

Individual Internet use and e-commerce, 2012

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The value of orders placed online by Canadians reached \$18.9 billion in 2012, up 24% from 2010 when the survey was last conducted. More than half of Internet users (56%) ordered goods or services online in 2012, up from 51% in 2010. In 2012, 77% of Internet users did research on goods or services or window shopped.

Internet users aged 25 to 34 were most likely to make a purchase online, as 69% did so in 2012.

Of those Canadians who ordered online in 2012, the average online shopper made about 13 separate orders and spent approximately \$1,450. Most Internet shoppers (82%) had placed an order from a company in Canada, 63% ordered from the United States and 21% from a company in another country.

Among online shoppers, 58% purchased travel arrangements such as airline tickets or hotel reservations and 52% purchased event tickets online. These two categories were the most cited in 2010 as well. Food, beverages or groceries were purchased online by 18% of Internet shoppers in 2012, up from 11% in 2010.

Almost one-quarter of online shoppers (24%) purchased goods other than those in defined product categories.

Table 1
Electronic commerce, types of goods or services ordered, 2012

	Online shoppers
	%
Travel arrangements (e.g., hotel reservations, travel tickets, rental cars)	58
Tickets for entertainment events (e.g., concerts, movies, sports)	52
Clothing, jewellery or accessories	42
Books, magazines, online newspapers	42
Music (e.g., CDs, MP3)	35
Memberships or registration fees (e.g., health clubs, tuition, online television subscriptions)	35
Software	24
Other	24
Consumer electronics (e.g., cameras, stereos, TVs, DVD players)	22
Videos or DVDs	22
Toys and games	21
Food or beverages (e.g., specialty foods or wine, pizza delivery)	18
Gift certificates or gift cards	17
Photographic services	15
Computer hardware	15
Other health or beauty products (e.g., vitamins, cosmetics)	15
House wares (e.g., large appliances, furniture)	12
Sports equipment	11
Home improvement or gardening supplies (including tools)	7
Prescription drugs or products (e.g., glasses)	6

The two main reasons identified by Internet users who did not make an online purchase were a preference to shop in person (30%), and having no interest (31%) in shopping online.

Not only are Canadians buying online, almost one-quarter (23%) sold items online, either through online auction sites or other means.

Internet use continues to rise

In 2012, 83% of Canadians aged 16 or over used the Internet for personal use from any location, compared with 80% in 2010.

The rise in Canadians using the Internet can be partially attributed to increased use by those who are 65 or older. Internet use by Canadians in this demographic rose from 40% in 2010 to 48% in 2012.

Provincially, the lowest levels of Internet use were found in Newfoundland and Labrador as well as New Brunswick, both at 77%. British Columbia, as in 2010, had the highest proportion of Internet users at 87%, followed by Alberta at 85%.

Table 2
Individuals using the Internet from any location, 2012

	Internet use
	%
Canada	83
Newfoundland and Labrador	77
Prince Edward Island	80
Nova Scotia	79
New Brunswick	77
Quebec	81
Ontario	84
Manitoba	83
Saskatchewan	82
Alberta	85
British Columbia	87

The census metropolitan areas with the highest rates of Internet use were Kelowna (93%), Regina (90%), and Victoria (90%). Other major metropolitan areas such as Calgary (89%) Vancouver (88%), Toronto (88%) and Montréal (84%) all had rates of Internet use above the national average.

Among individuals living in census metropolitan areas or census agglomerations, 85% used the Internet compared with 75% of those living outside of these areas.

Digital divide persists

Use of the Internet by individuals in households in the lowest income quartile continues to lag, at 62%, compared with 95% of individuals living in households in the highest income quartile.

However, most of this lag can be accounted for by the lack of Internet use by older, low-income Canadians. In 2012, 28% of Canadians aged 65 or over in the lowest income quartile used the Internet, compared with 95% of individuals aged 16 to 24 in households in the lowest income quartile.

Communicating online, using social media on the rise

The popularity of social media and the Internet as a communication tool increased from 2010 to 2012. Just over two-thirds (67%) of those Canadians who used the Internet visited social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter in 2012, up from 58% in 2010. As in 2010, female Internet users were more likely to use social networking sites than their male counterparts (70% versus 64%).

The percentage of Internet users that made phone calls or video calls over the Internet via technology such as Skype or Facetime rose from 24% in 2010 to 43% in 2012.

The percentage of Internet users who used an instant messenger fell from 47% in 2010 to 40% in 2012. The drop in instant messaging may be a result of the many other options now available to users such as text messaging via a wireless handheld device or communicating through social media.

In 2012, more than half (54%) of Internet users downloaded or watched movies or video clips online, 39% watched television online, and 50% obtained music online. These proportions were all up from 2010 when 47% of Internet users downloaded or watched movies online, 33% watched television online and 46% obtained music online.

Table 3
Online activities from any location, 2012

	Internet users
	%
E-mail	93
Window shopping or browsing for information on goods or services	77
Electronic banking (e.g., paying bills, viewing statements, transferring funds between accounts)	72
Reading or watching the news	71
Using social networking sites	67
Searching for medical or health-related information	67
Travel information or making travel arrangements	66
Visiting or interacting with government websites	63
Researching community events	58
Downloading or watching movies or video clips online	54
Obtaining or saving music (free or paid downloads)	50
Making telephone calls online	43
Using an instant messenger	40
Downloading or watching TV online	39
Listening to the radio online	38
Obtaining or saving software (free or paid downloads)	38
Formal education, training or school work	37
Searching for employment	36
Playing online games	35
Researching investments	27
Contributing content or participating in discussion groups (e.g., blogging, message boards, posting images)	24
Selling goods or services (e.g., through auction sites)	23

The handheld Internet

More than one-half of Internet users (58%) accessed the Internet in 2012 via a wireless handheld device such as a cell phone or tablet, up from 33% in 2010. Canadians aged 16 to 24 were most likely to use a wireless handheld device to connect to the Internet (84%). This access rate via wireless handheld device declined according to the age of the respondent and was lowest amongst those who are 65 or older at 9%.

Canadians in the highest income quartile (68%) were most likely to use a wireless handheld device in 2012 to access the Internet, while access by those in the lowest income quartile was 26%.

Internet intensity

Although the percentage of Internet users continues to rise, the proportion that used the Internet intensively, that is for 10 or more hours each week, was relatively stable at 31%.

The level of intensity varied considerably when considering the age of the user. In 2012, one-half (50%) of users aged 16 to 24 were online 10 hours or more each week while 21% of Internet users aged 65 or older reported similar use.

Privacy and security

In 2012, 28% of Canadians who used the Internet never erased their browser history. In contrast, 16% of Internet users deleted their browser history after each use and 56% did so occasionally.

The percentage of Internet users who electronically backed up files at least occasionally rose from 64% in 2010 to 68% in 2012, while 32% of Internet users still did not back up files electronically. Just over half (53%) of Internet users aged 65 or older backed up files electronically, at least occasionally.

The percentage of Internet users that employed security software on their computer or other devices edged down to 81% in 2012, while the proportion that used a free security software solution rose to 47%. Internet users between the ages of 16 to 24 were the least likely to use security software at 71%.

Note to readers

The 2012 Canadian Internet Use Survey was conducted in October and November as a supplement to the Labour Force Survey. The survey underwent minor changes since it was last conducted in 2010.

The survey consists of a household component, which measures home access, and an individual component, which measures online behaviours. The household component of the survey will be released through The Daily in a subsequent release.

This release features individual Internet use and e-commerce, based on a sample of approximately 22,615 individuals aged 16 years and older.

Definitions

*The **Internet use rate** is the proportion of individuals who used the Internet for personal use during the last 12 months, from any location. Business-related use is excluded. In the text of The Daily, these Canadians are referred to as Internet users.*

*An **Internet shopper**, or an **online shopper**, is someone who ordered at least one product or service on the Internet for personal or household use, with or without online payment.*

Households were divided into four equal groups, or quartiles, each representing 25% of the income distribution based on their household income from 2011. Income quartiles are defined at the provincial level (except for Canada).

Available in CANSIM: tables 358-0152 to 358-0158, 358-0167 to 358-0171, 358-0189, 358-0219 and 358-0220.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 4432.

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