

Australians say mobile phones help balance work and family

The majority of Australians believe that mobile phones have helped to balance their family and working lives, the first study of its kind undertaken in the nation has found.

Leading social researchers from The Australian National University, the University of New England and the University of New South Wales found that only 3% of people reported that the mobile phone had a negative impact on their work-life balance.

The project – part of an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant connecting researchers and the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA), the peak industry body for the mobile telecommunications industry – examined the social impact of mobile technologies at home and work. It collected nationally representative data between March and May this year from a sample of 1358 individuals from 845 on-line households.

The preliminary results of the three-year project found that the mobile phone is an indispensable part of the Australian life, with more than 90% of respondents reporting that their lives could not “proceed as normal” without their mobiles.

“Very few respondents reported that the mobile phone has a negative impact on their work-life balance (3%),” said lead researcher Professor Judy Wajcman from the Australian National University. “A high proportion of respondents (43%) said that it has had no effect. Yet more than half (54%) of the respondents believed that the mobile helped them to balance their family and working lives.”

Other key findings of the research:

- Mobiles predominantly used for contacting family and friends.
- Half of employed respondents thought that mobiles increase their workload. This is offset by productivity gains with over half (55%) of employed respondents indicating that job-related mobile calls increase their productivity.
- Carrying a mobile phone makes most people (75%) feel more secure.
- Few respondents (4%) report that the mobile reduces the quality of their leisure time.

“Rather than fragmenting time, our study suggests that mobile phone practices are strengthening and deepening relationships and building durable social bonds,” Professor Wajcman said.

To view the report on the ANU website:

http://polsc.anu.edu.au/staff/wajcman/pubs/Report_on_Mobiles_and_Work_Life_Balance_June_07.pdf

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