



The Daily

Statistics Canada

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Releases

General Social Survey: The Internet and the way we spend our time 2005

Heavy Internet users lead a considerably different lifestyle than individuals who do not surf the Web, according to a new study examining its impact on Canadians.

The findings come from the 2005 General Social Survey on time use, which asked respondents to provide a detailed account of all of their activities over a 24-hour period.

Heavy users (those who spent more than an hour on the Internet during the day) devoted less time to socializing with their spouse or partner, as well as their children and friends. And they tended to stay at home, showing less interest in outdoor activities than non-users.

They also devoted significantly less time than non-users to paid work and chores around the home, as well as less time sleeping, relaxing, resting or thinking.

What is striking is the amount of time they spent alone. Moderate Internet users (those using the Internet for five minutes to one hour during the diary day) spent about 26 more minutes by themselves than non-users during the diary day. But heavy Internet users were alone nearly two hours (119 minutes) longer than non-users, even when comparing people from similar-sized households.

Despite the reduced face-to-face contact, Internet users were interacting in other ways. Some users, particularly the heavy users, spent a considerable amount of their time on the Web using email or chat groups. They were also more likely to spend time conversing with others over the phone.

The study also found that heavy Internet users during the diary day were nearly eight years younger on average than non-users, while 6 out of every 10 heavy users were men. Just under one-half worked at a paid job, and students and the unemployed constituted a higher proportion of heavy users than non-users.

To take into account these socio-economic differences, time use estimates in the study were adjusted so that comparisons were made among people with similar characteristics. This approach compared people of the same age, sex and education, for example.

Note to readers

This release is the last in a series of four on time use based on data from Cycle 19 of the General Social Survey conducted in 2005. Previous such surveys were conducted in 1998, 1992 and 1986.

Today's article analyzes the impact of the Internet on how Canadians spend their time.

Previous articles analyzed the time that Canadians spent commuting from home to work and back (July 12), paid and unpaid work done by men and women (July 19) and the time spent in both leisure and work by Canadians aged 55 and over (July 26).

In the 2005 GSS, nearly 20,000 individuals aged 15 and over were asked to keep a diary over a 24-hour period recording details on the time they spent on various activities. These included everything from caring for children to participating in cultural or sporting activities to running errands. The survey covered all the provinces.

Definitions

Internet use covers personal use of the Internet over a 24-hour period and does not include use of the Internet for other reasons (e.g., work or school).

Non-users are those who did not spend at least five minutes on the Internet at any one time during the day (respondents in the survey were asked not to report activities that were less than five minutes in duration).

Moderate users are those who spent between five minutes and one hour on the Internet during the day.

Heavy users are those who spent more than one hour on the Internet during the day.

The General Social Survey focuses on relationships between time spent online and other aspects of the regular lives of Canadians over a 24-hour period. Additional information about the characteristics and online activities of Internet users, rates of Internet access and frequency of use will be available from the 2005 Canadian Internet Use Survey, scheduled for release in August 2006 in the Daily. Together, these surveys provide a better understanding of Internet use in Canada and its possible social impacts.

Heavy users spent half an hour less on domestic chores than non-users

Internet use takes away from the time that its heavy users devote to both family life and chores around the house, the study found. For example, heavy Internet users spent an average of 33 minutes less time each day than non-users on domestic work, such as child care and housekeeping.

They also devoted less time to a variety of social activities. For example, non-users shared their time equally with household members and people from outside the household. Heavy users spent about one hour less with both sets of people.

Spouses and children in particular bore the brunt. Heavy users spent about half an hour less with spouses and with children than did non-users.

The timing of Internet use also mattered. Weekend use of the Web was associated with even greater declines in time spent with friends and other people outside the household than use of the Internet on weekdays.

Heavy users were less likely than non-users to say they knew "most" or "many" of the people in their neighbourhood. They were also more likely to describe their sense of belonging to their community as "somewhat" or "very" weak.

Although Internet users spent less time with others generally, they identified having about the same number of close relationships with people outside the household as non-users.

Heavy Internet users also devoted less time to participating in active sports, engaging in civic and volunteer activities, and attending sports events, movies and other events.

They did, however, express greater enjoyment for participating in clubs and social organizations.

Internet users avid consumers of other media

Despite the fact that the Internet potentially competes with other sources of information and entertainment, Internet users remained interested in traditional media.

Heavy Internet users and non-users spent about the same amount of time, just over two hours, watching television during the day.

Internet users spent more time reading books than non-users, and moderate users were also likely to spend more time reading newspapers than non-users.

Heavy users report being less stressed

In general, the survey found no difference reported between Internet users and non-users regarding their perceived general health. But there were differences in their levels of stress.

Heavy users stood out because they were less likely to consider themselves to be stressed, rushed or workaholics.

However, many of the differences in stress levels had more to do with the personal characteristics of Internet users than Internet use itself. The study showed that once people with similar demographic backgrounds, work status and income were compared,

differences in stress levels between heavy Internet users and non-users disappeared.

In fact, it was the moderate users (those who spent five minutes to an hour on the Internet) who were less likely to be stressed.

Spending time with family and friends a priority for both Internet users and non-users

Given the choice about how they would spend more time if the opportunity arose, Internet users and non-users tended to share similar views.

However, moderate and heavy Internet users were less interested than non-users in spending more time doing outdoor activities. But they were more likely to want to spend time on their crafts and hobbies.

Heavy users were also more likely than non-users to want to spend more time on their studies, but this was linked with the fact that a greater proportion of these users were students.

Although Internet users spent substantial time alone, particularly the heavy users, they did not differ significantly from non-users in their desire to spend more time with family and friends.

In fact, this was the most popular choice for all three groups. More than one-quarter of individuals in each group singled out time with family and friends as their number one priority for spending additional time.

Similarly, even though heavy users spent less time participating in sports, they were no more likely to want to spend more time on sports than were non-users, given the choice.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 4503.

The new issue of the *Connectedness Series: The Internet: Is It Changing the Way Canadians Spend Their Time?* (56F0004MIE2006013, free) is now available online. From the *Publications* page, choose *Free Internet publications* then *Communications*.

For more information about the analysis contained in this report, contact Ben Veenhof (613-951-5067; ben.veenhof@statcan.ca), Science, Innovation and Electronic Information Division.

To enquire about concepts, methods or data quality pertaining to the General Social Survey on time use, contact Client Services and Dissemination Section (613-951-5979; fax: 613-951-4378; sasd-dssea@statcan.ca), Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division. ■

Retail Store Survey

2004

Additional data for the 2004 Retail Store Survey are now available.

Available on CANSIM: table 080-0011.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers, including related surveys, 2446 and 2447.

For general information or to order data, contact Client Services (613-951-3549 or toll-free 1-877-421-3067; retailinfo@statcan.ca). To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Manon Nadeau (613-951-3565), Distributive Trades Division. ■

Natural gas transportation and distribution

January 2006

Data on natural gas transportation and distribution are now available for January.

Available on CANSIM: tables 129-0001 to 129-0004.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 2149.

For more information, to order data, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact the dissemination officer (613-951-9497 or toll-free 1-866-873-8789; energ@statcan.ca), Manufacturing, Construction and Energy Division. ■

New products

Connectedness Series: The Internet: Is It Changing the Way Canadians Spend Their Time?, no. 13
Catalogue number 56F0004MIE2006013
(free).

Employment, Earnings and Hours, May 2006,
Vol. 84, no. 5
Catalogue number 72-002-XIB
(free).

All prices are in Canadian dollars and exclude sales tax. Additional shipping charges apply for delivery outside Canada.

Catalogue numbers with an -XWE, -XIB or an -XIE extension are Internet versions; those with -XMB or -XME are microfiche; -XPB or -XPE are paper versions; -XDB or -XDE are electronic versions on diskette; -XCB or -XCE are electronic versions on compact disc and -XBB or -XBE a database.

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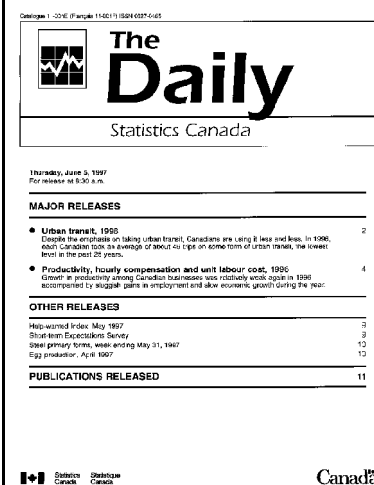
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MAJOR RELEASES

- **Urban transit, 1995** 2
Despite the emphasis on taking urban transit, Canadians are using it less and less. In 1996, each Canadian took an average of about 100 on some form of urban transit, the lowest level in the past 25 years.
- **Productivity, hourly compensation and unit labour cost, 1995** 4
Growth in productivity among Canadian businesses was relatively weak again in 1996, accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow economic growth (GDP) in 1996.

OTHER RELEASES

- **Help-wanted index, May 1997** 3
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