

## Statistics Canada: Canadian Usage of the Internet 2005

In August of 2006 Statistics Canada presented a study of Internet usage by Canadians showing a strong daily dependence on the Internet by Canadians. If 68 % of Canadians use the Internet and 2/3 of them use the Internet daily then almost one half of all Canadians use the Internet on a daily basis. The following article by the Toronto Star summarizes the study.

# Living online the new norm for Canadians

**In Toronto, 75% of residents use Internet**

**Canadians turn to Web for many tasks: Survey**

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Fifty years ago, it was a dream. Today, it is our world.

For the first time ever, Statistics Canada has tracked the Internet use of individual Canadians, and while the results may not be surprising, they pave a very clear path for the future.

► 68 per cent of adult Canadians used the Internet for personal, nonbusiness reasons in 2005.

► In Toronto, that number rose to 75 per cent.

► Almost 2/3 of adult Canadians who used the Internet from home did so every day during a typical month.

► About six in 10 Internet users used it to read news or sports, or to conduct their banking online.

The statistics, released yesterday, confirm a reality that many already understood — Canadians have a growing dependence on the Internet and are doing much more online than emailing and surfing.

More than half of home users said they used the Internet to check weather conditions, make travel arrangements and view news or sports, as well as search for medical or government information, bank electronically and window shop.

"That represents a pretty dramatic change," says Michael Geist, law professor at the University of Ottawa where he holds the Canada Research Chair in Internet and e-commerce law.

"People increasingly identify with the Internet as an essential tool to access information and engage in all sorts of activities that only a few years ago they did offline."

Experts agree that industries and businesses will have to shift online to stay successful if they haven't done so already.

"Whether they like it or not, that's where we're going," Geist says, adding "there are some exceptional opportunities here."

While many banks, stores and even governments have already taken advantage of such opportunities, other industries, traditional travel agencies for example, may be left behind.

And they won't be alone.

The shift to a virtual world raises concern over a "digital divide" that continues to exist between people living in urban and rural communities.

Only 58 per cent of residents living in Canada's small towns or rural areas accessed the World Wide Web, compared to a 68 per cent national average and a high of 77 per cent in some metropolitan areas.

The study acknowledges a variety of reasons for this gap.

In general, larger cities have younger populations, more residents with higher levels of income and education, and more allure for Internet service providers — all factors that lead to higher Internet use.

As the Internet becomes more and more important, the poor, the uneducated, seniors and rural residents, "who are already disadvantaged, get left further behind because everybody else has the means to accelerate their own chances," says Liss Jeffrey, director of the McLuhan Global Research Network and adjunct professor of new media and policy at the University of Toronto.

Some predict the problem might take care of itself, as it did with an earlier gender divide.

But "the fact that it's becoming such an important resource to get people connected to their municipal, provincial and federal government suggests that the government has a greater role to play in addressing the digital divide issues," says Arthur Cockfield, associate dean and law professor at Queen's University, where he specializes in cyber-law and privacy issues.

The survey also showed that almost 75 per cent of the 30,000 or so adults contacted were concerned about privacy and security, including Internet credit card use.