



Ipsos Reid



# Online Socialization, Social Networking and Online Communities

## Background

Online social networks and communities appear to have hit the Internet with the momentum of a runaway locomotive. These sites have attracted tremendous numbers of members in a very short period of time. For example, Facebook, launched in February 2004, boasts 39 million members as of June of 2007 and Windows Live Spaces, launched early in 2004 under the name MSN Spaces, boasts 120 million user accounts. The rapid growth in use of these online social networks has presented a challenge for some companies and organizations who question the value of online socializing in the workplace.

So what is the value of online social networks? If they are used for socializing and chatting with family and friends, what does a commercial enterprise care? The answer lies in who is using online social networks. Not what people with a profile on the particular site use the site for, but what other activities they are likely to participate in over the Internet. The challenge for online marketers is to understand how online communities and networks can be used to direct consumers to their own sites, products and services.

A Special Feature report, *Online Socialization, Social Networking and Online Communities* looks at Canadians' use of the Internet for social activities, including online social network visitation and use, and answers many questions: How many people are using the Internet to socialize?; Who are these people?; What are the impacts of the Internet on socialization?; and, What is the potential impact of online socializing for marketers?

## Online Socialization

A total of 1,103 online interviews were conducted online among a cross-section of Internet panelists. Ipsos Reid is the only research company in Canada to have a fully-staged, randomly selected representative sample of 185,000 Internet users across the country. The results of the online sample are accurate to within  $\pm 3.0\%$ , 19 times out of 20.

Topics covered in this report include:

- Online social activities ever conducted and frequency of those activities;
- Hours spent online conducting social activities;
- Online social networks visited and where personal profiles have been placed;
- Impact of online social activities to a personal social life;
- Benefits and drawbacks of online social networks and communities;
- Profile of Canadians who socialize online – who is doing it and what else do they do online; and,
- Potential growth of online social network and community use in the future.

Subscribers will also receive a synopsis of the demographic profile of online Canadians, giving them a clear understanding of who is online in Canada.



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## Internet Access and Profiles Section

A total of 1,000 Canadians 18 years of age or older are interviewed each quarter. Interviews are conducted via telephone using Ipsos Reid's national network of CATI (computer-assisted telephone interviewing) stations. Disproportionate random sampling is used to reach a representative sample of Canadians, with a margin of error of  $\pm 3.1\%$ , 19 times out of 20.

This snapshot of our Access and Profiles section will give you a clear understanding of who online Canadians are by looking at demographic breakdown of the Internet population by age, income, gender, region, household type, and Internet skill level.

## About *The Ipsos Canadian Inter@ctive Reid Report*

*The Ipsos Canadian Inter@ctive Reid Report* was developed by Ipsos Reid to monitor Canadian Internet behaviours and attitudes in order to provide subscribers with the most authoritative, comprehensive and up-to-date information about the Web that is available. Our study is not simple measurement figures. Rather, it is the who, what, why, where, when and how of Canadians and the Internet. Whether you are in the high-tech sector, a traditional consumer company, or a social marketer, the information provided in this report will keep you up to date on what Canadians are doing online and why.

To obtain further information on the full version of this report, please visit: <http://www.ipsos-reid.com/IREID.cfm>

## Order Form

### Online Socialization, Social Networking and Online Communities

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