Briefing

Facts and figures about digital inclusion and older people

September 2023

Age UK
7th Floor, One America Square
17 Crosswall
London
EC3N 2LB
T 0800 169 87 87 **F** 020 3033 1000
E policy@ageuk.org.uk
www.ageuk.org.uk

Summary of key points and statistics

Digital technology is playing an increasing role in our lives and, for many people, it is essential to the way that they socialise, work, shop, manage their finances, access services, and get entertainment. However, not everyone is online while others only use the internet in limited ways. Although many older people fully embrace the digital world, digital exclusion increases with age. Age UK believes that people should be supported and encouraged to get online, but those who cannot, or do not want to do so should be able to access services and support in a way that suits them. Further information about Age UK's work around digital inclusion is given at the end of this briefing.

Internet use

While digital inclusion among older people has increased substantially over recent years, there is still a sizable minority of older people who are not online, especially among those aged 75 & over. As of 2022 in the UK:

- 34% (around 2 million) people aged 75 & over do not use the internet[1]

- 10% (around 0.7 million) people aged 65 to 74 do not use the internet.

So, a total of 2.7 million aged 65 & over do not use the internet, equivalent to around one in five (22%) of this age group

Not everyone who gets online, stays online.

- As of 2022, almost 500,000 people aged 65 & over had used the internet in the past, but not recently.

---

[1] These are people who have never used the internet or who have not done so within the last 3 months – see section below on 'Prevalence of Internet Use in the United Kingdom'

Online activities

Using the internet is not an all or nothing situation. People may only want to, or feel confident to, carry out certain activities online. During 2020-21 in the UK:

- 85% of recent internet users aged 75 & over and 94% aged 65 to 74 browsed the internet at least once a month.

- 84% of recent internet users aged 75 & over, and 90% aged 65 to 74 used the internet at least once a month for emails.

- 43% of recent internet users aged 75 & over and 55% aged 65 to 74 used the internet for online buying at least once a month.

- 49% of recent internet users aged 75 & over and 61% aged 65 to 74 used the internet at least once a month for online banking.

Digital skills

Many people have limited digital skills even if they use the internet.

- Around seven-in-ten (69%) of people aged 75 & over and three-in-ten (30%) of people aged 65 to 74 are not able to complete eight of the most fundamental tasks[2] required to use the internet safely and successfully.

Mobile phone use

The majority of older people use a mobile phone, but many do not have a smartphone. At the end of 2022 in the UK:

- 13% (around 1.6 million) of people aged 65 & over in the UK did not use a mobile.

- 87% (around 10.9 million) of people aged 65 & over in the UK used a mobile phone, including:

  ➢ 58% (around 7.3 million) of people aged 65 & over in the UK used a smartphone.

  ➢ 27% (around 3.4 million) of people aged 65 & over in the UK used a mobile which was not a smartphone.

---

[2] These includes starting and logging into a devise, opening applications and searching websites, changing basic settings and connecting to wifi, and changing and keeping passwords secure – see section below on 'Digital Skills among older people in the United Kingdom' for more information.

Contents

Prevalence of Internet Use in the United Kingdom over time[3]:

- We estimate in 2022 around two-in-three (66%) people aged 75 years and over in the UK had used the internet within the last 3 months, up from over half (54%) just before the start of the pandemic in 2020 and three-in-ten (29%) a decade earlier in 2013. Among these recent users, around three-in-four (73%) used the internet daily and around one-in-six (17%) several times a week.

- We estimate in 2022 around nine-in-ten (90%) people aged 65 to 74 years and over in the UK had used the internet within the last 3 months, up a little (86%) from just before the start of the pandemic in 2020 and three-in-five (61%) a decade earlier in 2013. Among these recent users, over four-in-five (84%) used the internet daily and around one-in-ten (11%) several times a week.

Figure 1: Proportion of people aged 65-74 and 75 & over in the UK having used the internet within last 3 months between 2013 and 2022
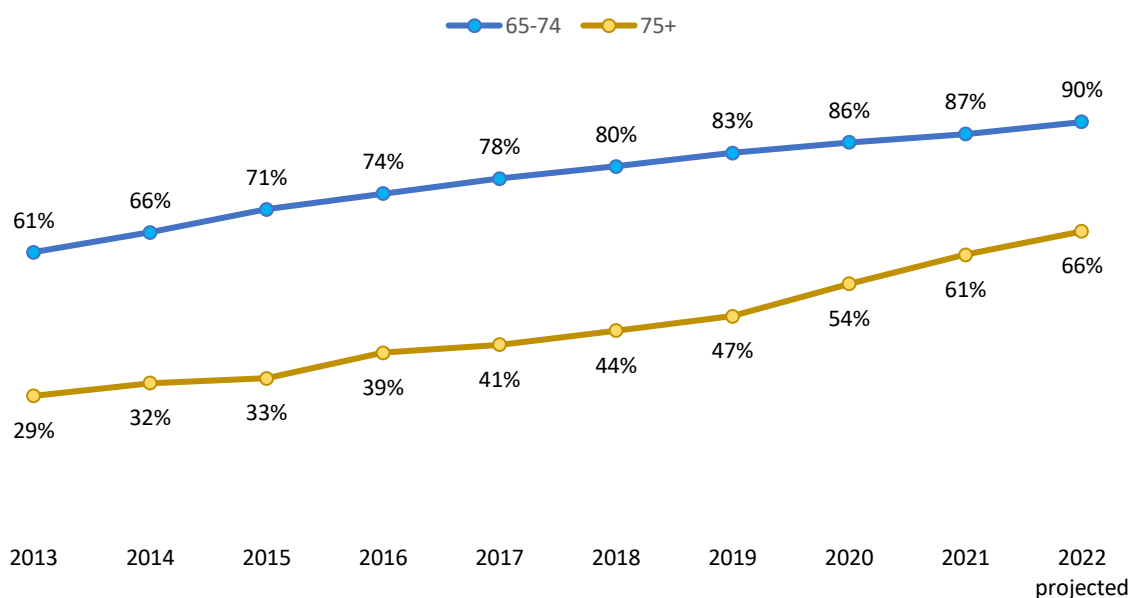
Source: Authour's visulisation of ONS Internet Use figures (2013-2020); Age UK analysis of quarterly Labour Force Survey, January-Macrh 2021 (2021 figurtes); Age UK projection (2022 figures)

Note: projection to 2022 figures based on applying average absolute change between 2018 to 2019 and 2019-2020 for each age group, to 2021 figures

---

[3] Age UK visualisation of ONS Internet Use statistics (2013-2020); Age UK analysis of Quarterly Labour Force Survey, January – March 2021; Age UK analysis of Understanding Society Wave 12 (2020-2021)

Number of people online (aged 75 & over) in *2022*:

- Almost three-in-ten (28%) people aged 75 & over in the UK in 2022, the equivalent of around 1.7 million, have never used the internet.

- Around 6% of people aged 75 & over in the UK in 2022, the equivalent of around 345,000, are lapsed users (i.e. have used the internet but not within the last 3 months).

- Around one-in-three (34%) people aged 75 & over in the UK in 2022, the equivalent of around 2 million, have never or not within the last 3 months used the internet.

- Around two-in-three (66%) people aged 75 & over in the UK in 2022, the equivalent of around 3.8 million, are recent internet users (i.e. have used the internet within the last 3 months). This compares to almost all people aged under 55 (99%) and those aged 55 to 64 (96%).

- Among recent internet users aged 75 & over in the UK in 2022, around three-in-four (73%), the equivalent of around 2.8 million, used the internet at least once a day; and around one-in-six (17%), the equivalent of 660,000, several times a week.

Number of people online (65 to 74 year olds) in *2022:*

- Around 8% of people aged 65 to 74 in the UK in 2022, the equivalent of around 510,000, have never used the internet.

- Around 2.5% of people aged 65 to 74 in the UK in 2022, the equivalent of around 155,000, are lapsed users (i.e. have used the internet but not within the last 3 months).

- Around one-in-ten (10%) of people aged 65 to 74 in the UK in 2022, the equivalent of around 665,000, have never or not within the last 3 months used the internet.

- Around nine-in-ten (90%) people aged 65 to 74 in the UK in 2022, the equivalent of around 6 million, are recent internet users (i.e. have used the internet within the last 3 months). This compares to almost all people aged under 55 (99%) and those aged 55 to 64 (96%).

- Among recent internet users aged 65 to 74 in the UK in 2022, over four-in-five (84%), the equivalent of around 5.1 million, used the internet at least once a day; and around one-in-ten (11%), the equivalent of 670,000, several times a week.

Number of people aged 65 & over online in 2022:

- Around one-in-six (18%) of people aged 65 & over in the UK in 2022, the equivalent of around 2.2 million have never used the internet.

- Around 4% of people aged 65 & over in the UK in 2022, the equivalent of around 515,000, are lapsed users (i.e. have used the internet but not within the last 3 months).

- Around one-in-five (22%) of people aged 65 & over in the UK in 2022, the equivalent of around 2.7 million, have never or not within the last 3 months used the internet.

- Almost four-in-five (78%) people aged 65 & over in the UK in 2022, the equivalent of around 9.8 million, are recent internet users (i.e. have used the internet within the last 3 months). This compares to almost all people aged under 55 (99%) and those aged 55 to 64 (96%).

Figure 2: Proportion of older people in the UK in 2022 who have never used the internet, are lapsed users or are recent internet users
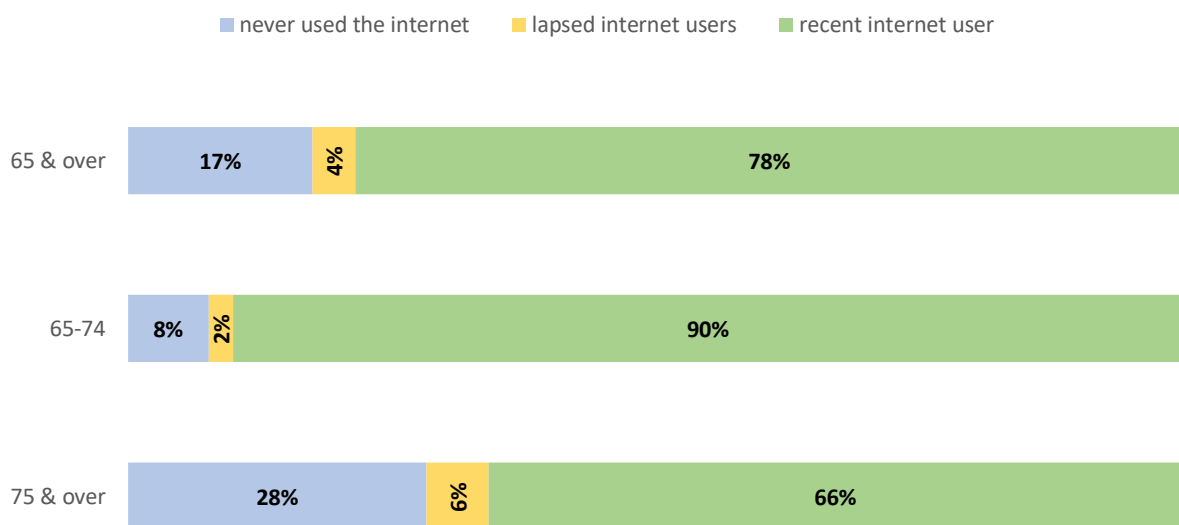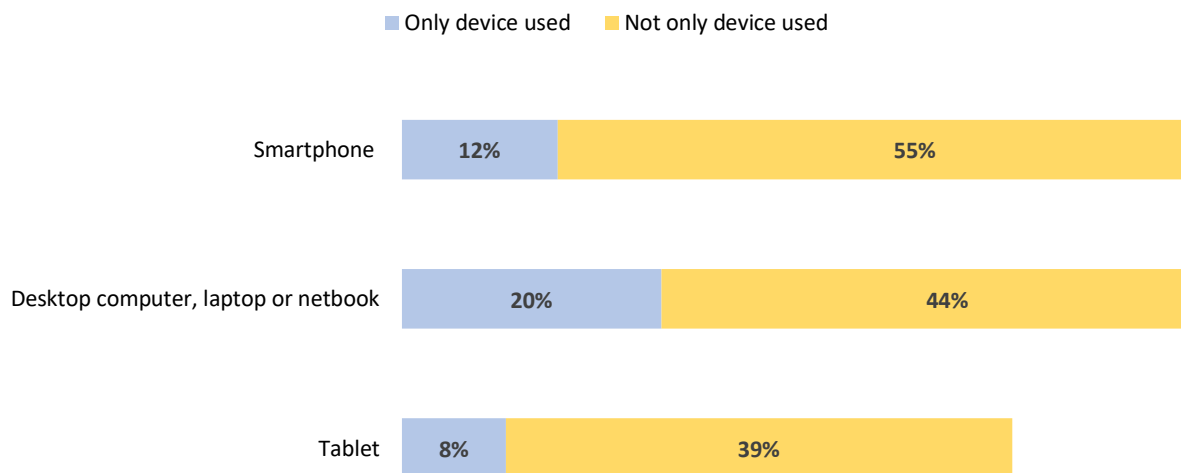

Source: Authour's visulisation 2022 projected internet use figures

Devices used by older people in the United Kingdom who are online[4]:

- At the end of 2022, among people aged 65 & over who go online:

  - around two-in-three (67%) used a smartphone to go online; and for around one-in-eight (12%) this was the only device they used to go online.

  - Almost two-in-three (64%) used a desktop or laptop computer to go online; and for one-in-four (20%) this was the only device they used to go online.

  - almost half (47%) used a tablet to go online; and for almost one-in-ten (8%) this was the only device they used to go online.

Figure 3: Devices used to go online, among people aged 65 & over in the UK who go online (2021)

Legend: ■ Only device used   ■ Not only device used

Device	Only device used	Not only device used
Smartphone	12%	55%
Desktop computer, laptop or netbook	20%	44%
Tablet	8%	39%

Source: Authour's visulisation of Ofcom, Adults' Media Literacy Core Survey 2022 Data Tables, table 39
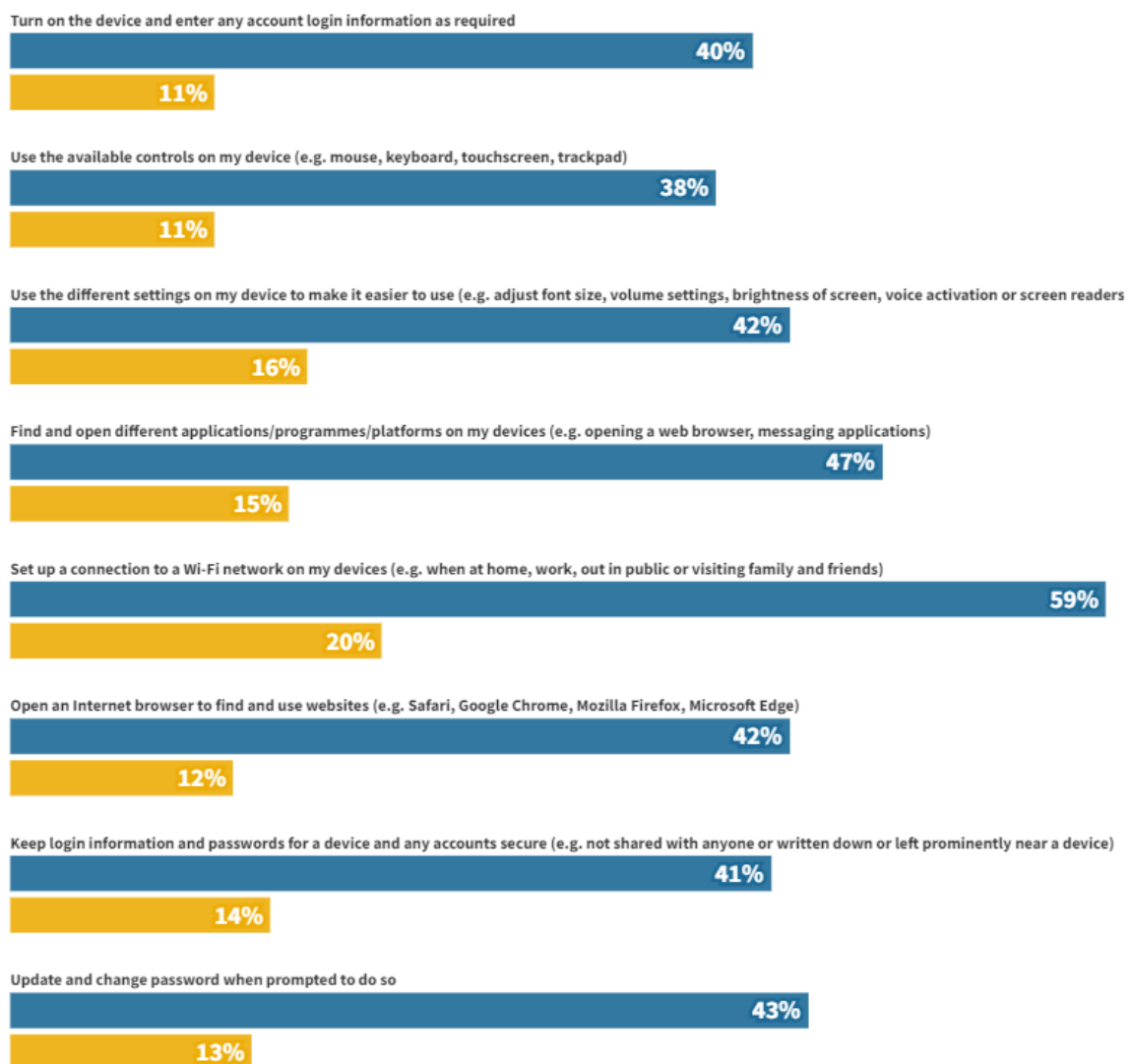
Note: Figures based on responses between 23rd Septmebre & 9th November 2022

---

[4] Ofcom. March 2023. *Adult's Media Literacy Core Survey 2022 Data Tables. Table 39.* [online] Available at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/data/statistics/stats23#adultmediatracker. Accessed 31st March 2023.

Digital Skills among older people in the United Kingdom[5]:

- Around seven-in-ten (69%) people 75 & over in the UK in 2022, and three-in-ten (30%) aged 65 to 74, are unable to complete all eight of the most fundamental tasks required to use the internet safely and successfully. This compares to less than one-in-ten (10%) of people aged under 55 and one-in-four (24%) of those aged 55 to 64.

Figure 4: Proportion of people aged 65 to 74 and 75 & over in the UK who are unable to carry out the following fundamental tasks:

Turn on the device and enter any account login information as required
- 40%
- 11%

Use the available controls on my device (e.g. mouse, keyboard, touchscreen, trackpad)
- 38%
- 11%

Use the different settings on my device to make it easier to use (e.g. adjust font size, volume settings, brightness of screen, voice activation or screen readers
- 42%
- 16%

Find and open different applications/programmes/platforms on my devices (e.g. opening a web browser, messaging applications)
- 47%
- 15%

Set up a connection to a Wi-Fi network on my devices (e.g. when at home, work, out in public or visiting family and friends)
- 59%
- 20%

Open an Internet browser to find and use websites (e.g. Safari, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Microsoft Edge)
- 42%
- 12%

Keep login information and passwords for a device and any accounts secure (e.g. not shared with anyone or written down or left prominently near a device)
- 41%
- 14%

Update and change password when prompted to do so
- 43%
- 13%

Source: Author's visualisaton of data from Lloyds Bank 2022 Consumer Digital Index.
Note: Figures based on responses between April and May 2022

TEMPLATE CREDITS: Line, bar and pie charts by **Flourish team**

---

[5] Lloyds Bank. November 2022. *2022 Consumer Digital Index. The UK's largest study of digital and financial lives. Essential Digital Skills Interactive Data Tables* [online] Available at https://www.lloydsbank.com/banking-with-us/whats-happening/consumer-digital-index.html Accessed 12th April 2023

Digital skills among people aged 75 & over:

- Almost seven-in-ten (69%) people aged 75 & over in the UK in 2022, equivalent to around 4 million (of whom 2 million are recent internet users[6]), are unable to complete all eight of the most fundamental tasks required to use the internet safely and successfully.

- Among people aged 75 & over in the UK in 2022:

  - two-in-five (40%) are unable to turn on the device and enter any account login information as required

  - almost four-in-ten (38%) are unable to use the available controls on their device (e.g. mouse, keyboard, touchscreen, trackpad)

  - around two-in-five (42%) are unable to use the different settings on their device to make it easier to use (e.g. adjust font size, volume settings, brightness of screen, voice activation or screen readers)

  - almost half (47%) are unable to find and open different applications/programmes/platforms on their devices (e.g. opening a web browser, messaging applications)

  - around three-in-five (59%) are unable to set up a connection to a Wi-Fi network on their devices (e.g. when at home, work, out in public or visiting family and friends)

  - around two-in-five (42%) are unable to open an Internet browser to find and use websites (e.g. Safari, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Microsoft Edge)

  - around two-in-five (41%) are unable to keep their login information and passwords for a device and any accounts secure (e.g. not shared with anyone or written down or left prominently near a device)

  - over two-in-five (43%) are unable to update and change their password when prompted to do so

---

[6] Around 2 million people aged 75 & over in the UK have never or not within the last 3 months used the internet. Assuming all these people are unable to complete all eight of the most fundamental tasks, then the remaining number must be people aged 75 & over who are recent internet users (4 million minus 2 million ~ 2 million)

Digital skills among people aged 65 to 74:

- Three-in-ten (30%) people aged 65 to 74 in the UK in 2022, the equivalent of around 2 million (of whom 1.3 million are recent internet users[7]), are unable to complete all eight of the most fundamental tasks required to use the internet safely and successfully.

- Among people aged 65 74 & over in the UK in 2022:

  - around one-in-nine (11%) are unable to turn on the device and enter any account login information as required

  - around one-in-nine (11%) are unable to use the available controls on their device (e.g. mouse, keyboard, touchscreen, trackpad)

  - around one-in-six (16%) are unable to use the different settings on their device to make it easier to use (e.g. adjust font size, volume settings, brightness of screen, voice activation or screen readers)

  - around one-in-seven (15%) are unable to find and open different applications/programmes/platforms on their devices (e.g. opening a web browser, messaging applications)

  - around one-in-five (20%) are unable to set up a connection to a Wi-Fi network on their devices (e.g. when at home, work, out in public or visiting family and friends)

  - around one-in-eight (12%) are unable to open an Internet browser to find and use websites (e.g. Safari, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Microsoft Edge)

  - around one-in-seven (14%) are unable to keep their login information and passwords for a device and any accounts secure (e.g. not shared with anyone or written down or left prominently near a device)

  - around one-in-eight (13%) are unable to update and change their password when prompted to do so

---

[7] Around 665,000 people aged 65 to 74 in the UK have never or not within the last 3 months used the internet. Assuming all these people are unable to complete all eight of the most fundamental tasks, then the remaining number must be people aged 75 & over who are recent internet users (2 million minus 665,000 ~ 1.3 million)

Activities recent internet users in UK carry out online during 2020-21[8]:

Browsing & Emailing:

- Browsing the internet and emailing are the most common use of the internet among older internet users in the UK.

- Among recent internet users in the UK aged 75 & over, almost seven-in-ten use the internet at least several times a week to browse the internet (68%), with around a further one-in-six (17%) using it less frequently but at least once a month. Among recent internet users in the UK aged 65 to 74 the respective figures are around four-in-five (82%) and one-in-eight (12%).

- Among recent internet users in the UK aged 75 & over, around seven-in-ten use the internet at least several times a week for emails (71%), with around a further one-in-eight (13%) using it less frequently but at least once a month. Among recent internet users in the UK aged 65 to 74 the respective figures are around four-in-five (81%) and one-in-ten (9%).

Online shopping & online banking:

- Among recent internet users in the UK aged 75 & over, around 7% use the internet at least several times a week for online buying, with around a further one-in-three (36%) using it less frequently but at least once a month. Among recent internet users in the UK aged 65 to 74 the respective figures are around one-in-eight (12%) and over two-in-five (43%).

- Among recent internet users in the UK aged 75 & over, around one-in-five use the internet at least several times a week for online banking (22%), with around a further one-in-four (27%) using it less frequently but at least once a month. Among recent internet users in the UK aged 65 to 74 the respective figures are around three-in-ten (29% & 32%).

[8] Authors analysis of Understanding Society: Wave 12, 2020-2021. [data collection]. 17th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 6614, DOI: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-6614-18. Downloaded 21st February 2023. Available at https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8806

Social Media:

- Among recent internet users in the UK aged 75 & over, over two-in-five (43%) use the internet at least several times a week for looking at and/or posting on social media, with around a further one-in-ten (10%) using it less frequently but at least once a month. Among recent internet users in the UK aged 65 to 74 the respective figures are around three-in-five (59%) and one-in-ten (10%).

Streaming:

- Among recent internet users in the UK aged 75 & over, around 7% use the internet at least several times a week to stream music or videos, with around a further one-in-ten (10%) using it less frequently but at least once a month. Among recent internet users in the UK aged 65 to 74 the respective figures are around one-in-six (16% & 15%).

Gaming:

- Among recent internet users in the UK aged 75 & over, around one-in-five use the internet at least several times a week for gaming (22%), with around a further 5% using it less frequently but at least once a month. Among recent internet users in the UK aged 65 to 74 the respective figures are around one-in-four (27%) and 6%.

Barriers to using the internet among those in England who would like to use it more[9]:

- During 2020, among people in England who wished to use the internet more frequently (between 14% to 19% of those aged between 65 to 74 and 75 & over), the reasons they did not were:

  - not having good enough IT skills (around 59% of people aged 65 to 74, and around 79% of people aged 75 & over)

  - not trusting the internet (around 39% of people aged 65 to 74, and around 39% of people aged 75 & over)

  - not having access to good enough equipment and/or broadband access (around 30% of people aged 65 to 74, and around 20% of people aged 75 & over)

  - health reasons (around 27% of people aged 65 to 74 and aged 75 & over)

[9] Author's analysis of English Longitudinal Study of Ageing Covid 19 Study, Wave 1-2, 2020. [data collection]. 3rd Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 8688, DOI: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-8688-3

Smartphone use among older people in the UK[10]:

- At the end of 2022, around one-in-eight (13%) people aged 65 & over in the UK, the equivalent of around 1.6 million, did not use a mobile phone or were unsure whether they did.

- At the end of 2022, around seven-in-eight (87%) people aged 65 & over in the UK, the equivalent of around 10.9 million, used a mobile phone, including:

  - almost three-in-five (58%) people aged 65 & over in the UK, the equivalent of around 7.3 million, used a smartphone.

  - around one-in-four (27%) people aged 65 & over in the UK, the equivalent of around 3.4 million, used a standard mobile phone.

  - around one-in-fifty (2%) people aged 65 & over in the UK, the equivalent of around 250,000, were unsure whether the mobile phone they used was a smartphone or not.

Figure 5: Mobile phone use among people aged 65 & over in the UK (2022) who use a mobile phone
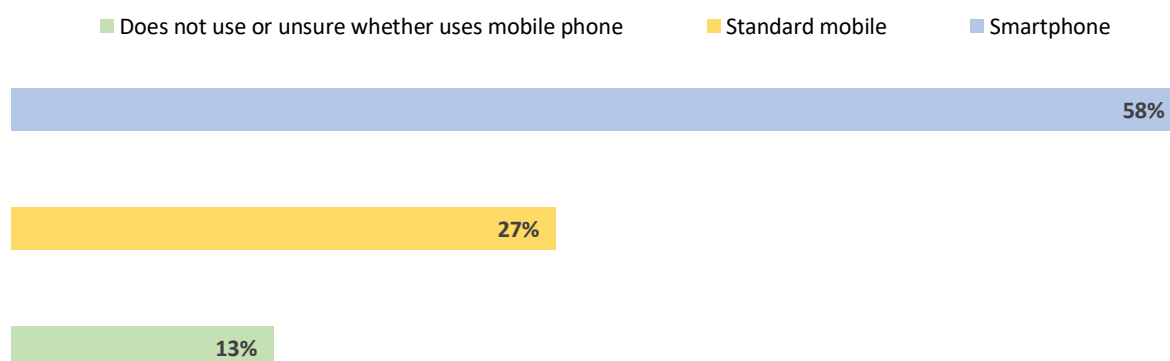
Source: Author's visualisation of Ofcom, Adult's Media Literacy Core Survey 2022 Data Tables, table 20

Note: Figures based on responses between 23rd September & 9th November 2022; figures do not sum to 100% because people unsure of type of mobile their use are not included

---

[10] Ofcom. March 2023. *Adult's Media Literacy Core Survey 2022 Data Tables. Tables 18 & 19.* [online] Available at https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/data/statistics/stats23#adultmediatracker. Accessed 31st March 2023. Figures scaled up to population level using ONS mid-2021 population estimates,
Office for National Statistics (ONS). 21st December 2022. *Estimates of the population for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Mid-2021 edition of this dataset.* [online] Accessed 23rd March 2023. Available at https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland

Further information about Age UK's digital work

Age UK works locally and nationally to support older people to gain and extend digital skills. In our view, most older learners need ongoing support, tailored to their needs and preferences, and often this is most effective when delivered on a one-to-one basis. An effective approach is using Digital Champions who are staff and volunteers who have been trained to have the skills and knowledge to support older people in their community to gain digital skills and stay safe online. More information about Age UK's work can be found on our website and many local Age UK organisations also run their own digital support services.[11]

However, as mentioned at the start of this paper, Age UK believes that those who cannot or do not want to get online should still be able to access the support and services they need. We have carried out a range studies to explore digital exclusion and its impact for older people. For example, our work has: looked at the difficulties that those who do not use the internet have in accessing local authority services; found that the pandemic in itself did not result in a sea change in the proportion of older people who use the internet; looked at the impact of the pandemic on everyday life for individuals who are not online; and explored the reasons why some older people stop using the internet. Further information about these and other projects can be found on Age UK's website.[12]

---

[11] https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/programmes/digital-skills/digital-champions/

[12] https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/publications/reports-and-briefings/ Reports on digital inclusion and exclusion are found in the 'Active Communities' section.