

Tuesday, 3 March 2020

Two-thirds of Australians agree that ‘Overall the internet solves more problems than it creates’

A special Roy Morgan SMS survey has found that around two-thirds (66.8%) of Australians agree that ‘Overall the internet solves more problems than it creates’, while a third (33.2%) disagree believing the ‘internet creates more problems than it solves’. Respondents were asked: ‘Do you agree or disagree that ‘Overall, the internet solves more problems than it creates’? The survey, conducted February 11-13, 2020, was completed by 949 Australians aged 18 years and over.

Women and those aged 35-49 look slightly less favourably on the internet

Women held a slightly less positive view, with 63.3% agreeing that the internet solves more problems than it creates, compared to 70.5% of men.

Although Australians generally have a favourable opinion of the internet, as might be expected, those who grew up with the internet tend to be more positive about it than older Australians, although the difference is not huge. Nearly three-quarters (74.9%) of Australians aged 18-24 agreed the internet solves more problems than it creates, as do 69% of Australians aged 25-34, but only with 65.3% of those aged over 65.

The group least positively inclined towards the internet is those aged 35-49, but even here 63.1% felt it solved more problems than it creates.

Understanding why people feel as they do

Among respondents who believe that ‘Overall the internet creates more problems than it solves’ around a third gave reasons relating to the spread of misinformation, uninformed opinions, outright lies or fake news. Almost one in five Australians mentioned problems with bullying or harassment, while a similar proportion highlighted distractions from the real world, contributing to social disconnection, and addictive aspects.

“Every year, more and more of our interactions in all walks of life move into the digital realm. This often provides, or at least promises, a frictionless alternative to previous modes of conducting our lives and doing business,” said Roy Morgan CEO Michele Levine.

“Of course, this also has the potential for negative outcomes if not handled with appropriate care and diligence. We all know horror stories that have sprung from online interactions. These survey results confirm that Australians see the positive impact the internet is having on their day-to-day lives.”

The results in further detail

Over half of Australians who agreed that “Overall, the internet solves more problems than it creates” gave reasons relating to the ease of access to a wide variety of information and education benefits. Around one quarter value that the internet makes life easier and more convenient, and the remaining quarter feel that the internet brings people together and helps people stay connected.

Some respondents also highlighted the benefits that access to the internet can bring in regards to significant events such as the recent bushfires and the new threat of the coronavirus.

Examples of specific reasons Australians gave for their feeling that the internet solves more problems than it creates include:

“The internet allows individuals to make more informed decisions, provided that they can distinguish between information coming from reliable and unreliable sources.”

“I think that the internet has allowed us to work more productively and to be more efficient.”

“The communication and connectivity that it allows has made the world a better place. It is a place to share knowledge and ideas, so overall yes it is a good thing.”

“We wouldn’t be the technological society that we are today if we didn’t have the internet. Recently with the fires, there probably would have been more deaths if we didn’t have the internet.”

“The internet has improved our ability to communicate over distance both written and verbal; therefore it has increased collaboration in all areas. Think of the current coronavirus – all the data is being shared to come up with a cure.”

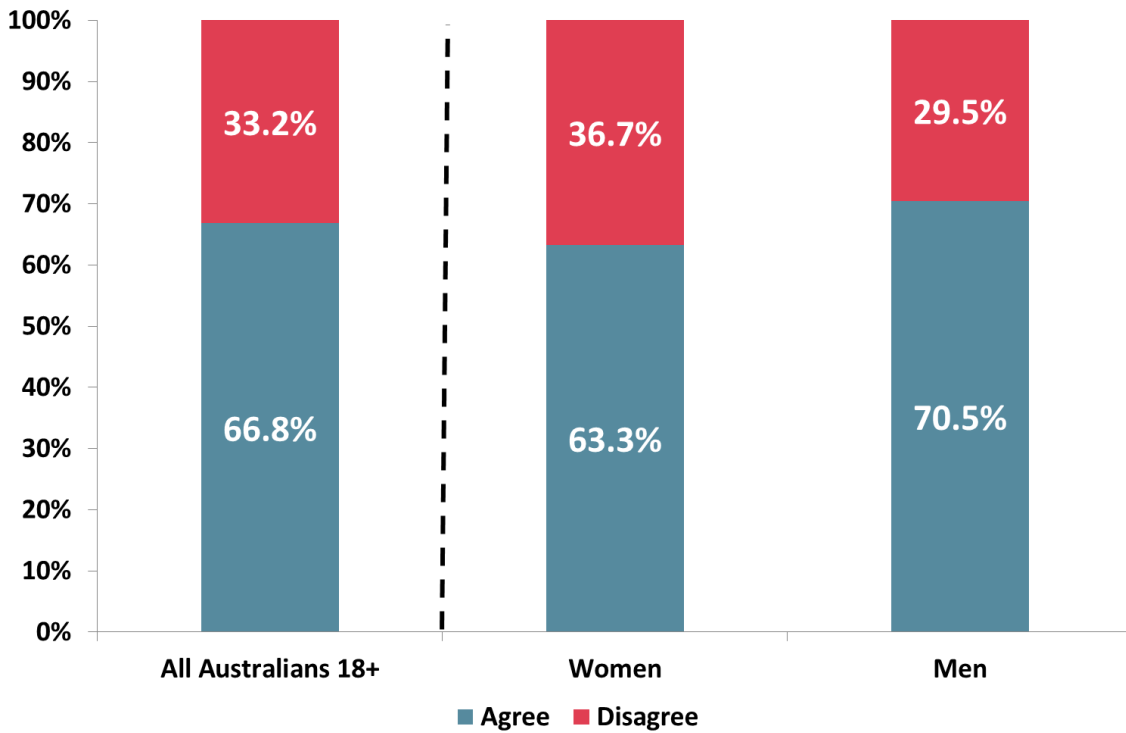
Examples of specific comments Australians who believe the internet creates more problems than it solves included:

“There is a lot of misinformation masqueraded as fact with virtually no accountability.”

“The internet has created new forms of destructive and socially unacceptable behaviour.”

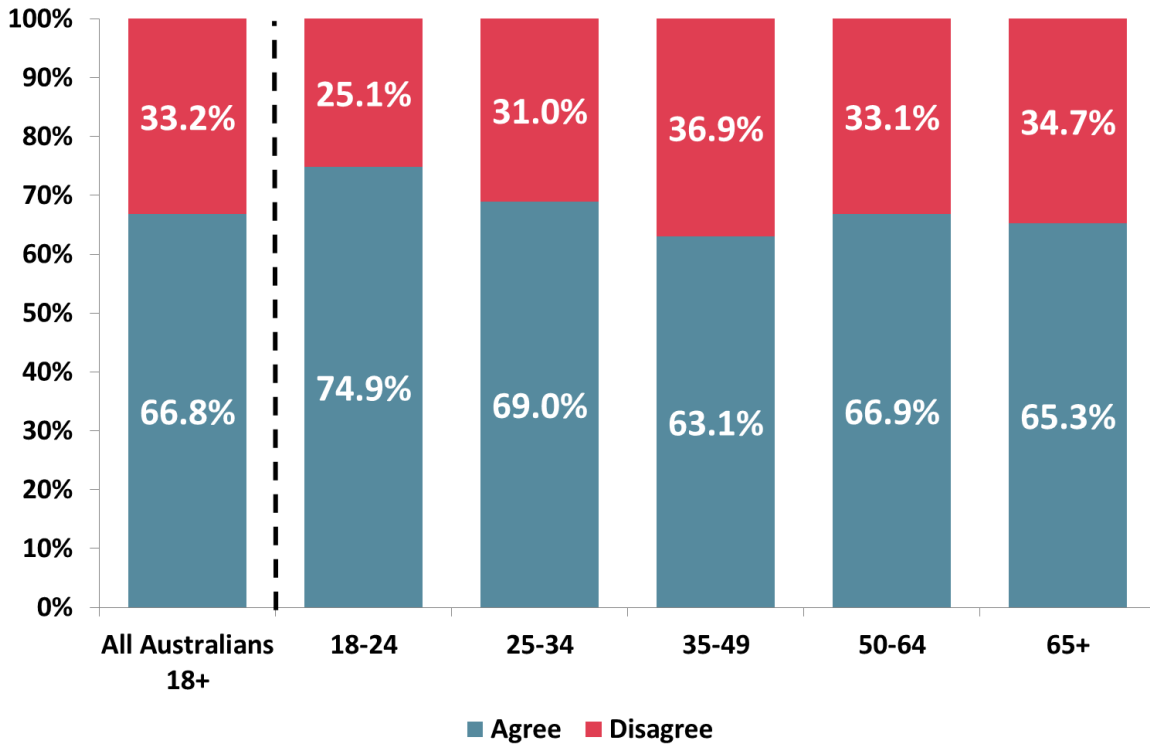
“There’s too much reliance on technology by kids and adults. On the whole we are losing the art of conversation and how to interact face-to-face with others.”

Percentage of Australians 18+ who agree/disagree “Overall, the internet solves more problems than it creates” – By Gender



Source: Roy Morgan internet attitudes survey, February 11-13, 2020. Base: Australians 18+; n=949.

Percentage of Australians 18+ who agree/disagree “Overall, the internet solves more problems than it creates” – By Age



Source: Roy Morgan internet attitudes survey, February 11-13, 2020. **Base:** Australians 18+; n=949.

Question rotations included ‘Do you agree or disagree that “Overall, the internet solves more problems than it creates?”’, and ‘Do you agree or disagree that “Overall, the internet creates more problems than it solves?”’ with responses reversed for consistent analysis.

For comments or more information about Roy Morgan’s extensive and detailed consumer data please contact:

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About Roy Morgan

Roy Morgan is Australia’s largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each State, as well as in the U.S. and U.K. A full-service research organisation, Roy Morgan has over 75 years’ experience collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

Margin of Error

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
500	±4.3	±3.8	±2.6	±1.9
1,000	±3.0	±2.7	±1.9	±1.3
1,500	±2.5	±2.2	±1.5	±1.1
2,000	±2.1	±1.9	±1.3	±1.0
2,500	±1.9	±1.7	±1.2	±0.8