



DIGITAL DISCUSSIONS

A Peer Led Research Study

In October 2020, Age & Opportunity spoke to almost 900 older people aged over 65 in five counties to find out the reasons why people do not or cannot use computers, the internet or other digital technology.

This study was carried out on a peer research basis; by older people, for older people. This was really important and allowed us to ask the right questions, based on the expertise and lived experience of older people.

Here is a summary of what we learned from older people in communities throughout Ireland:

- Two-thirds of older people said that they currently own a computer. Most of them bought their own computer in a shop, while a very small number bought it online. This shows the importance of being able to access actual shopping facilities in our communities where people can purchase computer equipment.
- Older people who do not own or have access to a computer are less likely to have someone else in their household who has access to a computer.
- The number of people who own a computer, who access the internet, or who own a mobile phone, decreases with age as does the level of skill to use all three. Ownership is also lower in rural areas and among some disadvantaged groups, eg those living in nursing/care homes, people from an Irish Traveller background and people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.
- Levels and reliability of access to the internet varied across the five counties with residents in Counties Donegal and Kerry reporting lower levels of both.
- Internet reliability was lower in rural areas and more than half of rural residents said their mobile phone connection is more reliable than their broadband.
- Less than half of older people who use the internet currently use online banking facilities, and this reduces as people get older. Many older people therefore face digital financial exclusion, making it increasingly difficult for older people to maintain their financial independence.
- Older people said they have fewer skills in using the internet. More than half of respondents over the age of 80 reported that their skillset in using internet was 'non-existent'.
- Lots of older people did not feel motivated to access computers or the internet. People in the older age groups said they did not see the need to use the Internet and other essential services such as banking online.
- Most older people use the internet to browse for information, followed by half of people reading the news and less than half using the internet for online banking.
- As age group increases, people were less likely to access online banking with less than half of those aged 80+ using it compared to those aged in their 60's.





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Results of this research will help inform policy to improve digital opportunities and experience for older people.

This research was commissioned by Age & Opportunity to investigate factors influencing digital access and its effects on older people throughout Ireland using personal and public involvement (PPI) as a core principle.

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Age & Opportunity is funded by

