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Special New York State New Technologies Survey

72% Say Cell Phones, Computers Have Made Life Better

92% Use Cell Phones; 86% Computers

New Technologies Provide Information and Connections but Some Say Causes Anxiety and Used Too Much by Children

Problems Include Talking/Texting while Driving, Internet Bullying, Pornography and Cyber Crime

Loudonville, NY. Seventy-two percent of New Yorkers think that electronic devices such as personal computers, cell phones and smartphones have made life better while only 12 percent think they have made it worse according to a new survey released today by the Siena (College) Research Institute (SRI). Among state residents, 92 percent say that they have access to and use a cell phone while nearly as many, 86 percent, have and use a computer. Ninety-five percent agree (72 percent strongly) that new technologies like the internet have changed our lives by putting all information at our fingertips and three quarters agree new technologies have increased the level of communication they have with important people in their lives.

New technologies have according to survey respondents brought problems as well. Nearly two-thirds say that they actually cause increased levels of stress and anxiety and 79 percent feel that children use computers, cell phones and gaming systems too much. Despite all the advantages the internet and electronic devices offer, significant problems and concerns include drivers talking on cell phones (84 percent), texting while driving (92 percent), internet bullying (64 percent), sexting (54 percent), pornography on the internet (55 percent) and the ease of using personal information for criminal or exploitive purposes (87 percent).

“Cell phones, smartphones, computers and the internet have become part of everyday life for most New Yorkers. A majority have a cell phone, a computer and an MP3 player. Over half have flat screen TV’s and a GPS system. But feelings are mixed. Despite most concluding that all the new technologies have improved our quality of life, nine out of ten say we now spend too much time with machines and buttons rather than with people or nature,” according to Dr. Don Levy, SRI’s Director.

“Seventy percent of those with cell phones use it every day and nearly half of users have a smartphone. Of those, forty-two percent admit that when they don’t have their smartphone with them they feel anxious, isolated and out of touch,” notes Levy.

Among smartphone users, 93 percent text messages to friends and colleagues, 90 percent use the phone to take pictures, 87 percent access the internet and 85 percent check their email on the phone.

“This data does support the notion that all around us all the time, we and our neighbors are taking out those iPhones and Droids and talking, surfing, checking and texting. In fact, half of New Yorkers say that it is a very significant problem that people talk loudly on cell phones in public places including public transportation. Cell phone and smartphone use in public is clearly a growing part of social life,” Levy concludes.

Personal computer use is greatest among young people (94 percent) and those with incomes above \$100K (99 percent) but it remains high among those with incomes below \$50K (73 percent), less than a college degree (79 percent) and those over 65 years of age (66 percent). Nearly half of state residents (46 percent) use a computer many times each and every day and 58 percent use it both at work and for personal reasons. Ninety percent email friends and colleagues, 88 percent use their computer to research topics of interest and 80 percent for travel directions. A majority also uses computers to get health information, keep up with news, check the weather, do banking, buy or sell goods, view videos, listen to music and visit social networking sites. Google is the top website with 89 percent visiting it followed by YouTube (62%), Facebook (61%), Yahoo (56%) and Wikipedia (50%).

“How important are our computers to us? Nearly half of those that use computers, or forty percent of all New Yorkers, say that the computer is something they can’t imagine living without!” Levy says.

In addition to survey respondents noting that new technologies like the internet have put information at our fingertips and allowed us to increase our communication with important people in our lives, 79 percent note that new technologies promote democracy by allowing communication between and among people that previously could not easily reach one another and 65 percent think these advancements will solve many of mankind’s most enduring problems. Still, 40 percent insist that new technologies are creating more problems than they solve and 51 percent say they have changed the way people communicate for the worse.

Large percentages of New Yorkers have and use electronic devices beyond cell phones and computers. Sixty-three percent have flat screen televisions, 58 percent have an MP3 player, 51 percent use a GPS system, 43 percent have a game system and even 18 percent use an eBook reader. Currently of those with a computer, 12 percent use a tablet.

The SRI special survey of New Technologies was conducted July 27 – August 22, 2011 by random telephone calls to 830 residents of New York State over the age of 18 via both landline and cell phones. Data was statistically adjusted by age, region and gender to ensure representativeness. SRI reports this data at a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of ± 3.4 points for the overall sample. Sampling was conducted via random digit dialing weighted to reflect known population patterns. SRI, an independent, non-partisan research institute, subscribes to the American Association of Public Opinion Research Code of Professional Ethics and Practices. For more information or comments, please call Dr. Don Levy, Director Siena College Research Institute, at 518-783-2901. Survey cross-tabulations and frequencies can be found at www.siena.edu/sri/research.