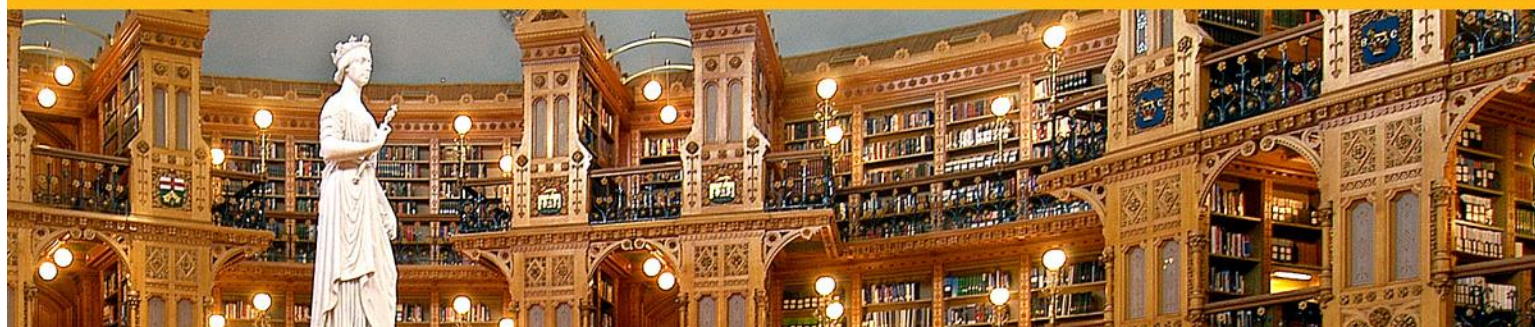




LIBRARY of PARLIAMENT  
BIBLIOTHÈQUE du PARLEMENT

IN BRIEF



## ***Social Media: Who Uses Them?***

**Publication No. 2010-05-E**  
**3 February 2013**  
***Revised 20 November 2012***

**Michael Dewing**

Social Affairs Division  
Parliamentary Information and Research Service

***Social Media: Who Uses Them?***  
**(In Brief)**

HTML and PDF versions of this publication are available on IntraParl (the parliamentary intranet) and on the Parliament of Canada website.

In the electronic versions, a number of the endnote entries contain hyperlinks to referenced resources.

*Ce document est également publié en français.*

Papers in the Library of Parliament's ***In Brief*** series are short briefings on current issues. At times, they may serve as overviews, referring readers to more substantive sources published on the same topic. They are prepared by the Parliamentary Information and Research Service, which carries out research for and provides information and analysis to parliamentarians and Senate and House of Commons committees and parliamentary associations in an objective, impartial manner.

# CONTENTS

1	AGE .....	1
2	GENDER .....	2
3	OFFICIAL LANGUAGE GROUPS .....	2
4	NEW CANADIANS .....	3
5	URBAN AND RURAL DWELLERS .....	3
6	INCOME DIFFERENCES.....	3

# SOCIAL MEDIA: WHO USES THEM?\*

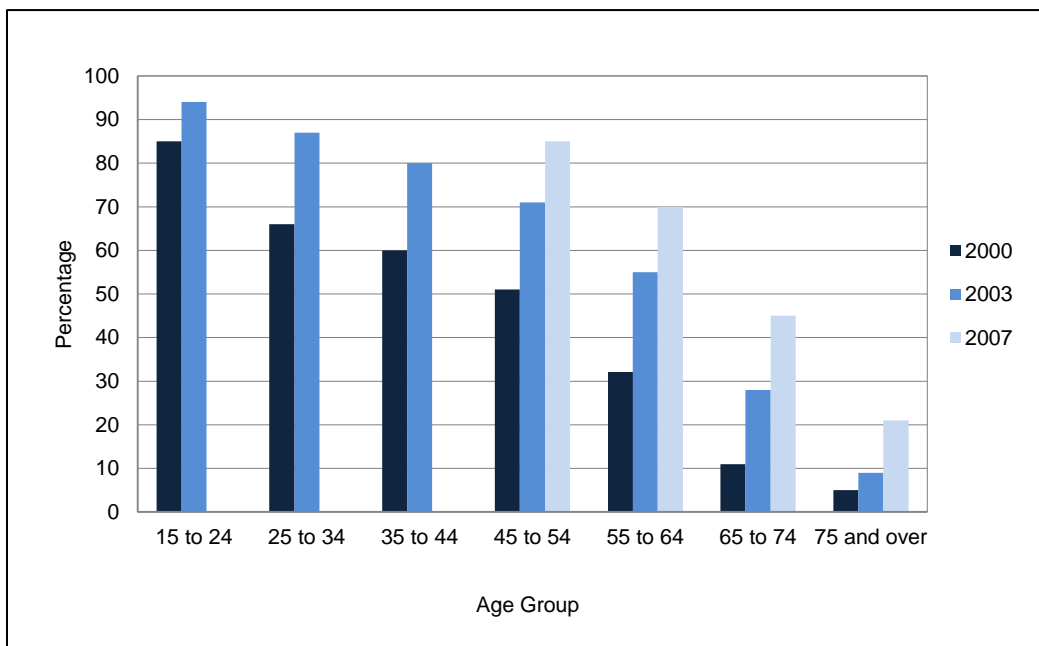
Although the adoption of social media<sup>1</sup> has been rapid and widespread in Canada, rates of use vary considerably between demographic groups. This paper reviews recent statistics that demonstrate differences in rates of Internet and social media use between older and younger Canadians, men and women, anglophones and francophones, immigrants and native-born Canadians, urban and rural dwellers, and those in the highest and lowest income brackets.

## 1 AGE

According to Statistics Canada, age is a significant predictor of Internet use, even when factors such as level of education and household income are taken into account. In 2010, 94% of those under the age of 45 used the Internet. In addition, 80% of those aged 45 to 64 used the Internet. On the other hand, those over 65 were significantly less likely to use the Internet: rates of use were 51% for those aged 65 to 74 and only 27% for those 75 and over.<sup>2</sup>

Internet use has increased in all age categories since 2000, with seniors being the fastest growing group of users (see Figure 1). Furthermore, since younger and middle-aged people are likely to continue using the Internet as they get older, age-related differences in usage are expected to decline over time.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1 – Rates of Internet Use, by Age Group, Selected Years**



Source: Ben Veenhof and Peter Timusk, "[Online activities of Canadian boomers and seniors](#)," *Canadian Social Trends*, Statistics Canada, Cat. no. 11-008, No. 88, Winter 2009, p. 26.

These differences in Internet usage are reflected in the statistics on social media, which show that younger people use them to a far greater extent than older people do. In July 2011, market research company Ipsos Reid reported that 86% of Canadians aged 18 to 34 who used the Internet had a social network profile, as compared with 62% of those aged 35 to 54 and only 44% of those aged 55 and over.<sup>4</sup>

Data from the United States show similar trends. A 2012 survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that 86% of online adults aged 18 to 29 used social network sites. The percentage of online Americans using social media was 72% for those aged 30 to 49, 50% for those aged 50 to 64 and 34% for those aged 65 and over.<sup>5</sup>

## 2 GENDER

According to Statistics Canada survey results for 2007, an equal proportion of Canadian men and women – just under 75% – had used the Internet in the previous year.<sup>6</sup> However, their patterns of use were different: men used the Internet at home more often and for longer periods than women,<sup>7</sup> and earlier data showed that women were more likely than men to use the Internet to communicate with family and friends.<sup>8</sup>

Gender differences are also apparent in the use of social media. A 2012 Ipsos Reid survey of Canadians aged 18 and over who go online showed that women (37%) were significantly more likely than men (24%) to visit a social networking site daily. A 2009 Ipsos Reid survey found that 92% of the women with online personal social network profiles had a Facebook profile, compared with 75% of online men.<sup>9</sup>

## 3 OFFICIAL LANGUAGE GROUPS

On the whole, Internet use in Canada is higher among anglophones than francophones, but this difference is becoming less pronounced as time goes by. Among 8,000 Canadians surveyed in 2011, 87% of anglophones and 82% of francophones reported that they had used the Internet during the past month (see Table 1). Differences in the rate of use were most pronounced in older populations. Use among anglophones aged 35 to 49 years was 94%, as compared with 92% for francophones, while the corresponding rates among those over 50 years of age were 75% and 63%. On the other hand, Internet use among those aged 18 to 34 years stood at 97% for both anglophones and francophones.<sup>10</sup> Survey results for earlier years show that usage has increased in all age groups, but has been consistently higher among anglophones compared with their francophone counterparts.

In 2011, about 56% of anglophone Internet users used social networking sites, as compared with 50% of francophone users. The percentage using Twitter was about 8% and 5% respectively.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 1 – Percentage of Canadians Who Used the Internet, by Age and Linguistic Group**

	2007		2009		2010		2011	
	Anglo- phone	Franco- phone	Anglo- phone	Franco- phone	Anglo- phone	Franco- phone	Anglo- phone	Franco- phone
Overall	81	71	83	76	86	79	87	82
18–34	95	91	94	93	96	97	97	97
35–49	89	84	91	88	92	90	94	92
50+	66	51	69	59	74	63	75	63

Data source: Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, "[CRTC Communications Monitoring Report](#)," September 2012, p. 109.

#### 4 NEW CANADIANS

New Canadians tend to use the Internet differently from those who are Canadian-born. They are more likely to use it to communicate with friends and family, particularly those back home. Indeed, in 2007 new Canadians were much more likely to make telephone calls over the Internet or to use instant messaging than were the Canadian-born. As far as contributing content on the Internet was concerned, however, new Canadians were slightly less likely than the Canadian-born to do so – 17%, as compared with 21%.<sup>12</sup>

#### 5 URBAN AND RURAL DWELLERS

Canadians living in rural areas are generally less likely to use the Internet than their urban counterparts. In 2007, 76% of urban Canadians used the Internet for personal reasons, while only 65% of rural Canadians did so. Canadians living in urban areas also participate in a greater variety of online activities than do those living in rural areas. This is partly due to the lack of high-speed service in many rural areas. As for contributing content on the Internet, in 2007, 21% of urban Canadians but only 16% of rural Canadians did so.<sup>13</sup>

#### 6 INCOME DIFFERENCES

There are also significant differences in the rate of home Internet use between Canadian households in the highest and lowest income brackets. According to Statistics Canada's 2010 Internet Use Survey, 97% of households with incomes in excess of \$87,000 had Internet access, compared with only 54% of households with incomes of \$30,000 or less.<sup>14</sup>

---

**NOTES**

- \* This paper was originally part of a series on social media prepared by the Parliamentary Information and Research Service of the Library of Parliament. The following papers were also in the series: Michael Dewing, *Social Media: An Introduction*, Publication no. 2010-03-E, revised 20 November 2012; Alysia Davies, [Social Media: 3. Privacy and the Facebook Example](#), Publication no. 2010-06-E, 8 February 2010 [archived]; Amanda Clarke, [Social Media: 4. Political Uses and Implications for Representative Democracy](#), Publication no. 2010-10-E, 22 March 2010; and Havi Echenberg, [Social Media: 5. Parliamentary Use in the United Kingdom](#), Publication no. 2010-11-E, 25 March 2010 [archived]. Finally, the reader is invited to read an additional paper related to social media: Marie-Claude Langlois, [Social Media and Job Searching Among Young Canadian Workers: A Summary of Government Initiatives](#), Publication no. 2012-44-E, 26 July 2012.
1. For a definition of social media, an overview of their evolution and development, and a discussion of their effects and implications, see Dewing (2012).
  2. Statistics Canada, "[Individual Internet use and E-commerce](#)," *The Daily*, 12 October 2011.
  3. Ben Veenhof and Peter Timusk, "[Online activities of Canadian boomers and seniors](#)," *Canadian Social Trends*, Statistics Canada, Cat. no. 11-008, No. 88, Winter 2009, p. 26.
  4. Ipsos, "[Canada's Love Affair with Online Social Networking Continues](#)," News release, *News and Polls*, 14 July 2011.
  5. Kathryn Zickuhr and Mary Madden, "[Older adults and internet use](#)," Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, 6 June 2012.
  6. Statistics Canada, "[Canadian Internet Use Survey](#)," *The Daily*, 12 June 2008.
  7. Ibid.
  8. B. Veenhof et al., Table 3, "Percentage of Internet/Email users who used the Internet in the previous month to communicate with family and friends, Canada, 2003," in "[How Canadians' Use of the Internet Affects Social Life and Civic Participation](#)," *Connectedness Series*, Statistics Canada, Cat. no. 56F0004M, No. 16, December 2008, p. 11.
  9. Ipsos, "[What? You Don't Have a Social Network Profile? You Are Now in the Minority](#)," News release, *News and Polls*, 19 June 2009.
  10. Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, Table 4.5.5, "[Percentage of Canadians using the Internet, by linguistic group](#)," in *CRTC Communications Monitoring Report*, September 2012.
  11. Ibid., Figure 4.5.5, "[Popular Internet activities for Canadian Internet users](#)."
  12. Veenhof et al. (2008), pp. 17–18.
  13. Ibid., pp. 19–20.
  14. Statistics Canada, "[Canadian Internet Use Survey](#)," *The Daily*, 25 May 2011.