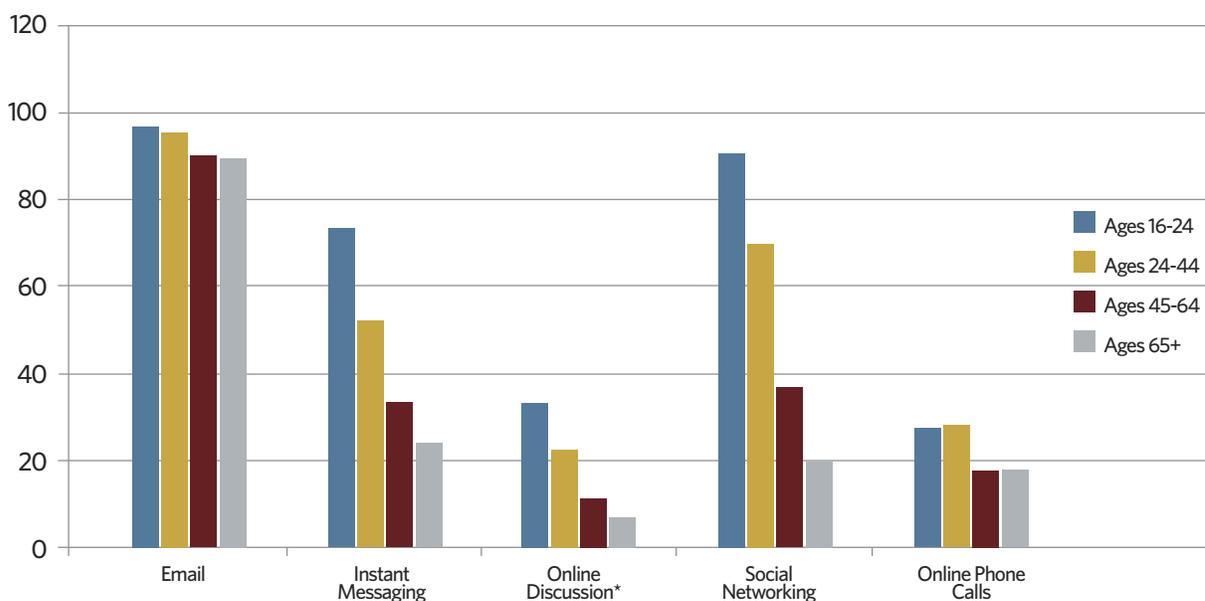


FASCINATING FAMILIES

JANUARY 2013 | ISSUE 50

E-Connections: Using Technology to Keep in Touch

Canadian Internet use survey, Internet use, by age group and Internet activity (%)



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, 2010 CANADIAN INTERNET USE SURVEY. CANSIM NO 358-0153 bit.ly/PRLCCt
 * Consists of content contributions or participation in discussion groups (blogging, message boards, posting images)

Canada has become a truly wired and networked nation, a trend driven by the evolution and spread of advanced communication technologies. With Internet access at an all-time high and mobile Internet devices (e.g. smartphones, tablet computers, etc.) more popular than ever, technology has changed the nature and frequency of our communication, unleashing new possibilities for family connections in the process.

Young Canadians, who use email and social media more than any other age group, are the saviest e-communicators. However, these technologies are also being embraced by parents - with 70% now saying their families rely on technology to stay connected.¹

Data from Statistics Canada's 2010 *Canadian Internet Use Survey* shows that Canadians regularly use the Internet to keep in touch. Of the 80% of Canadians aged 16 years and older who use the Web outside of work, email and social networking were two of the most commonly cited online activities among all age groups (used by 94% and 58% of survey respondents, respectively).²

Online communication is most popular among the 16-24 age group, with 97% emailing and 91% using social media sites.³ Most Canadian parents who were surveyed say they use email (91%) and social media sites (63%) to share pictures, photos and videos with friends and family.⁴

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The proliferation of mobile Internet devices has made Web-based communication portable and available at all times, which has entrenched many people's e-communication habits even further.

Younger Canadians are the most attached. Of the 33% of Internet users who rely on such devices for their online access, 59% were under the age of 35.⁵ For many, mobile Web communication has become a part of their daily routine. Nine out of 10 recently surveyed Canadians aged 18-29 said they check their email, texts and social media updates every morning while getting ready for work or school.⁶

E-communication has great potential for nurturing ties between family members – a view held by parents as well as their kids. The majority of surveyed Canadian youth now say they are friends with their parents on Facebook, and 50% cite “staying close to family” as a benefit of using mobile Internet devices (outranking “entertainment” by 16%).⁷ Among parents, 29% say that “technology allows me to be closer to my kids than I was to my parents.”⁸

Family Lens

Communication technologies are now a staple of modern life for many people, most popular among youth, but also with older generations who are seeking new ways of connecting with others. More than ever, geographically dispersed family members can now maintain ties and share moments with each other, regardless of their distance. Video chatting and instant messaging can shrink the perceived sense of distance between loved ones, and social media offers both parents and their kids unique insight into each other's lives – perspectives that may not have been available in the past. While computers, smartphones and social media sites don't *create* the bonds and feelings shared between family members and friends, they can help to sustain them, and will continue to play a supportive role in our relationships.

¹ Ipsos. “Canadians increasingly reliant on technology as family lives grow more complex” (Ipsos poll, conducted January 3-10, 2013).

² Statistics Canada. “Individual Internet Use and E-Commerce.” *The Daily* (October 12, 2011). Ottawa. Accessed January 17, 2013. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/111012/dq111012a-eng.htm>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ipsos.

⁵ Statistics Canada.

⁶ Cisco Systems, Inc. *Cisco Connected World Technology Report* (2012). Accessed January 18, 2013. <http://www.cisco.com/en/US/solutions/ns341/ns525/ns537/ns705/ns1120/2012-CCWTR-Chapter1-Global-Results.pdf>

⁷ Rogers Communications. *Rogers Innovation Report: 2012 Trend Watch* (August 2012). Accessed January 16, 2013. <http://www.slideshare.net/Rogers/rogers-innovation-report-parents-youth-study>

⁸ Ibid.

