

## Expanding Mobility with Community Wi-Fi: 40% of Consumers Regularly Connect to the Internet in a Friend's Home

Service Provider FastFacts

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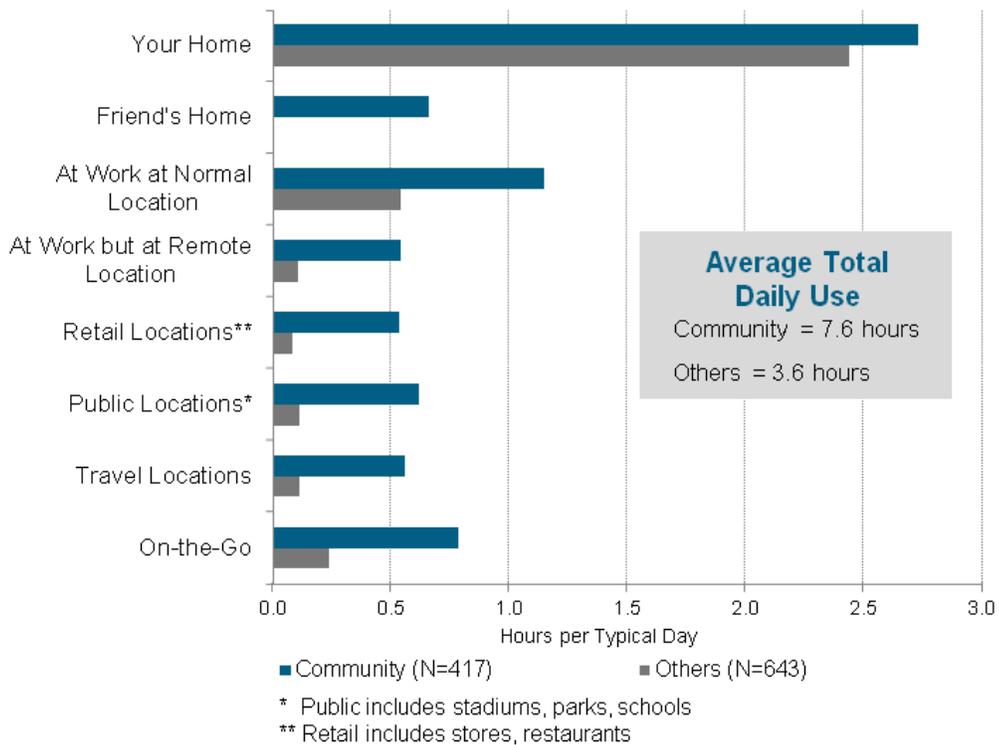
English poet John Donne said, “No man is an island, entire of itself.” The same could be said for a man’s – or woman’s – home network, which today is no longer his or hers alone. Friends and family increasingly expect to be able to connect their growing number of mobile devices to the Internet when they are at someone else’s home. In response, service providers (SPs) are creating Wi-Fi communities to enable users to connect safely and seamlessly to SPs’ Wi-Fi networks from other customers’ locations. Not only do SPs understand that there is pent-up customer demand for this sort of “community Wi-Fi” – they also realize that this model makes good business sense. This sort of service will enable them to expand the size of their Wi-Fi network quickly, differentiate their broadband offerings, acquire new customers, and manage customer churn.

Many SPs are now trying to understand how they can create a community Wi-Fi network among their broadband customers and reap new business benefits. However, there has been very little information available on customer behaviors to help SPs design a winning program and build the business case for further investment. To learn more, the Cisco® Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG) conducted a [survey](#) of 1,060 Canadian mobile users to understand their needs and behaviors, their current and future mobile use, and the average profile of potential community Wi-Fi users. The findings can help SPs understand the size of the opportunity, develop strategies for success, and differentiate their community Wi-Fi offerings and initiatives to become more competitive.

### Community Users Are Power Mobile Users

Forty percent of mobile device owners are “community” users – people who use their mobile devices in a friends’ homes on a somewhat regular basis. This group reported using their devices (most often a smartphone) in someone else’s home an average of 0.7 hours in a typical day. These community users are generally more active than other mobile customers, using their mobile devices more than twice as much as other mobile consumers. In our survey, the home was the only location where both groups showed high mobile device usage. In other locations, community users are two to six times more active (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Average Daily Use of Mobile Devices, by Location.



Source: Cisco IBSG, 2012

While the community group and other mobile users reported similar ownership of laptops and eReaders, the community group reported significantly higher ownership of advanced devices. They own twice the number of smartphones and half again as many tablets as other mobile users. Nearly a quarter of them own mobile gaming devices, compared with 15 percent of the rest of the survey's population. Clearly, community Wi-Fi users are an attractive segment for broadband and mobile SPs – they are young, employed, affluent, and willing to pay for mobile services. They are also far more likely than others to use public Wi-Fi hotspots.

## Developing a Winning Community Wi-Fi Strategy

In developing a successful community Wi-Fi proposition to attract these power mobile users, SPs should consider a number of key questions:

- 1. Strategy** – Which customer segments do we target? What is the business case? Is it better to have customers opt-in or opt-out of community Wi-Fi? Are there different service tiers based on the customer's broadband or mobile plan?
- 2. Customer perceptions** – How do we assure customers that the network is secure, that their network and data are always private, and that there is no degradation in network performance?
- 3. Marketing** – How do we create successful “friends and family” sales and retention programs? How do we make customers aware of these programs and their value?

4. **Equipment** – Which type of home equipment should we offer? Do we upgrade existing customers and, if so, how many and when?
5. **Technology** – How do we ensure seamless authentication, security, and home network performance? How does community Wi-Fi fit into our overall network architectures?
6. **Operations** – How can we efficiently support the complexities of a combined home and community network? How do we support other customers accessing the community network?

Progressive SPs are beginning to recognize the importance of community Wi-Fi networks in planning and executing a winning Wi-Fi strategy. Developing well-crafted business strategies and execution plans based on the unique customer insights revealed in the Cisco IBSG research will be essential to creating successful community Wi-Fi networks.

To read the complete report, please download our Point of View, “[May I Borrow A Cup of Wi-Fi?](#)”

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#### More Information

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