The Language of the Keyboard Generation.

Lingo
Online

A Study by MSN.CA and Dr. Neil Randall.

Lingo Online:
A Report on the Language of the Keyboard Generation

A Report by:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Over the past decade, the Internet has emerged as a major new medium for communication between individuals. People of all ages make extensive use of electronic mail, instant messaging, and Chat rooms to exchange written messages at previously unheard-of speeds and at various levels of informality. MSN.CA's Lingo Online study explores the ways in which the writers of these messages adapt the English language for their needs, and how they introduce non-linguistic elements in an attempt to simulate spoken communication.

The Lingo Online report explains the state of the English language as used by Canadians on the Internet. Commissioned by MSN.CA, the report draws its findings and conclusions from data and observations generated by a telephone survey and focus groups conducted by POLLARA Inc., as well as observation, interviews, and text analysis performed by Dr. Neil F. Randall of the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Waterloo.

In particular, the report examines the following areas:

1. The new and creative language of the Internet
2. Who uses the main modes of Internet communication?
3. Have the traditional communication conventions been forgotten?

Methodology

The Lingo Online report contains results of a national telephone survey of 1,000 Canadians between the ages of 16 and 54, conducted in April 2002, as well as the results of two focus groups, conducted April 9, 2002, informal interviews with Internet users among the student population at the University of Waterloo, and observations of messages on Chat systems and Web discussion boards. The first focus group consisted of a mix of girls and boys 15-16 years old, and the second of girls and boys 17-18 years old. The informal interviews asked questions of 30 Arts students between 2nd and 4th year at the University of Waterloo. For the message observation results, fifteen Chat rooms and twelve Web discussion boards, all consisting of topics appealing to older teenagers or young adults, were observed over the course of two weeks each.

The majority of the data in the report is drawn from the national telephone survey, conducted by POLLARA Inc. The questionnaire was designed primarily by POLLARA, with guidance and suggestions from Dr. Neil Randall. The sampling error in a random sample of 1,000 is approximately plus or minus 3.0%, 19 out of 20 times.

The entirety of the questionnaire and its results can be found in Appendix A.

The Focus of the Lingo Online Report

Lingo Online focuses on how Canadians communicate on the Internet. In doing so, it emphasizes three major areas of discovery:

A. Online lingo is a rich combination of speaking and writing

Language on the Internet combines writing and speaking to a degree that we have never seen before. Sending messages via instant messaging and in Chat rooms demands speed, and in many instances email demands and encourages a similar focus on speed. This speed attempts to capture the essence of spoken communication, but because the keyboard is the means of language generation, users must rely on their writing skills to make this happen. The result is the use of writing to simulate speech, a skill that we do not formally learn. This skill is developing on its own, through practice only, and its success is remarkable.

To simulate spoken communication, Internet users turn to a set of non-linguistic signs called emoticons, as well as linguistic play in the form of acronyms and abbreviations. Emoticons simulate speech – and in fact some of the bodily communication that accompanies speech – by providing physical expressions (mostly facial) that would be apparent in a spoken conversation. The acronyms and abbreviations serve two functions: they allow for greater speed, and they let users demonstrate their belonging to the communities that use specific abbreviations.

In its blend of speech and writing, and in its new and adapted techniques of creating meaning specifically for this medium, Internet communication is a highly creative and unique form of language. Internet users are speaking with their fingers.

B. Who uses the main modes of Internet communication?

Email is the dominant mode of Internet communication, the staple of virtually all Internet users. Instant messaging (IM) is now very clearly in second place, despite being around for less time than either Internet Chat or Internet newsgroups. This survey found that 57% of people between the age of 20-34 use instant messaging regularly, a figure that jumps to 80% in the 16-19 age range. In fact, for the 16-19 age group, IM is approaching or surpassing email in importance. While all of these people have email accounts, they conduct more of their online communication with friends via IM. Discussions in a focus group of even younger Internet users suggest that the trend towards IM will continue. Far fewer people use Chat, in part because IM offers the immediacy of Chat without the negatives of Chat (too many messages in general, and too many offensive messages in particular). In addition, IM offers the privacy that is possible but more difficult in Chat. Internet newsgroups (USENET) are still around, but their use is more valuable to those who have been on the Net for a longer period of time.

C. Have the traditional conventions of communication been forgotten?

Despite the novelty and inventiveness of Internet communication, many of the traditional conventions remain in place. The vast majority of users steer clear of online communication to convey bad news messages, and almost as many to convey good news messages, preferring the telephone in both cases because of its greater immediacy and intimacy. But once online, users are adept at recognizing the communication needs of the specific situation and tailoring their use of language accordingly. For example, while 90% use emoticons and abbreviations in online conversations with friends only 18% use them in messages they deem more serious, such as those to business associates or teachers.

Internet users also recognize the difference in formality, central to the teaching of most Canadian schools, between the conventions of the spoken language and the written language. Over 50% regularly check spelling in their email messages, and over 75% regularly use conventionally proper grammar in email. Over 75% regularly include a salutation or other greeting, and over 50% use a distinct closing. In a clear recognition that instant messaging and Chat are simulations of spoken language, these numbers drop considerably with instant messaging and Chat, according to the survey respondents.

But observation reveals that, in practice, the traditional conventions are more closely adhered to than most users realize. Because of the degree to which writing is a learned skill, taught at an early age, it is nearly impossible to simply ignore matters of spelling and grammar while engaged in the writing process.

Each area of discovery is expanded in the Main Findings section starting on page 5, then given full treatment in the subsequent sections of the report.

MAIN FINDINGS

A. The Rich Combination of Speaking and Writing

- The Internet is the first medium where communication combines key elements of written language and key elements of spoken language in a real way.

- The use of emoticons, abbreviations, and other similar communication elements demonstrates a level of creativity in everyday language use never before seen.

- Emoticons and other indicators of emotion or reaction are attempts to represent the body, while informal use of punctuation, grammar and diction are attempts to represent the spoken word. Internet lingo combines these representations with writing to create a new language type.

- Instant messaging and Chat, but also email in many cases, teach people how to write by accelerating the writing process to the point where people attempt to write the way they speak.

- Over 60% of emoticon users employ them to perform the difficult written act of expressing feelings.

- About 40% believe emoticons express individuality. An overwhelming reason to use acronyms is to save typing time. This report argues that a significant reason for their use is to build identification among the discourse group, by demonstrating they speak that group's language.

- 72% of users feel that inventing words for online communication is creative. However, older users treat online language twice as seriously as young users: 85% of the youngest age group considers the language they use online as mostly for fun, compared with only 44% of the 35+ group.

- Only 34% of respondents over age of 20 holding a University degree feel that the use of acronyms expresses individuality, as compared with 54% of non-holders.

- Internet language is almost universally known among users under 20 years of age. 86% know the meaning of the abbreviation LOL (laughing out loud), 71% G2G (got to go), and 62% TTYL (talk to you later). Half of them use the abbreviations A/S/L to ask the age, sex, and location of the other person. By comparison, only 60% of the 20-34 group know LOL and 28% of the 35+ group, while under 20% of those over 20 know G2G, A/S/L, or TTYL. Focus groups show that teenagers understand almost intuitively the meanings and functions of all online lingo.

B. Use of the Main Modes of Internet Communication

- Email remains the dominant form of interpersonal communication on the Internet, used by virtually 100% of Internet users. But in the 16-19 age group its dominance is giving way to instant messaging.
    - ➸ Instant messaging has become a major form of interpersonal communication among the 16-19 age group and increasingly popular in the 20-34 age group. 80% of Internet users under 20 use instant messaging, 57% of the 20-34 group. Only 31% of users 35 years and over use it.
    - ➸ Chat, once seen as the major real-time application on the Internet, is used by only 30% of users under 20 and less than 20% of users 20 or older. Chat has clearly given way to instant messaging, primarily because of ease of use (no need to log onto chat services) and users' sense that it is more private.
    - ➸ Internet newsgroups (USENET) are of virtually no interest to younger users today, owing largely to the abuse of the Usenet system – unpleasant experiences resulting from spam, flames, identity fraud, and stalking.

- Email is seen primarily as a written medium; instant messaging is perceived as closer to speech. Chat is somewhere between the two.

- People over the age of 20 with a university degree receive less email than those without. Only 8% receive at least one email message per day, much less than the 45% of those without degrees.

C. What About Traditional Communication Conventions?

- Both email and instant messaging regularly dispense with the kinds of formality associated with paper-based written communication, but not as completely as might be expected.
    - ➸ Over 50% always use salutations in email messages, with 40% using a kind of formal ending.
    - ➸ Over 45% always use salutations in instant messaging, as high as 58% of the 16-19 age group.
    - ➸ 40% of users always include a distinct closing word or phrase (Thanks, Cheers, Sincerely, etc.)

- All age groups tend to use proper grammar in email, ranging from 72% in the 20-34 group to 82% in the youngest group. But fewer than 10% of users bother with proper grammar in instant messaging or Chat.

- Over half in the oldest group and 41% of the 20-34 age group always check their email messages for spelling. The number drops to 27% for the youngest group. 63% of people check their instant messages for spelling at least occasionally.

- Virtually all users recognize the need to use formal (or at least more formal) language in the traditionally appropriate situations – emailing teachers, professors, business associates, older relatives, etc.

- All age groups use emoticons or acronyms almost exclusively in messages to people with whom they have a personal relationship.
  - ➡ 65% of users under the age of 35 would send emoticons/acronyms to a relative, 73% of users 35 or older.
  - ➡ Over 90% of users under 35 would send emoticons/acronyms to a friend, and 84% of users 35 or older.
  - ➡ Older users (35+) are less likely to use emoticons/acronyms in a message to a boyfriend/girlfriend: 61% as opposed to 85% of those under 35.
  - ➡ But older users are more likely to include emoticons/acronyms in messages to business associates: 25% as opposed to 19% and under among younger users.

- Users in all age groups overwhelmingly use the telephone to convey messages containing bad news. Only 26% of the youngest age group, down to 12% of the oldest, would use Internet communication for this purpose. They are somewhat but not significantly more likely to use the Internet for good news messages. Again, the telephone wins out by a long shot.

- Online arguments are common among the 16-19 group and rare among the 35+ group (20%). The majority of those who have experienced this, however, argue online much as they do in real life. 28% of users are more controversial when arguing online, probably owing to the lesser immediacy of the Internet compared with face-to-face or telephone communication.

I. HOW LANGUAGE EVOLVES

A language is never fixed. It changes constantly, adapting to the changes in society's needs. New words appear continually, and the meanings of existing words change. Word use changes, and usages once considered incorrect become accepted. New ways to express ourselves find their way into our consciousness, demanded by the needs of social and professional situations. Change and language go hand in hand.

The English language has experienced a great deal of change over the past century. Terms from numerous fields of study have found their way into our everyday speech, with people talking freely about global warming, 747s, hard drives, microwave ovens, hackers, biodiversity, virtual reality, atomic bombs, Y2K, faxes, couch potatoes, debit cards, mad cow disease, carjacking, televisions, and baby boomers. The concept of "standard" or "King's" English has been replaced by a much more complex landscape, with regional or social versions of the language treated as serious and acceptable variations. So we have the language of the inner city, just as we have the language of the east coast. The changes keep coming.

The English language has three major historical periods:

- Old English (Anglo-Saxon) – approximately 400-1100
- Middle English – approximately 1100-1500
- Modern English – 1500 to the present
  - ➡ Early-Modern English – 1500-1800
  - ➡ Late-Modern English – 1800-present

At the end of each brief explanation of the historical period below, you'll see how a verse from the Bible looks in that language (from Mark Davies, "The Polyglot Bible" – *http://mdavies.for.ilstu.edu/polyglot/.)*

Luke 2:8 is translated by the King James Bible as:
"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night."

Old English

English began as what is now known as Old English, a name given to four major dialects of a language that came to England with the ongoing invasions by Saxons, Jutes, and Angles (the last of these gives us the name "English"). The Viking invasions, starting in roughly 850, brought a northern Germanic influence into the language. The combination of all these influences forms the root of today's English, with many of our most commonly used vocabulary – although less than one-sixth of the total words in today's English – coming from that time. The word "be," as common a word as we have, is one such example.

The best-known Old English text is *Beowulf*.

Note that Old English is not the language of Shakespeare: his plays are considered Modern English, specifically Early-Modern English, as is the King James Bible.

Middle English

When William the Conqueror successfully invaded England in 1066, he naturally brought his native French language (actually a dialect of Old French) with him. His language became the language of the powerful, simply because he ruled. But Anglo-Saxon proved difficult to get rid of, simply because most people had no dealings with the court and thus had no reason to change.

The result was a language that drew from both Anglo-Saxon and Old French, and this combination is at the core of our language today. Courtroom words such as "indict" and "verdict" come from William's time, as do many other words relating to government and what we still term "proper English" ("perspire" rather than "sweat", for example), and other words that co-exist with their Anglo-Saxon counterparts: "wish" and "desire" is one example.

The best-known Middle English text is The Canterbury Tales, written by the best-known Middle English author, Geoffrey Chaucer.

Luke 2:8 in Middle English
and shepherdis weren in þe same kuntre wakende and kepende þe wacchis of þe niȝt on her floc

Modern English

The major linguistic change that separates Middle and Modern English is the difference in vowel sounds. Known as The Great Vowel Shift, this change saw vowel sounds being made closer to the front of the mouth, so that Middle English "lyf," which became Modern English "life," was changed in pronunciation from "leef" to the current pronunciation. At the same time, the final "e" on words started to become silent, as did some other sounds. In Middle English, for example, "game" was pronounced "gah-ma," but this eventually took on today's pronunciation with one syllable and a long vowel. Although not vowel-related, it was also during this time that the "k" was dropped from "knight," which in Middle English was pronounced "ka-neek-t."

Modern English is often split into two different time periods: Early-Modern (1500-1800) and Late-Modern (1800-present). The King James Bible and Shakespeare's plays are thus considered Early-Modern English, during which time spellings were often much different from today's spellings (they were also inconsistent), and paragraphing was in its infancy.

Luke 2:8 in Early-Modern English
And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

Late-Modern English is still Modern English, but it differs in several ways from Early-Modern English. First, the vocabulary is much larger, the result of three major influences. First, in the 19th century saw the British Empire reach its peak, resulting in borrowings of language from numerous cultures. Second, science and technology added words and concepts to the language constantly and quickly. The third influence is the rise of American English in its various forms, which dominates now because of the political and military power of the U.S., as well as the power of its entertainment industries and its media.

21st Century English

It's possible that Late-Modern English is already outdated as a category. Given the preponderance of the language of technology and the world-wide dissemination of all forms of today's English, perhaps a new category is in order. This category would include the constant borrowings from other languages still seen today, the emergence of African-American English towards the mainstream, and the vocabularies of science and high technology. It would also include the new notation systems of the Internet, everything from emoticons to URLs (Web addresses). Language is changing, after all, and the changes need to reflect the differences in use and function at all times. And the early 21st century, quite obviously, is a different time in very many ways.

Why is language change so important? Quite simply, because language isn't just about communicating – language is also about how we think of things. Our concepts are bound up in language, and as new terms and new uses arise, so do our ways of understanding. When we learn a new word and make it ours, we do more than just add it to our store of terms. We understand the world differently, either a tiny little bit or, in the case of some words, dramatically. The first time we heard the word "astronaut," our entire world-view was affected. The same is true, in a different way, of the first time we understood what "downsizing" meant.

Over the past fifty years, the high-tech field has invented and borrowed numerous new terms. At first only the specialists knew them, the engineers and the industry insiders. As computers became seen as important things to learn, to work with, and to own, the language started to incorporate these words and concepts, and more and more people started to use them. We could look at any area of computing to see how this language change has worked, but the most dramatic in the past decade has been the acceptance of the terminology surrounding the Internet.

The term "Internet" itself, for example, is over twenty years old, but back then it was a specialist's term. Today it is part of the language of everyday use, as are its related terms "World Wide Web" (originating in Tim Berners Lee's mind in the late 1980s), email (from the early days of ARPAnet in the 1960s), and "cyberspace" (from William Gibson's 1984 novel Neuromancer). Each of these terms has altered our world-view in unique and important ways, and together they have worked to make us believe that the world isn't all that big a place.

Communicating on the Internet

Today, the Internet is at the very centre of how we communicate. It lets us write to people all over the world, and to expect responses from them almost immediately, all from the comfort and convenience of our house. This isn't new, of course, but for many of us who came to the Internet as adults, it's a constant source of amazement even as we come to take it for granted. Just think of it: you can send an email message from Toronto to Stockholm in a matter of seconds, and you can use instant messaging to chat with that person very nearly live. And all of this is possible because of a network technology, called TCP, developed on a napkin in a restaurant way back in 1974.

What's fascinating about Internet communication is that it combines writing with speaking to an unprecedented degree. Email, chat, and instant messaging are all written, but crucial elements of speech come into play. In discussions of instant messaging, people exclusively use terms for speech, saying that they are talking to their friends or having a chat with a buddy. The Internet application called "chat" automatically suggests speech, and while people often refer to "writing" an email message, a fast exchange of email messages quickly takes on terminology related to speaking as well.

Most importantly, the writing style tends to come very close to speech. Punctuation and grammar, as well as other prescriptions of formal writing, get lost in the flurry. Capitalization becomes thoroughly unimportant. Slang and abbreviations abound. People say something quickly in one message, then explain it again in subsequent messages. And as in speech, a fast exchange forces the parties to think on their feet and say something – type something – without taking time to consider. Even email can be like this, when fast responses are expected or demanded, or when the email "conversation" is personal.

All in all, Internet communication is much closer to talking on the telephone than writing a letter. But it's not talking on the telephone, because messages are written, not spoken. What this means is that we have begun to learn and develop a new communication skill: speaking with our fingers. We are attempting to capture the best things about speech through a process – writing – that is almost completely different from speech. In the past, despite guidelines such as "write the way you speak," we have never come anywhere near this close to making that happen. But this is the essence of composing and sending messages on the Internet.

The Internet has given us a new medium in which to communicate, and it has demanded of us that we develop a new process for doing so – a speaking/writing hybrid. This process requires creativity in how we use language, sensitivity to the nuances of language, and the ability to translate our thoughts and emotions quickly and effectively from our minds to the screen in a way that uses the act of writing but that comes across as much closer to speaking.

II. CREATIVITY AND FREEDOM IN INTERNET LANGUAGE

New words, phrases, and techniques of expression enter the language constantly. The reason for this is simple: language never stands still, because society never stands still. When something new comes along that people want to talk about, they have to acquire the language necessary to do so. Whenever they encounter a new technology, a new scientific discovery, a new psychological insight, a new political controversy, or something as simple as a new method of dieting, they need the linguistic (language) and semiotic (sign) systems in order to participate in the conversation. Without these acquisitions, they remain outsiders.

Rarely, however, do we get to see what happens when a new mode of interpersonal communication appears. The last major new mode was the telephone, and of course it generated its own vocabulary and its own set of meanings. It also brought its own conventions. A standard opening emerged with "Hello" for personal calls and "Good morning" or the company name for organizations, and the standard "Goodbye" (or one of its variations) for ending the call. People learned to indicate they were listening with a variation of "mm-hm," and they also learned the turn-taking system and its differences from face-to-face conversation. All of these techniques are now second-nature in a society where telephones are ubiquitous.

Interpersonal communication on the Internet has required a significantly greater degree of learning. For one thing, using a computer is far more difficult than using a telephone ever was. A telephone had only one function when first introduced, and once people learned to speak into the mouthpiece and hold the speaker to their ear, and how to ask to be connected to the remote party (which later became learning how to crank or dial), there wasn't much more to learn from a technological perspective. But learning to write and send an email message is far more difficult. You have to know how to boot the computer, how to get online, how to load the appropriate program, how to address the message with a valid email address, and how to send it to the destination. Each one of these steps can have numerous sub-steps, and troubleshooting becomes part of the process.

Furthermore, email isn't the only possibility for interpersonal communication online. Instant messaging, chat, newsgroups, and discussion boards are also available. If someone asks you to phone them, you have to know how to dial the number (at the most, to request it). If someone asks you to meet them online, you have to know enough to sort through a variety of options. And each of the modes of online communication has its own particular – along with some shared – communication conventions.

How do we learn these conventions? The same way we learn all conventions of communication: observation, and trial and error. And where did these conventions come from in the first place? From a combination of existing communication modes – letters, memos, notes, telephone conversation, face-to-face conversation – and from new conventions created precisely for the new mode. And this is where the true fascination lies.

Online communication uses conventions, but it also allows and encourages creativity. Onliners can dream up new ways of getting their points across, then introduce these to their correspondents. It can quickly become accepted not only within that person's social group, but widely on the Internet. This is less true of the traditional communication modes, which rely almost entirely on convention.

Not all online communication is creative. Far from it. But during the research for this report, the creative use of linguistic and semiotic practices became apparent in several ways. Emoticons are obviously creative; although the happy face and the frowning face have been around for a long time, the ways in which onliners use these signs is new and often bold. Acronyms abound, and new ones appear whenever at least two people decide they need a new one. So do abbreviations. People know that there is nothing stopping them from adding to the list of these details of expression; they know that there is nobody out there who is going to deny them the right to use them. They are free to create the discourse system they need or simply want.

These are conventions, of course. Conventions suited to the online world. But it's easy to add to the conventions online. New acronyms and abbreviations find their way into online conversations constantly, and while many are subsequently dropped, some find their way into regular use. Indeed, informal interviews established that some onliners even go so far as to attempt to communicate with close friends as consciously as possible exclusively through emoticons, short forms, and acronyms. To attempt such communication in a mode that relies so heavily on speed of message exchange is to suggest a highly creative and aggressive attempt to build a new language for this mode. Onliners actively want Internet communication to be different from the traditional modes, because they want the freedom that this difference allows.

III. INTERNET COMMUNICATION AS A NEW COMMUNICATION SKILL

The Internet combines much of the immediacy of the telephone with all the benefits of being able to write out our thoughts before sending them to the other person. This combination is revolutionary.

Speaking to another person requires instant comprehension of what is being said, and a near-instant response by the person who heard it. This give-and-take requires a strong command of the language by both communicators, a fact that becomes obvious whenever we are speaking with someone who does not understand our language well. Most of us are masters of speech at a very early age, and barring debilitating illnesses we continue speaking for all our lives.

But it's not an easy skill. Learning it in the first place takes time and effort when we are young, and learning to perform it in all situations to the best effect is something that practically all of us struggle with throughout our lives. Many people are excellent at speaking to their friends in places where both people feel comfortable, but all of us encounter situations where it is far less easy. Some people never overcome a fear of speaking in front of large gatherings, and many are nervous in social situations where they don't know anybody. And all of us are impressed by those people who always seem to know the right thing to say in every situation, often without realizing that it, too, is a learned skill.

Writing is a completely different skill. It requires the ability to transfer thoughts and emotions to paper, using a set of notations and a system of rules that takes a long time to learn and years to learn well. It combines the mental skill of organized thinking with the physical skill of making letters and words on paper if using a pencil, or on a monitor if using a computer keyboard. Writing does not share the immediacy of speech, but instead allows for editing, rethinking, and reflecting. It is the foundation of our educational system, with a student's written work – whether in language or other kinds of symbols – given much more value than the student's speech.

The two skills have long been separate, or at least largely so. For much of history, in fact, the majority of people only had one of them, with the other – writing – restricted to a very limited percentage of the population. Even as writing became more widespread, however, its uses differed from those of speaking. If you wanted to communicate with people further away than your voice could carry, you either went where they were and talked to them, or, if that was impractical, you wrote to them. If you couldn't write, you either hired someone to do so, or you simply didn't communicate.

In the 19th century, technology started to change much of this. The first telegraph message was transmitted in 1844 – Samuel Morse's message was, "What hath God wrought?" – and suddenly it was possible to significantly lessen the time it took to communicate by writing.

In 1876, speech was dramatically changed by the invention of the telephone. A year later, the first telephone exchange was installed (in Hartford, Connecticut), and 1883 saw the first

linking of two major cities, Boston and New York. With the expansion of the telephone systems came the ability to talk to people at distances that would previously have required writing to them. Suddenly, important news did not require writing, but could depend, instead, on the speed, the emotional capabilities, and the back-and-forth nature of speech.

But this isn't to say that the telephone captured all the components of face-to-face speech. It had no means of reproducing facial expressions, nods or shakes of the head, or the look in the listener's eyes that expresses either a failure of understanding or a loss of interest. Speech compensates for these things with explanation, intonation, and oral expressiveness, but any messages communicated by bodily means was lost (you can, for instance, give people the finger with impunity while on the phone). Still, even for people who lived close to each other, the telephone frequently became the primary means of spoken communication, either because the parties were too lazy to walk to see each other, they were unable to do so, or time or weather restrictions made it undesirable.

Until the advent of computer networking, technology has had much less effect on writing. Telegraphy made fast, long-distance messaging possible, and that was of major importance, but it never became a normal way for two people to carry on a discussion (business negotiations aside). Nor did it ever become a medium for the exchange of in-depth information. Certainly it never became a substitute for conversation. Other technologies enhanced the ability to write and send letters – the ballpoint pen, the cargo airplane – but the writing process remained very much the same.

Computer networking altered the writing process by changing the speed by which messages could be exchanged. In a networked environment, people could write to each other and send the message without the use of paper and without the need for mail carriers, and they could expect a response in much less time than they would receive by postal mail or any other delivery system. The Internet, which is by definition simply a network of computer networks, enhanced electronic messaging by expanding the distances possible and the speed to traverse those distances. Written messages could go far and fast, and responses could return within minutes. People started using the network to do the written equivalent of conversing with one another, and suddenly the writing process had changed.

Suddenly, speed was expected from both parties, and the requirement of speed meant that people could spend much less time thinking about what they would write. So instead of drawing on their ability to write – to compose fully formed, grammatically correct, rhetorically effective sentences and paragraphs complete with transitions, flow, and carefully considered style and tone – writers began drawing on the experience of speaking. They started using the written word to capture the patterns and techniques of speech, in order to make the electronic discussion seem more like a telephone conversation than an exchange of written letters or memos. Issues in speech such as turn-taking, humour, irony, nuance, and the wide range of expressiveness (including exaggeration) suddenly became issues in writing. The fingers tried to become the voice.

This trend continued as other types of Internet communication developed. 1979 saw the implementation of USENET, a system of posting messages to topic boards called newsgroups. As the Internet grew, USENET became increasingly important as a means of carrying on discussions, with long, thoughtful messages – the product of writing – coinciding with rapid-fire exchanges, a simulation of speaking. Newsgroups are still around today, but of less use than at their peak in the mid-1990s. They began to fall out of use when people started using them as a platform for hiding behind their anonymity and insulting people – called "flaming" in USENET lingo – and when some people used that same anonymity to engage in such negative acts as stalking.

Internet Relay Chat (IRC), introduced in 1988, was the next person-to-person communication application to hit the Internet. It wasn't the first chat application on the Net, though; UNIX's Talk program already existed, and IRC was an attempt to rethink Talk. With Talk, two people "chatted" live with each other, each able to see the other's keystrokes as they were typed (including errors and backspaces). IRC added the ability for multiple people to participate in the conversation simultaneously, and chaos often reigned. But the idea again tried to merge the spoken and the written. IRC was similar to sitting around the kitchen table listening in to multiple conversations, with one crucial exception. Human beings have the ability to filter out, in most cases, conversations they don't want to hear. On IRC, you saw it all, and had trouble picking out the one you were engaged in. Still, the idea was born, and Chat remains popular to this day.

Next up was instant messaging. Although messaging software already existed for use in networks (UNIX's msg program, for instance), the concept began to garner real interest with the release of Mirablis Ltd.'s free program ICQ. A cute acronym meaning "I seek you," the ICQ network let people find each other and fire off quick messages. Its popularity was supplanted before too long by America Online's AOL Instant Messenger (AIM), while not to be outdone, the Web portal Yahoo quickly introduced Yahoo Messenger. In 1998, Microsoft introduced MSN Messenger, and today has the greatest market share of the messaging programs.

Figure 1: MSN Messenger Growth (Canada), January 2000 - April 2002
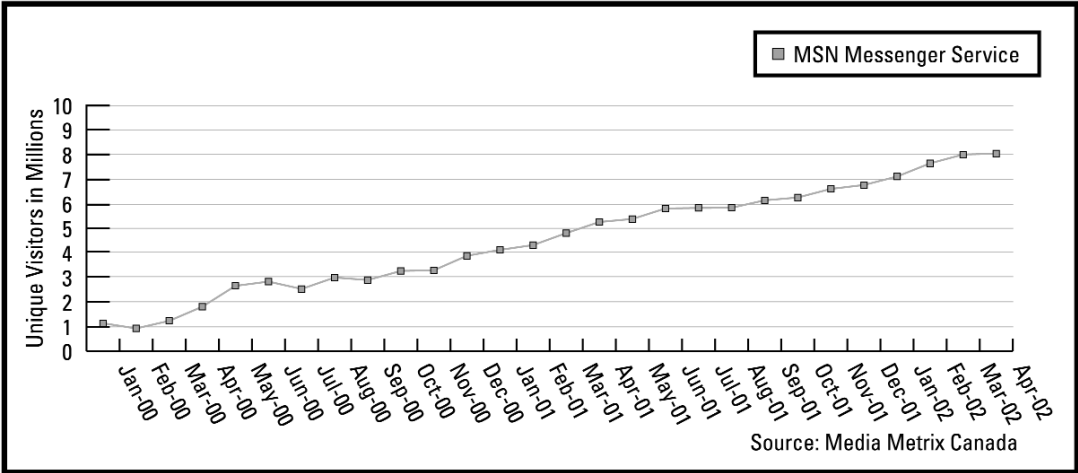
No matter what messaging system you use, the idea is the same: quickly written and speedily exchanged writings. Here is where we see the strongest convergence of speech and writing, at least in the area of thinking on one's feet. Here the fingers must transfer the mind in ways and at speeds never before seen in any medium.

But fingers and voices are different, of course, and one cannot simulate the other. We type letter by letter, and we write word by word, but we don't speak in letters at all, and we rarely speak in individual words. We speak in sound units and in breath units, joining words together with no breaks between them, and our typing fingers simply cannot keep up. But this is precisely what speedy Internet communication asks us to do, and we are quickly learning how. We are learning a skill that human beings never had to know before, and the time has come to recognize and develop that skill.

IV. WHO USES WHAT?
FROM EMAIL TO INSTANT MESSAGING

Internet users – whom we'll call "onliners"[1] from this point on for the sake of convenience – have five major modes at their disposal for communicating directly with other onliners. In chronological order of their appearance on the Net, they are:

- Electronic mail, better known as email or email.[2]
- Newsgroups, also referred to by its network description, USENET (technically correct) or Usenet (which looks better in print)
- Chat
- Web discussions, also known as discussion boards or discussion groups
- Instant messaging, sometimes abbreviated to IM

This study covers only three of the modes in detail – email, chat, and instant messaging. It does not ignore newsgroups and Web discussions, but instead deals with them from a text analysis standpoint rather than a user behaviour standpoint. The reasons for this difference are as follows:

- Because the messages and replies are posted and accessible by anyone (except in the case of restricted Web discussions), they are readily available for analysis.
- Web discussion boards are less oriented to real-time conversations – i.e., with two people firing messages back and forth – than email, chat, or Web discussions. People post messages and wait for a response, which often comes days later. Certainly real-time discussions do occur, but they're not the norm. Of course, email itself is not real-time, but has become frequently used for that purpose as expectations of fast turnaround of messages has grown.
- Newsgroups still abound, and still have a significant function, but are of decreasing importance to new users. In fact, informal discussions with 30+ university students revealed that only a handful of them bothered with newsgroups at all, and only two contributed regularly to at least one. It's entirely possible that USENET has seen its last generation of users.

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[1] Because the term "Internet users" is so clumsy to write and, indeed, offensive to some (it has been suggested that only two industries refer to their customers as users, the computer industry and the illegal drug industry), several replacement terms have been suggested. The most commonly used is "netizen," and for a time it looked as if it might take over. But over the past two years or so it has appeared less and less, so a new term is needed. "Internetter" is one possibility, except that it's almost as clumsy as "Internet user" and technically the "er" suffix is supposed to apply only to verbs. Still, the idea is sound, so this report suggests (and contributes) "onliner" – it's not based on a verb either, but it's easier to pronounce and captures the thing that all Internet users have in common. Everybody on the Internet is, by definition, online. But the report also refers to them simply as "people" at many times.

[2] Two things about the term "email." First, it used to be spelled only as "email" and still is in many places. Either is fine. As the "e" prefix comes to dominate, we can expect to see it more frequently as an unpunctuated prefix – eshopping, elearning, and so on. The other point is that there have been suggestions to start referring to email as simply "mail," with postal mail becoming "p-mail." Postal mail is already sarcastically labeled "snail-mail" by many, but "p-mail" manages to convey its usurpation by electronic mail while still allowing it some dignity.

Figure 2: Length of Time Using Instant Messaging Service by Age Group

Legend:
- 16-19 years
- 20-34 years
- 35 years +

Less than 1 Year: 12%, 26%, 24%
1 Year: 25%, 21%, 23%
2 Years: 29%, 18%, 17%
3 Years: 13%, 12%, 4%
4 Years: 10%, 8%, 10%
5 Years: 4%, 9%, 10%
6+ Years: 4%, 4%, 7%
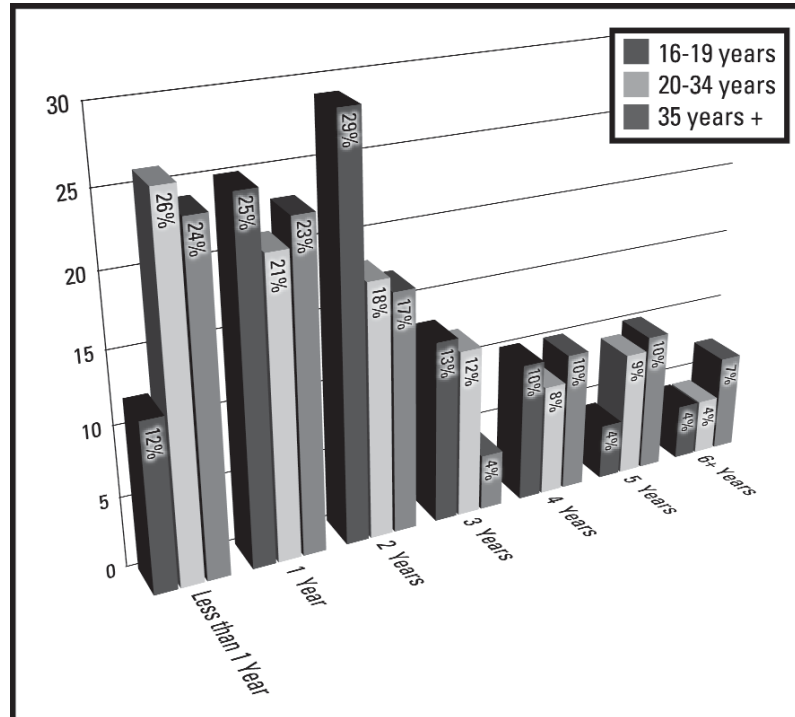
Figure 3: Length of Time Using Email Service by Age Group

Legend:
- 16-19 years
- 20-34 years
- 35 years +

Less than 1 Year: 3%, 5%, 9%
1-2 Years: 29%, 15%, 18%
3-4 Years: 42%, 21%, 19%
5-6 Years: 19%, 32%, 23%
7-8 Years: 5%, 16%, 10%
9+ Years: 1%, 10%, 18%
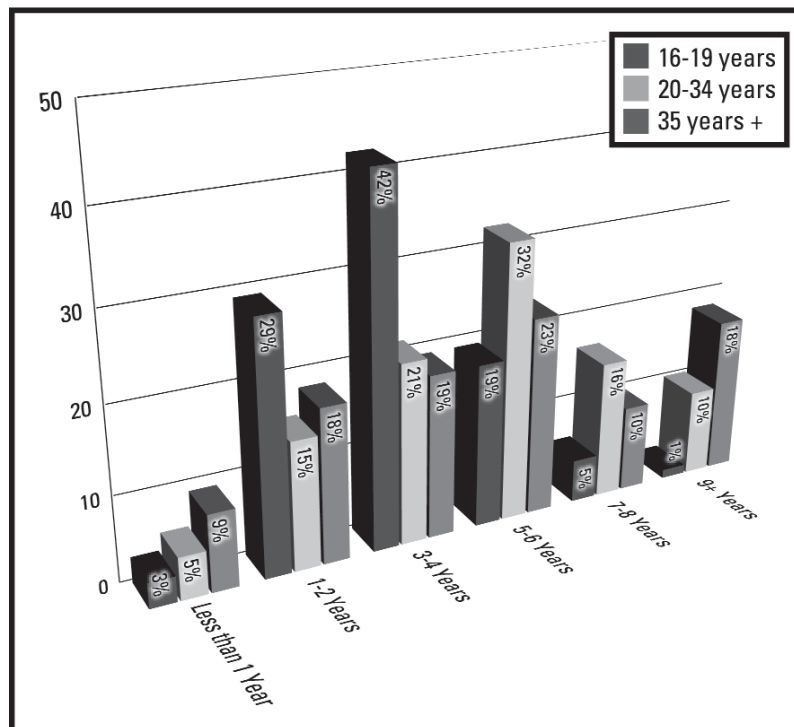
The Breakdown

Email is clearly the dominant mode, as it has always been on the Internet. It is, in fact, the true staple of Internet communication, with no sign of disappearance. Practically all onliners use it. There is certainly reason to suggest, however, that it is falling in importance among younger people. The 16-19 age group shows the only deviation from 100% use, and focus group discussion clearly suggested a drop in its usage among young onliners.

Instant messaging has picked up the slack for this group. 80% of the 16-19 group uses IM, as compared with 57% of the 20-34 group and far fewer people 35 or older. IM offers convenient access and fast person-to-person communication, and in these ways, as well as its similarities to speech as opposed to writing, offers an environment similar to the telephone. But it moves beyond the telephone in its ability to let you know which of their contacts are currently online and thus available for conversation, and in letting them talk to each other without the difficulties that speech itself can sometimes create. Shyness and uncertainty are less of an issue, and privacy is easier to establish (as compared with a telephone in an open area of the house).

One survey result not present in the table on the previous page is of interest. The use of instant messaging drops off considerably among onliners who have university degrees. Fully two-thirds of the 20-34 age group without degrees use IM, as compared with 44% of those who have completed their degrees. This suggests that the members of that group who are still students continue to use IM, a suggestion that echoes personal observation and discussions conducted for this study with university students. In other words, people in school use IM much more frequently than those who have completed school.

Chat is used by 30% of the 16-19 group and by few people in the other two groups. Focus group discussions suggested reasons for this that, in fact, fit with general perceptions of the problems of Chat. First, it's not as amenable to personal messaging as IM is; IM is almost exclusively a one-on-one environment, where Chat is by default an open environment and becomes private only if the onliner creates a room and allows only specific people into it. Second, people don't trust the privacy of the private rooms, probably because Chat is so open for the most part that it's hard to believe the private room can't be overheard. Third, Chat can be offensive and even dangerous, and young onliners avoid it because of this reputation.

An interesting issue comes to the fore here. Throughout the focus group discussions, and also in informal discussions with university students, people referred to their IM and Chat activities exclusively in terms related to speaking rather than writing. They "talk" to their friends, they "say" things to them, they "listen" to them. Nobody talks about writing or reading in reference to IM and chat. By comparison, younger onliners "write" and "read" email messages, although older onliners revealed a tendency to think of email threads as conversations and chats as well.

The point, once again, is that Internet communication is a hybrid of speaking and writing, demanding the skills and the thought processes of both, and it will almost certainly continue to develop in that fashion as the popularity of instant messaging grows.

V. FORMAL VS. INFORMAL LANGUAGE IN INTERNET COMMUNICATION

The formal use of language (for our purposes) refers to the practice of abiding by the prescribed "rules" of vocabulary, diction, grammar, syntax, and punctuation. Because it follows these rules, many people see this as the "correct" or "proper" use of language. Language scholars tend to pretty well dismiss the entire concept of correctness in language, claiming instead that correctness is defined by the situation – correctness in a locker-room conversation is far different from correctness in the language of a church sermon, for instance – but in practice, society still maintains a general sense of "properness" anyway. Formal and proper tend to go hand in hand when it comes to issues surrounding language.

Informal language represents language that moves away from the prescribed rules and practices. It includes the use of slang, sentence fragments, made-up words, one-word responses, and good old swearing. It can also include the use of things such as contractions in writing (it's instead of it is, don't instead of do not), although why these are considered informal mystifies numerous scholars (including this researcher). The same holds for old standards like not splitting infinitives and not ending sentences with prepositions.

Even such an accomplished writer and speaker as Winston Churchill recognized the problem with the latter rule; in an apparent response to a civil servant's objection to ending sentences with prepositions, he apparently wrote, "This is the sort of pedantry up with which I will not put." In a similar manner, George Orwell's spelled out five writing guidelines in a 1946 essay, and then added a sixth: "Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous."

One of the purposes of using informal language is for speakers to demonstrate that they belong to a specific discourse group – i.e., a population that uses language in specific ways for its own purposes. In other words, it's a badge of identification. This is true for people of all age groups and in all situations; the correct use of the language for that specific group and situation determines whether or not the person will be included in the group, at least at that moment. In rare instances that means using formal language, but in most cases it means some specific informalities.

Because email resembles the writing of letters or memos, we might expect the use of some of the formal structures of these types of communication. Letters are expected to have salutations (such as Dear John) and closings (such as Yours truly). They are also expected to have full sentences and divisions into paragraphs. Memos are similar, but less formal, with salutations replaced by To/From information and closings rarely included. Email can include any and all of these items, depending on the writer and depending on the situation.

But email can take on another written communication type as well, the note. People send notes by email the way they leave notes for people on their desk or on the kitchen counter. These notes are less formal than either letters or memos, of course, although they resemble memos more than letters.

By comparison, chat and instant messaging primarily resemble spoken conversation. They take on some of the characteristics of quickly exchanged notes, certainly, but speech remains the central simulation.

58% of the survey respondents always use a salutation of one kind or another in their email messages, and nearly 80% include one the majority of the time. These could range from those in the "Dear John" format to those in a simpler style, such as "Hi" or "Hey there." The survey did not distinguish among the different styles, but judging from years of email experience and research into email styles, we can conclude that the "Dear X" style is used only on messages that are designed to resemble letters, written to persons with whom the writer has or is trying to establish a formal relationship.

**Figure 4: Use of Salutations or Formal Address
When Instant Messaging vs. Email**
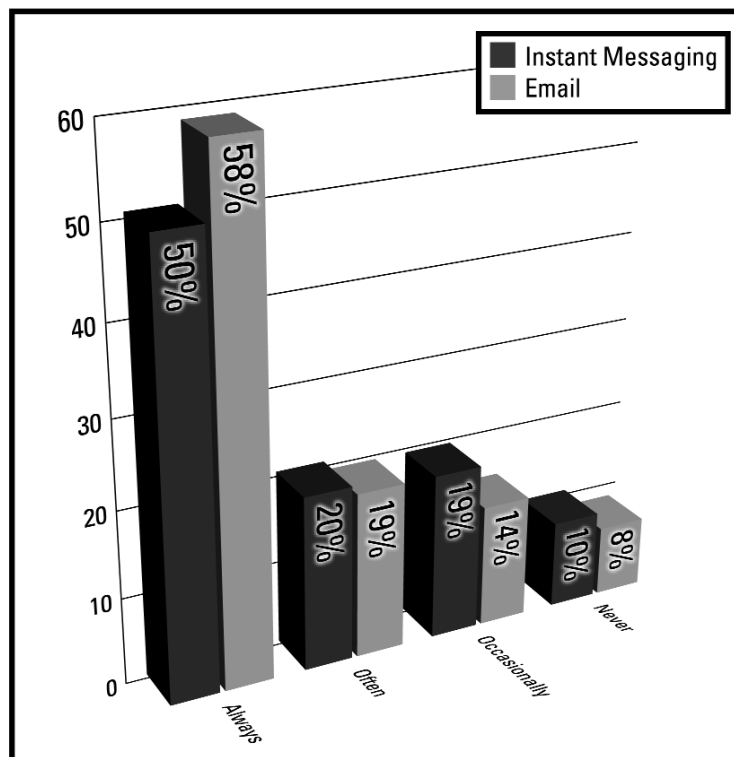
A greeting of some kind, therefore, is to be expected in email. Closings are not as common, however, with only 55% including one at least the majority of the time. Emailers end with their names, certainly, but the closing "Thanks," "Cheers," or the more formal "Sincerely" are left out almost half the time.

Email reflects letters and notes when it comes to salutations, both of which typically include greetings, instead of formal memos which frequently omit salutations because names are included in the To/From component of the memo. For closings, however, email often resembles memos rather than either letters or notes; memos typically include a name but not a closing, while letters and notes almost always do.

Somewhat surprisingly, the results aren't much different when it comes to instant messaging. 70% claim to include a greeting always or at least often, while 43% claim to include a closing the majority of the time. Some differences among the age groups comes into play here, with 58% of the 16-19 group using salutations all the time as opposed to only 44%-45% of the 19+ groups (the use of closings shows less difference).

A significant majority of onliners attempt to use proper grammar in their email message, 82% of the 16-19 age group and over 70% of the other two age groups. Younger people see email as a substantially formal mode of communication, and this helps to account for their tendency to move towards instant messaging as a way to communicate with friends. The drop-off in the use of proper grammar for IM and chat is enormous, with only 8% attempting proper grammar in chat rooms and 5% in instant messaging.

Figure 5: Frequency of Onliners Who Check For Spelling When Instant Messaging vs. Email
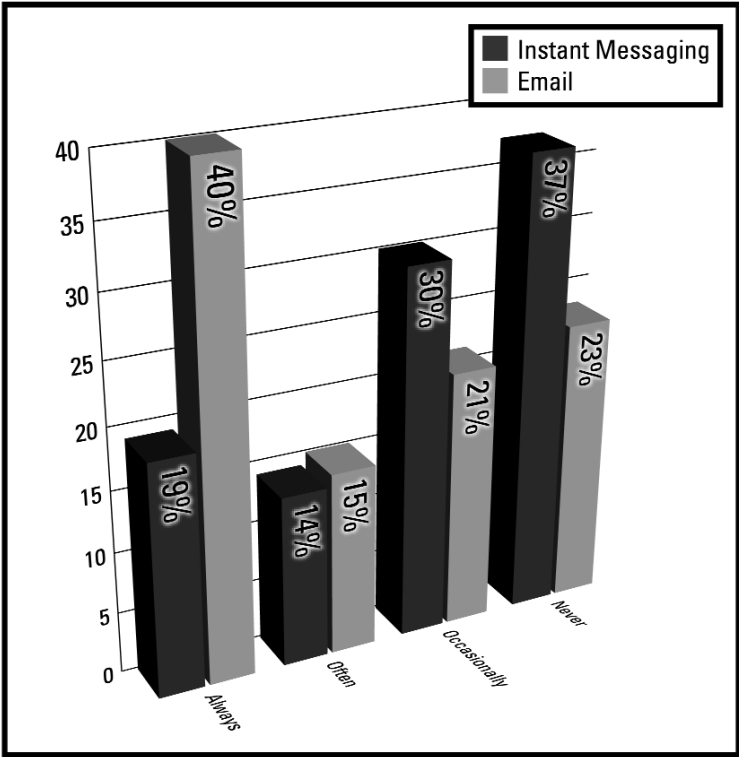
There is a slight difference here between those who have finished university and those who have not: roughly 10% of degree holders are more likely to use proper grammar in email, and this holds true across all the age groups. It would appear that the university system instills a slightly stronger commitment to formal writing (or perhaps an inbred fear of not using it), although again the difference isn't particularly large.

VI. EMOTICONS, ACRONYMS, AND ABBREVIATIONS

By far the most frequent forms of informal language found on the Internet are those that allow onliners to save typing time, and those that give them a means of giving an indication of their moods. Abbreviations abound, sometimes simply as short forms of words (v. for very is one example) and sometimes in the form of acronyms, which join the first letter of each word in a phrase – TTYL is an acronym for "talk to your later," for instance).[3] Also in heavy use are emoticons, otherwise known as smileys, those combinations of letters that represent a facial expression when viewed with the head tilted 90 degrees to the left.

Abbreviations and acronyms simplify the writing process, of course, by shortening the amount of time needed to type words and phrases. They do not necessarily shorten the reading process, however; only if both correspondents know the meaning of the abbreviation is it useful. To that end, abbreviations and acronyms constitute something of a sub-language of their own, and in Internet communication, this is true to a substantial degree. Email, chat, and IM messages frequently resemble technical reports or computer manuals in their use of specialized language,[4] and are inaccessible to those who do not share the vocabulary or the method of expression.

Emoticons simplify the writing process in a surprisingly similar way. While they are not abbreviations for any words in particular, they act as abbreviations for expressions of mood, tone of voice, or instructions to the reader. The original emoticon, the smiley was designed in 1982 by Scott Fahlman[5] (source: http://www.fastcompany.com/launch/launch_feature/emoticon.html) to convey a sense that an expression was not to be taken seriously. Typed as :-), this notation looks like a smiling face if you tilt your head 90% to the left, and it has become, in effect, a punctuation mark for the online age. Today it is typed as :-), :) or ☺, and most recent versions of instant messaging programs offer cartoon versions of emoticons, which some have said ruin the entire effect. Fahlman, like many long-time onliners, does not like the term "emoticon," finding it pretentious, and he is not alone in thinking this way. However, the term is here to say, especially since it's been built into the latest instant messaging programs. One of the benefits of having such a term – beyond giving academics and industry leaders something more official-sounding to use – is to allow the distinction between the original smiley – the smiling face – and the other emoticons.

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[3] Not everyone agrees on what constitutes an acronym. One argument holds that TTYL isn't an acronym at all, but rather an initialism. An initialism, in the way of thinking, is given the definition shown here, while an acronym takes things much further. A true acronym, according to this argument, not only joins the first letter of a phrase, but in doing so creates a pronounceable word that eventually becomes a recognized word in the language. There are, of course, very few of these, but some are well-known: "scuba" (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus), "sonar" (sound navigation and ranging, so not quite an acronym), and "snafu" (situation normal all fouled up – well, this is one version of it). "Posh" used to be considered acronymic (apparently standing for port out, starboard home, the preference of the first-class passengers traveling by ship from England to India and back), but that has been discredited. At any rate, here we use "acronym" to refer to both acronyms and initialisms, in keeping with most of the rest of the planet.

[4] This report will not use the term "jargon." A pejorative term, it refers to terms, abbreviations, and acronyms the reader is unfamiliar with. In other words, it's only jargon if you don't understand it. But suggesting that writers should avoid jargon is appropriate only when the message is ignoring the needs of the reader. In many cases, such as the financial pages of the newspaper or articles about agricultural techniques, specialized language is aimed precisely at the reader and thus fully appropriate.

[5] This is one view, at any rate. Others claim the smiley has been around as long as email itself.

The smiley arose out of a problem caused by the fact that all Internet communication is written and read: writing skills are all too frequently insufficient to convey humour, and even when they are, reading skills are all too frequently insufficient to perceive it. This has been true for even some of the greatest writers, and it is certainly true of those of us with less command of the language. Furthermore, communicating on the Internet demands that we write quickly and read quickly, thereby making humour even less likely to be effectively conveyed or instantly understood. We can chalk emoticons up to the fact that we have a long way to go to master the skills of Internet communication.

Emoticons

There's no such thing as a complete listing of emoticons, because people keep inventing them. But Table 1 shows a few of the most common ones in use on the Internet today.

Table 1: Emoticons

Emoticon	Meaning
:) or :-)	Smiling; happy; don't take it seriously
:(or :-(	Frowning; unhappy; this is sad; I'm sorry
;) or ;-)	Winking; just kidding
:-o or :-O	Surprised or astonished
:-D	Laughing
:-P	Various meanings, but the idea is the tongue hanging out
:-S	Incoherent
[ ]	Need a hug

Many others exist, but they are often simply experiments to see how many face-like images are possible using a keyboard, and are not in actual use.

The first three emoticons in Table 1 are by far the most commonly used. The smiling face has long been known as the smiley, and the other two have come to have their own names as well: the frowney and the winkey. Of these, informal observation and interviews confirm that the smiley appears far more frequently than the other two; for some users, in fact, adding the smiley has become nearly routine in all but the most serious messages.

27% of the survey respondents said they always use emoticons when using instant messaging; 46% use them at least regularly. The numbers are almost identical for all users under the age of 35, although they drop off among older users. Instant messaging makes the use of emoticons especially easy by offering them as menu items, and this accounts for part of their extensive use. Another reason is the speed of instant messaging; with so little time taken to compose a message, subtle nuances simply don't cut it. Onliners need a way to demonstrate their mood or tone of voice, or simply to indicate humour, to avoid misunderstanding and miscommunication. Only 22% of respondents don't use emoticons at all.

Among the people who go to chat rooms, emoticons are frequently employed, with 46% using them frequently and another 32% occasionally. Observation of chat room conversations reveals this figure depends on the subject matter in the chat room, with the more serious topics generating emoticons less frequently than those with more frivolous topics (or no real topic at all). But in chat rooms where the conversation ranges into contentious topics, emoticons appear with other types of indicators and abbreviations to clarify tone of voice, and in attempts to bring conversations away from the possibility of arguments between two chatterers. The smiley and the winkey carry extra duty in these situations.

Emoticons are used much less in email. Only 16% use them always or often, with 59% claiming not to use them at all. One reason for this drop-off is the ability in email to spend more time composing the message and thus requiring fewer non-linguistic indicators for the benefit of the reader's comprehension. Another is the fact that email is seen as more serious a mode of communication by many onliners, and emoticons are not considered serious at all. But day-to-day observation shows that emoticons are finding their way into email increasingly, probably as a result of their growing acceptance as a means of expression and, in effect, as punctuation marks.

Figure 6: Use of Emoticons in Email Messages Dependent on Specific Recipients
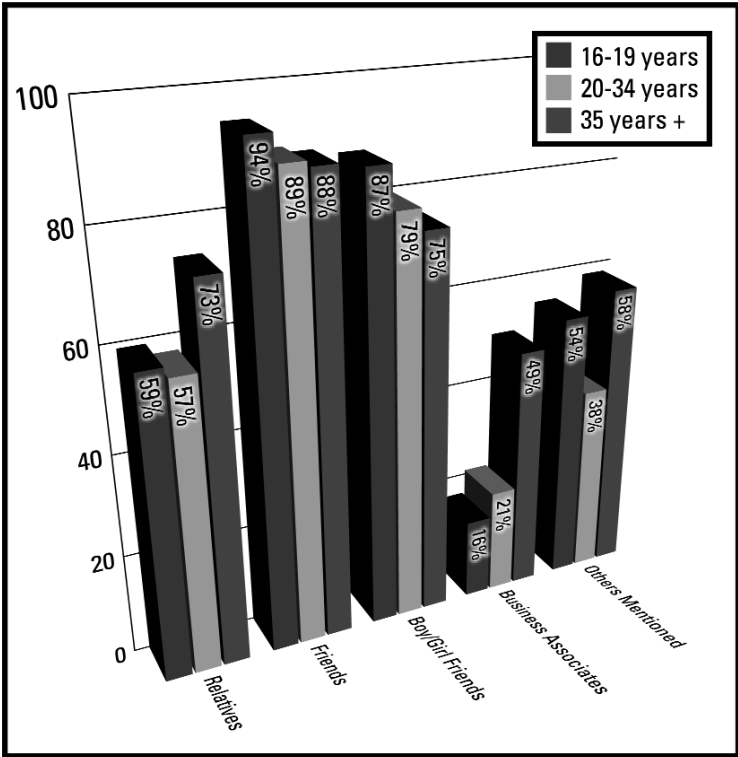
One important point to recognize about emoticons is that they attempt to fill an important gap in person-to-person communication. When people talk to one another, they engage in far more than just verbal communication. The body joins the process as well, with body position, facial expression, and eye movement making their own statements.

Non-verbal communication has long been an important focus in communication research, and the problem with online communication is that, like all written communication, it has failed to reflect the human ability to communicate without speaking.

Emoticons represent a primitive but useful means of bringing a small portion of bodily communication – specifically facial expression – into online conversation. It remains to be seen if other expressions of non-verbal communication will find their way in as well, particularly since a great deal of non-verbal communication is unconscious and thus unintentional – but it's certainly something for experimental onliners to attempt.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Emoticons are abbreviations, of course. But this section refers to linguistic abbreviations, such as short forms and acronyms. These are more conventional abbreviations, of course, some of which – or at least the type of which – have been with us throughout the history of the written language. You can see abbreviations at work in the published letters of authors and politicians, for example, and in business correspondence throughout history. Abbreviations cut time.

One category of abbreviation fulfills much the same function as emoticons. Typically represented by a single letter enclosed in angle-brackets, these abbreviations (which this report calls "mood abbreviations") indicate to the reader the mood in which the message is intended. Table 2 lists the most common of these.

Table 2: Mood Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
<g>	Grinning
<s>	Smiling
<l>	Laughing
<j>	Joking
<y>	Yawning
<bg>	Big grin
<sigh>	Sighing

In practice, only <g> and <s> are used frequently. And of these, <g> is by far the most common. In a way, it takes the place of the winking smiley, but in fact it comes across as a bit more subtle than that. Observation of email and newsgroup messages over the years reveals that long-time onliners who wouldn't dream of using smileys will sometimes use <g>.

Much more common than mood abbreviations are abbreviations of common words. Those shown in Table 3 represent only a few of them, because of course any common abbreviation (such as "etc.") would actually fit here, and there's no need to list them. Here are those found in Internet communication but less so (although with exceptions) in communication on paper.

Table 3: Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
v.	Very
g.	Good
Vg	Very good
&	And
K	Okay
m.	Many
Y	Why
U	You
j.	Just
>	More than (mathematical symbols are common)
C	See
b/c	Because (also bc.)
Ppl	People
?	Huh?
Sup	What's up? (also Wassup? Wazzup?)
b4	Before

Finally, there are the acronyms. Among onliners who get to know one another's styles, or who frequent acronym-heavy locations such as chat groups, these both speed up the typing of messages and function as a symbol of group belonging. They range from the common to the obscure, with some onliners using the latter as a demonstration of their greater knowledge, in a form of one-upmanship.

Table 4 lists numerous acronyms found in use in the research for this report, some from the focus groups, others from the analysis of email, IM, chat, and discussion board messages.

Table 4: Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
LOL	Laughing out loud
ROFL	Rolling on the floor laughing (also ROTFL)
TTYL	Talk to you later
TTFN	Ta ta for now
BBS	Be back soon
IMHO	In my humble opinion (also the simpler IMO)
F2F	Face-to-face (also FtF)
A/S/L	Age/sex/location (also ASL)
ASLP	Age/sex/location/picture
BFN	Bye for now (also B4N)
CU	See you
IOW	In other words
n2m	Not too much
W8	Wait
w8m	Wait a minute
?4U	Question for you
g2g	Got to go (also GTG)
BTW	By the way
AFAIK	As far as I know
FWIW	For what it's worth
IAC	In any case
HTH	Hope that helps
TYVM	Thank you very much
OTOH	On the other hand
AFK	Away from the keyboard
RL	Real life (also IRL, in real life)
JAS	Just a second
JK	Just kidding
KHYF	Know how you feel (also IKHYF)
L8R	Later
NM	Never mind
NTK	Need to know
OIC	Oh, I see
N2B	Not too bad
POV	Point of view
BRB	Be right back
RTM	Read the manual
U2	You too
WTG	Way to go (also w2g)
WU	What's up?
YW	You're welcome

While some of these acronyms could apply to any mode of communication, some exist because of needs specific to being online. A/S/L is an extremely rich example of this. Because the Internet lends itself so acutely to anonymity, and yet fosters the kind of familiarity in communication style typically found only among people who know each other, onliners understandably want to know some details about the people they're conversing with. Some of this is simply curiosity, but some of it determines the topics, tone, and vocabulary of the conversation as well.

A/S/L requests the age, sex, and location of the other party in the conversation. Nothing forces that person to respond truthfully, of course, but according to people interviewed for this report, the expectation is indeed of truthfulness or at least of approximate truth. These people claim to give their correct (or nearly correct) age when responding, they reveal their sex, and they give location at least as far as country and province are concerned.

When asked why they reveal this information, they say first that it helps to visualize the other person, but second that it makes a difference in the content and style of the interaction. Location is important when it comes to common topics, but equally important is not revealing specific location, unless some degree of trust has already been established. Of course, specific location also means little to someone unfamiliar with at least the general geography of the place, so that, too, can dictate what is revealed.

Other acronyms also reflect the experience of being online. AFK (away from the keyboard) is an obvious example, but so are several others in a different way. These could as easily be used in telephone conversation, and indeed several, such as TTYL and GTG, frequently are. Others, such as L8R, reflect spoken conversation. What this reflects, once again, is the hybrid nature of Internet communication, a thorough combination of written and spoken discourse, and in the process creating a new form. This is further confirmed by the wealth of acronyms designed to ease the typing burden, where the onliner wants to type an expression frequently used in spoken discourse that takes too long to type for it to be effective online. IMHO and FWIW apply in this manner, as do OTOH and ?4U.

LOL, by comparison, gives the correspondent a cue that appeals to the sense of hearing, while its associated acronym, ROFL, offers a visual image, albeit one fully recognizable as an abbreviation. Obviously, nobody can type while actually rolling on the floor laughing.

Who Uses Acronyms and Abbreviations?

Acronyms are quite clearly part of youth discourse online. As an example, 86% of survey respondents younger than 20 knew what LOL meant, as opposed to 60% of the 20-34 age group and only 28% of respondents 35 or older. The numbers for G2G are even more dramatic, with 71% of the 16-19 set correctly identifying it as opposed to 21% of the middle group and 13% of the oldest group. A/S/L is very definitely a teenager's phenomenon, recognized by 49% of those under 20 and well under 20% of the rest. Of interest to long-time onliners is the relative non-recognition of ROFL and IMHO. Only 18% of the respondents knew the meaning of ROFL, and 8% the meaning of IMHO, but these two are cited in the majority of the scholarship about Internet abbreviations. Clearly, they are on the way out.

44% of the 16-19 group use acronyms regularly in their IM messages, with only 17% never using them. By comparison, roughly 30% of the older age groups use them in IM regularly, with 35% of the middle group and 51% of the oldest group never using them. The numbers are similar with other kinds of abbreviations, although in all age groups the number of people never using them is higher.

The use of acronyms among the Chat users is quite high all around. 77% of the youngest group, 67% of the middle group, and a surprising 75% of the oldest group employs them regularly. It's important to keep in mind here, however, that Chat itself was the least used of the three modes for the respondents, so the actual number is quite low. Those who use Chat, however, are aware of Chat's conventions, which include the frequent use of acronyms and abbreviations.

Figure 7: Use of Acronyms in Email Messages Dependent on Specific Recipients
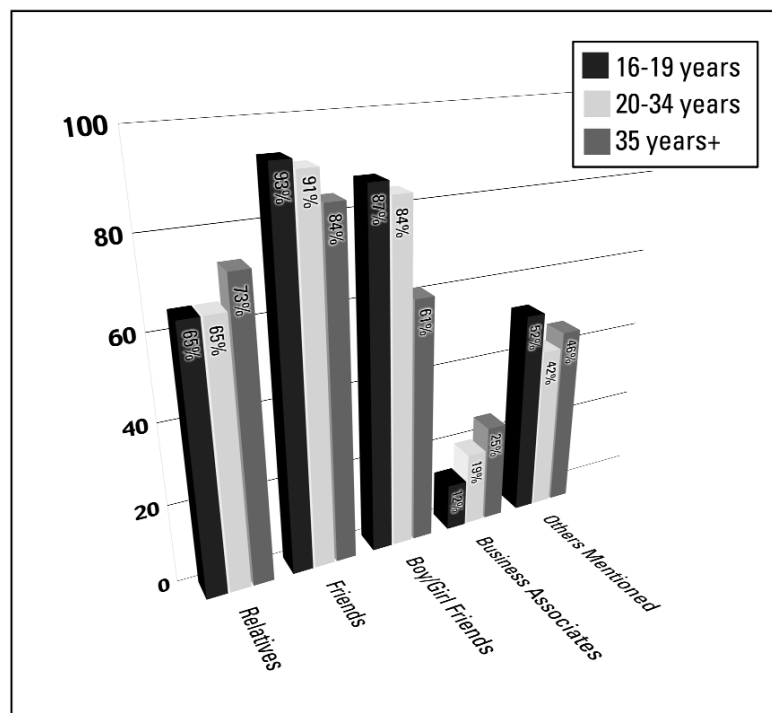
From the standpoint of the use of acronyms and abbreviations, email once again shows its sources as a mode of writing, with the greater formality that writing evokes. Only 11% of those surveyed claimed to use acronyms regularly, with other abbreviations employed by only 16%. As with emoticons, however, practical observation appeared to reveal a stronger tendency to use these features in email, so it's likely these figures are at least a few percentage points higher in, well, RL (real life).

VII. RHETORICAL SITUATIONS

In 1968, the language theorist Lloyd Bitzer coined the term "rhetorical situation" to refer to any situation in which communication could have an impact on a recognized problem (or "exigence," as he termed it). This report uses the phrase "rhetorical situation" similarly, referring to a situation that requires certain styles of language and other expected conventions. They are "rhetorical" because the participants communicate with one another in a way that can effect a change.[6]

The survey asked people about how they would handle the communication necessary in specific rhetorical situations. The results are interesting for a number of reasons, and are elaborated below. The point of the questions was to attempt to determine if communicating online changes traditional communication strategies, or if in fact the situation dictates the strategy and possibly the technology to be used.

Good News and Bad News

One example, shown in Figures 8 and 9, shows how the respondents would share good news or bad news. For both categories, the telephone dominates, and this result, while unsurprising, is certainly comforting. When something is to be celebrated, or something important but negative needs to be communicated, then people clearly believe talking to the person is better than writing them.

Just as comforting is the low use of email for conveying bad news, with only 12% (and almost equally across the age groups) suggesting email as a valid medium. The Internet is frequently used for anonymous communication, as research in computer-mediated communications has shown, but not, apparently, for hiding behind the immediacy of a person's reaction to negative things.

However, for those who believe that voice communication is indeed the best way to convey negative messages (whether by phone or in person), one statistic suggests a potential concern. Among the 16-19 age group, 28% use either email or IM to perform this task. This means that almost 3 out of every 10 negative messages are relayed electronically, which suggests either that IM has become a trusted medium of important expression, or that younger users are willing to use the safety of the Net to avoid delivering the message more directly.

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[6] The word "rhetoric" has suffered more abuse than practically any other philosophical term. It refers to the effective use of language in specific situations, but since roughly the 16th century it has been denounced as referring to nothing but empty style, empty language, and flat-out lies. This is all because Plato hated the concept of rhetoric and the scientific philosophers of the Renaissance decided it had nothing to do with logic and was thus bad. But we are all rhetorical beings, because we all use language to make things happen and to influence thoughts and to express concepts well, which are precisely the things rhetoric studies. Besides, this researcher teaches courses in rhetoric at his university, and feels he has to defend it whenever it is used in its denunciatory manner. He's even more adamant when it comes to the abuse of the word "myth," but that's another story.

It could also have something to do with shyness: 24% of those who call themselves shy say they would send bad news electronically, as opposed to only 17% of those who label themselves outgoing. But given that over 70% of the 16-19 age group thought of themselves as outgoing, this statistic isn't as useful as it might seem.

Figure 8: Methods Used When Sharing Good News
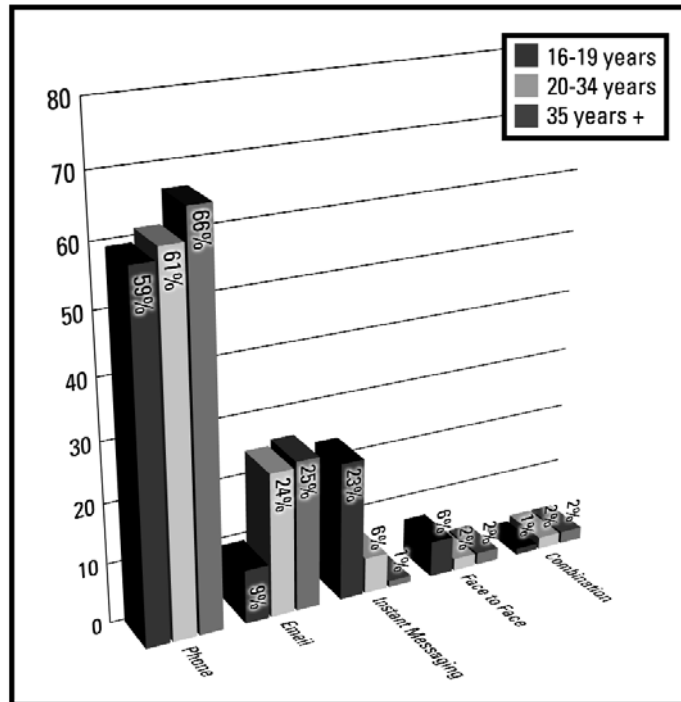
Figure 9: Methods Used When Sharing Bad News
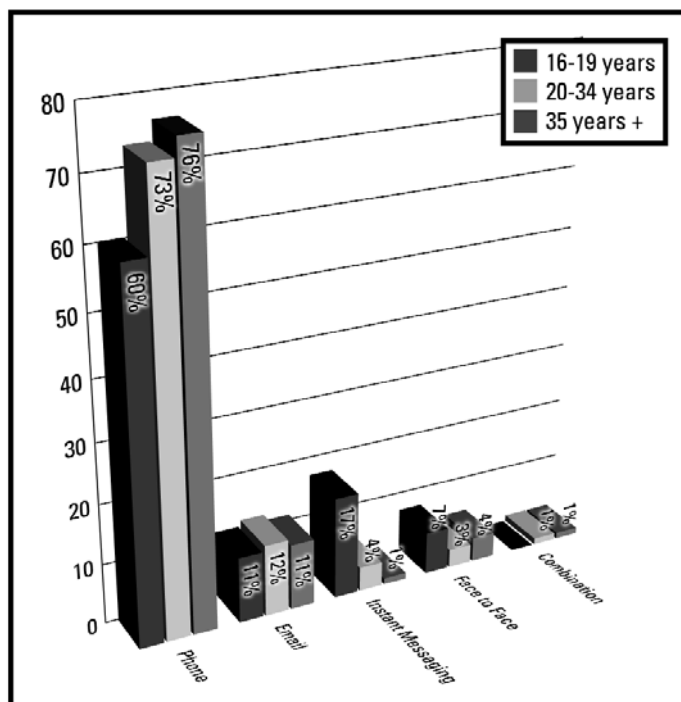
Online Arguments

68% of the 16-19 group have argued with another person online. This number drops to 42% of the 20-34 group and down to a negligible 20% of the 35+ group. Again, this number points to the acceptance by younger onliners of online communication as conversational in nature. 30% of this group and 25% of the rest said that they were more confrontational online, a figure that to a certain extent argues for the ability to avoid direct confrontation in an online environment. 58% of the respondents felt being online made no difference to their arguing.

Swearing Online

Only 8% of respondents claimed to swear more online than they do when talking to someone face-to-face. Of course, this number does not suggest that people do not swear online, just that they don't do it more than they do offline. It just doesn't make an appreciable difference. Only 10% believe that swearing online is serious, so in effect few people seem to treat swearing as a big deal.

What's interesting, though, is that swearing online requires the ability to type swear words, which means it's done fully consciously, something that is not always true of a habitual swearer in speech.

Flirting and Being Hit On

32% of the 16-19 group flirt more often online than offline, in comparison to 21% of the 20-34 group. None of the age groups considers online flirting to be serious.

Nearly half of the 16-19 group, however, have had people "come on" to them online, a number that drops in half or much lower with older onliners. Again, though, almost nobody takes it seriously.

VIII. REGIONAL VARIATIONS

While the survey was not designed to capture a full range of Canadian regional data, it nevertheless asked where each respondent lived. The results below show the differences and similarities found between the various regions.

The use of email is consistently high – in fact pretty well a given – across the regions. The use of instant messaging is also consistent, with 55-56% of onliners in each region communication in this mode, with a slight dip on the Prairies to 52%. The use of Chat ranges from 22% of respondents in the Atlantic region to 16% of those in Alberta and 15% of British Columbians. This would seem to suggest that the further you go west, the less likely Chat is in use, but the numbers are too small (22% is the highest, remember) to allow this statement with any authority.

The Prairies are a little behind the rest, and Albertans a little ahead of the rest, when it comes to the speed of adopting the new modes. 27% of Prairies respondents have used IM for less than a year, as opposed to only 15% of Albertans, while 24% of Albertans have been using it for over two years versus 14% from the Prairies (and 14% of British Columbians). Ontario comes closest to Alberta in this regard, with only 17% on IM for less than a year and 23% for over two years. Similarly, only 64% from the Prairies have been using email for more than two years, as opposed to 79% of Albertans, 76% of Ontarians, 74% from Atlantic Canada, and 72% from British Columbia.

In the number of email messages received, Prairie onliners again come out lower than the rest. 42% from the Prairies receive more than three messages per average day, as opposed to 52% of Atlantic onliners, 54% of Ontarians, 56% of Albertans, and 59% of British Columbians. Albertans are also more inclined to spend longer periods of time conversing with instant messaging software, with 24% stating they spend over an hour per week on IM as opposed to 5-10% of those from any other region.

Recognition of abbreviations shows some small but interesting deviations across the regions. 63% of respondents from Alberta knew the meaning of LOL, against only 54% of Ontarians and 56% of British Columbians. Only 13% of Prairies respondents knew ROFL, however, compared with 25% from Alberta, 20% from BC, and only 17% and 16% from Ontario and the Atlantic provinces respectively (hmmm … maybe Ontarians need to laugh more). A/S/L was recognized by between 21-24% across the board, while TTYL was most frequently recognized by those from the Prairies (42%) and least by those from BC (30%). There's no pattern here – i.e., no group recognized the abbreviations either most or least across the board – but the details are interesting to consider nevertheless.

There is no major regional difference in the number of people who use emoticons or abbreviations in IM or email messages, although 44% of Prairie onliners say they regularly use short forms they or their friends have invented. When compared with 34% of Albertans and British Columbians, 31% of Ontarians, and 28% of respondents from the Atlantic region, the Prairie users appear significantly more creative. One other minor note of interest is that 70% of BC respondents claim never to use emoticons in email, as opposed to a low of 52% of Albertans. As far as acronyms are concerned, fully two-thirds of all respondents, regardless of region, say they never use them in email messages at all.

While a considerable majority of onliners from all regions feel that emoticons are useful in IM and email messages to express emotions or moods, the numbers differ somewhat when asked if the use of emoticons express the individuality of the writer. When used in IM, 48% of Atlantic onliners agree that they do, against a low of 33% of Ontarians. Prairie onliners are the second most likely to see emoticons this way, clocking in at 43%. The number rises somewhat (and surprisingly) when it comes to email, with 54% of those from Atlantic Canada feeling they express individuality against 44% of those from Ontario and the Prairies. Of those who use acronyms regularly, by comparison, a full 54% of Atlantic respondents feel they express individuality, compared with 53% of Albertans, 45% of Ontarians, 42% of British Columbians, and a low of 39% of Prairie respondents.

90% of users from all regions would use emoticons to their friends in email, and fewer than 20% to business associates, but the numbers vary more when it comes to sending them for relatives or parents. Over 70% of those from Ontario and the Atlantic provinces would use emoticons in email to relatives, compared with 64% of those from the Prairies and 58% of onliners in the two westernmost provinces. 66% from the Atlantic region would send emoticons in email to parents, significantly higher than the 56% of Prairie onliners, the 48% of Ontarians, the 46% of Albertans, and a low 31% of British Columbians. Atlantic users seem more willing than any of the other groups to use emoticons for these two purposes, with British Columbians the least likely.

In what is possibly a further indication of the somewhat later adoption of Internet technology in the Prairie region, 70% of the respondents from that region say they would be most likely to share good news over the telephone, with only 16% likely to share it through email. This compares with 58% of Albertans saying they would share it on the phone and 22% through email (and an additional 10% through IM). Prairies respondents similarly lead the groups in non-computer methods for sharing bad news: 77%, compared with Ontario's low of 67%. Again, however, the overwhelming tendency is not to share bad news online.

Prairie onliners do, however, seem somewhat more positive regarding the potential dangers of online language. While 38-41% of respondents from the rest of the country feel that online language might ruin spoken English, only 28% of those from the Prairies feel this way. However, only 25% of Prairie onliners feel the opposite, that online language is enhancing spoken English, as opposed to a high of 31% of respondents from the Atlantic region. Along these lines, 66% of Atlantic onliners feel that people who use emoticons are creative, against a low of 54% from Ontario and British Columbia.

CONCLUSION:
THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF INTERNET LANGUAGE

Online language is unique. It is not simply a new way of exchanging messages, passing notes, or sending letters or memos. Nor is it simply a revamped kind of talking on the phone. Instead, online language combines writing and speaking in unique and unprecedented ways. It is a creative language, yet one that does not abandon the purposes or the values of traditional writing or speech. It is a language driven by the media to which it belongs, one that recognizes that traditional communication doesn't quite cut it.

Onliners use creative new systems of notation in order to get their thoughts and feelings across. Emoticons, acronyms, and other abbreviations are commonplace in instant messaging and chat messages (46% use them), and are making their way, albeit more slowly, into email messages as well. Emoticons help users convey attitudes and tone of voice, and they provide clues for the recipient of how to read the message in the way it was intended. They allow the writer to build bodily communication into the message, simulating winks, smiles, frowns, and other physical expressions. 61% of onliners feel that emoticons in IM help enhance the message, so not only have they become acceptable, for many they have become preferable.

Onliners type quickly to exchange messages with as little delay as possible. In doing so, they try to capture the essence of speech by using the much slower act of writing. They try, in other words, to speak with their fingers.

Onliners clearly recognize the need for this new language to incorporate important elements of its precursors. 77% include an identifiable greeting with their email messages, for example, bringing the convention of letter-writing into their messages, and 55% continue to check for spelling, a value associated solely with written language. 70% offer a greeting in their IM messages, as they would in spoken communication, but only 33% regularly check their spelling in these messages, again because IM reflects speech rather than writing. Over 75% of all users pay strong attention to the conventions of grammar in their email but less than 10% do in IM, again demonstrating a knowledge of where this new technology came from. As yet another example of this knowledge, the vast majority (71%) would use the telephone to relay bad news, a clear demonstration of which medium is best for which purpose.

Numerous sources determine how language is used. Some of it, at least the fundamental structures, might be "hard-wired" at birth. But even if not, we begin to acquire it early, and by the age of 2 (or thereabouts) we can fully participate in the speech of society. Our parents and other acquaintances help us develop our early speech, and when we enter school the formal development of spoken and written skills, with a primary focus on the latter, begins in earnest.

And that's just the beginning. As we proceed through the complex web of school, friendships, interests both private and social, books and magazines, activities outside the school, and all the various news and entertainment media, our exposure to new ways and means of expression increases continually. We learn new vocabularies, new diction, new ways to emphasize, new language play, new slang, new swear words, new god words and devil words (to use the rhetorician Richard Weaver's terms for words that society approves or disapproves of), new ways to annoy, new ways to persuade, and new ways to flatter.

And we learn and begin to master the technologies in which this language is used: speech, writing, and communicating with the body, through the air, on paper, on the telephone, and on the computer.

School teaches us the technology of writing – how to draw the shapes of letters and punctuation marks – and it drills into us the conventions of writing – spelling, word formation, sentence construction, paragraphing, essay writing, story writing, and the development of argument. Social life teaches us the other side of language: the words our friends want to hear about topics that interest them, and the ways of expression that make us part of the group. If you're with a group of teenagers who use the "f …" word a lot, you proclaim yourself part of the group by using it as well. If you're with a couple of friends who are obsessed with hockey, and can't seem to talk about anything else, you either learn the discourse of hockey or you find other friends. If you join a profession, you learn the language and the linguistic mannerisms of that profession. If you get on the Internet, you learn the language of the Internet.

There is, of course, no single (English) language of the Internet, any more than there is a single English language for all social occasions or for all writing purposes. A letter asking advice from a medical expert will use much different language than a letter to a long-time friend. An essay written for an academic journal will use different language than a review of a horror film for an underground newspaper. On the Internet, an email to the human resources department at a corporation requesting information about a posted job will be nothing like an email to a friend at your school asking for a quick rundown on what happened in that History class you bailed on. And none of these will use the same language as an exchange via instant messaging about whether or not George Lucas should have stopped with "The Return of the Jedi." Or a chat room message about how to make "Attack of the Clone" costumes for Hallowe'en.

Simulated speech consists of non-conventional uses of spellings, sentences, punctuation, diction, and vocabulary in an attempt to make the message sound and feel as much like spoken discourse as possible. To this end, writers of email messages to a degree, but primarily in Chat and IM messages, abandon punctuation or use only dashes, spell words as they sound rather than by their conventional spelling, ignore the conventional rules of sentence construction, use slang, and other colloquialisms, use speech-like openings and closings, provide numerous forms of emphasis (all-caps, asterisks, etc.) in an attempt to get the recipient to read the message as if it was spoken, and write so that messages can be sent, read, and responded to at very high speeds.

The combined uses of these four components makes Internet language one in which creativity is encouraged and often necessary. Any writer of Internet messages can add new non-linguistic signs, new abbreviations and acronyms, new forms of greeting, new methods of emphasis, new ways of simulating speech and bodily expression, and new vocabulary. In many cases, especially in IM and Chat, but often in email as well, such additions are encouraged and appreciated. This kind of encouragement and acceptance is somewhat common with speech in social situations, particularly among youth, but actively discouraged in written communication (just ask the Modern Language Association, the American Psychological Association, or the Canadian Press). The Internet gives its users a freedom of written expression found nowhere else in our society, precisely because of the close association of spoken and written language.

So what happens next?

First, the future will yield more of what we already have, with writers developing their own means of expression, including new ways of non-linguistic communication. The formalization of emoticons offered by the pictorial versions in instant messaging software will bring emoticons into the mainstream, but onliners will then turn to other ways to make their feelings, thoughts, and responses felt. Some will push the envelope and break through into new semiotic systems, and they, too, will eventually become formalized. And then still newer ways will pop up.

Internet communication will also see a stronger use of audio and video, as tools to create these components become easier and faster to use. With audio, some of the speech nuances can be relayed directly, but the keyboard will remain in use because of its convenience and its special capabilities. Eventually, we will have a multi-technology hybridity – writing, speech, and audio and visual elements added in – and this will require new learning and new adoption.

Most importantly, online lingo will continue to grow in importance, as people use the Internet more and more to communicate in personal, social, and professional relationships. Because it will be called upon to handle all these situations, the lingo will expand, adapt, and evolve, changing whenever a new kind of online situation arises. Writing and speaking will continue to merge in order to effect this evolution, and the result will be a language that efficiently and creatively combines the characteristics and the technologies of both, and that brings a new and welcome means of communication into our lives.

Survey by POLLARA Inc.	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
D1. *First, could you please tell me which of the following is your age or age group? Are you...*				
16 years old	(8%)	(31%)	(<1%)	(<1%)
17 years old	(7%)	(24%)	(<1%)	(<1%)
18 years old	(6%)	(21%)	(<1%)	(<1%)
19 years old	(6%)	(24%)	(<1%)	(<1%)
20-24 years old	(15%)	(<1%)	(36%)	(<1%)
25-34 years old	(26%)	(<1%)	(64%)	(<1%)
35-44 years old	(19%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(60%)
45-54 years old	(13%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(40%)

I want to speak with you briefly about how you use the Internet for communicating.
First, which of the following do you use when you are on the Internet?

1. *email*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Yes	(99%)	(96%)	(100%)	(100%)
No	(1%)	(4%)	(<1%)	(<1%)

2. *instant messaging [you are online and get and receive messages instantly]*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Yes	(55%)	(80%)	(57%)	(31%)
No	(44%)	(19%)	(43%)	(68%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(1%)	(<1%)	(1%)

3. *chat rooms [you enter an area with others and as a group exchange typed messages on a topic]*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Yes	(19%)	(30%)	(17%)	(11%)
No	(81%)	(70%)	(83%)	(89%)
Don't Know	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)

(If No/DK to all of 1-3, politely terminate.)

To begin, I am going to read you a sequence of letters that you might find in an online communication, and I want you to tell me what they mean. If you don't know, don't guess. For example, what is the meaning of [interviewer reads letters only, and mark correct or not correct]?

4A. *LOL - Laughing out loud*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Correct	(57%)	(86%)	(60%)	(28%)
Not Correct	(22%)	(8%)	(20%)	(37%)
Don't Know	(21%)	(7%)	(20%)	(35%)

4B. *ROFL - rolling on the floor laughing*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Correct	18%)	(22%)	(19%)	(13%)
Not Correct	(37%)	(33%)	(38%)	(41%)
Don't Know	(45%)	(45%)	(43%)	(46%)

4C. *IMHO - in my humble opinion*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Correct	(8%)	(3%)	(10%)	(8%)
Not Correct	(42%)	(44%)	(40%)	(43%)
Don't Know	(51%)	(54%)	(50%)	(49%)

4D. *G2G - got to go*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Correct	(32%)	(71%)	(21%)	(13%)
Not Correct	(31%)	(12%)	(36%)	(42%)
Don't Know	(37%)	(17%)	(43%)	(45%)

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
4E. *A/S/L - age/sex/location (or age/sex/lives)*				
Correct	(23%)	(49%)	(17%)	(7%)
Not Correct	(36%)	(23%)	(37%)	(46%)
Don't Know	(42%)	(28%)	(46%)	(47%)
4F. *TTYL - Talk to you later*				
Correct	(34%)	(62%)	(32%)	(13%)
Not Correct	(30%)	(15%)	(32%)	(41%)
Don't Know	(36%)	(23%)	(36%)	(46%)

For those who use Instant Messaging from Q2 above, ask QI section.

I1A. *Can you tell me how long you have been using instant messaging? (IN YEARS)*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
None	(20%)	(12%)	(26%)	(24%)
One Year	(23%)	(25%)	(21%)	(23%)
Two Years	(22%)	(29%)	(18%)	(17%)
Three Years	(11%)	(13%)	(12%)	(4%)
Four Years	(9%)	(10%)	(8%)	(10%)
Five Years	(7%)	(4%)	(9%)	(10%)
Six Or More Years	(5%)	(4%)	(4%)	(7%)
Don't Know	(3%)	(3%)	(2%)	(4%)
Mean:	2.16	2.17	2.04	2.44

I1B. *Can you tell me how long you have been using instant messaging? (IN MONTHS)*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
None	(65%)	(71%)	(62%)	(60%)
One Month	(4%)	(1%)	(6%)	(7%)
Two Months	(6%)	(6%)	(6%)	(7%)
Three Months	(3%)	(3%)	(3%)	(6%)
Four Months	(2%)	(2%)	(2%)	(2%)
Five Months	(1%)	(1%)	(1%)	(1%)
Six Or More Months	(15%)	(13%)	(19%)	(12%)
Don't Know	(3%)	(2%)	(3%)	(5%)
Mean:	1.40	1.23	1.59	1.35

I2. *And what instant messaging programs or systems do you use?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
MSN Messenger	(81%)	(87%)	(79%)	(71%)
ICQ	(44%)	(56%)	(40%)	(25%)
Yahoo/Yahoo Messenger	(14%)	(14%)	(15%)	(13%)
AOL	(9%)	(6%)	(10%)	(11%)
IRC/MIRC	(1%)	(2%)	(<1%)	(<1%)
PalTalk	(1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(4%)
Other	(6%)	(2%)	(4%)	(16%)
Don't Know/No Other	(2%)	(<1%)	(3%)	(5%)

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
I3A. *How much time do you spend on Instant Messenger every day? (IN HOURS)*				
None	(45%)	(32%)	(52%)	(59%)
One Hour	(26%)	(34%)	(21%)	(20%)
Two Hours	(12%)	(19%)	(9%)	(5%)
Three Hours	(5%)	(7%)	(3%)	(2%)
Four Hours	(3%)	(3%)	(3%)	(<1%)
Five Hours	(2%)	(2%)	(2%)	(2%)
Six Or More Hours	(4%)	(2%)	(6%)	(4%)
Don't Know	(4%)	(1%)	(4%)	(8%)
Mean:	1.38	1.47	1.43	1.05
I3B. *How much time do you spend on Instant Messenger every day? (IN MINUTES)*				
None	(49%)	(57%)	(45%)	(40%)
1 To 5 Minutes	(8%)	(3%)	(9%)	(15%)
6 To 10 Minutes	(7%)	(6%)	(8%)	(9%)
11 To 20 Minutes	(12%)	(7%)	(15%)	(14%)
21 To 30 Minutes	(19%)	(22%)	(18%)	(16%)
More Than 30 Minutes	(2%)	(2%)	(2%)	(1%)
Don't Know	(3%)	(3%)	(3%)	(4%)
Mean:	9.89	9.58	10.32	9.57
I3A1. *[If DK - Prompt] Is it for at least 15 minutes, or less?*				
At Least 15 Minutes	(67%)	(100%)	(67%)	(33%)
Less Than 15 Minutes	(33%)	(<1%)	(33%)	(67%)
I3B1. *How about in one week? (IN HOURS)*				
None	(49%)	(33%)	(48%)	(59%)
One Hour	(35%)	(43%)	(40%)	(24%)
Two Hour	(8%)	(14%)	(8%)	(5%)
3 Or More Hours	(4%)	(<1%)	(2%)	(8%)
Don't Know	(4%)	(10%)	(2%)	(3%)
Mean:	1.91	0.79	0.78	4.06
I3B2. *How about in one week? (IN MINUTES)*				
None	(46%)	(52%)	(42%)	(49%)
1 To 10 Minutes	(19%)	(5%)	(30%)	(11%)
11 To 20 Minutes	(11%)	(19%)	(8%)	(11%)
21 To 30 Minutes	(15%)	(10%)	(12%)	(22%)
More Than 30 Minutes	(6%)	(5%)	(6%)	(5%)
Don't Know	(4%)	(10%)	(2%)	(3%)
Mean:	10.50	9.47	10.10	11.58
I3C. *[If I3b=DK - Prompt] Would it be for at least 15 minutes, or less?*				
At Least 15 Minutes	(75%)	(100%)	(<1%)	(100%)
Less Than 15 Minutes	(25%)	(<1%)	(100%)	(<1%)

	Overall	**16-19yrs**	**20-34yrs**	**35yrs+**

When you use instant messaging on your computer, which of the following do you do? Would you say always, often, occasionally or never.

I4A. *Check for spelling*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(19%)	(11%)	(23%)	(27%)
Often	(14%)	(16%)	(14%)	(10%)
Occasionally	(30%)	(36%)	(29%)	(21%)
Never	(37%)	(37%)	(35%)	(42%)

I4B1. *Put in a salutation or formal address like hi, hey, what's up, dear Mary*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(50%)	(58%)	(44%)	(45%)
Often	(20%)	(18%)	(22%)	(22%)
Occasionally	(19%)	(15%)	(21%)	(25%)
Never	(10%)	(9%)	(14%)	(7%)
Don't Know	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(1%)

I4C1. *Attach a formal ending like yours truly, later, cheers, or sincerely.*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(30%)	(32%)	(27%)	(32%)
Often	(13%)	(14%)	(14%)	(11%)
Occasionally	(19%)	(17%)	(17%)	(25%)
Never	(38%)	(36%)	(42%)	(32%)
Don't Know	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)

I4D. *Use a specific font or typeface that you like*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(36%)	(40%)	(30%)	(41%)
Often	(9%)	(6%)	(10%)	(13%)
Occasionally	(15%)	(18%)	(11%)	(18%)
Never	(38%)	(35%)	(46%)	(26%)
Don't Know	(2%)	(1%)	(3%)	(2%)

I4E. *Use "smileys" (or emoticons) like smiling faces or frowns*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(27%)	(28%)	(29%)	(16%)
Often	(19%)	(19%)	(20%)	(15%)
Occasionally	(32%)	(32%)	(30%)	(36%)
Never	(22%)	(20%)	(19%)	(32%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(<1%)	(1%)	(<1%)

I4F. *Use acronyms like IMHO, LOL, or a/s/l*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(18%)	(24%)	(16%)	(10%)
Often	(17%)	(20%)	(14%)	(18%)
Occasionally	(34%)	(38%)	(35%)	(22%)
Never	(30%)	(17%)	(35%)	(51%)
Don't Know	(<1%)	(1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)

I4G. *Short forms or abbreviations that you or other online friends may have made up [NOT emoticons or acronyms like IMHO]*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(18%)	(28%)	(13%)	(10%)
Often	(14%)	(16%)	(15%)	(8%)
Occasionally	(23%)	(20%)	(26%)	(24%)
Never	(44%)	(35%)	(46%)	(58%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+

I5A. *[if QI4e= always, often, occasionally] Does using emoticons (smileys) in IM help you express your emotions?*

Yes	(63%)	(59%)	(68%)	(61%)
No	(20%)	(20%)	(19%)	(24%)
Sometimes	(16%)	(21%)	(13%)	(15%)
Don't Know	(<1%)	(<1%)	(1%)	(<1%)

I5B. *[if QI4e= always, often, occasionally] Does using emoticons (smileys) in IM help express your individuality?*

Yes	(38%)	(38%)	(38%)	(42%)
No	(51%)	(52%)	(51%)	(47%)
Sometimes	(10%)	(9%)	(10%)	(10%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(1%)	(1%)	(2%)

I5C. *[if QI4e= always, often, occasionally] Does using emoticons (smileys) in IM to save time and typing strokes?*

Yes	(72%)	(75%)	(70%)	(66%)
No	(23%)	(20%)	(24%)	(31%)
Sometimes	(5%)	(5%)	(5%)	(3%)
Don't Know	(<1%)	(<1%)	(1%)	(<1%)

I6. *[ALL IM] When people use emoticons (smileys) in IM, do you think it enhances the message or makes it more appealing, detracts from the message or makes it less appealing, or do you not really notice them?*

Enhances Message Or Makes It More Appealing	(61%)	(61%)	(65%)	(51%)
Detracts From Message Or Makes It Less Appealing	(6%)	(3%)	(7%)	(8%)
Not Really Notice Them	(29%)	(31%)	(26%)	(31%)
Don't Know/No Answer	(5%)	(6%)	(2%)	(11%)

I7A. *[if I4f = always, often or occasionally] Do you use acronyms in IM to help you express your emotions?*

Yes	(49%)	(51%)	(49%)	(40%)
No	(37%)	(35%)	(37%)	(44%)
Sometimes	(14%)	(14%)	(15%)	(11%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(1%)	(<1%)	(4%)

I7B. *[if I4f = always, often or occasionally] Do you use acronyms in IM to help express your individuality?*

Yes	(32%)	(27%)	(38%)	(29%)
No	(58%)	(63%)	(51%)	(58%)
Sometimes	(9%)	(9%)	(9%)	(7%)
Don't Know	(2%)	(1%)	(1%)	(7%)

I7C. *[if I4f = always, often or occasionally] Do you use acronyms in IM to save time/key strokes?*

Yes	(76%)	(81%)	(74%)	(64%)
No	(18%)	(14%)	(17%)	(33%)
Sometimes	(5%)	(4%)	(7%)	(<1%)
Don't Know	(2%)	(1%)	(2%)	(2%)

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
I8. *[All IM] When people use acronyms in IM, do you think they [take one only] enhance the message or make it more appealing, detract from the message or make it less appealing, or do you not really notice them?*				
Enhances Message Or Makes It More Appealing .	(36%)	(39%)	(35%)	(31%)
Detracts From Message Or Makes It Less Appealing	(13%)	(8%)	(13%)	(24%)
Not Really Notice Them.	(47%)	(50%)	(48%)	(35%)
Don't Know/No Answer	(5%)	(3%)	(4%)	(10%)

Email

[If "yes" to email (in q1 above) ask all QE]

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
E1A. *How long have you personally been using email? (IN YEARS)*				
None	(6%)	(3%)	(5%)	(9%)
One Year	(9%)	(10%)	(6%)	(10%)
Two Years	(11%)	(19%)	(9%)	(8%)
Three Years	(13%)	(21%)	(9%)	(10%)
Four Years	(13%)	(21%)	(12%)	(9%)
Five Years	(18%)	(14%)	(21%)	(16%)
Six Years	(8%)	(5%)	(11%)	(7%)
Seven Years	(6%)	(3%)	(9%)	(6%)
Eight Years	(5%)	(2%)	(7%)	(4%)
9 To 10 Years	(7%)	(1%)	(7%)	(11%)
More Than 10 Years	(4%)	(<1%)	(3%)	(7%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(1%)	(1%)	(1%)
Mean:	4.65	3.49	5.03	5.11
E1B. *How long have you personally been using email? (IN MONTHS)*				
None	(83%)	(85%)	(84%)	(80%)
1 To 5 Months	(7%)	(7%)	(6%)	(8%)
6 To 10 Months	(8%)	(5%)	(8%)	(9%)
More Than 10 Months	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)
Don't Know	(2%)	(2%)	(2%)	(2%)
Mean:	0.72	0.58	0.67	0.89

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
E2. *Thinking about your personal, non-work email usage, about how many separate personal emails would you get in one day?*				
1	(12%)	(10%)	(9%)	(16%)
2	(16%)	(19%)	(13%)	(17%)
3	(15%)	(18%)	(15%)	(11%)
4	(7%)	(8%)	(7%)	(7%)
5	(12%)	(12%)	(14%)	(9%)
6	(5%)	(5%)	(6%)	(6%)
7	(2%)	(2%)	(2%)	(2%)
8	(3%)	(2%)	(3%)	(3%)
9 To 10	(10%)	(10%)	(12%)	(8%)
11 To 20	(9%)	(7%)	(10%)	(8%)
21 To 30	(3%)	(4%)	(3%)	(3%)
More Than 30	(2%)	(2%)	(2%)	(4%)
Don't Know	(4%)	(3%)	(3%)	(6%)
Mean:	7.49	7.12	7.37	7.95
E2A. *[IF e2=DK] Do you receive at least 1 personal email a day, or less?*				
At Least 1 Personal E-mail A Day	(33%)	(25%)	(43%)	(30%)
Less Than 1 E-mail A Day	(62%)	(75%)	(50%)	(65%)
Don't Know	(5%)	(<1%)	(7%)	(5%)
E2B. *How about in one week? [Go to chat section if less than 7 per week]*				
1	(7%)	(17%)	(<1%)	(7%)
2	(21%)	(<1%)	(25%)	(29%)
3	(11%)	(17%)	(<1%)	(14%)
4	(7%)	(<1%)	(13%)	(7%)
5	(14%)	(<1%)	(25%)	(14%)
99	(7%)	(<1%)	(25%)	(<1%)
Don't Know	(32%)	(67%)	(13%)	(29%)
Mean:	13.11	2.00	30.86	2.90
E2C. *[IF e2b=DK - Prompt] Would it be at least 7 personal emails per week, or less?*				
At Least 7 Personal E-mails Per Week	(11%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(25%)
Less Than 7 Per Week	(78%)	(100%)	(100%)	(50%)
Don't Know	(11%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(25%)
E2D. *[If IM was YES and Instant messaging section was completed, then ask:] When you send email, do you use any other special words, acronyms or emoticons (smileys) that you don't use in your Instant Messages?*				
Yes	(9%)	(10%)	(7%)	(13%)
No	(90%)	(89%)	(92%)	(87%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(2%)	(1%)	(<1%)

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+

[all] When you compose personal (not business) emails on your computer, how frequently do you do each of the following? Would you say that you always, often, occasionally or never.

E3A. *Check for spelling*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(40%)	(27%)	(41%)	(51%)
Often	(15%)	(17%)	(15%)	(14%)
Occasionally	(21%)	(26%)	(21%)	(17%)
Never	(23%)	(28%)	(23%)	(18%)
Don't Know	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)

E3B. *Put in a salutation or formal address like hi, hey, what's up, dear Mary*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(58%)	(56%)	(61%)	(56%)
Often	(19%)	(22%)	(15%)	(23%)
Occasionally	(14%)	(14%)	(15%)	(13%)
Never	(8%)	(8%)	(9%)	(9%)
Don't Know	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)

E3C. *Attach a formal ending like yours truly, later, cheers, or sincerely*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(40%)	(43%)	(38%)	(41%)
Often	(15%)	(12%)	(18%)	(14%)
Occasionally	(21%)	(23%)	(21%)	(20%)
Never	(23%)	(21%)	(24%)	(24%)
Don't Know	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)

E3D. *Attach a signature that you have set up/entered beforehand*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(14%)	(13%)	(14%)	(13%)
Often	(4%)	(4%)	(4%)	(5%)
Occasionally	(7%)	(6%)	(8%)	(8%)
Never	(74%)	(77%)	(73%)	(72%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(2%)

E3E. *Use a specific font or typeface that you like*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(25%)	(22%)	(22%)	(30%)
Often	(6%)	(6%)	(4%)	(9%)
Occasionally	(14%)	(17%)	(12%)	(14%)
Never	(55%)	(56%)	(61%)	(46%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(1%)

E3F. *Use "smileys" or emoticons like smiling faces or frowns*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(8%)	(12%)	(8%)	(5%)
Often	(8%)	(11%)	(9%)	(4%)
Occasionally	(25%)	(30%)	(26%)	(18%)
Never	(59%)	(47%)	(57%)	(74%)
Don't Know	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)

E3G. *Use acronyms like IMHO, LOL, or a/s/l*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(6%)	(15%)	(3%)	(3%)
Often	(5%)	(8%)	(6%)	(2%)
Occasionally	(22%)	(32%)	(21%)	(14%)
Never	(66%)	(45%)	(69%)	(79%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(<1%)	(1%)	(1%)

	Overall	**16-19yrs**	**20-34yrs**	**35yrs+**

E3H. *Short forms or abbreviations that you or others may have made up [NOT emoticons or acronyms like IMHO]*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Always	(8%)	(14%)	(7%)	(4%)
Often	(8%)	(13%)	(8%)	(6%)
Occasionally	(24%)	(30%)	(26%)	(17%)
Never	(59%)	(43%)	(59%)	(73%)
Don't Know	(<1%)	(1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)

E4A. *[If QE3f=always, often, occasionally] Would you agree that using emoticons (smileys) in your email help you express your emotions?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Yes	(70%)	(70%)	(74%)	(64%)
No	(20%)	(18%)	(18%)	(29%)
Maybe/Sometimes	(9%)	(13%)	(8%)	(6%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(<1%)	(1%)	(1%)

E4B. *[If QE3f=always, often, occasionally] Would you agree that using emoticons (smileys) in your email help express your individuality?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Yes	(48%)	(44%)	(49%)	(53%)
No	(44%)	(47%)	(43%)	(40%)
Maybe/Sometimes	(7%)	(8%)	(6%)	(6%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(<1%)	(2%)	(1%)

E4C. *[If QE3f=always, often, occasionally] Would you agree that using emoticons (smileys) in your email helps you save time?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Yes	(69%)	(83%)	(66%)	(54%)
No	(27%)	(14%)	(29%)	(44%)
Maybe/Sometimes	(3%)	(3%)	(4%)	(1%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(<1%)	(1%)	(1%)

E4D. *[If QE3f=always, often, occasionally] Would you agree that using emoticons (smileys) in your email is just for fun?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Yes	(86%)	(93%)	(82%)	(85%)
No	(9%)	(4%)	(13%)	(9%)
Maybe/Sometimes	(4%)	(3%)	(5%)	(5%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(<1%)	(1%)	(1%)

E5. *[ALL E-mail] When you see an emoticon (smiley) in a message that you get, do you think that it [pick one only] enhances the message or makes it more appealing, detracts from the message or makes it less appealing, or do you not really notice them?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Enhances Message Or Makes It More Appealing	(43%)	(51%)	(44%)	(36%)
Detracts From Message Or Makes It Less Appealing	(13%)	(8%)	(11%)	(19%)
Not Really Notice Them	(38%)	(40%)	(42%)	(33%)
Don't Know/No Answer	(6%)	(1%)	(3%)	(12%)

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
E6A. *[IF QE3g=always, often, occasionally] When you use acronyms in your email would you say that they help you express your emotions?*				
Yes	(58%)	(58%)	(58%)	(58%)
No, Not Really	(33%)	(32%)	(33%)	(32%)
Sometimes	(9%)	(9%)	(8%)	(10%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(1%)	(1%)	(<1%)
E6B. *[IF QE3g=always, often, occasionally] When you use acronyms in your email would you say that they help express your individuality?*				
Yes	(48%)	(48%)	(50%)	(42%)
No, Not Really	(44%)	(46%)	(41%)	(46%)
Sometimes	(7%)	(6%)	(8%)	(10%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(<1%)	(1%)	(2%)
E6C. *[IF QE3g=always, often, occasionally] When you use acronyms in your email would you say that they save you time and typing strokes?*				
Yes	(86%)	(91%)	(80%)	(86%)
No, Not Really	(11%)	(6%)	(15%)	(12%)
Sometimes	(3%)	(2%)	(4%)	(2%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(1%)	(1%)	(<1%)
E7. *[ALL E-mail] And when people use acronyms in email, do you think that they [pick one only] enhance the message or make it more appealing, detract from the message or make it less appealing, or do you not really notice them?*				
Enhances Message Or Makes It More Appealing	(26%)	(35%)	(22%)	(25%)
Detracts From Message Or Makes It Less Appealing	(23%)	(11%)	(23%)	(33%)
Not Really Notice Them	(46%)	(53%)	(49%)	(37%)
Don't Know/No Answer	(5%)	(1%)	(6%)	(6%)
E8. *[ALL E-mail] And do you think that abbreviations used in email [choose one only] enhance the message or make it more appealing, detract from the message or make it less appealing, or do you not really notice them?*				
Enhances Message Or Makes It More Appealing	(18%)	(24%)	(16%)	(16%)
Detracts From Message Or Makes It Less Appealing	(24%)	(12%)	(23%)	(36%)
Not Really Notice Them	(53%)	(62%)	(57%)	(41%)
Don't Know/No Answer	(5%)	(2%)	(5%)	(7%)
[IF E3f = always, often, occasionally] In general, when you are sending email, would you use emoticons (smileys) in a message to...				
E9A. *Relatives*				
Yes	(66%)	(65%)	(65%)	(73%)
No	(32%)	(35%)	(33%)	(26%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(<1%)	(2%)	(1%)
E9B. *Parents*				
Yes	(50%)	(50%)		
No	(48%)	(48%)		
Don't Know	(2%)	(2%)		

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
E9C. *Friends*				
Yes	(90%)	(93%)	(91%)	(84%)
No	(10%)	(7%)	(9%)	(16%)
E9D. *Boy or Girl friends*				
Yes	(81%)	(87%)	(84%)	(61%)
No	(17%)	(11%)	(15%)	(33%)
Don't Know	(2%)	(1%)	(1%)	(6%)
E9E. *Business associates*				
Yes	(18%)	(12%)	(19%)	(25%)
No	(81%)	(87%)	(80%)	(71%)
Don't Know	(2%)	(1%)	(1%)	(4%)
E9F. *Other persons you mentioned*				
Yes	(46%)	(52%)	(42%)	(46%)
No	(48%)	(42%)	(53%)	(48%)
Don't Know	(6%)	(6%)	(6%)	(6%)

[IF E3g = always, often, occasionally] In general, when you are sending email, would you use acronyms in a message to...

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
E10A. *Relatives*				
Yes	(61%)	(59%)	(57%)	(73%)
No	(38%)	(40%)	(41%)	(25%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(1%)	(2%)	(2%)
E10B. *Parents (only ask if under 19]*				
Yes		(45%)	(45%)	
No		(54%)	(54%)	
Don't Know		(1%)	(1%)	
E10C. *Friends*				
Yes	(91%)	(94%)	(89%)	(88%)
No	(7%)	(4%)	(10%)	(10%)
Don't Know	(2%)	(2%)	(1%)	(2%)
E10D. Boy or Girl friends				
Yes	(82%)	(87%)	(79%)	(75%)
No	(16%)	(12%)	(18%)	(22%)
Don't Know	(2%)	(1%)	(3%)	(3%)
E10E. *Business associates*				
Yes	(24%)	(16%)	(21%)	(49%)
No	(73%)	(80%)	(77%)	(49%)
Don't Know	(3%)	(4%)	(2%)	(2%)
E10F. *Other persons you mentioned*				
Yes	(48%)	(54%)	(38%)	(58%)
No	(46%)	(41%)	(53%)	(39%)
Don't Know	(6%)	(5%)	(9%)	(3%)

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+

E11. *Do you ever use any of your email language in other forms of communication. (i.e. use email terms in everyday correspondence, writing, in school, letters, speaking, etc.?)*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Yes	(19%)	(29%)	(18%)	(13%)
No	(71%)	(58%)	(73%)	(78%)
Sometimes	(9%)	(12%)	(8%)	(7%)
Don't Know/No Answer	(2%)	(1%)	(2%)	(2%)

E12. *In which of the three following situations would you use the most formal language in your email (CHOOSE ONE ONLY). To ask someone out on a date, to communicate with your boss, to send an email to an older relative or parent?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
To Ask Someone Out On A Date	(6%)	(14%)	(3%)	(2%)
To Communicate With Your Boss	(56%)	(55%)	(65%)	(46%)
Send Email To Older Relative Or Parent	(30%)	(28%)	(26%)	(37%)
Don't Know	(8%)	(3%)	(5%)	(16%)

Chat Rooms

[If "yes" to Chat Rooms [in Q3 above] ask QC section]

C1. *How often would you say you go to chat rooms? Frequently, occasionally, seldom or never?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Frequently	(21%)	(18%)	(26%)	(20%)
Occasionally	(29%)	(31%)	(29%)	(26%)
Seldom	(41%)	(41%)	(40%)	(40%)
Never	(9%)	(10%)	(4%)	(14%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(<1%)	(1%)	(<1%)

We are interested in the specific ways you form and send messages. How frequently do you use each of the following? Would you say frequently, occasionally, seldom or never?

C2A. *Emoticons (smileys)*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Frequently	(46%)	(46%)	(54%)	(25%)
Occasionally	(32%)	(28%)	(28%)	(50%)
Seldom	(7%)	(10%)	(<1%)	(19%)
Never	(15%)	(15%)	(18%)	(6%)

C2B. *Acronyms like IMHO*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Frequently	(35%)	(36%)	(36%)	(31%)
Occasionally	(37%)	(41%)	(31%)	(44%)
Seldom	(9%)	(8%)	(8%)	(13%)
Never	(19%)	(15%)	(26%)	(13%)

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+

C4. *[IF USE CHAT ROOM AND AT LEAST ONE OTHER] In which situation are you more likely to use more proper grammar and spelling: when you're in chat rooms, when you are using [IF Q1=YES] email or when you are using [if Q2=YES] Instant Messaging? (CHOOSE ONE ONLY)*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Chat Rooms	(8%)	(5%)	(13%)	(<1%)
E-mail	(76%)	(82%)	(72%)	(75%)
Instant Messaging	(5%)	(8%)	(3%)	(6%)
Don't Know	(11%)	(5%)	(13%)	(19%)

Scenarios

How would you describe yourself?

S1. *Do you consider yourself shy or outgoing?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Shy	(26%)	(24%)	(28%)	(25%)
Outgoing	(66%)	(72%)	(63%)	(66%)
Don't Know	(8%)	(4%)	(9%)	(9%)

S2. *Do you consider yourself a "math & science" thinker or an "artsy"?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Math And Science Person	(47%)	(44%)	(48%)	(47%)
Artsy	(40%)	(47%)	(37%)	(39%)
Neither	(8%)	(6%)	(10%)	(8%)
Both/A Bit Of Both/Combination Of	(3%)	(2%)	(2%)	(4%)
Don't Know	(2%)	(1%)	(3%)	(1%)

S3. *When you have good news to share do you typically [one only].*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Use The Phone	(62%)	(59%)	(61%)	(66%)
Use E-Mail	(20%)	(9%)	(24%)	(25%)
Use Instant Messaging	(9%)	(23%)	(6%)	(1%)
Personal Communication/Face-To-Face/In Person	(3%)	(6%)	(2%)	(2%)
All Of The Above/Combination Of Above . . .	(2%)	(1%)	(2%)	(2%)
Depends/Depends On Situation	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)
ICQ/Chat Room	(<1%)	(1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)
Mail Them/Write Letter/Write It On Paper . .	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)
Something Else Other	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(1%)
Don't Know	(3%)	(1%)	(4%)	(3%)

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+

S4. *When you have bad news to share do you typically [one only].*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Use The Phone	(71%)	(60%)	(73%)	(76%)
Use E-Mail	(12%)	(11%)	(12%)	(11%)
Use Instant Messaging Or	(7%)	(17%)	(4%)	(1%)
Personal Communication/Face-To-Face/In Person	(5%)	(7%)	(3%)	(4%)
All Of The Above/Combination Of Above	(1%)	(<1%)	(1%)	(1%)
Avoidance/Don't Say Nothing At All	(1%)	(1%)	(<1%)	(1%)
Depends/Depends On Situation	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)
ICQ/Chat Room	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)
Mail Them/Write Letter/Write It On Paper	(<1%)	(1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)
Something Else Other	(<1%)	(<1%)	(1%)	(<1%)
Don't Know	(4%)	(2%)	(5%)	(5%)

S5. *Have you ever argued with anyone online?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Yes	(42%)	(68%)	(42%)	(20%)
No	(58%)	(32%)	(58%)	(80%)
Don't Know	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)	(<1%)

S6. *[If yes] When you argue online, are you [one only] more confrontational, more diplomatic, or just the same as always?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
More Confrontational	(28%)	(30%)	(26%)	(24%)
More Diplomatic	(12%)	(8%)	(15%)	(16%)
Just The Same As Always	(58%)	(61%)	(56%)	(55%)
Don't Know	(2%)	(1%)	(3%)	(5%)

S7. *If you were to receive an email or IM with perfect punctuations with periods and capitals at the beginning of each sentence, would you think the sender was under 18 or over 18?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Under 18	(6%)	(8%)	(6%)	(4%)
Over 18	(80%)	(81%)	(79%)	(80%)
Don't Know	(14%)	(11%)	(15%)	(15%)

S8. *[ASK IF OVER 24] Do you have children who use email or IM?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Yes			(33%)	(10%) / (52%)
No			(67%)	(90%) / (48%)
Don't Know/Refused			(<1%)	(<1%) / (<1%)

S9. *[IF YES] If/or when your kids instant message or email you, and they use abbreviations, emoticons (smileys) and acronyms to express themselves, do you ever. [choose all that apply] correct their English, respond in the same manner or do you not pay attention to or notice these things?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Don't Pay Attention/Notice These Thing			(46%)	(68%) / (42%)
Correct Their English			(24%)	(24%) / (24%)
Respond In The Same Manner			(14%)	(4%) / (15%)
Don't Know/No Other			(21%)	(8%) / (23%)

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+

Some of the following may happen more when you're online than in a face-to- face situation. For example, when you are online.

S10A. *Do you swear more often than in face-to-face situations?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Yes	(8%)	(15%)	(7%)	(3%)
No	(91%)	(84%)	(92%)	(96%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(1%)	(<1%)	(1%)

S10B. *Do you flirt more often?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Yes	(20%)	(32%)	(21%)	(9%)
No	(79%)	(66%)	(79%)	(91%)
Don't Know	(1%)	(2%)	(<1%)	(1%)

S10C. *Do individuals come on to you more often?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Yes	(28%)	(48%)	(24%)	(15%)
No	(70%)	(49%)	(74%)	(84%)
Don't Know	(2%)	(3%)	(2%)	(2%)

S11A. *[if yes above] What about swearing? Is it serious or not?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Serious	(10%)	(8%)	(10%)	(18%)
Not Serious	(86%)	(90%)	(87%)	(73%)
Don't Know	(4%)	(3%)	(3%)	(9%)

S11B. *[if yes above] What about when you flirt?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Serious	(8%)	(13%)	(4%)	(7%)
Not Serious	(90%)	(85%)	(93%)	(93%)
Don't Know	(3%)	(2%)	(4%)	(<1%)

S11C. *[if yes, above] What about when someone comes on to you?*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Serious	(9%)	(12%)	(5%)	(13%)
Not Serious	(86%)	(85%)	(91%)	(79%)
Don't Know	(4%)	(3%)	(4%)	(9%)

Would you agree or disagree with the following?

S12A. *The language I use online is mostly for fun.*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Agree	(64%)	(85%)	(65%)	(44%)
Disagree	(33%)	(15%)	(32%)	(50%)
Don't Know	(3%)	(<1%)	(3%)	(6%)

S12B. *Making up words for online communications can be creative.*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Agree	(72%)	(83%)	(75%)	(60%)
Disagree	(24%)	(16%)	(20%)	(36%)
Don't Know	(4%)	(1%)	(6%)	(4%)

S12C. *Making things up online helps me express myself.*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Agree	(41%)	(50%)	(43%)	(32%)
Disagree	(56%)	(49%)	(54%)	(66%)
Don't Know	(3%)	(1%)	(3%)	(3%)

S12D. *Online language will ruin spoken and written English.*

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Agree	(38%)	(39%)	(35%)	(42%)
Disagree	(58%)	(57%)	(62%)	(54%)
Don't Know	(3%)	(4%)	(3%)	(4%)

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
S12E. *Online language is enhancing spoken and written English.*				
Agree	(28%)	(33%)	(29%)	(23%)
Disagree	(67%)	(65%)	(67%)	(70%)
Don't Know	(4%)	(2%)	(4%)	(7%)
S12F. *People who use acronyms and emoticons online are creative.*				
Agree	(57%)	(65%)	(57%)	(51%)
Disagree	(40%)	(34%)	(39%)	(45%)
Don't Know	(3%)	(1%)	(4%)	(4%)
S12G. *People who use emoticons and acronyms online are encouraging the poor use of English.*				
Agree	(32%)	(28%)	(29%)	(38%)
Disagree	(65%)	(70%)	(68%)	(57%)
Don't Know	(3%)	(2%)	(2%)	(4%)
S12H. *I can often tell what people are like from their online use of emoticons and acronyms.*				
Agree	(43%)	(46%)	(44%)	(37%)
Disagree	(52%)	(52%)	(53%)	(51%)
Don't Know	(5%)	(1%)	(3%)	(12%)
S12I. *I use emoticons and acronyms to make my writing faster and more efficient.*				
Agree	(53%)	(75%)	(51%)	(35%)
Disagree	(44%)	(24%)	(46%)	(60%)
Don't Know	(3%)	(1%)	(3%)	(4%)

DEMOGRAPHICS

I would like to ask you a few questions about yourself. These are only for statistical purposes. Please be assured that all information is confidential.

D2. *Which of the following income groups would best represent your annual household income? Is it.?*
(READ LIST)

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
Less Than $20,000	(11%)	(15%)	(13%)	(4%)
$20,000-$29,999	(6%)	(6%)	(8%)	(3%)
$30,000-$39,999	(11%)	(6%)	(15%)	(9%)
$40,000-$49,999	(10%)	(6%)	(11%)	(10%)
$50,000-$59,999	(10%)	(7%)	(12%)	(10%)
$60,000-$69,999	(8%)	(4%)	(7%)	(11%)
$70,000-$79,999	(7%)	(6%)	(6%)	(7%)
$80,000-$99,999	(7%)	(4%)	(6%)	(9%)
$100,000-$124,999	(7%)	(5%)	(5%)	(12%)
$125,000 Or More	(5%)	(3%)	(3%)	(9%)
No Opinion	(20%)	(37%)	(12%)	(14%)

	Overall	16-19yrs	20-34yrs	35yrs+
D4. *And what is the highest level of education that you have completed? Is it.? (READ LIST)*				
Elementary School	(10%)	(32%)	(<1%)	(2%)
Secondary School	(27%)	(49%)	(19%)	(20%)
Community College	(16%)	(5%)	(19%)	(20%)
Some University	(14%)	(10%)	(18%)	(12%)
Completed University	(20%)	(1%)	(30%)	(22%)
Post Graduate Degree/Studies	(13%)	(1%)	(14%)	(21%)
Refused	(1%)	(1%)	(1%)	(3%)
10. *Gender*				
Male	(50%)	(52%)	(50%)	(49%)
Female	(50%)	(48%)	(50%)	(51%)
11. *Region*				
Atlantic	(21%)	(22%)	(20%)	(20%)
Ontario	(33%)	(28%)	(36%)	(34%)
Prairies	(11%)	(11%)	(10%)	(11%)
Alberta	(15%)	(17%)	(15%)	(15%)
British Columbia	(20%)	(23%)	(20%)	(19%)