

MEDIA RELEASE

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Research Reveals a Link Between Communication Technology and Loneliness

Relationships Australia/CUA's 2011 Relationships Indicators Survey¹, released today, reveals that more than 40 percent of Australians who use an average of four methods of technology to communicate with their friends or family feel lonely, compared to 11 percent of those who use one form of technology.

This is the 7th Relationships Indicators Survey undertaken by Relationships Australia and is sponsored by CUA.

Australians who reported frequently feeling lonely identified SMS (67 percent) and email (64 percent) as the method of technology regularly used to communicate with friends, family and/or a potential partner. Across all respondents, data showed that email (67 percent), SMS (62 percent) and social networking including Facebook and Twitter (39 percent) were the top forms of technology used.

Relationships Australia National Executive Officer, Alison Brook said: "Overall, our 2011 research showed that Australians are feeling more optimistic about their relationships, and reasonably well supported and connected to their communities.

The research revealed that despite Australia's young adults being well connected through technology and social media, they are more likely to frequently feel lonely. Approximately a quarter of 18 – 24 and 25 – 34 year olds frequently feel lonely compared to less than 10 percent of 35 – 39 and 40 – 49 year olds.

"The highest rate of loneliness was amongst 25 – 34 year olds, with 27 percent frequently feeling lonely," Ms Brook said.

When asked if social networking technology has had a positive or negative impact on their relationships, the majority of survey respondents indicated it had no impact (57 percent), compared to those who stated a positive impact (27 percent), and those who cited a negative impact (16 percent).

For those who felt social networking had a positive impact on their relationships, comments ranged from: 'It's easy to keep in touch with people' to 'It brings people back in touch with friends'. Those who cited social networking as having a negative impact felt: 'There is less face-to-face contact', 'People forget how to communicate in person' and 'People spend too much time on the computer and not together'.

The 2011 Relationships Indicators Survey results also revealed the most common reasons for relationship breakdowns in Australia, with 'financial stress' being the leading cause (26 percent), followed by 'communication difficulties' (25 percent), 'different expectations/values' (23 percent) and 'lack of trust' (22 percent).

Andrew Hadley, CUA's Group General Manager, Strategy and Marketing, said: "Given one in four respondents cited financial stress as a major reason for their relationship breaking down, proactively taking control of your money is a positive first step. As Australia's largest customer-owned financial institution, CUA works with its customers to set realistic financial goals and provide the financial expertise and support required to get their finances in shape."

Samantha Aldridge, Practising Psychologist and Executive Director of Relationships Australia QLD said: "With the issues facing Australia's relationships today, I was surprised to find that 77 percent of respondents said they have not sought professional help for relationship issues, particularly those aged 18 to 24 (86 percent), followed by those aged 25 to 34. Most respondents cited 'talking to friends' as the most common way they got through low points in their relationships (35 percent). Often the best thing you can do is seek professional help to get you through the tough times of a relationship or to make a good relationship even better."

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About Relationships Australia

Relationships Australia is a leading provider of relationship support services for individuals, families and communities. Relationships Australia is a community-based, not-for-profit Australian organisation with no religious affiliations. Services include counselling for individuals, couples and families (face-to-face, telephone and online); parenting and relationship education; mediation and support for families going through separation; specialist services for people who have been in out of home care, refugee families and Aboriginal communities; workplace counselling and training; employee assistance programs and consultancy for companies; and training for family support professionals. To find out more contact Relationships Australia at **1300 364 277** or visit: www.relationships.org.au.

About CUA

CUA, Australia's largest customer-owned financial institution, is emerging as a competitive force in Australian banking. CUA provides banking products and services to more than 400,000 Australians across the country and is 100 per cent owned by its customers, not shareholders, with profits reinvested back into its business. CUA has a comprehensive Community Investment Program that is executed nationally through a combination of major national partnerships and locally focused activity. For further information visit www.cua.com.au.

For spokesperson interviews, please contact:

Sian Davis, Publicis Life Brands

OR

Cheryl Pettinau, Publicis Life Brands

T: 02 9006 2964

T: 02 9006 2943

E: sian.davis@publicislifibrands.com.au

M: 0424 157714

E: cheryl.pettinau@publicislifibrands.com.au

AUDIO/VIDEO GRABS AVAILABLE NOW: Broadcast quality radio and video grabs of **Alison Brook, Relationships Australia National Executive Officer and Samantha Aldridge, Practising Psychologist and Executive Director of Relationships Australia QLD**, as well as images and media materials.

Go to: <http://medianet.multimediarelease.com.au/bundles/93aa73fa-6220-44c0-883b-dfcbb625741f>

ⁱ The 2011 Relationships Indicators Survey is a joint initiative of Relationships Australia and CUA based on data collected, analysed and reported by Woolcott Research Limited. Woolcott gathered results, comprising 1,204 interviews among the general population aged 18 and above. The 2011 survey combined telephone interviews and a new online component. Fieldwork was conducted between 27 February and 8 March 2011.