

Tech-Savvy Seniors Bridging the Digital Divide: Revera Report

Social connectivity and independent living key benefits, say seniors; new research partnership with U of T to explore age-friendly technologies

TORONTO, Canada, June 20, 2012 – Digital communications may once have been the domain of the young, but Canada’s senior citizens are increasingly crossing the digital divide, according to new research from Revera, a Canadian leader in seniors' accommodation, care and services. The **Revera Report on Tech-Savvy Seniors** reveals that a growing army of online seniors, aged 75 and older, are using digital technology for everything from independent living to online shopping and more face time with friends and family using platforms like Skype. Further, three-quarters surveyed say they believe technology has the potential to make their lives easier.

According to Statistics Canada, only five per cent of seniors 75 and older were online in 2000ⁱ; today, that number has grown more than fivefold to 27 per centⁱⁱ. Recent data from Pew Research Center, a U.S.-based think-tank, showed 34 per cent of American seniors 75-plus are now onlineⁱⁱⁱ.

“The computer is invaluable to me. I don’t know what I would do without it,” said Bertha Kronenberg, 88, who stays in touch with family living in South Africa from her computer at Revera’s Forest Hill Place Retirement Residence in Toronto. “The internet is a wonderful record of what is going on in the world.”

Revera Report on Tech-Savvy Seniors: Key Findings

- Canadian online seniors 75 and older are most inclined to use technology to keep socially active. In fact, email has surpassed face to face contact as a primary way to keep in contact with friends and family.
- Fifty-three per cent are socializing via social networking sites like Facebook, and one in five uses Skype or Facetime to speak with friends and family.
- Eighty-eight per cent go online at least once a day.
- Seven in 10 believe technology plays an important role in helping them live in their homes for as long as possible.

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U of T Research Partnership Supports New Innovations in Technology For Seniors

In response to this growth, Revera is teaming up with the University of Toronto's Technologies for Aging Gracefully Lab (TAGlab) in a three-year, \$50,000/year research partnership. Along with research and development at the University, the partnership will see TAGlab researchers visiting Revera residences to conduct focus groups and test new technologies.

"Our shared goal is to create new advances in technology that will have a positive impact on the lives of Canadian seniors," says Trish Barbato, Senior Vice President of Home Health and Business Development at Revera Inc. "There is such vast potential for technology to play a pivotal role in helping seniors stay socially active and independent - both benefits of the digital age that seniors say are key."

Dr. Ronald Baecker, Founder and Lead Researcher at the TAGlab says while not all seniors are currently embracing technology, the emerging trends illustrate the growing place for digital in helping seniors live their lives, the way they choose.

"We know for instance that Canadians want to age at home," says Dr. Baecker. "One of the ways we can help them do this is by creating new innovations that will address some of the big challenges they face like isolation and home health care monitoring. Our partnership with Revera will help us in our mission to advance technology for health, well-being and graceful aging."

TAGlab is currently working on numerous devices to help social interaction including a touch screen photo frame that sends messages to a loved one's email saying "*I'm thinking of you*". This message prompts the relative to record a video that is transmitted back to the photo frame for viewing by the senior. New kinds of electronic books that enhance the experience of reading is another area of focus for TAGlab.

About the Revera Report on Tech Savvy Seniors

Revera, in partnership with Leger Marketing, surveyed online Canadians aged 55-64, 65-74 and seniors 75+ to find out their attitudes and behaviours around technology use. The survey was completed online from January 23, 2012 to February 3, 2012 using Leger Marketing's online panel, LegerWeb, with a sample of 1532 Canadians in the following age groups: 500 Canadians age 55 to 64, 513 Canadians ages 65 to 74; and 519 Canadians age 75+. A probability sample of the same size would yield a margin of error of ± 2.5 per cent, 19 times out of 20. The Revera Report on Tech-Savvy Seniors is one in a series of reports that will be issued by Revera exploring different topics relevant to the aging experience of Canadian seniors.

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About Revera Inc.

Revera is a leading provider of seniors' accommodation, care and services; built on 50-year history of helping seniors live life to the fullest. Our nearly 30,000 dedicated employees continually strive to serve a diverse group of clients and to offer choices to meet their individual preferences. With more than 250 sites across Canada and parts of the U.S., we work to enhance lives in our retirement communities, long term care homes, U.S. nursing and rehab centres and through the provision of home health services. Canadian-owned and operated, Revera serves approximately 30,000 clients every day, with the core values of respect, integrity, compassion and excellence at the heart of our business. Find out more about Revera at www.reveraliving.com or find us on Facebook and Twitter.

About TAGlab

TAGlab is a research team in the Department of Computer Science at the University of Toronto that collaborates with clinicians and researchers from the health sciences across North America. TAGlab conducts research for the journey through life (see also <http://taglab.utoronto.ca/>). TAGlab's mission is to enable full participation in society by normally aging senior citizens, and by individuals with special needs — e.g, people afflicted by Alzheimer's disease (AD), mild cognitive impairment (MCI), aphasia, strokes, multiple sclerosis (MS), or vision loss. This is done by identifying "sweet spots" where technology seems relevant to human needs, envisioning ways in which the technology could address a problem, then designing, building, testing, and where possible commercializing solutions.

For poll results, to read seniors' stories, and receive tips to help make the senior in your life more tech-savvy, visit www.reveraliving.com.

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For further information please contact:

Kristen Marano
Environics Communications
(416) 969-2730
kmarano@environicspr.com

Sandra Vlaar Ingram
Revera Inc.
(289) 777-1401
sandra.vlaaringram@reveraliving.com

ⁱ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2009002/c-g/10910/c-g001-eng.htm> Accessed April 17, 2012.

ⁱⁱ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/111012/dq111012a-eng.htm> Accessed April 17, 2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Older-adults-and-internet-use/Summary-of-findings.aspx> Accessed June 8, 2012.



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