to visit, and a social forum within which to interact with others and to share. This growing aspect of online life is influencing a wider range of Internet activities and developments and, we believe, fundamentally changing social dynamics and relations.

Sampling behaviour is synonymous with online engagement.

Online "sampling" of content appears to be a widespread activity and is perhaps symptomatic of the changing patterns of consumption brought about by the Internet. The Internet offers unprecedented opportunities to search for and access content online, unlike any previous medium, and there is an abundance of choice. Its impact on consumption of cultural content is considerable, as the experience of using and sampling media rather than attending to specific content is increasingly becoming a part of the use patterns of Canadians online. The traditional approach to audience research focuses on consumption of specific cultural materials or media. It asks who watches or listens to what and when. But when Internet users go online, they are often listening to music and doing research, checking out a video while blogging in response to it or, perhaps, simply browsing or surfing online without a specific goal in mind. This new paradigm of online engagement may be seen as a novel form of mediated experience and raises questions about how to conceptualize cultural specificity in the context of online activities. The quest for new online experiences may not reflect established definitions of community or cultural identity.

The Internet is the leading venue for new forms of social interaction and engagement.

The emergence of social networks is transforming the online experience, as much as it is changing social connectivity and expression. Social and community networking sites encourage new forms of socializing and interacting with geographically dispersed friends, and groups created for common and diverse purposes. It also provides the opportunity for exchange of creative expression, such as sharing of photos and videos online. Being online has increased and supplemented contact with family and friends, but has also reduced time spent face-to-face with both, especially family.

More and more Canadians are looking for entertainment online.

While information seeking remains the most common reason for going online, there has been a significant increase across the two CIP surveys in accessing online entertainment activities as a motive for using the Internet. In fact, youth spend more time online for entertainment than for information, while young adult Internet users spend about equal time for each. As these cohorts age, we can expect the entertainment portion of online time to continue to grow relative to time devoted to seeking information.

The Internet is more of a supplement to than a replacement for traditional media.

Online activities appear more typically to supplement than to displace traditional media use. This flies in the face of conventional wisdom, which suggests Internet use has increased at the expense of traditional media. The amount of time spent attending to conventional media by Internet users and non-users is virtually identical. While some media consumption has significantly diminished — television viewing, for example — Internet users are not finding the time to be online by taking away from their traditional media diet. One of the most popular entertainment-related activities online is visiting television and network websites. For many, the Internet has become another conduit for traditional media in both original and repurposed form.

It appears that Internet time comes from a variety of other activities, including face-to-face time with family and friends, as part of an overall adjustment. In fact, Internet users tend to be heavier users of all media. Media use begets more media use. More and more Internet users are taking

advantage of the wide range of choice — for consumption and interaction — that the Internet provides. While time spent using traditional media has declined since 2004, the decline is similar for Internet users and non-users and reflects a general increase in competition for audience attention.

Multi-tasking is an integral part of online behaviour.

Online engagement is not an isolated activity. It is part of a multi-faceted range of concurrent activities. Multi-tasking behaviour is very common while online. The majority of Canadians online tell us that they are listening to music, watching television or talking on the telephone at the same time they use the Internet. This provides valuable insights into emerging online behaviour as younger Canadians more readily embrace several activities simultaneously. It also informs us about the changing nature of consumption, particularly online consumption. Content development and activities online must take into account users' decreasing attention spans and changes in intensity or focus.

As well, the multifaceted nature of the Internet, along with the multitasking it encourages, means that Internet users cannot be seen simply as audiences or consumers of cultural goods or information services. A majority are also producers and distributors of various forms of cultural expression. In addition, many Internet users, especially those under 30 years of age, are participants in a complex and rapidly changing online world. The challenge is to find ways of measuring and describing this kind of engagement**.**

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