

Canadians spend more money and time online during pandemic and over two-fifths report a cyber incident

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Canadians have been spending more time at home and online since the onset of the pandemic and this has led to increased online spending, use of social media and messaging services and online streaming, according to our latest web panel survey.

Statistics Canada has conducted five web panel surveys since the beginning of the pandemic to see how Canadians are faring during these challenging times. For the most part, the same respondents are followed over time, and the panels are statistically representative of the Canadian population.

In the most recent Canadian Perspectives Survey Series (CPSS), conducted from September 14 to September 20, Canadians were asked about their online spending, as well as their use of social media, messaging services and cyber security since the onset of the pandemic.

Higher online spending on digital technology

Canadians have increased their spending online on a number of products since the beginning of the pandemic, particularly technology. More than 4 out of 10 Canadians (44%) indicated that they had spent more online on technology, including computers, laptops and tablets, since the onset of the pandemic. This was also the case for smartphones (40%) and online video streaming services (42%). These results are also reflected in recent retail sales figures, which show that [retail e-commerce sales](#) were up by almost two-thirds year over year in July.

To maximize the use of this technology, one-third (34%) of Canadians also spent more on their home and mobile Internet connections.

As the pandemic put various restrictions on travel and movement, the vast majority of respondents (96%) reported spending less or none at all on at least one of the following categories: short-term rentals, domestic or international travel.



Table 1
Percentage of Canadians reporting increased spending, by age and product

Category	Age of respondent				
	15 to 34	35 to 49	50 to 64	65+	All ages (15+)
	%				
Computers, laptops, tablets and accessories	56	46	36	33	44
Smartphones	58	43	30	20	40
Spectator entertainment	17	16	13	10	14
Food delivered from restaurants and fast food places, including third-party delivery services	35	28	14	12	23
Online video streaming services	55	50	34	24	42
Online audio streaming services	40	25	15	6	23
Online courses and training materials	31	21	15	6	20
Home exercise equipment	24	19	10	6	16
Internet services	42	41	31	20	34

Note(s): Remaining percentage in categories listed above includes: no change in activity, decrease in activity or N/A.

Source(s): Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 5: Technology Use and Cyber Security during the Pandemic (5311).

Canadians embrace screen time during the pandemic

Just over 4 in 10 respondents told us they were spending more time on social media and messaging services (41%) since the onset of the pandemic, while 3% spent less time. Young Canadians aged 15 to 34 (57%) were most likely to have increased their use of social media and messaging services, while seniors aged 65 and older (18%) were the least likely to have done so.

As reported by the CPSS earlier this summer, almost half of Canadians (46%) have increased their use of free streaming video services such as YouTube. The increase was the most pronounced among young Canadians, with just over two-thirds of 15 to 34 year olds (68%) reporting increased use of online video streaming services. Canadians also reported increased use of free online information services and online educational services since the onset of the pandemic.

Table 2
Percentage of Canadians reporting increased use of selected free services, by age group and online service

Online service	Age of respondent				
	15 to 34	35 to 49	50 to 64	65+	All ages (15+)
	%				
Social media and messaging services	57	47	33	18	41
Online video streaming services	68	54	34	21	46
Online audio streaming services	44	31	16	9	27
Online productivity services	17	13	5	1	10
Online information services	46	38	31	25	36
Online education services	29	26	13	5	19

Note(s): Remaining percentage in categories listed above includes: no change in activity, decrease in activity or N/A.

Source(s): Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 5: Technology Use and Cyber Security during the Pandemic (5311).

One-third of Canadians have experienced a phishing attack

The pandemic did not diminish the volume of cyber incidents faced by Canadians, and led to some new, targeted attacks directly related to information about COVID-19.

Just over 4 in 10 Canadians (42%) experienced at least one type of cyber security incident since the beginning of the pandemic, including phishing attacks, malware, fraud and hacked accounts.

Just over one-third of respondents (34%) received phishing attacks since the start of the pandemic, a specific type of spam targeting individuals with the intent of defrauding the recipient, while 14% of respondents reported at least one phishing attack related to COVID test results, a potential cure for the virus or about the Canada Emergency Response Benefit.

Just over one-third (36%) of those reporting at least one cyber security incident experienced a loss as a result of the incident. Among those who experienced a loss, the most common were a loss of time (87%), followed by loss of data (13%) or financial loss (13%).

Just under one-third of Canadians (29%) that experienced a cyber security incident during the pandemic reported the incident. Canadians were most likely to report the incident to the company through which the incident occurred (11%) or to a credit card company or other financial institution (12%) in the event of payment card fraud or financial loss. Approximately, 5% of individuals that experienced an incident reported it to an authority such as the police or the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security.

Canadians have increased certain precautions online

Although most Canadians maintained the same cyber security measures as before the pandemic, some age groups reported heightened awareness of privacy.

This shift was most pronounced among younger Canadians, with three-quarters (75%) of those aged 15 to 34 increasing or maintaining their usage of multi-factor authentication, compared with less than half of those aged 65 and older (39%).

Just under one-half of young Canadians (47%) maintained or increased their purchases of new or additional security software. Meanwhile, 28% of seniors did.

Just over one-fifth (21%) of Canadians said they had increased restricting or refusing access to their geographic location or refused the use of personal data for advertising purposes since the onset of the pandemic. Of those Canadians that restricted access to their geographic location, the majority (77%) did so because of a greater awareness of cyber security risk, not as a result of work directives or advice from friends and family.

Canadians also took specific steps to protect themselves when they were shopping online. Of those that shopped online, almost half (47%) did not allow websites to remember credit card information and just over one-quarter (26%) used a third-party payment system such as PayPal when making a purchase.

Almost two-thirds of Canadians have helped someone navigate digital technologies during the pandemic

With the increased reliance on technology during the pandemic, many Canadians have found themselves helping others navigate new technology to communicate or access resources. Younger Canadians were most likely to provide assistance, with almost two-thirds of those aged 15 to 34 (63%) and 35 to 49 (64%) helping someone navigate digital technologies.

About 12% of Canadians helped young children under the age of 11 navigate digital technologies, while 23% helped someone over the age of 65.

Over one-third of Canadians who helped others with technology stressed the importance of strong passwords or passphrases (37%), keeping passwords or passphrases private (35%), spotting phishing attempts (36%) and avoiding misinformation (37%).

Note to readers

Data in this release are from Statistics Canada's new Canadian Perspectives Survey Series (CPSS), for which a panel of Canadians has agreed to complete a number of short online surveys. The CPSS is a probabilistic panel based on the Labour Force Survey and is therefore representative of the general population. The CPSS enables Statistics Canada to collect important information from Canadians more efficiently, more rapidly and at a lower cost, compared with traditional survey methods. The first iteration of the CPSS was conducted from March 29 to April 3 and collected information from 4,600 respondents. The second iteration was conducted from May 4 to 10, the third was conducted from June 15 to 21, the fourth was conducted from July 20 to July 26, and the fifth was conducted from September 14 to September 20.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5311](#).

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-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).