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Canadian Users Spend 5.4 Hours per Week Accessing Online Social Networks.

Visitors to Online Social Networks More Active Using the Internet Overall.



Ipsos Reid

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Vancouver, BC – Online social networks and communities appear to have hit the Internet with the momentum of a runaway locomotive. A new study released by Ipsos Reid, “*Online Socialization, Social Networking and Online Communities*”¹, has found that nearly four-in-ten Internet-enabled adults in Canada (37%) have visited an online social network or online social community and three-in-ten (29%) have placed a profile on at least one such site.

Younger Canadian adults are much more likely to have visited these websites and to have placed a personal profile on at least one of them. Nearly two-thirds of 18 to 34 year olds (63%) have visited an online social network or community and more than half of (55%) have placed a personal profile on at least one. Meanwhile, three-in-ten 35 to 54 year olds (29%) have visited such a site and one-in-five (21%) have placed a personal profile on one. One-in-five Canadians aged 55 and older (20%) have visited an online social network or community and one-in-ten (9%) have placed a personal profile on one.

¹ The “*Online Socialization, Social Networking and Online Communities*” survey is a special feature of the Ipsos Canadian Inter@ctive Reid Report, Quarter 2, 2007.



Not only have Internet users signed up in droves, but most visitors of these sites end up putting on a profile. With nearly four-in-ten Internet-enabled adults in Canada (37%) having visited an online social network or online social community and three-in-ten (29%) having placed a personal profile, nearly eight-in-ten visitors have been converted to active users.

Scott Patton, Senior Research Manager in Western Canada says, “This is a staggering result given that these sites didn’t exist four years ago. Facebook launched in early 2004, as did MSN Spaces, two of the largest such sites on the Internet. The growth in use of these sites simply hasn’t been matched by any other Internet activities we’ve ever seen.”

Canadian adults who have heard of and/or visited an online social network spend an average of 5.4 hours per week browsing and using online social networks. Facebook is the most popular online social network among Canadian adults with a personal profile on such a site. Two-thirds of adult Internet users in Canada who have placed a personal profile on an online social network or online community have one on Facebook (65%), compared to one-in-five with a personal profile on Classmates.com (20%), one-in-seven with a profile on MySpace (15%) and one-in-eight with a profile on Windows Live Space (13%). Facebook users spend the most time online using the site per week, an average of 5.9 hours, among all online social network users in Canada.

It is possible that use of online social networks will not continue to grow as rapidly as it already has. Fewer than one-in-ten adults in Canada who have visited an online social network but who have not placed a personal profile on one (8%) say they are likely to place a personal profile on an online social network in the next twelve months, with more than seven-in-ten (72%) saying they are very unlikely to do so. Even though the conversion rate of visitors to users has been extremely high, nearly two-thirds of Internet users in Canada who have not already visited an online social network (63%) say they are simply not interested in doing so and seven-in-ten (69%) say they are very unlikely to visit an online social network in the next twelve months.



Scott Patton also says, “The challenge for the managers and developers of online social networks and communities will be to generate enough positive interest to keep up the momentum they have experienced so far. In fact, these managers and developers may have more success in looking for ways to increase the contact with current users, enticing them to spend more time online than they already do, and convincing them to use their own site over a competitor’s.”

Even with an expected slower uptake in the future, Canadian adults who use online social networks will still represent a significant demographic for years to come. As younger users age, they are likely to take their Internet habits with them. With penetration of the Internet being nearly total among those currently in the 18-to-54-year-old age bracket (more than 90% have Internet access from some location) and the high use of online social networks currently, these sites will likely represent a larger proportion of the core Internet user group in the not too distant future.

There are opportunities for marketers interested in targeting this core demographic of online social network users. Canadian adults who have visited an online social network are more active online in many ways. More than four-in-ten Canadian adults who have visited an online social network (44%) say they visit one of these sites on a weekly basis, with about half of these people saying they visit daily (20% of all visitors overall). Three-quarters of online social network visitors (75%) have also comparison shopped for products and services online (compared to only 57% among those who have never visited an online social network), and a similar number have made purchases of products or services directly online (77% among online social network visitors, compared to only 65% of non-visitors). Online social network visitors are more likely to have clicked on a website advertisement; two-thirds of visitors (65%) have done so compared to only half of non-visitors (50%).

Scott Patton goes on to say that, “Given the differences in online behaviour between users and non-users, plus the sheer number of hours spent online by people visiting social network sites, the opportunities simply cannot be ignored from a marketing perspective. Visitors to these sites are more



apt to respond to a marketing message and make a purchase online. It's not hard to imagine the possibilities that online social networks represent for marketing. The challenge is to decide which online social network to partner with when targeting your customers."

Methodology

The Ipsos 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, 1,000 web users from Ipsos Reid'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 1,000 interviews via telephone with Canadian adults in order to verify results of the panel, and track issues among non-Internet users.

Telephone interviews for this release were conducted from July 26 to 30, 2007 while the online data was collected from July 31 to August 7, 2007. These data are statistically weighted to reflect the population proportions of regular online users by online expertise and regional distribution. With national samples of 1,000 telephone interviews and 1,103 online interviews, 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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