

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Report tracks changes in Kiwi Internet usage since 2007

**World Internet Project Trends**  
**AUT Institute of Culture, Discourse and Communication**  
**Internet Trends in New Zealand 2007 – 2015**

After surveying New Zealanders about their online usage every second year for eight years, AUT's Institute of Culture, Discourse and Communication has released a new report showing the remarkable impact of the internet on our lives.

The report, *Internet Trends in New Zealand 2007-2015*, compares findings from the five World Internet Project New Zealand surveys which were compiled from more than 7000 questionnaires. It tracks key trends in how our online behaviour has altered over the past eight years, across all major social groupings, and reveals how our daily communication, consumer interactions and sources of news and information have changed; in some cases, dramatically.

Executive Director of the World Internet Project New Zealand research project AUT senior lecturer Dr Philippa Smith says some notable changes have been seen over the course of the five surveys.

“People aged 65 years and older, for example, have traditionally struggled with new technologies in the digital age, but our findings show that they have clearly become much more internet-savvy.

“Not only are they are using the internet more for communication or making financial transactions, but the numbers of people rating the internet as important in their lives has jumped from 21% in 2007 to almost 60% in 2015,” says Smith. “Also remarkable is the uptake of mobile devices for connecting to the Internet over this time.”

In contrast a noticeable divide still remains in comparing the highest and lowest household income groups with 31% fewer people in low income households using the internet than high income houses.

Funding for the 2015 survey was provided by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, InternetNZ and Buzz Channel Marketing.

The full report is available at <http://icdc.aut.ac.nz/home/projects/world-internet-project>.

The World Internet Project in New Zealand surveys are part of an international collaborative project surveying people in up to 40 countries. A comparative approach helps to understand

where New Zealand fits in the global arena when it comes to the impact of the internet on people's lives.

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**Key trends**

**Internet usage** - The percentage of internet users in the five WIPNZ surveys has risen steadily from 82% in 2007 to slightly over 90% in 2013 and 2015. The uptake of mobile handheld devices has proceeded at a remarkable pace from low to high usage: from 8% of internet users in 2007 to 87% in 2015.

**Comparing the importance of different media** - The importance of the internet as a source of information has risen considerably, most dramatically for those aged 65 and over. Starting at 21% of over-65s saying the internet was important for information in 2007, this has risen and then levelled out in 2013 and 2015 at just under 60%.

In 2007, 52% of respondents rated traditional platforms such as print newspapers as an important source of entertainment, well above the internet (42%), but that has now reversed. In 2015 the internet supersedes all traditional forms of entertainment media, rising to 68 percent compared to 55% for television.

While younger people now value the internet as a source of entertainment most (84% in 2015), the proportion of respondents in the middle age group has also risen steeply in just the last couple of years (66% in 2015).

**Relationships and communication** - Texting has consistently been the most popular form of daily communication across all waves of the survey, but instant messaging (e.g. through Whatsapp or Snapchat) may now be replacing texts as the number-one conduit for daily communication (75% in 2015).

The increasing diversity of social networking sites available in addition to Facebook may also be responsible for the jump in the users who rate these as important in their daily life (from 28% in 2007 to 53% in 2015).

**Consumer and public sector interactions, internet security** - Online consumer transactions across the board, including financial interactions with the public sector such as paying for fines, taxes or licences online, have increased steadily since 2007. However, this has levelled out in the last two surveys, and we are seeing some behaviours perhaps reaching near-saturation point in 2015.

Although rules on young people's internet use such as having a website filter have diminished, restrictions on the amount of time that under-18s spend online and advice about not giving out personal information persist.

**Shifting digital divides** - All five waves of the survey indicate that certain groups are more engaged with the internet, having a higher percentage of internet users and generally using the internet more widely and more frequently. These groups include those who are younger, more urban, have a higher household income, and are New Zealand European or Asian.

There has also been a notable increase in the confidence levels of internet users aged 65 years and older, with those rating themselves as 'good' on the internet up from 25% in 2007 to 60% in 2015.

Many - but not all - of the digital divides that exist on various demographic dimensions have decreased somewhat between 2007 and 2015. There are no significant gender differences in terms of overall access to the internet, however there are differing preferences which have continued in 2015, such as men watching videos online more frequently, and more women than men being involved in playing games online daily.

However, divides within groups relating to household income, area and ethnicity still exist, indicating the difficulty in establishing a level playing field for all internet users. The risk of people 'missing out' because they lack access and accessibility to the internet for a variety of reasons is still of concern, particularly for basic activities such as banking, finding information or communicating with others.