

This Is Your Brain on E-Mail

By *srlinuxx*

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Whatever the title, it's hard to turn a corner without seeing someone flipping open a cell phone or PDA to casually browse through their e-mail inbox. Some might be checking for important work-related messages, others to stay on top of their social life. And the rise in wireless mobile devices makes that process as easy as ever.

Does paying [regular attention](#) [2] to e-mail really classify as an addiction? Hard to say, but according to a joint study by America Online Inc. and the Opinion Research Corp., e-mail reading and maintenance is, for some, as common a daily routine as brushing teeth.

After surveying 4,012 adults who live in major urban areas, they found that people spend an hour a day on e-mail and rely on e-mail as much as the phone for communication. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents carry more than one e-mail account.

A few of the findings probably won't sound much different from the average on-the-go person's daily routine. Forty-one percent of the respondent said they check their e-mail first thing in the morning and 40 percent said that they have checked their e-mail in the middle of the night. Also, more than one in four said they haven't let more than two or three days pass before checking their e-mail.

Even on vacation, most of us can't seem to bear parting ways with e-mail. Six out of 10 e-mail users say they check e-mail on vacation, though mostly for social purposes rather than for business. For this same group, more than half say it's important that they have access to their e-mail accounts during their time off.

In terms of e-mail addiction, the Miami-Ft. Lauderdale-area respondents took the No. 1 spot, with San Francisco, Philadelphia, New York and Houston rounding out the top five lists.

If your e-mail habits seem to be getting in the way of a productive lifestyle, AOL offers a few ways to curb the impulse to check messages:

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