

Life in the fast lane: How are Canadians managing?, 2016

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Just over 90% of Canadians 15 years of age and older went online at least a few times a month in 2016, and it was not just young people checking out the Internet. Some 68% of those 65 years of age and older also used the Internet at least a few times a month.

Being connected is reshaping how we work, interact, spend our free time and consume and produce goods; in short, how we live. Efforts to keep up with and understand these events have led to increased focus on the complex relationships between technology, work-life balance and personal well-being.

The 2016 General Social Survey (GSS), [Canadians at Work and Home](#), allows multi-faceted analyses of today's issues in a manner not previously possible, providing new and current insights into the lifestyle behaviour of Canadians as they meet the challenges of a changing world. Providing information on diverse subjects such as Internet use, work-life balance, job satisfaction, leisure activities, and their potential interactions, this first analysis showcases a selection of the many topics examined in the 2016 survey.

Internet is no longer just for the young

Although previous surveys showed that the Internet was used predominantly by the young, the survey *Canadians at Work and Home* reveals that by 2016 the pattern had changed. Older age groups are making large inroads into the digital world.

According to the 2016 GSS, 91% of Canadians aged 15 and older used the Internet at least a few times during the month preceding the survey, up from 86% three years earlier in 2013. While people aged 15 to 44 had similarly high usage rates—generally well over 90% in both years—individuals aged 45 and older increased their Internet use substantially from 2013 to 2016. Most notably, among 65- to 74-year-olds, Internet use rose from 65% to 81%, while among those aged 75 and older usage rose from 35% to 50% over these three years.

Internet use varied across the provinces, ranging from 94% in Alberta to 88% in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2016. In every province, Internet use was highest among the youngest age groups and lowest for those aged 75 and older.

The majority of Canadians own smart phones and use multiple devices

Although Internet access is becoming more and more pervasive, age differences still persist in the choice of device used to connect. Having a smart phone, for example, now appears to be a near-necessity for the young. The overwhelming majority of 15- to 34-year-olds (94%) reported owning one, compared with 69% of those aged 55 to 64 and 18% of Canadians 75 years and older. Overall, 76% of Canadians owned a smart phone in 2016.

Furthermore, the majority of people in Canada now seem to need, or want, more than one device. In all, 90% of Canadians owned two or more digital devices and 80% three or more in 2016. Overall, 71% Canadians aged 15 and older owned a laptop or netbook, 54% had a tablet or e-reader and half (50%) a desktop computer.

Most Canadians say life is better with technology

Although technology use in modern society can potentially facilitate negative events such as fraud, or [cyberbullying and cyberstalking](#), on the positive side, it can improve communications over distances, connect and re-connect friends, and offer the convenience of on-line studying or shopping. According to the 2016 GSS, the majority of Canadians saw the benefits of being connected and, in fact, felt that life is better as a result of technology.



Specifically, nearly three-in-five (59%) Canadians aged 15 and older reported that life was better as a result of their use of technology in 2016. Interestingly, the proportion of those who felt this way was fairly stable for those aged 15 to 64—averaging about 61%. From age 65 on, it declined to 55% for those aged 65 to 74 and continued falling to 38% for Canadians aged 75 and older. These older Canadians were more likely to say that the use of technology makes no difference in life.

Technology can offer several potential benefits. Indeed, 77% of Canadians aged 15 and older reported that technology helps them to communicate with others, 66% felt that it saves time, 52% stated that it helps to make more informed decisions, and 36% felt that it helps one to be more creative. In each case, Canadians in younger age groups were more likely to affirm these benefits than their older counterparts. Those aged 75 and older were consistently the least likely to agree that technology helped them achieve these benefits.

Overall, 14% of Canadians felt that technology often interfered with other things in life, with a declining pattern showing across older age groups. Among those who reported that technology often interfered with other things in life, the proportion ranged from 20% of 15- to 24-year-olds to 3% of those aged 75 or older. This is perhaps not surprising since people who use technology more often are more likely to find it interfering with the rest of life.

Most Canadians feel satisfied with work-life balance but there has been a downturn

Balancing life between technology, family responsibilities, work and leisure is not always easy or straightforward. For some adults, an overly heavy work load may intrude into home activities, while for others, family responsibilities may demand attention during working hours. In addition, technology often blurs the boundaries by keeping one connected at all times and in all places.

According to the 2016 GSS, over the previous eight years, the proportion of working Canadians who were either satisfied or very satisfied with their work-life-balance declined by 10 percentage points, dropping from 78% in 2008 to 68% in 2016. While the majority still felt positive about their ability to balance work and home, the downward trend may have implications for the well-being of Canadians.

The latest data show that in 2016, women were somewhat less likely than men to be very satisfied or satisfied with their work-life balance (66% versus 70% respectively). Canadians with children (67%) and those without children (69%) reported feeling this way in nearly equal proportions.

Conversely, just over one-in-five (21%) Canadians aged 15 to 64 who worked in 2016 stated that they always or often had difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities because of the amount of time they spent on their job. Family intruding on work life appeared to be less common, with 6% of respondents indicating that their family life interfered with their job.

Most paid workers are satisfied with their jobs, but those who are not most often cite the work environment

Canadians who are happy with their work-life balance are more likely to be satisfied with their job than those who struggle to balance these two aspects of their lives. Indeed, according to the 2016 GSS, 61% of paid workers who were very satisfied with their work-life balance reported being very satisfied with their job.

Overall, 84% of paid workers reported feeling very satisfied or satisfied with their job while 6% stated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Of those employees who said that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with work in 2016, the most common reason given was the "work environment" (31%), followed by "pay being too low" (20%).

Sense of belonging to the work organization, being motivated to do one's best, having a sense of accomplishment and feeling like the work was useful were all closely related to job satisfaction. Respondents who scored high on these characteristics consistently reported feelings of higher job satisfaction than those who did not.

Many adults still find time for creative pursuits and outdoor activities

Despite the demands of home, work and the increasing use of electronic devices, Canadians still derive enjoyment during their leisure time from outdoor activities and creative hobbies.

More than two-in-five Canadians aged 15 and over (44%) reported that they had been hiking or backpacking in the 12 months prior to the 2016 GSS, 24% had been tent camping, and 22% had gone either canoeing or kayaking. Half (50%) had spent time on creative pursuits: 18% undertook crafts such as needlework, scrapbooking, woodwork, metalwork and pottery, while 15% were involved in music as a hobby and 13% in visual arts.

Note to readers

Data for [Canadians at Work and Home](#) were collected from August to December 2016. The target population for the survey included non-institutionalized persons 15 years of age or older, living in the 10 provinces. The final sample size was 19,609.

Internet use data reported from 2013 and work-life balance data reported from 2008 were taken from the [Social Identity](#) cycle of the General Social Survey (GSS).

The tip of the iceberg

Data from the 2016 GSS, [Canadians at Work and Home](#), can be used to inform a myriad of important and complex social and economic issues. It can also contribute to policies and programs aimed at helping Canadians cope with the impacts of a rapidly changing society.

Future Statistics Canada releases will focus on topics such as life outlook, job quality, and the middle class among a vast array of other subjects and will cover the results of [Canadians at Work and Home](#) in a more in-depth manner.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5221](#).

Available in CANSIM: tables [121-0001](#) and [121-0002](#).

The infographic "[The Internet and Digital Technology](#)", which is part of *Statistics Canada — Infographics (11-627-M)*, shows some key findings on Internet use.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinformatives.STATCAN@canada.ca).