

NEW STUDY SHOWS CANADIAN INTERNET ACCESS CONTINUES TO GROW, AND USERS SAY THE NET HAS HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THEIR LIVES

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Three-quarters say the Internet has had an effect on their life, with 37% saying it has made them more knowledgeable and up-to-date .

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According to a jointly released study between Columbus Group and the Angus Reid Group in July of 2000, the number of Canadians with Internet access in Canada continues to grow. The proportion of Canadian adults who have Internet access from home, work, school or elsewhere has increased to 70% from 55% exactly one year ago. This represents a 27% increase year-over-year. The proportion of users who use the Internet one hour per week or more currently has grown at the same rate, and currently stands at 52%, up from 41% in 1999.

“Last year we predicted that the on-line market in Canada would eventually level off. Well—so far this year, we haven’t seen evidence of that”, says Steve Mossop, Senior Vice-president. “However, at some point around the 80% level, we expect Internet access to plateau. The reason for this is the major barrier to further growth is a lack of interest”

More importantly, the study shows that among users, the Internet has had a significant impact on people’s lives. Of users polled, only 24% say the Internet has not changed their life at all—while the remaining 76% say it has impacted their lives in a variety of areas, affecting learning, communication and entertainment.

“What is surprising here is the extent to which people admit that the Internet has affected their lives”, says Mossop. “I don’t think we would have found that the advent of television, radio, movies or any other medium has had such a significant impact on so many people as quickly as the Internet has”.

By far, the most significant impact of the Internet is that it has made people more knowledgeable and up-to-date (37%), primarily because of the access to a variety of

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information, and how up to date they can keep on world issues and news. However, the entertainment angle is also significant—in that 13% say it has made their life more fun—purely because of the entertainment options available, and the ways in which they are able to communicate and meet new people online. A further 7% say that the Web has made their life easier because of the convenience of conducting financial transactions like banking, online shopping and investing. A smaller number (4%) say that their work performance has been improved (4%) through better communication, access to information and research. Other positive impacts of the net include reducing stress, creating more time, and heightening awareness of social issues. There were even two people out of 1084 who say that they met their spouse on-line.

“It is clear that the Internet has had a profound effect on the life of the typical Canadian”, says Scott Brownlee, President of Columbus Group. “So much of what you hear about the Internet is based on the commerce point of view. I think a lot of people have forgotten the educational impact that the Internet has made on the typical end user, and this research reminds us of how the online user experience enables education and knowledge transfer.”

The release of these results coincides with the announcement of a strategic alliance between Angus Reid and Columbus Group. Angus Reid and Columbus Group have partnered to provide a powerful combination of Columbus Group's people centered Internet solutions with Angus Reid's custom interactive research services.

“We are excited about our partnership with Angus Reid”, says Columbus Group's Brownlee. “For Columbus Group clients, our alliance will expand our user research capability to deepen our understanding of various geo- and psycho-demographic populations, not only on a project-specific basis, but on an ongoing market wide basis.”

"We are extremely pleased to be working with Columbus Group", Angus Reid's Mossop said. "Columbus Group is a recognized Internet professional services leader in Canada. For our clients, the alliance brings proven e-business strategy, Internet technology and user experience design to bear on our interactive suite of research services."

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The "Canadian Inter@ctive Reid Report" is the largest, most comprehensive and authoritative source of its kind about quarterly Internet trends in Canada. The results are based on two separate data collection instruments. In the first, 1,084 web users from Angus Reid Group's Canadian Internet Panel are surveyed online. Panelists are chosen through random telephone surveys conducted on an ongoing basis across Canada. Results are complemented by a further 1,500 interviews via telephone with Canadian adults in order to verify results of the panel and track issues among non-Internet users. The results from this study are based on the 1,084 web users conducted between June 16th and 26th, of 2000.

These data are statistically weighted to reflect the population proportions of regular online users by length of access to the Internet and online expertise, regional distribution, as well as demographics such as gender, age and income. Our panelists represent approximately 11.4 million Canadian adult Internet users who are online for one hour a week or more (there are a total of 14.4 million adults who have Internet access—but not everyone can be classified as a regular user).

With a national sample of 1,000 and 1,500 (for each component), one can say with 95% certainty that the overall results are within a maximum of ± 3.1 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire population of Canada's regular online users been surveyed. The margin of error will be larger for sub-groupings of the survey population.

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