Straightforward

Research and Development

Research on digital access and older persons throughout Ireland using personal and public involvement (PPI) as a core principle.

Age & Opportunity
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Section 1 Executive Summary

This research was commissioned by Age & Opportunity to investigate factors influencing digital poverty and its effects on older people throughout Ireland using personal and public involvement (PPI) as a core principle. The research was funded by Comic Relief, administered by the Community Foundation for Ireland. The initiative was a collaboration between Age & Opportunity and Age Friendly Ireland, and in particular with the Age Friendly Programme Managers in counties Clare, Donegal, Fingal, Kerry and Kildare.

General information:

1. Peer researchers across five counties in Ireland interviewed a total of 935 older people aged over 65 years of age. Following cleaning of the data, 898 responses were analysed for the primary research data of this research[1].

2. The response achieved was closely representative of the population sample.

3. Two of the counties had lower response rates than the other three. This was due to drop-off of peer researchers from these two counties.

Findings:

1. From the outset of the programme, the richness of peer researchers was brought into clear focus with suggested terminology put forward by the Research Coordinator being constructively challenged by the peer researchers. Peer researchers advised that 'technical' terminology and the way in which questions would be phrased, should be kept very basic and checked for plain English. The questionnaire was subsequently checked for literacy level by the National Adult Literacy Association.

2. Two-thirds of respondents indicated that they currently own a computer.

3. The majority of respondents purchased their own computer in a shop, while one in ten indicated they had bought it online. This highlights the importance of access to physical shopping facilities with ability to purchase computer equipment.

4. 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. This is consistent with the findings of the recent research completed by The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing. (TILDA).

[1] 37 questionnaires were extracted prior to analysis, as a number of entries were duplicated and a number not fully completed.

5. The level of digital connectivity across the five counties included in the research decreases with age across access to and usage of computing equipment, online connectivity and mobile phone connectivity.

6. Digital connectivity among older people is lower in rural communities and some marginalised groups including those living in nursing/care homes, people from an Irish Traveller background and people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.

7. 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.

8. Internet reliability was lower in rural areas (27% reliable all the time versus 53% in urban areas). More than half of rural residents reported mobile phone connectivity as more reliable than their broadband.

9. Less than half of older people who use the internet indicated that they currently use online banking facilities. As a result, many older people could face digital financial exclusion, i.e., they could be adversely affected by the withdrawal of services in the face of increasing reliance by banks on online services. This can make it increasingly difficult for older people to maintain their financial independence and could increase exclusion.

10. The skillset in using internet decreased with age group. More than half of respondents over the age of 80 reported that their skillset in using internet was 'non-existent'.

11. Motivation is a recurring theme across digital access, particularly in the older age groups with many respondents to this research failing to see the need to use the Internet and other essential services such as banking online.

12. The majority of older people use the internet to browse for information, followed by 50% reading the news and less than half 47% using the internet for online banking.

13. There is a significant decrease in the percentage of people who access banking services online as age group increases with less than half of those aged 80+ accessing online banking compared to those aged in their 60's.

Recommendations

1. Make PPI standard practice for research and action planning to address digital exclusion. Including peer researchers in this project enabled a more nuanced understanding of the complex range of interrelating factors driving digital exclusion for older people throughout Ireland.

2. Focus on motivation to access to digital infrastructure at both policy and practice levels. This may well require highlighting the benefits of digital connectivity, rather than focussing on skills development as the traditional entry point for new users – e.g. to increase health and wellbeing, save money through online banking and to keep in touch with friends and family. Highlight other influencing factors identified by older people for increasing online use for example, keeping up to date with and participating in sporting/club activities, church, news, etc.

3. Focus on motivation/end user benefit across all three aspects of the research for computers, mobile phone and broadband ownership.

4. Focus efforts on motivation for computer ownership to older people aged over 80 years.

5. Focus training for respondents aged in their 70's. Promotion of basic training may require inclusion of and focussed promotion on confidence building components to encourage new entrants to take first steps to attend.

6. Provide training for those who already do use the internet, to strengthen their confidence in protecting personal information and increasing confidence and skills on using the internet safely. This will require shifting focus away from training on provision of basic digital skills, towards enabling people to do the things they need and want to online.

7. Provide focussed computer training for older people from the Irish Traveller community. Policy makers should consider the digital exclusion faced by Irish Traveller and BAME communities when carrying out Equality Impact Assessments.

8. Consider targeting internet skills training to rural residents to bridge the gap in capacity between rural and urban residents and mitigate against financial and social isolation in rural areas.

9. Consider specific measures to increase confidence in/address barriers to accessing online banking facilities, and/or lobbying for retention of physical banking facilities for older people.

10. Less than 10% of respondents purchased their computers online, highlighting the importance of access to physical shopping facilities selling computer equipment.

11. A significant proportion of respondents indicated that they simply do not want to engage in online services or connectivity. Essential government or financial services which take a 'digital first/digital only' approach should continue to ensure that other options are available to older people who are experiencing digital exclusion. Peer researchers indicated that the policy of pushing all services online is not a welcome age friendly development amongst their peers.

12. Consider focussing on increasing the use of smart phone functionality given the prevalence of device ownership versus the low prevalence of maximising the functionality of devices. Coupled with higher reliability rates in mobile versus broadband connectivity experienced by older people, this may provide a more accessible route to digital inclusion.

Section 2 Background and Introduction:

This research was commissioned by Age & Opportunity to coordinate and complete a qualitative study on digital poverty and its effects on older persons throughout Ireland using personal and public involvement (PPI) as a core principle.

This initiative is a collaboration between Age & Opportunity and Age Friendly Ireland, and all stages of the initiative were guided and influenced by older people in five counties throughout Ireland. Counties which participated in the research include Clare, Donegal, Fingal, Kerry, and Kildare. We are indebted to the Age Friendly Programme Managers in each of the five counties for their support throughout the research initiative - Karen Fennessy (Clare County Council), Charles Sweeney (Donegal County Council), Tricia Matthews (Fingal County Council), Siobhán Griffin (Kerry County Council) and Carmel Cashin (Kildare County Council).

We are also extremely grateful for the input of peer researchers to the design, implementation and analysis of this research. We trust that their involvement and expertise will strengthen the findings, build skills in the age friendly sector and sustain the legacy of this research across Ireland, particularly in the five counties in which the detailed research was completed. The following peer researchers were invaluable to the completion of this project[2]:

Janet Gaynor
Sean O'Callaghan
Mary McGowan
Frank Campbell
Mary Deasy
Phyl O'Connor
Bill Turner
Debbie Breslin
Michael Kissane
Gerry O'Sullivan
Breda O'Sullivan
Catherine Lenihan
Marian Lyons
Liam Farrell
John McLoughlin
Madge O'Callaghan
Larry Hally

Including peer researchers in this project enabled a more nuanced understanding of the complex range of interrelating factors driving digital exclusion for older people throughout Ireland.

This initial aims of the project were to:

- Carry out an older person led research study on the prevalence and impact of digital poverty across 5 counties in Ireland;
- Identify the main factors in digital poverty: including educational, financial, broadband infrastructure;
- Explore links with areas of disadvantage;
- Consult with older persons about factors that could reduce digital poverty

[2] One peer researcher completed all of the training and contributed to questionnaire design and development of the data collection process, however unfortunately had to withdraw from the project prior to completion.

and increase their use of and access to digital resources.

For context, this research was carried out at a time of public health crisis in Ireland, in the wake of the first waves of the COVID-19 pandemic and the data collection took place throughout sustained emergence of additional coronavirus variants. This imposed public health restrictions on populations at government level, and fear among the older age groups in particular given the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people aged 65 years and over. Ensuring safety of researchers and participant took primacy throughout the period of the project and as a result, necessary adjustments had an impact on the initial proposed project delivery methodology. Notwithstanding these required adjustments, overall aims and objectives of the research were achieved.

PPI

The inclusion of Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) in the research methodology was a key component of Age & Opportunity's proposal to The Community Foundation for Ireland.

PPI is an umbrella term used to describe effective involvement of people in service delivery or improvement processes. A key component of effective PPI is empowerment of service users to sustain and consolidate their involvement and influence. It means actively engaging with those who use services, their carers and the general public to discuss ideas, plans, their experiences, why services need to change; what people want from services; how to make the best use of resources; and how to listen to these views and therefore improve the quality and safety of services.

Section 3 Methodology:

Given the range of this research project, a number of interrelated methodologies were employed in the completion of this research assignment with PPI engagement significantly influencing of the methodology at each stage of the assignment. As outlined in Section 2, the research was carried out at a time of public health crisis in Ireland, which ultimately required changes from the proposed to the final project delivery methodology.

A research steering group was established to oversee the research assignment through whom the various stages of the research methodology were agreed. The steering group met three times throughout the course of the assignment. The group consisted largely of key staff in Age & Opportunity along with County Managers and representatives of Age Friendly Ireland.

Séamus Mullen from Straightforward Research and Development took on the role of Research Coordinator for the programme. The role of the Research Coordinator was as follows:

- Development of research tool, including study sample, recruitment (through Age Friendly Ireland) and up skilling of 20 older people in five counties to contribute to research design and carry out field research with total of 1,000 older persons;
- Coordinate study, analyse and report on results;
- Contribute to the project's reporting requirements and produce a final report;
- Identify elements of best practice and quality indicators in the project delivery;
- Measure the overall outputs achieved against the project work-plan;
- Measure the short and medium term impacts achieved against the project objectives;

Literature review:

A literature review was completed of relevant National and International literature relating to digital access amongst older people as an 'embedded study' to inform and augment the primary data collection phase. This was a significant driver in setting the parameters of the consultation content and also the geographical targeting of the consultation with older people across the five counties.

Recruitment and training of peer researchers

Recruitment of peer researchers was completed by Age Friendly Programme Managers in each of the five participating County Councils. Programme Managers set out to secure four peer researchers in each of their areas who would have the time, skills and interest to complete research for and on behalf of their communities.

Once recruited, a training programme was designed by Straightforward Research and Development, and delivered across four sessions covering the following components:

1. Outline of the research
2. Exploring the reasons driving a digital divide
3. Skills and expertise we bring to the research
4. Personal and Public Involvement – what is it and why is it important?
5. Introduction to each other and to the research and PPI
6. What do we want to find out – key areas of questionnaire
7. Speaking to people – asking the right questions
8. Subject areas for consultation
9. Ethics and conflicts of interest
10. Understanding stratified population sampling
11. Pilot survey
12. Review session

Peer research

A primary research questionnaire was designed in conjunction with the peer researchers in Sessions 3 and 4 of the training programme. The questionnaire was piloted with the researchers following session 4 and adjustments were made based on peer researchers suggestions. The questionnaire was also assessed by the National Adult Literacy Association (NALA) to ensure maximum use of plain English, to minimise misunderstanding and take into account varying levels of literacy across the community.

Once trained, a stratified population sample was agreed with Age & Opportunity and provided to each of the five County Managers to help peer researchers access the correct population sample. A copy of the Stratified Population Sample is provided in Appendix 1:

Data to determine population sample was extracted from the 2016 Census SapMaps[3] at county level from the Central Statistics Office.

Assumptions:

Following a discussion with Age & Opportunity we agreed to focus the population sample on older people aged 65 and above. This was based on the premise for which the funding was allocated, i.e., to investigate the impact of the digital divide on the older population across the five counties.

[3] SapMaps are developed by the All Ireland Research Observatory

The population sample generated accounted for variances in each of the counties throughout the study area rather than relying an overall sample country-wide. This provided the most accurate methodology of determining the sample to account for any variances in the demographic structure at county level. For example, the demographic structure of the Fingal County area is 'younger' than the other four counties in the study.

The table below outlines the approximate population sample targeted from each researcher:

Stratified Sample

	Kerry		***Donegal***		***Fingal***		***Clare***		***Kildare***	
	N	***%***	***N***	***%***	***N***	***%***	***N***	***%***	***N***	***%***
Age										
65-69	**17**	*34.3*	**16**	*32.8*	**19**	*37.5*	**17**	*34.9*	**19**	*37.9*
70-79	**22**	*43.8*	**22**	*44.2*	**22**	*44.1*	**22**	*43.3*	**21**	*42.9*
80+	**11**	*22*	**11**	*23*	**9**	*18.4*	**11**	*21.9*	**10**	*19.3*
Male	**24**	*48*	**24**	*48*	**23**	*46*	**24**	*47.7*	**24**	*47.6*
Female	**26**	*52*	**26**	*52*	**27**	*54*	**26**	*52.3*	**26**	*52.4*
Total per researcher	**50**		**50**		**50**		**50**		**50**	

Following discussion at the research steering group and with the peer researchers in advance of the data collection phase, we did not stratify population by areas of deprivation or occupation/educational level throughout the five counties as there is already significant research existing which confirms that socio-economic status is a reliable indicator of digital literacy. We are also mindful that there is research confirming that older people from non-professional working backgrounds that are more likely to experience digital exclusion.

The research also sought to include minority communities throughout the five counties, including Irish Travellers, Black and Minority Ethnic communities, and residents living in nursing and care homes. A population sample was calculated for these population groups, however as the age profile of minority ethnic communities across Ireland is predominantly a youthful population profile, the numbers required were relatively small.

Following consultation with the steering group, we agreed to lower the age range for inclusion of older people from the Irish Traveller population and BAME communities. The chart below demonstrates necessity to do this given the age profile of Irish Traveller communities in Ireland:

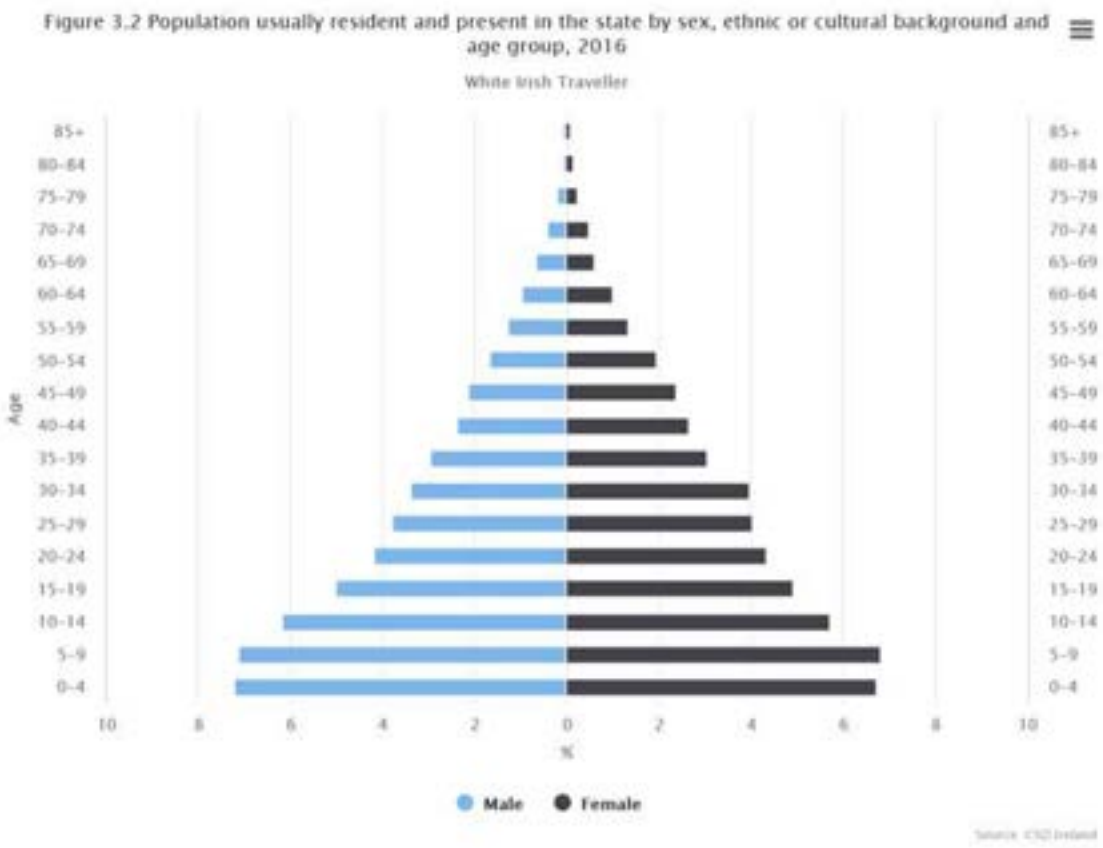


Figure 1 Age profile of Irish Traveller Community in Ireland, Source CSO Ireland, 2021

Data analysis

Data was cleaned and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) to provide frequency, and cross-tabulation at single and multiple-response variable levels.

Data was extracted from SPSS to Microsoft Excel to provide more useable graphs and tables for the final report.

Section 4 Findings of Literature Review

The literature review for this project found that there are various concepts focusing on digital access and poverty which have been studied across Ireland, UK and internationally. This was discussed at the PPI Sessions with peer researchers and used to help classify the range and type of questions to be asked in the data collection phase of the research. The various concepts relevant to this area of research were:

- Digital divide
- Digital poverty
- Digital exclusion
- Digital access
- Digital literacy

The 'Digital Divide'

In Ireland, 29% of 60-74-year-olds have never used the internet[i]. This is in comparison to 1% of those aged 16–29 (CSO, 2019). Professor Roger O'Sullivan from the Institute of Public Health provided some insight on a recent blog on the digital divide in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

"COVID-19 has changed our lives in many ways as individuals, families, communities and society. It has changed how and when we work, how we shop, how we learn, and most importantly how we connect with others."

Professor O'Sullivan continues, "There is a digital disconnect of which we must be mindful when considering how to support people during Covid-19. In Ireland, 29% of 60-74-year-olds have never used the internet. This is in comparison to 1% of those aged 16–29 (CSO, 2019). In Northern Ireland, internet use also varies sharply with age, with 55% of those aged 65 and over having used the internet compared to 98.4% of those aged between 16-24."

The digital divide increases with age but there are also other differences. Males, for example, in Northern Ireland are more likely to use the internet compared to females. Urban areas are more likely to have faster broadband than those in rural areas (if it is available at all)."

The Socio-economic 'Digital Divide':

It is well documented that Socio Economic Status is a reliable indicator of digital literacy and that it is primarily older persons from non-professional working backgrounds that are more likely to experience digital exclusion. A 'Sociological Analysis of Digital Literacy' by Kerry Rinaldiii, provided analysis of how sociological factors, access to literacy, and self-sponsored digital literacy are interrelated.

Covid-19

A recent study *"Internet access and use among adults aged 50 and over in Ireland: Results from Wave 5 of The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing*"[iii] states 'However, our data also indicates a relatively large section of the population are without home internet access. This is particularly the case for older age groups and those living alone. For these individuals, more traditional forms of communication and information distribution, in combination with ongoing family and community support, are likely to be essential'.

The Centre for Ageing Better in UK has carried out research focussing on how the digital divide affects older adults'[iv]. It found that there are now more people online in later life than ever before. Over the last several years, the proportion of older people using the internet has risen considerably faster than for the general population; in 2018, more than twice as many people over 75 used the internet as they did in 2011 (ONS, 2018). Despite recent rapid increases, there are still 4.8 million people over the age of 55 who are not online, making up 91% of the population who are not online (5.3 million people). These people – who are already likely to be poorer, less well educated and in worse health than their peers – are at risk of being left on the wrong side of the digital divide, as more services and information move online.

People in later life stand to benefit hugely from being online – to improve health and wellbeing, save money and keep in touch with family and friends. However, there remains a core of people in later life who are not online and have no intention of getting online. When asked what would prompt them to go online, 74% of people over the age of 65 responded 'nothing' (Ofcom, 2018).

Funded by the British Academy/Leverhulme Trust, CAB has identified some of the barriers faced by older people when it comes to using technology, including the following key barriers:

1. Self-confidence
In the study, some participants experienced low confidence, perceiving themselves as being novices and not 'technology minded', and some lacked patience with technology.

2. Fear
Some were fearful that they would break the devices, do something "wrong" that they couldn't amend, or they were worried about privacy issues. This is reflected in other existing research that older adults are more vulnerable to misinformation.

3. Physical functioning
Participants also experienced physical barriers. For example, for some the text was too small, making it difficult to read, or the buttons were too small.

4. Culture and communication
The research found that cultural differences around communication impacted the way older adults used social media and their online connections. While some participants were more active users of social media, others were more passive. Some worried about how they would come across using social media or didn't like the way others communicated via social media.

5. Lack of social capital
Finally, an individual's social network was highly influential in getting them started with using technology and was important for ongoing support and maintenance of using digital devices and social media. Often without this existing social network, individuals would not have received the digital device, would not have gotten started with it, or would not have any support to keep using it.

Digital Poverty:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) in the UK estimates that around 2 million UK households don't have access to the internet and as many as 2.7 million adults haven't used the internet in the past three months[v]. Lack of internet access was an issue before the Covid-19 pandemic, but it has become more critical.

Individuals who lacked solid digital skills would perhaps manage their banking in-branch before the pandemic. However, bank closures or restricted hours may have jeopardised their ability to manage their finances during what was – for many in our society – a financially taxing year.

There are 3 main types of digital poverty:
- Access, which can be the result of geography
- Skills, including lack of education
- Financial poverty causing digital poverty.

Restricted access to digital – particularly the internet – can simply be a side effect of geography. For example, if you live in the Lake District, there often isn't 4G or 5G connectivity – although there are rural connectivity projects that are beginning to tackle that.

Internationally:

The digital poverty concept tries to find the minimum ICT use and consumption levels as well as income levels of the population necessary to demand ICT products.

Digital Poverty: Concept and Measurement, With an application to Peru [vi] was developed at the Institute of Peruvian Studies (IEP), as part of its research activities on the challenges to the poor and socially excluded posed by the development of the "information society."

This research discussed the notions of demand, poverty, information needs, and information and communication technologies (ICTs) to offer a concept of digital poverty, to estimate the digital poverty level in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The paper defined and discussed several aspects of digital poverty when posing the issue of increased and better use of ICTs for the region's poor. One issue is the availability of ICT goods and services. This aspect is called the supply side of the problem and requires looking at physical connectivity aspects as well as availability of radios, TV sets, and computers. The use and purchase of ICT goods and services is another important issue. This is the demand side of the problem and requires an examination of actual usage, affordability and individual capabilities.

Demand, as understood by economists, is defined as the amount of a good/service people are willing to buy at a certain price. Demand is therefore a concept affected by buying power—without it, a person may have needs but not demand. Buying power is, in turn, affected by the consumer's income. With insufficient income, demand can be null or reduced, even if the need is urgent. Demand or buying power for a good/service arises from the consumer's preferences for specific goods or services.

Thus, two issues become relevant in the analysis: defining a good and studying how the consumer orders his/her preferences for such good in relation to other available goods.
The definition of a good plays a vital role when establishing consumer preferences. Defining a good means knowing what it is, knowing its use, and knowing the disadvantages (or costs) associated with its consumption, which means understanding the full benefits of its consumption.

Defining a good is equivalent to defining a group of attributes or features of such good that fulfil a consumer need. Demand arises then from previous knowledge and a subjective evaluation of the advantages (benefits) and disadvantages (costs). Those who do not know the service or who do not have buying power will not have demand.

Digitally poor individuals lack the information and communication enabled by digital technologies due to a lack of knowledge on how they are used, or a lack of income (a demand consideration). Technologies are the means but, at the same time, their availability is the most visible component of the demand that can be estimated.

Digitally poor individuals may be those who do not use ICTs due to lack of services or lack of use abilities. We will use four variables to define digitally poor individuals:

- Age. The hypothesis states that the older the person is, the more likely he/she will be a digitally poor person. It is a way of measuring human capital.
- Education. The hypothesis states that the higher a person's educational level is, the less likely he/she will be a digitally poor person. It is the most common way of measuring human capital.

- Available Infrastructure. Radio, open television, fixed and mobile telephone services, cable television, computers, and Internet access are taken into account.
- Accomplished Functionality. Functionality refers to the uses given to technology: from the mere reception of information to the full interaction involved in electronic forms of government or commercial purchases, as well as the creation of content.

Digital literacy:

The 2012 report on digital exclusion by the Low Incomes Tax Reform group concluded that '*Digital exclusion is about more than not having access to a computer. It is not enough that citizens are able to access government services online – a sufficient level of digital literacy is required to be able to recognise when information is needed and to have the ability to locate, evaluate and make effective use of the online systems'*[vii].

Digital access for Traveller communities:

Research by Scadding et al in 2018[viii] concluded that while digital technology has been responsible for the biggest changes we have seen in the last century in health, social care, education, employment and further afield. However, whilst digital technology has been behind some of the biggest advances and changes society has made in recent years, it can also act to worsen the inequalities experienced by some groups.

Researchers interviewed 50 people from Gypsy and Traveller communities across the UK to find out the extent of digital inclusion and identify barriers for Gypsy and Traveller communities in digital participation. Key findings included:

- One in five Gypsy and Traveller participants had never used the internet, compared to one in ten members of the general population.
- Over half of Gypsy and Traveller participants said that they did not feel confident using digital technology by themselves.
- Only two in five Gypsies and Travellers surveyed said that they use the internet daily, compared to four out of five of the general population.
- Only 38% of Gypsies and Travellers (33% if housed) had a household internet connection, compared to 86% of the general population.

https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Digital-Inclusion-in-Gypsy-and-Traveller-communities-FINAL-1.pdf

Section 5 Research Analysis:

"Digital participation is a critical social justice issue of the 21st century. Digital can be the driver for greater social and economic equality but just as surely it can be the barrier to such equality too."

Douglas White, Carnegie UK

This section of the report provides analysis of the data from 898 valid questionnaire returns across the five participating counties. Unless stated otherwise, charts and tables in this section are based on 898 responses.

5.1 Demographics:

5.1.1 Age Profile:

The chart below highlights the age profile of respondents to the survey. At the outset, we set out to achieve a stratified sample of 36% aged 65-69, 44% aged 70-79 and 20% aged 80+.

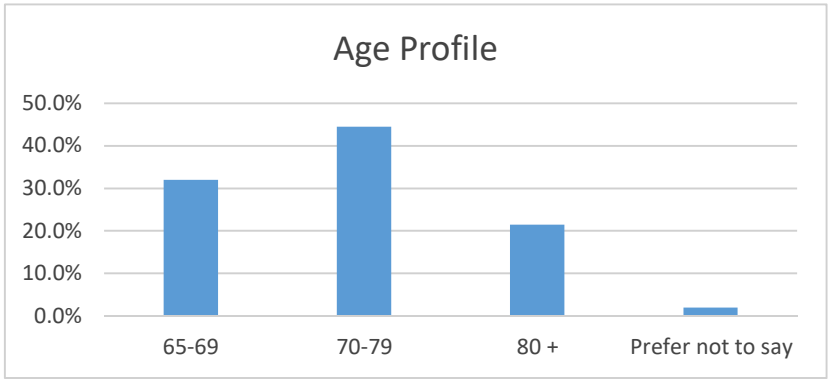


Figure 2 Respondent Age Profile

As the chart shows, the actual response was broadly reflective of the population sample. The majority of respondents were aged between 70-79 reflecting the 44% within this age category extracted from data in the 2016 Census SapMaps[4] at county level from the Central Statistics Office.

[4] SapMaps are developed by the All Ireland Research Observatory

5.1.2 Gender:

The chart below shows the gender profile for responses to the survey. In the stratified sample we set out to achieve a 48% male and 52% female split across the five counties:

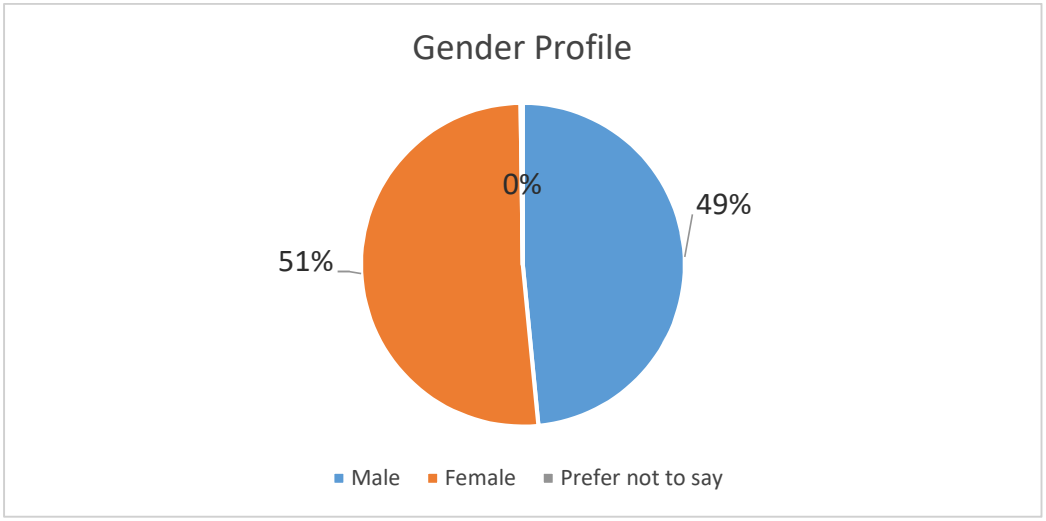


Figure 3 Respondents' Gender profile

5.1.3 Location of Respondents:

The chart below highlights the location of respondents by County. Initially we set out to achieve a target of 1,000 respondents spread equally across the five counties:

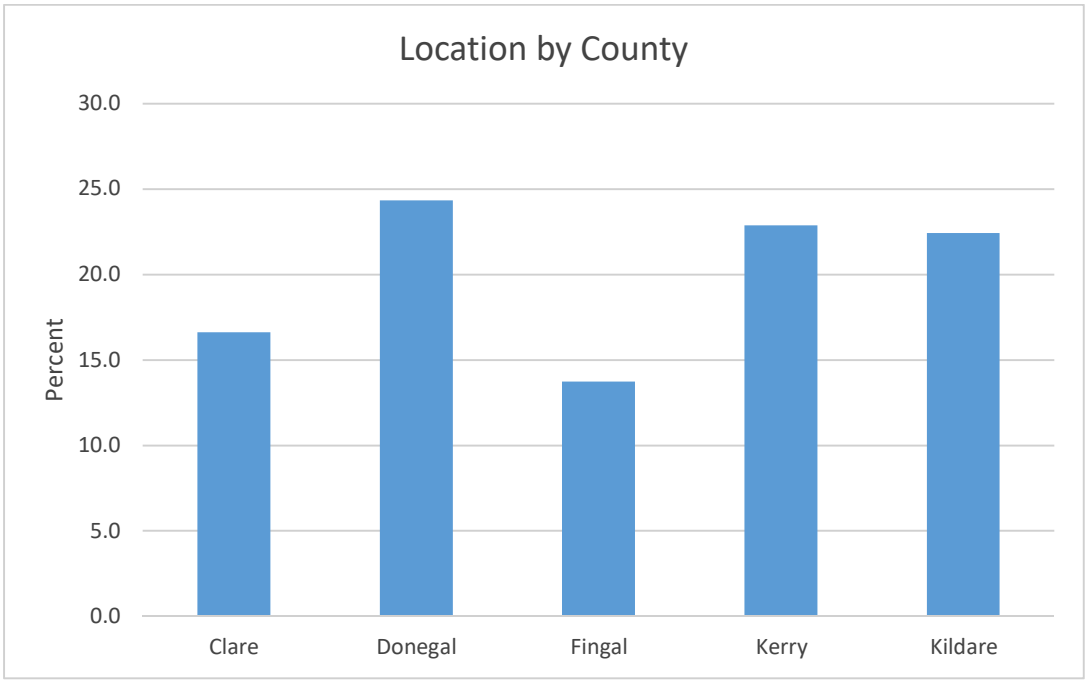
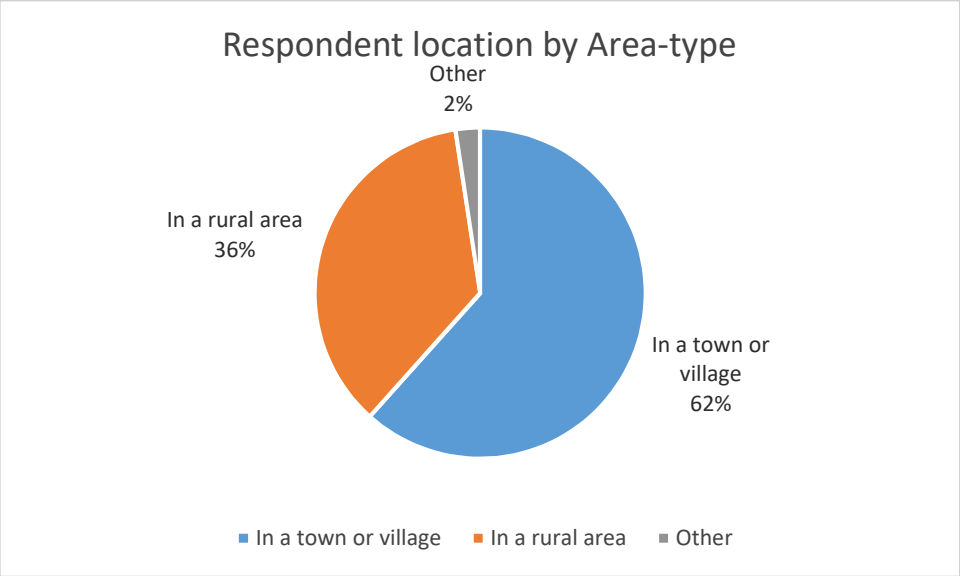


Figure 4 Location of respondents by County

The chart highlights that two of the counties had a lower level of response compared to the other three. This was due to a number of the peer researchers in the two counties withdrawing from the project due to personal circumstances.
The chart below highlights the proportion of respondents who live either in an urban or rural area:



We did not set targets for this in the stratified sample, however this is broadly reflective of the urban/rural population breakdown by area type in Ireland according to the most recent statistics published by Central Statistics Office in 2019[5], which suggest 62.5% live in an urban area and 37.5% in a rural area.

5.1.4 Vulnerable communities:

We also set out to include a number of vulnerable communities in the research including those living in day care centres, older people from an Irish Traveller backgrounds, and older people from Black and Minority Ethnic populations (BAME).

The table below highlights the numbers we set out to achieve based on the stratified sample outline in the methodology, versus the numbers from these population groups who actually responded to the research. Further details are available in Appendix 1:

Table 1 Respondents from vulnerable population groups

	Respondents	**Target**
Live in a Care/nursing home	38	40
Are from Irish Traveller background	13	10
Are from an Ethnic minority background	13	10

[5] Urban and Rural Life in Ireland, 2019 - CSO - Central Statistics Office

5.2 Access to Computer Equipment:

This section of the research focussed on access to computing equipment, the physical equipment necessary to access digital services. Internet and broadband capability is dealt with in a Section 5.3.

5.2.1 Understanding of basic equipment

Following discussion with the peer researchers during training sessions, we agreed that a useful introductory question for respondents would be to test the extent to which they were aware of basic terms used in computing equipment and connectivity. The richness of peer research at this stage was brought into clear focus with suggested terminology put forward by the Research Coordinator being constructively challenged by the peer researchers.

This was set against an assumption that there may be older people living in our communities who are not necessarily familiar with basic digital terminology. The chart below highlights the level of awareness of the key terms we used to test knowledge at the start of the interview:

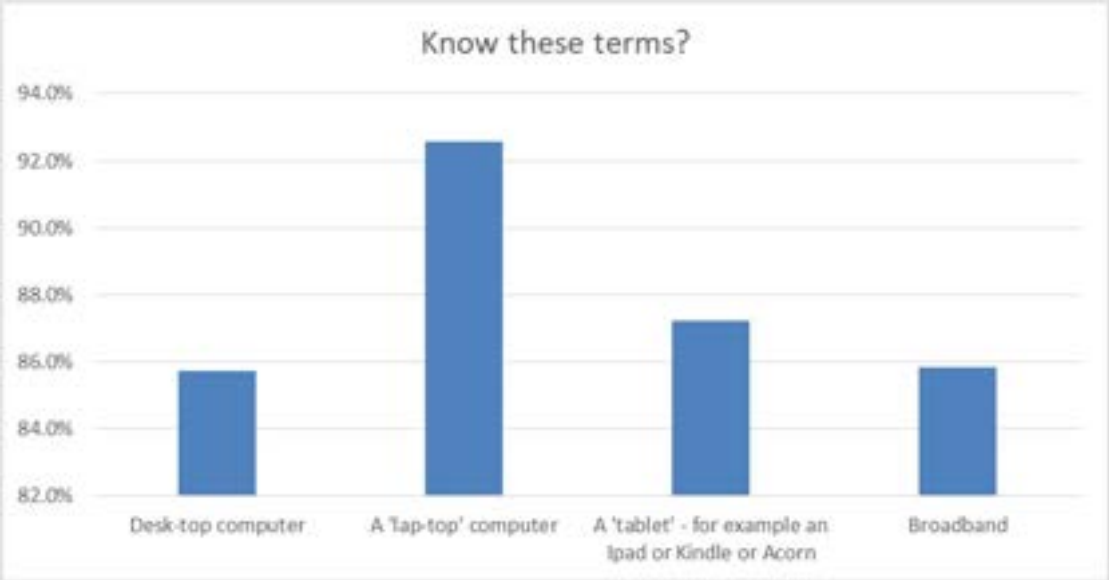


Figure 5 Awareness of basic computing terminology

The chart above shows a high level of understanding of the basic terms used in digital goods and connectivity.

5.2.2 Computer Ownership

The research found that just over 67% of respondents either own or have access to a computer (the 'supply side' of digital inclusion). Of those who own or have access to a computer, the majority indicated that they owned a laptop.

Type of equipment owned:

- 64% own a laptop
- 50% own a tablet, and
- 25% own a desktop

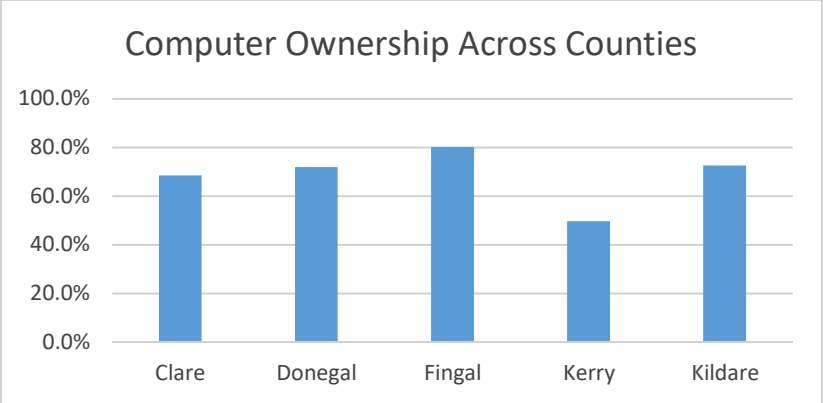


Figure 6 Computer ownership by County

Ownership across various communities/population groups:

Further analysis shows that the level of ownership decreases by age group. Ownership levels across the three age groups are:

- Respondents aged in their 60's > 81%
- Respondents aged in their 70's > 68%
- Respondents aged 80+ > 45%

There was a significant difference in ownership across urban and rural areas:

- Respondents living in Urban areas > 71%
- Respondents living in Rural areas > 62%

There was a significant difference in ownership across some of the most vulnerable older communities in the five counties:

- Respondents living in nursing homes > 60%
- Respondents from an Irish Traveller background > 15%
- Respondents from a BAME background > 62%

The findings above are consistent with a blog discussion led by Professor Roger O'Sullivan from CARDI[ix] which stated, "*The digital divide increases with age but there are also other differences… Urban areas are more likely to have faster broadband than those in rural areas (if it is available at all).*" Professor O'Sullivan's blog indicated that in Northern Ireland males were more likely than females to access the internet, however this was not reflected in the current research in the five counties across Ireland.

Frequency of computer usage

We asked respondents to tell us how often they use their computer/laptop/ tablet. The table below highlights responses:

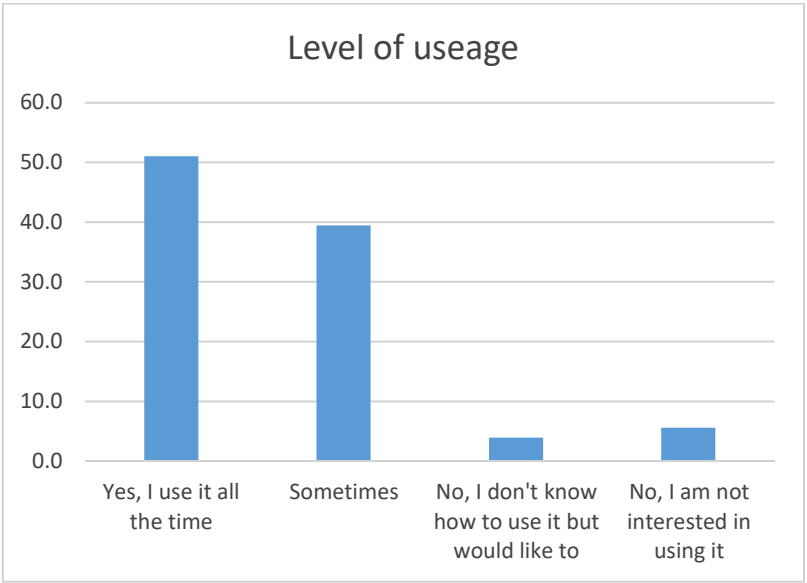


Figure 7 Frequency of computer usage, N=588

The chart shows that for respondents who do have access to a computer, 51% use it all the time and 40% use it sometimes. Almost 10% do not use their computer, more than half of which indicated that this is due to 'lack of interest'.

Source of computer:

Following discussion with peer researchers focussing on motivation and confidence of older people to join the digital community, we asked those respondents who said they had access to a computer, where they got it from. The chart below highlights the responses:

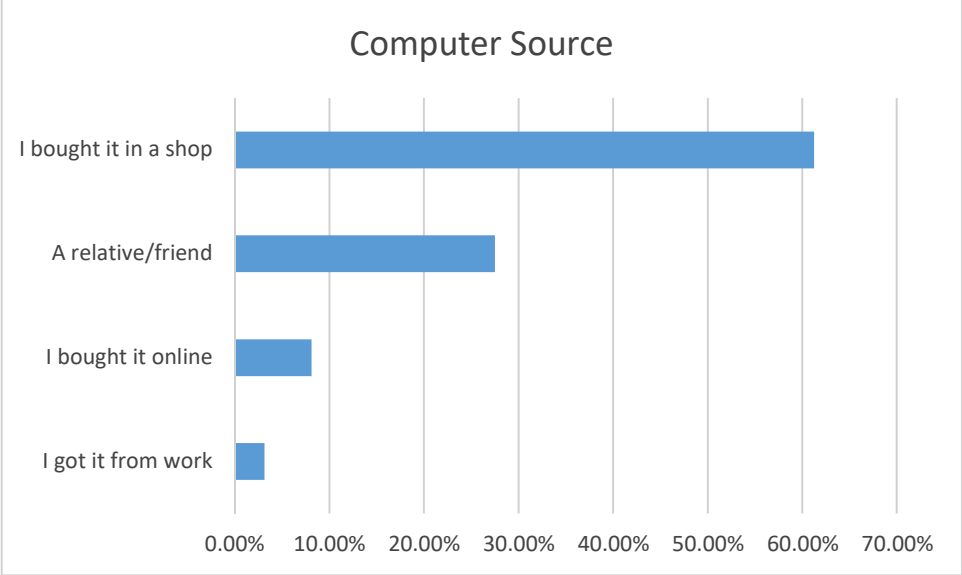


Figure 8 Source of computer

The chart highlights that the majority of respondents (over 60%) purchased their computer in a shop, followed by family or friends purchasing the computers for them (27%). Less than 10% of respondents purchased their computers online, highlighting the importance of access to shopping facilities with capacity to purchase computer equipment.

Access to another computer in residence:

In discussion with peer researchers prior to data collection, we felt it was necessary to also ask if respondents lived with other family members or residents who owned a computer to assess overall level of digital isolation/connectivity. Overall, more than 54% of respondents lived with someone else who had access to a computer. The chart below shows a cross-tabulation of whether or not these respondents who do or do not have access to a computer themselves, live with someone else who has:

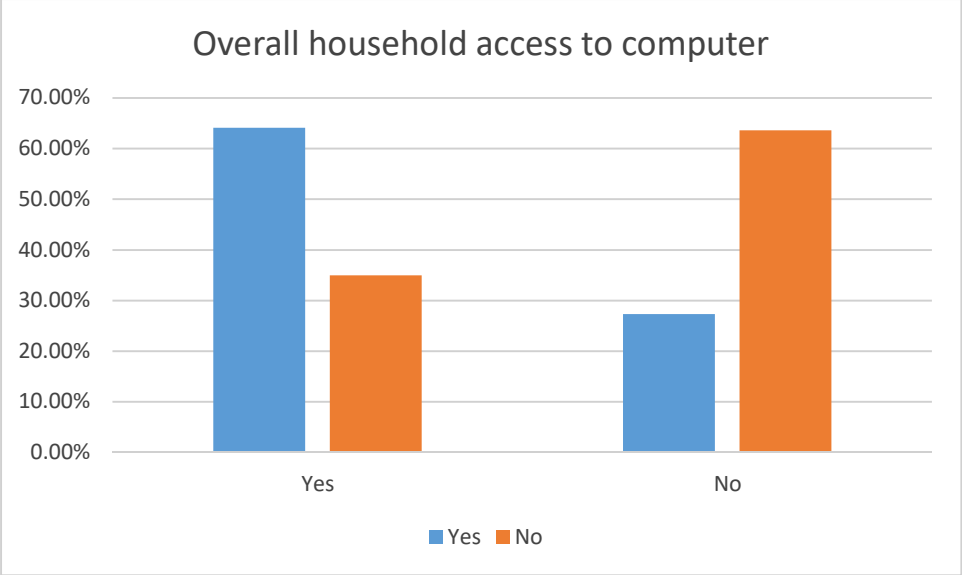


Figure 9 Comparison of computer owners living with someone else who owns a computer

The chart shows that respondents who do not own or have access to a computer are less likely to have someone else in household who has access to a computer (27% v 64%). This is consistent with the findings of the recent Tilda research on *"Internet access and use among adults aged 50 and over in Ireland: Results from Wave 5 of The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing*" which states "*data also indicates a relatively large section of the population are without home internet access. This is particularly the case for older age groups and those living alone. For these individuals, more traditional forms of communication and information distribution, in combination with ongoing family and community support, are likely to be essential"*.

Source of support for computer equipment:

We asked respondents to highlight if they need support to use their computer equipment, where do they go for that type of support. The chart below outlines the responses:

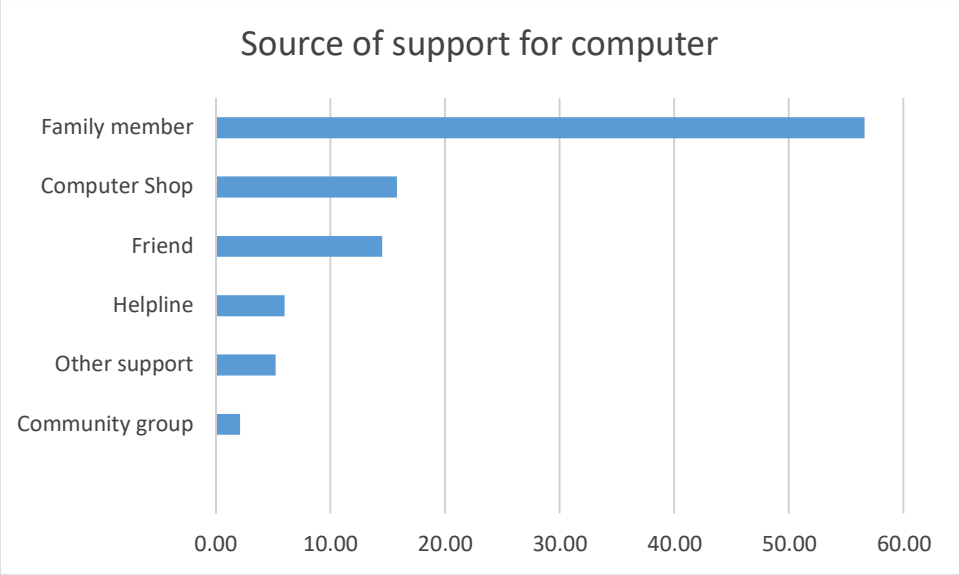


Figure 10 Source of support for computer equipment

The chart highlights that the majority of older people (56.6%) access their support from family members, followed by 16% from a computer shop and 14.5% from friends.

Computer literacy:

The 2012 report on digital exclusion by the Low Incomes Tax Reform group concluded that '*Digital exclusion is about more than not having access to a computer. It is not enough that citizens are able to access government services online – a sufficient level of digital literacy is required to be able to recognise when information is needed and to have the ability to locate, evaluate and make effective use of the online systems'*[x].

We asked respondents to self-assess their digital skillset using a Likert scale from 'very good' to 'very poor'. Based on lived experience, peer researchers asked the research coordinator to adjust this question prior to commencing the data collection phase of the research. Peer researchers suggested including a category to distinguish the proportion of older people who have no skills whatsoever in using computers, from those who would indicate 'very poor'. The chart below highlights the findings:

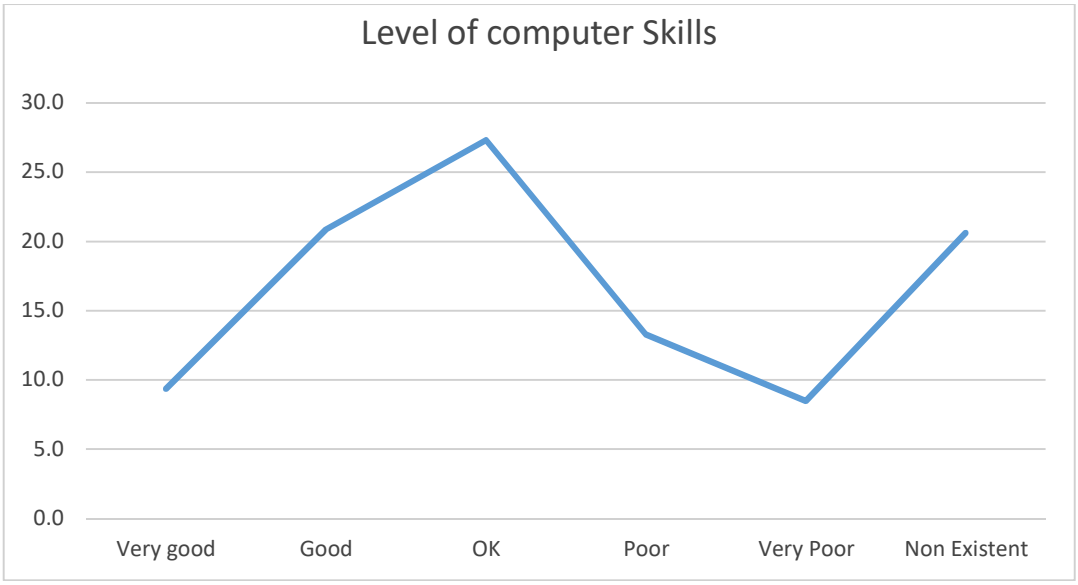


Figure 11 Level of computer skills

Further analysis shows that the level of computer skills decreases by age group. Proportion of population with 'non-existent' skills across the three age groups is:

- Respondents aged in their 60's > 12%
- Respondents aged in their 70's > 17%
- Respondents aged 80+ > 41%

There was a difference in proportion of population with 'non-existent' skills across urban and rural areas:

- Respondents living in Urban areas > 18%
- Respondents living in Rural areas > 24%

There was a significant difference in the proportion of population with 'non-existent' skills across some of the most vulnerable older communities in the five counties:

- Respondents living in nursing homes > 43%
- Respondents from an Irish Traveller background > 73%
- Respondents from a BAME background > 33%

Previous participation in computer training:

We asked respondents whether or not they had ever participated in computer training.

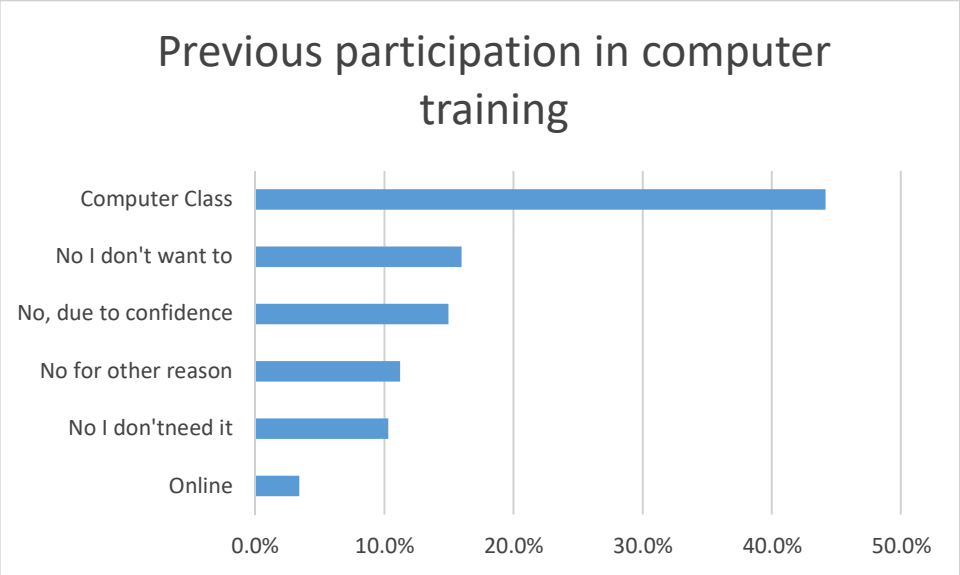
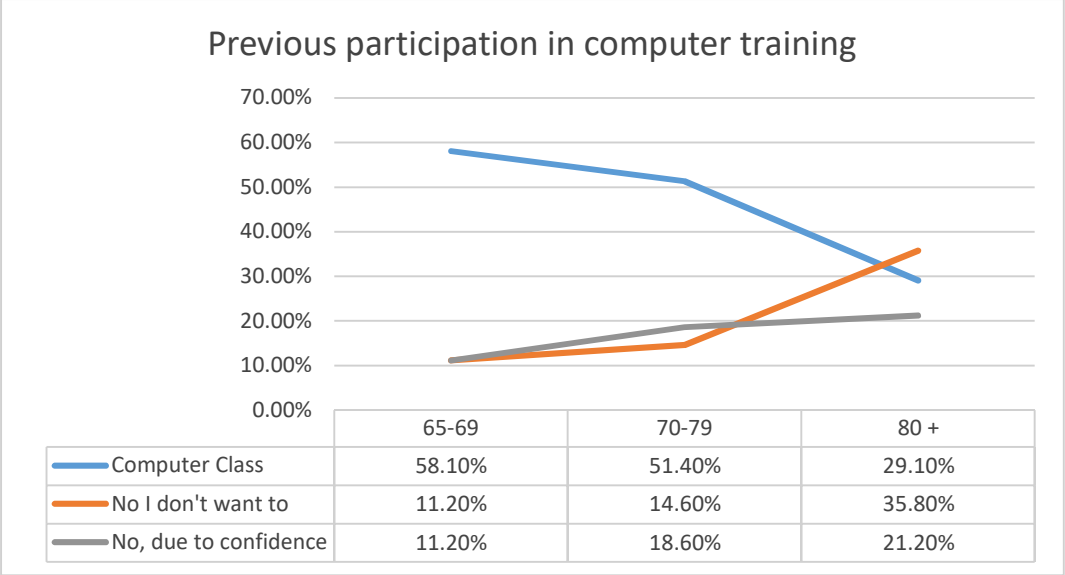


Figure 12 Previous participation in computer training

The chart above highlights that less than half (44%) had participated in computer training prior to this research. Over 52% said they had not done any training - 30% of these because they didn't want to and 28% because they didn't have confidence to attend. This should be borne in mind when planning to make computer training available to older people.



	65-69	70-79	80 +
Computer Class	58.10%	51.40%	29.10%
No I don't want to	11.20%	14.60%	35.80%
No, due to confidence	11.20%	18.60%	21.20%

Figure 13 Previous participation in computer training

The chart above highlights a significant difference in the age profile of respondents who had previously participated in computer training. 11% of respondents aged in their 60's indicated that they would not want to participate in computer training, compared to almost 36% in their 80's, while almost twice the proportion of those in their 80's felt they lacked the confidence necessary to participate in computer training when compared to respondents aged in their late 60's.

There was no significant difference in previous participation in computer training across respondents living in either rural or urban areas.

A third of those living in a care/nursing home, and those from ethnic minority backgrounds had previously attended a computer class, while 10% of those form an Irish Traveller background had completed training.

Reason why respondents do not have a computer:

Research completed by the Institute of Peruvian Studies (IEP), in 2007 defined individuals who do not use ICTs due to lack of services or lack of use abilities as '**digitally poor'**[xi]. The study concluded that digitally poor individuals may be those who do not use ICTs due to lack of services or lack of use abilities. It also indicated that demand for a good arises from previous knowledge and a subjective evaluation of the advantages (benefits) and disadvantages (costs). i.e., those who do not know the service or who do not have buying power will not have demand.

In this section and further sections of this report we outline older people's access, ownership and understanding of computer, internet and mobile phone access to assess the extent of 'digitally poor' population amongst older people in Ireland.

The chart below highlights the reasons indicated by respondents for not owning a computer of any type:

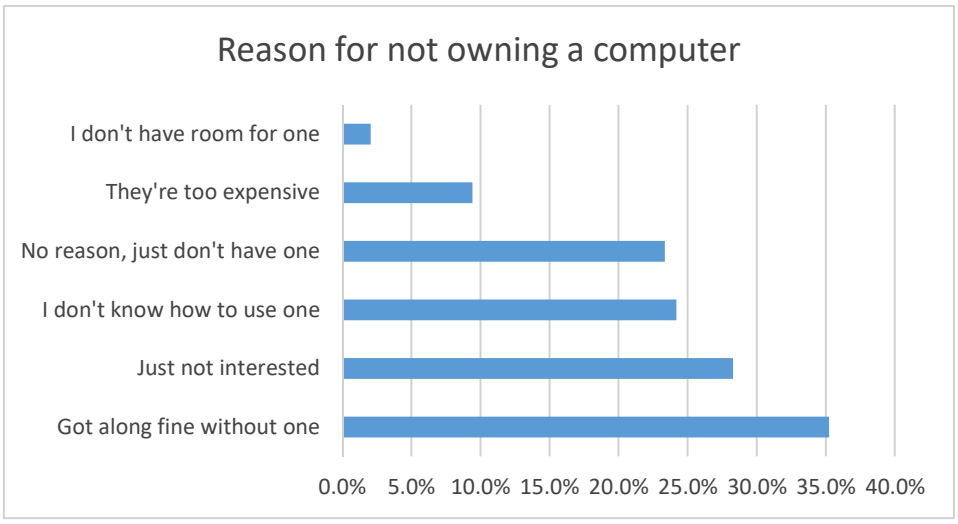


Figure 14 Reason for not owning a computer

When focussing on the reasons given above by respondents, we can observe that there are three categories of reasons why respondents indicated that they did not own a computer.

- **Motivation -** More than 63% said they did not have a computer as they had got along without one fine without one for most of their lives, or were just not interested in owning one.
- **Knowledge** - Less than a quarter indicated that they do not have a computer as they do not know how to use one
- **Access** - Just over 10% put it down to physical barriers – i.e. expense, or lack of room

Further analysis shows that the determining factors of computer ownership were similar across area of location (urban/rural) and gender.

Significant differences were observed within the age profile and background:

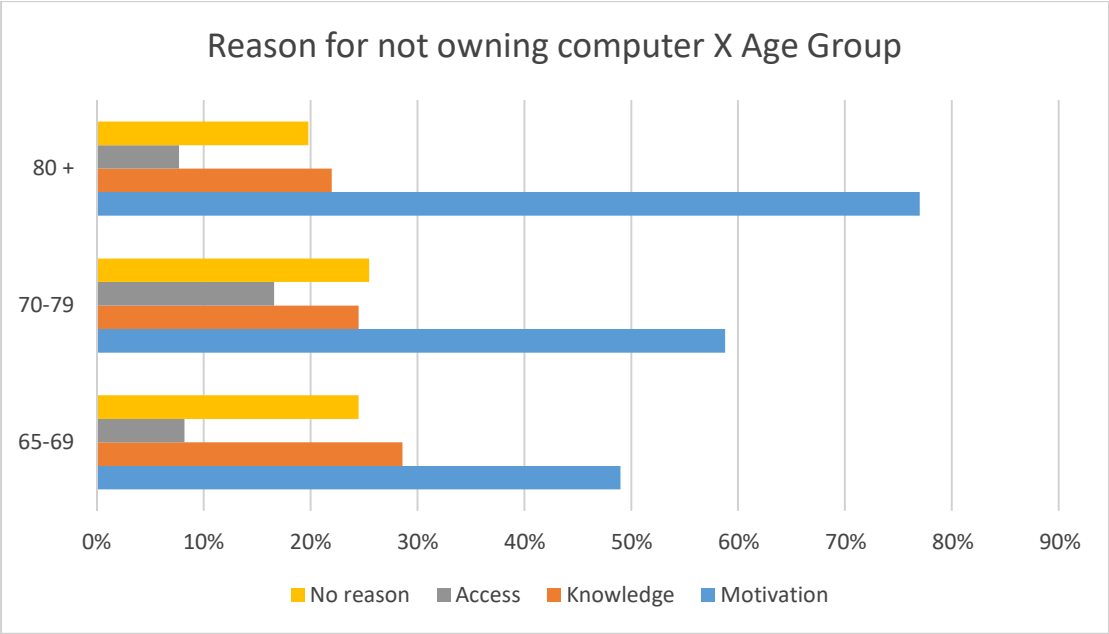


Figure 15 Reason for not owning a computer by age group

The chart above highlights that lack of motivation or interest as a factor determining ownership is stronger within respondents aged in their 80's.

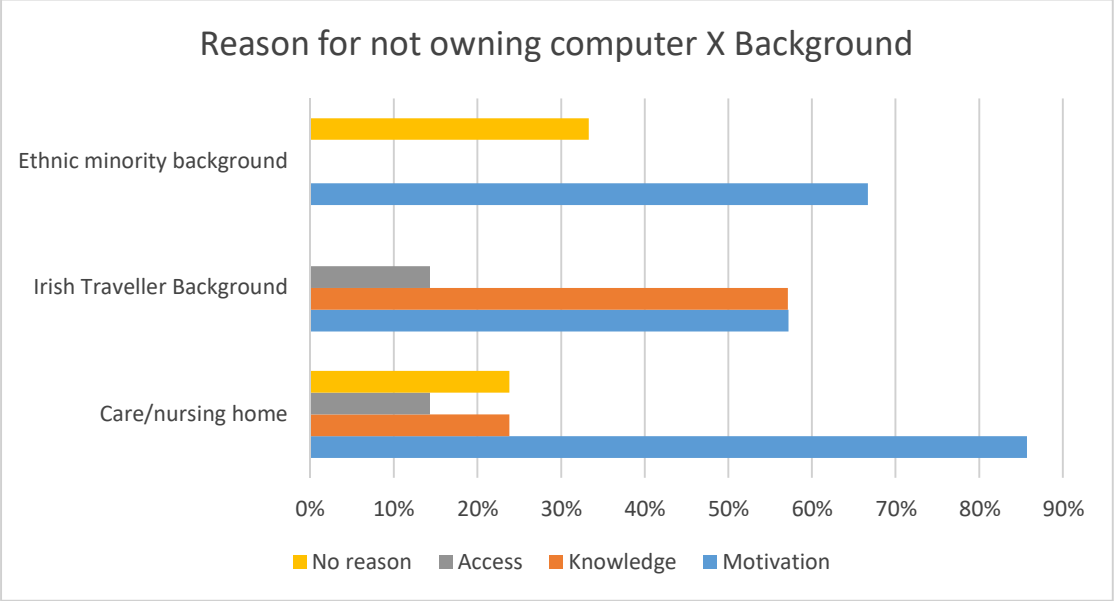


Figure 16 Reason for not owning a computer by background and care/nursing home

The chart above highlights that lack of motivation was particularly high for respondents living in a nursing home, which may be connected to age profile as demonstrated in Figure 8.

While some care must be taken with the analysis for respondents identifying with an Irish Traveller background (due to relatively small numbers), it would appear that lack of knowledge and motivation were equally strong determining factors in this population group.

5.3 Access to Internet:

This section of the research focused on access to the internet and connectivity throughout the five counties.

Research citied in the literature review from the Centre for Better Ageing in UK, highlighted that '*people in later life stand to benefit hugely from being online – to improve health and wellbeing, save money and keep in touch with family and friends. However, there remains a core of people in later life who are not online and have no intention of getting online'*[xii].

When asked whether or not older people had internet access at home ('supply side' of digital inclusion), 77% indicated they have access to the internet. 83% of these respondents indicated that they have broadband, 4% use a dongle connection, and 1% use a dial up connection.

The chart below illustrates the level of internet access for respondents living in each of the five counties participating in the research:

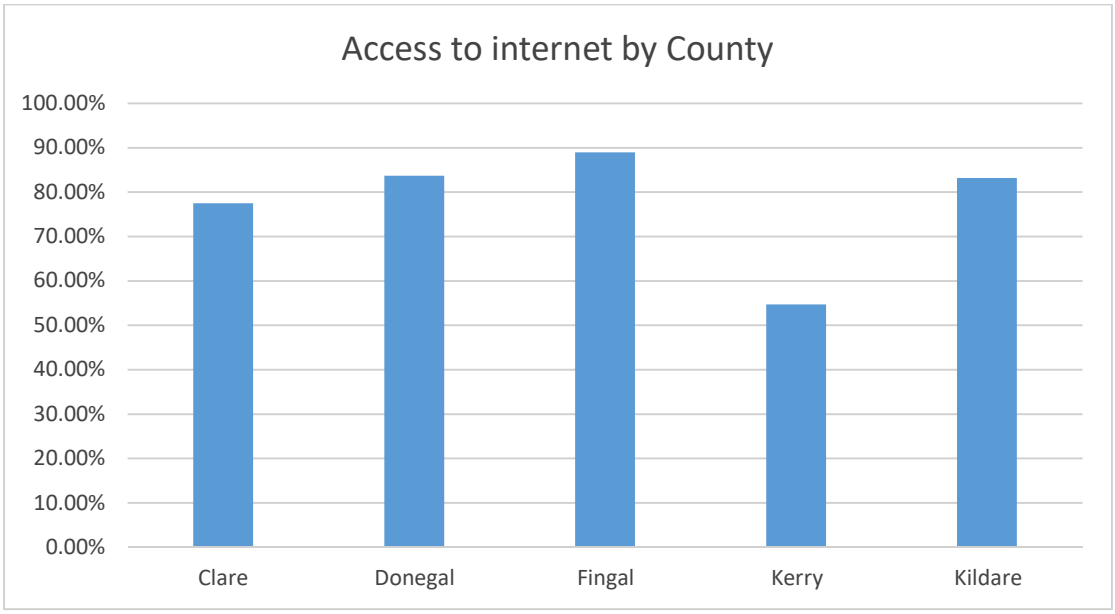


Figure 17 Access to the internet by county

The chart highlights that the highest level of access to the internet are in Fingal, Donegal and Kildare. Just over half of the respondents in Kerry (54.7%) have access to the internet at home.

Internet access across various communities/population groups:

Further analysis shows that the level of internet access decreases by age group. Ownership levels across the three age groups are:

- Respondents aged in their 60's > 87%
- Respondents aged in their 70's > 79%
- Respondents aged 80+ > 58%

There was also a difference in access across urban and rural areas:

- Respondents living in Urban areas > 79%
- Respondents living in Rural areas > 72%

There was a significant difference in ownership across some of the most vulnerable older communities in the five counties:

- Respondents living in nursing homes > 59%
- Respondents from an Irish Traveller background > 29%
- Respondents from a BAME background > 41%

While numbers of Irish Travellers interviewed for this research were small given population sample, the findings are consistent with research completed in England on Traveller and Gypsy populations[xiii] which concluded that, only 38% of Gypsies and Travellers (33% if housed) had a household internet connection, compared to 86% of the general population, and only two in five Gypsies and Travellers surveyed said that they use the internet daily, compared to four out of five of the general population.

There was no discernible significant difference in ownership across genders.

Internet reliability:

Thee chart below highlights reliability of respondents' internet connection:

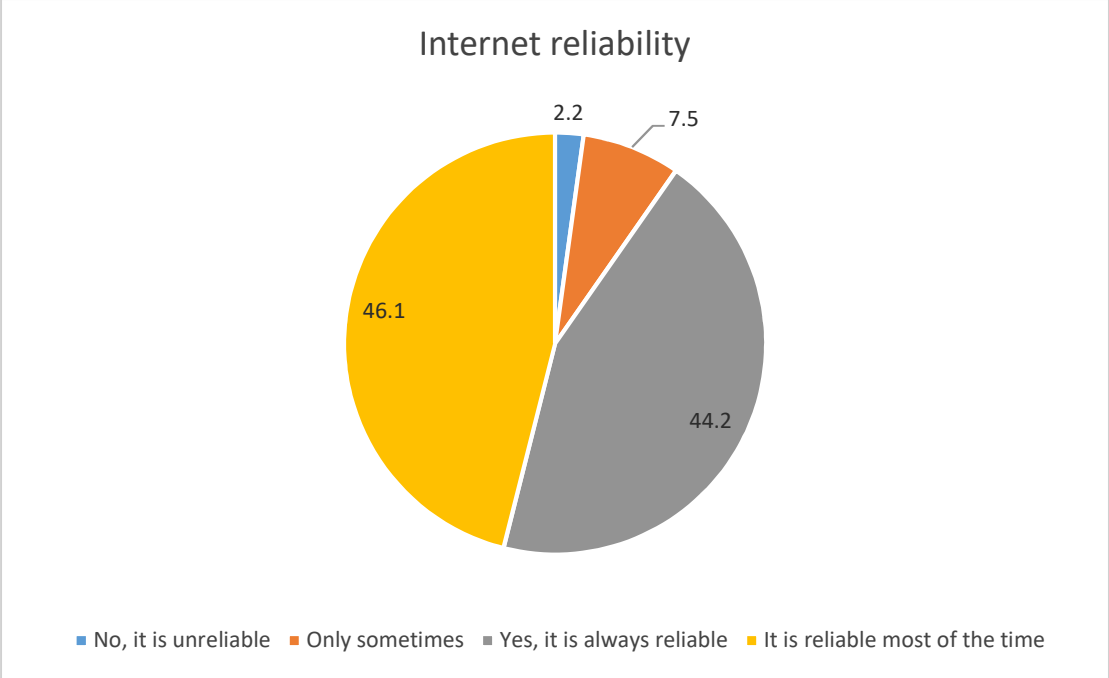
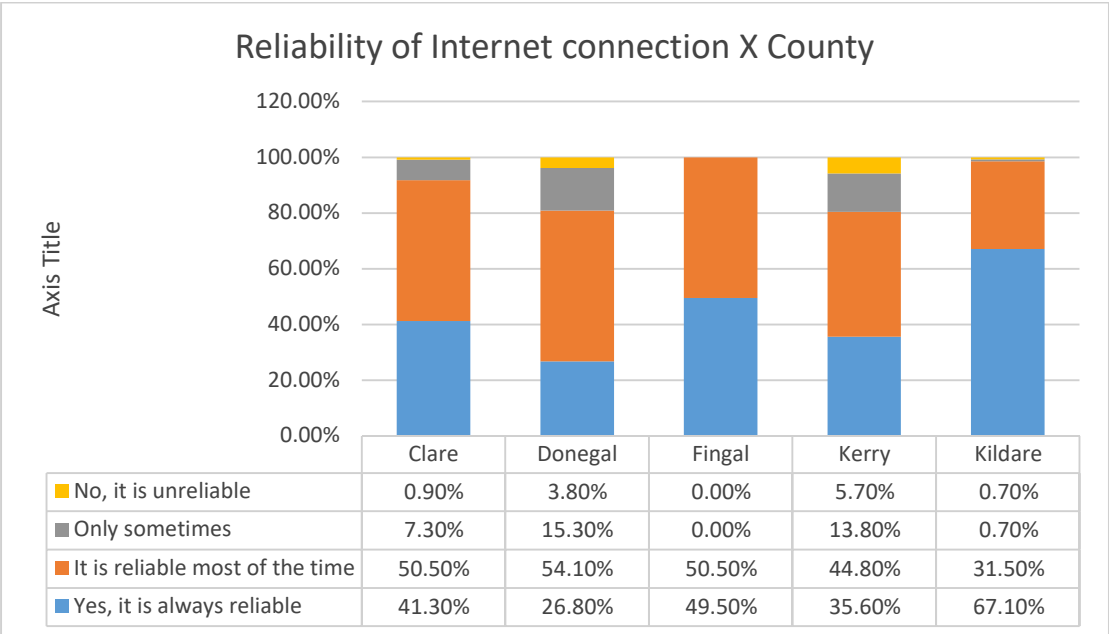


Figure 18 Reliability of respondents' internet connection

It shows that almost half indicated their internet was reliable all of the time (44%) and almost half indicated most of the time (46%).

Further analysis shows varying levels of reliability across geographies included in the research. In general, reliability in urban areas was higher with 53% indicating their connection was reliable all of the time, compared to 27% in rural areas. The chart below also shows variation across the five counties included in the research:



	Clare	Donegal	Fingal	Kerry	Kildare
No, it is unreliable	0.90%	3.80%	0.00%	5.70%	0.70%
Only sometimes	7.30%	15.30%	0.00%	13.80%	0.70%
It is reliable most of the time	50.50%	54.10%	50.50%	44.80%	31.50%
Yes, it is always reliable	41.30%	26.80%	49.50%	35.60%	67.10%

Figure 19 Reliability of internet connection by County

The chart highlights lower level of reliability in Counties Donegal, Kerry and Clare, with 26%, 36% and 41% respectively experiencing reliable connection at all times.

Almost 20% of residents in Kerry and 19% Donegal found their internet connection to be either unreliable all of the time or reliable 'sometimes'.

Speed of internet:

Just over half of respondents (51%) indicated that using their mobile phone signal is much easier than accessing broadband for using the internet, with a higher proportion of respondents living in rural areas experiencing this issue (57%). A small percentage (1.4%) indicating they cannot get any level of internet signal where they live, all of whom live in rural areas.

The chart below highlights the percentage of respondents who experienced faster mobile phone connection than broadband across all five counties:

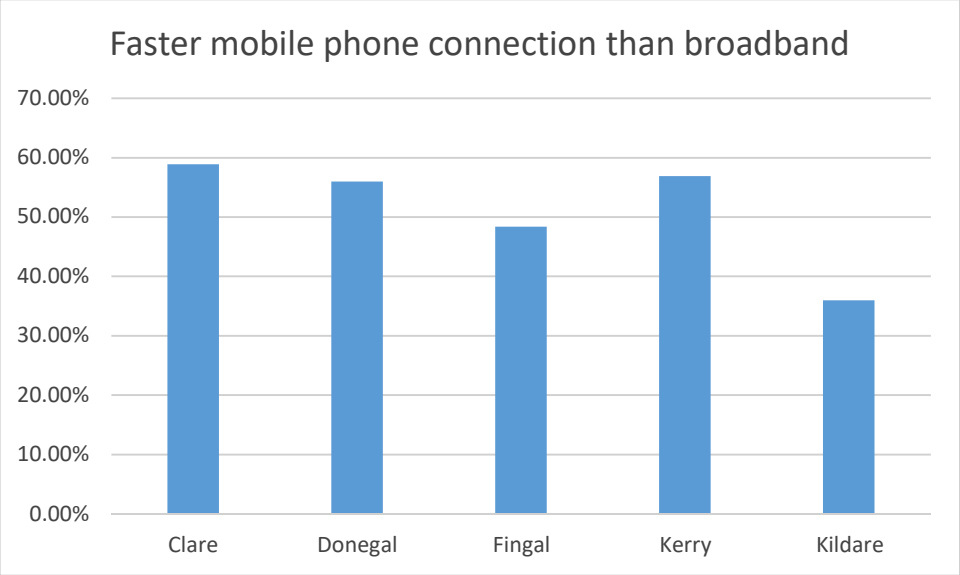


Figure 20 Faster mobile phone connection than broadband

Internet usage:

More than 79% of respondents indicate that they do use the internet, 13% indicated that they do not know how to, and 8% indicated that they don't want to use the internet.

Internet access across various communities/population groups:

Further analysis shows that the level of internet usage decreases by age group. Usage across the three age groups are:

- Respondents aged in their 60's > 87%
- Respondents aged in their 70's > 79%
- Respondents aged 80+ > 58%

There was also a difference in usage across urban and rural areas:

- Respondents living in Urban areas > 82%
- Respondents living in Rural areas > 73%

There was a significant difference in usage across some of the most vulnerable older communities in the five counties:

- Respondents living in nursing homes > 42%
- Respondents from Irish Traveller background 0%
- Respondents from a BAME background > 100%

There was no discernible significant usage in ownership across genders.

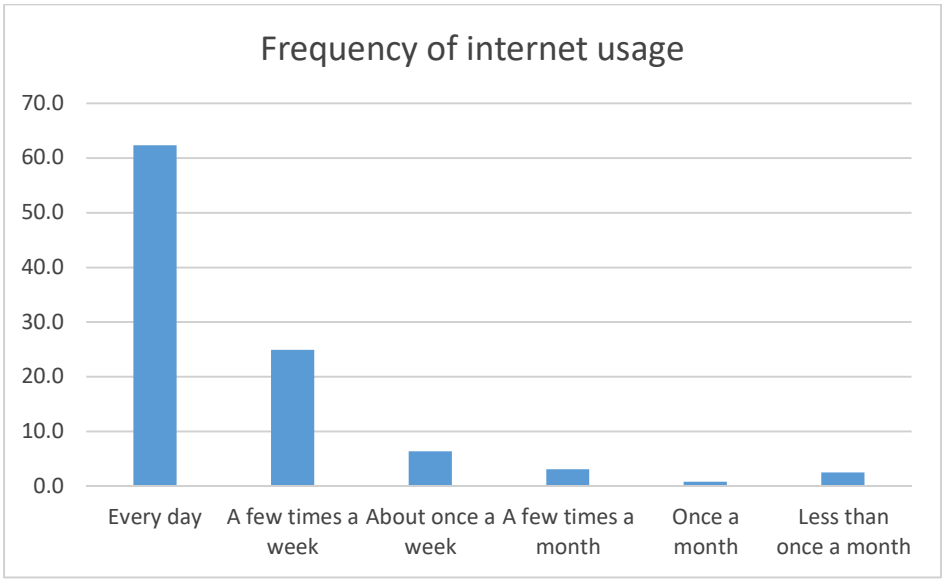


Figure 21 Frequency of internet usage

Skills in using internet:

As with computer access, we asked respondents to indicate what level of skills they had in using the internet using a Likert scale from 'very good' to 'very poor'. Based on lived experience, peer researchers asked the research coordinator to adjust this question prior to commencing the data collection phase of the research to include a category to distinguish the proportion of older people who have no skills whatsoever in using the internet, from those who would indicate 'very poor'. The chart below highlights the findings:

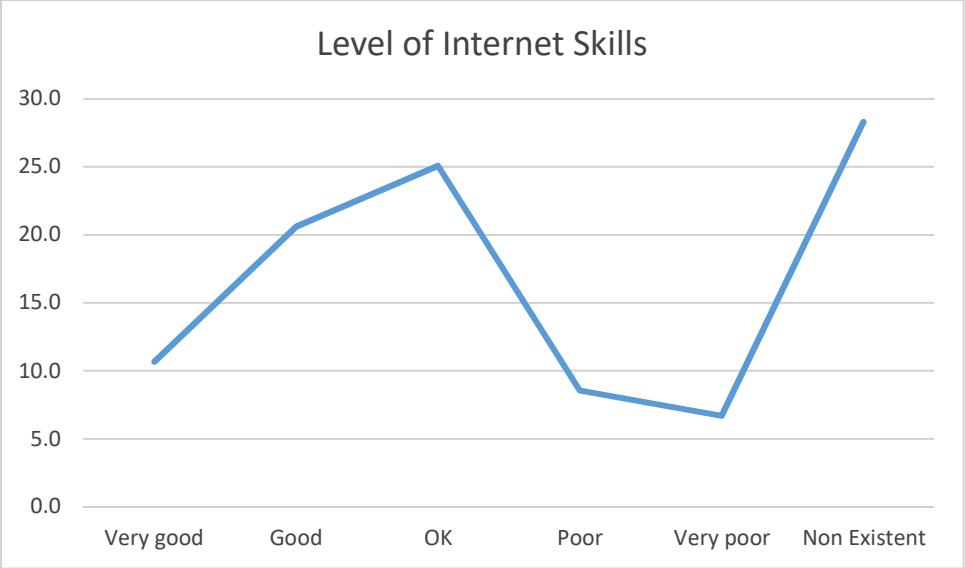


Figure 22 Level of internet usage skills

The chart above illustrates a significant proportion of respondents who feel that their skillset in using the internet is 'non-existent' (28%).

Further analysis shows that the level of skillset in using the internet decreases by age group. Proportion of population with 'non-existent' skills across the three age groups is:

- Respondents aged in their 60's > 14%
- Respondents aged in their 70's > 27%
- Respondents aged 80+ > 53%

There was a difference in proportion of population with 'non-existent' skills across urban and rural areas:

- Respondents living in Urban areas > 24%
- Respondents living in Rural areas > 36%

There was a significant difference in the proportion of population with 'non-existent' skills across some of the most vulnerable older communities in the five counties:

- Respondents living in nursing homes > 57%
- Respondents from Irish Traveller background > 85%
- Respondents from a BAME background > 33%

Reason for using internet:

Several studies have defined the concept of *accomplished functionality* as the uses given to technology - i.e. distinguishing from the mere ownership of devices, reception of information to full levels of interaction involved in using electronic forms of purchases, as well as the creation of content.

The chart below highlights respondents' 'functionality' extracted from using the internet:

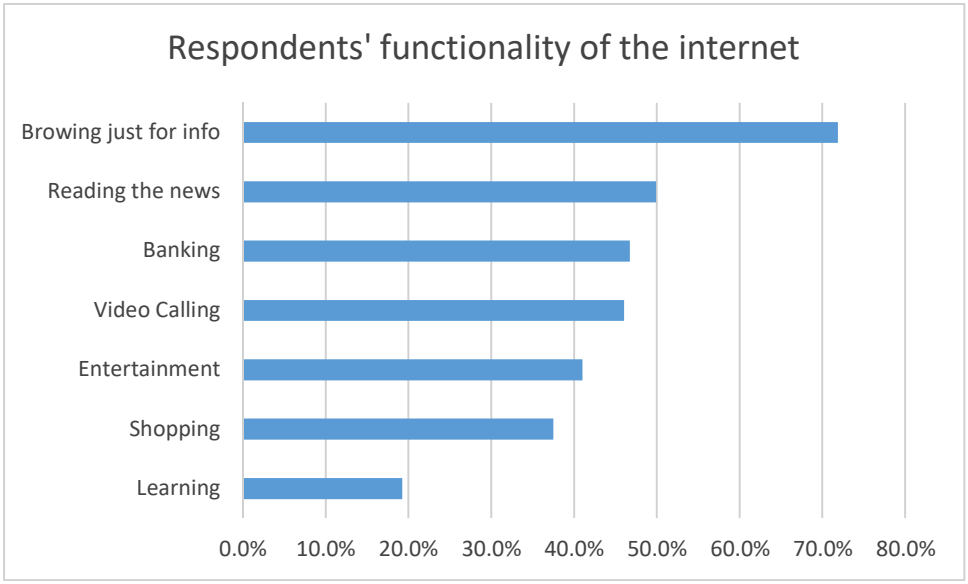


Figure 23 Functionality of internet

The majority of respondents (72%) indicated that they are using the internet to browse for information, followed by 50% reading the news and less than half 47% using the internet for online banking.

Online banking was the subject of much discussion at the training sessions with peer researchers, in respect of local knowledge that many older people are reluctant to use the internet for online banking for fear of losing money or becoming victims of 'scamming' activity. Given recent moves across Ireland to close many local banking services (including access to cash withdrawals, bank lodgements etc.) many older people could face digital financial exclusion, i.e. they could be adversely affected by the withdrawal of services in the face of increasing reliance by banks on online services. This can make it far more difficult for older people to maintain their financial independence and could increase exclusion.

Looking at online banking in more detail, we can see that there is a significant decrease in the percentage of people who access banking services online as age group increases:

- Respondents aged in their 60's > 57%
- Respondents aged in their 70's > 42%
- Respondents aged 80+ > 29%

There was a slight difference in proportion of population accessing online banking services across urban and rural areas.

- Respondents living in Urban areas > 49%
- Respondents living in Rural areas > 42%

There was a significant difference in the proportion of population accessing online banking services across some of the most vulnerable older communities in the five counties:

- Respondents living in nursing homes > 12%
- Respondents from Irish Traveller background > 0%
- Respondents from a BAME background > 33%

Using the internet more often:

For respondents who already access the internet, the chart below reasons they indicated that would stop them using the internet more than they already do:

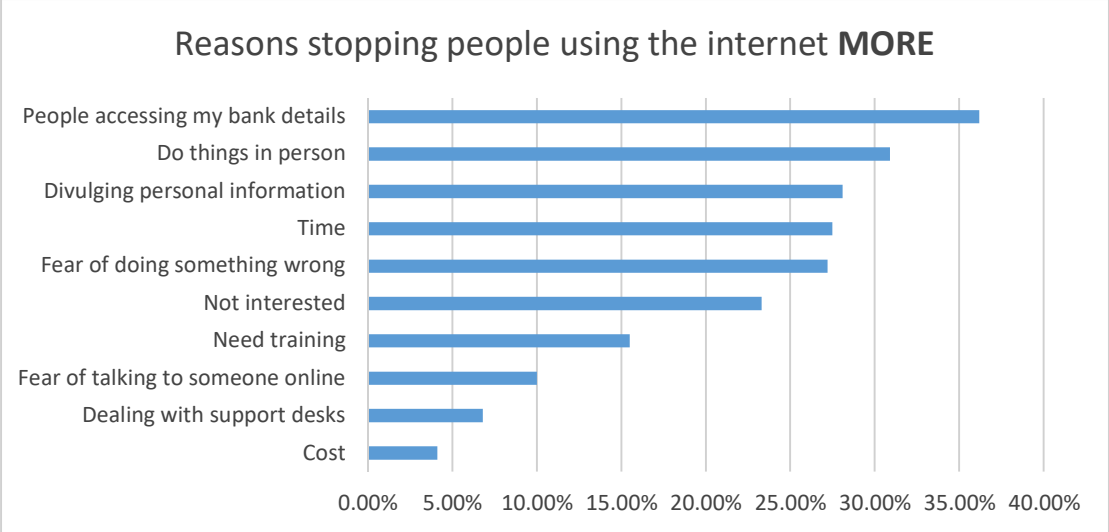


Figure 24 Reasons stopping people using the internet more than they do already

The chart above illustrates that a significant proportion of respondents were reluctant to use the internet more than they already do, due to fears around divulging personal information or fear of doing something wrong. These were both significant concerns expressed by the peer researchers both before and after completing the data collection phase of this research. While only 15% of respondents indicated that they need more training to help them use the internet, looking in more detail we see:

- 36% of respondents indicated that the reason preventing them from using the internet more than they do already is fear of people accessing their bank details.
- 28% indicated that they are afraid of divulging personal information while using the internet.
- 27% indicated that they were afraid of doing something wrong while using the internet.

Cost of using the internet was a concern for a small percentage of respondents (4%).

Reason why respondents do not have access to the internet:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) in the UK estimates that around 2 million UK households don't have access to the internet and as many as 2.7 million adults haven't used the internet in the past three months[xiv].

The Central Statistics Office in Ireland suggested that in 2020, 92% of households had an internet connection, an increase of one percentage point since 2019. Data for 2020 indicated that fixed broadband was the most common type of internet access in the household (85% compared with 42% using mobile broadband)[xv]. Fixed broadband connection is highest in the Dublin region at 92%, compared with the West and Border regions, at 79% and 73% respectively.

Lack of internet access was an issue before the Covid-19 pandemic, but it has become more critical.

The chart below highlights the main reasons why respondents do not have access to the internet:

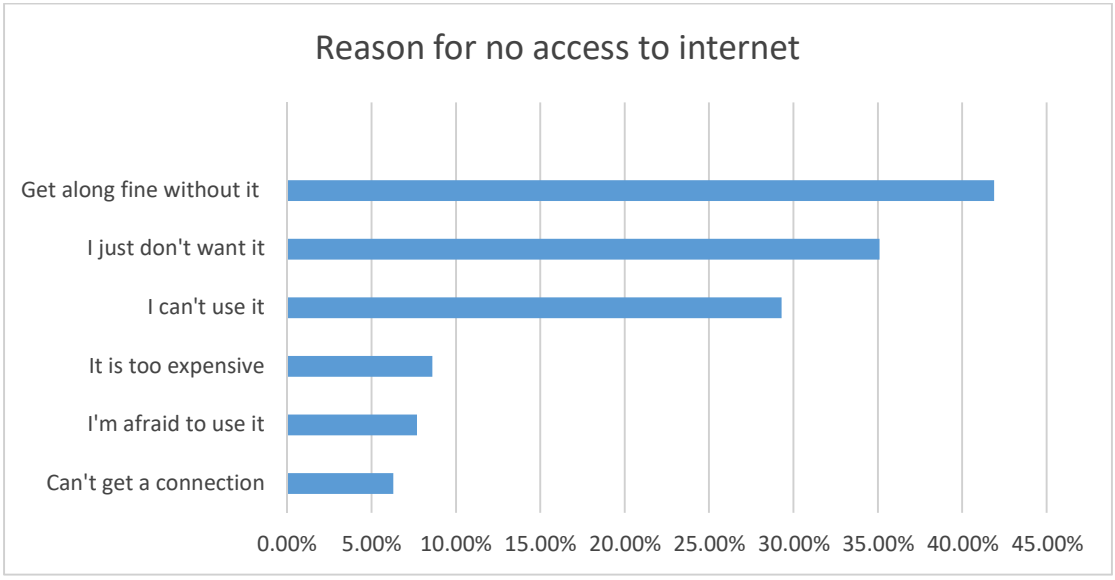


Figure 25 Reason for no access to internet

When focussing on the reasons given above by respondents, we can observe that there are three categories of reasons why respondents indicated that they do not have access to the internet:

- **Motivation** – 60% of respondents said they did not have internet because they had got along without it all their life, or just didn't want it
- **Knowledge** – Over a quarter put it down to not knowing how to use it or being afraid
- **Access** - 11% put it down to physical barriers – i.e. expense, or inability to get connection

This is consistent with findings from the Central Statistics Office Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Household Survey 2020[xvi], which concluded that in 2020, of the 9% of households with no internet access in Ireland, 55% of these households reported that the reason for no access was that they 'Do not need' internet. Just over three in every ten (32%) reported Lack of skills as a reason for not having household internet access. Equipment costs too high and Access costs too high were cited by 19% and 18% of households respectively as the reason for not having a household internet connection, while 7% stated Privacy/security concerns. Nearly one in ten (9%) of these households reported Broadband internet not available in the area.

We asked those who do not have internet connection, what would encourage them to get online and use the internet. The chart below shows their responses:

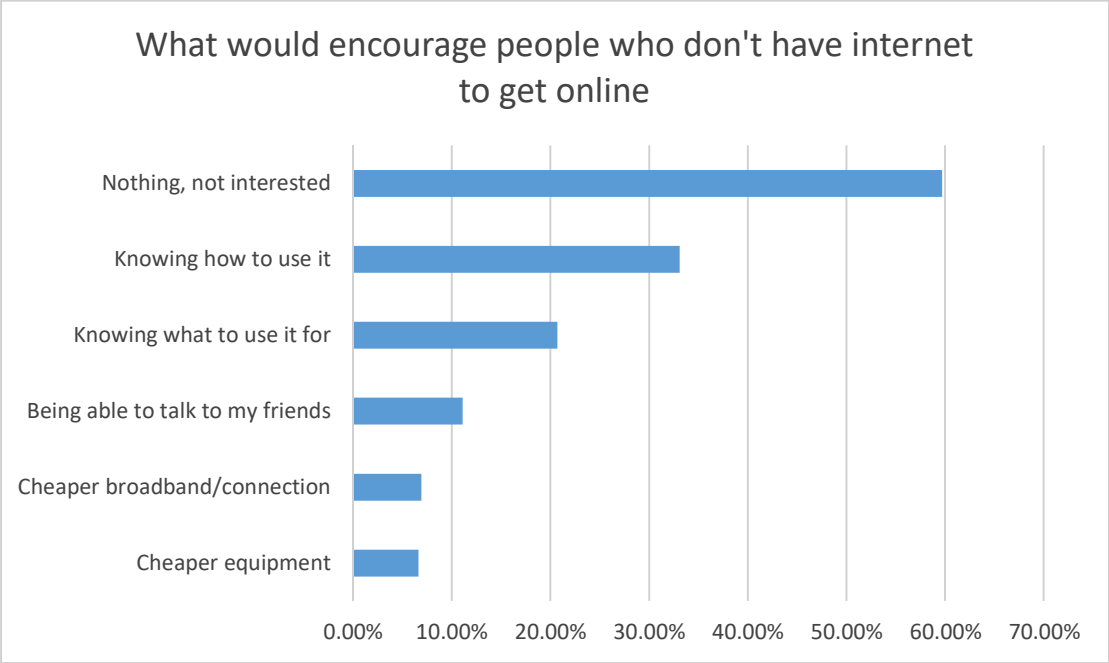


Figure 26 What would encourage people who don't have internet to get online

5.4 Access to Mobile Phone Equipment and Connectivity:

This section of the research focused on access to mobile phone equipment and connectivity throughout the five counties. It should be noted that this section of the research was one which was treated sensitively by peer researchers given their experience of concerns amongst their peers around scams and fear of accessing personal details.

When asked whether or not they had access to a mobile phone, 91% of respondents indicated that they currently own a mobile phone.

The chart below illustrates the level of mobile phone ownership for respondents living in each of the five counties participating in the research:

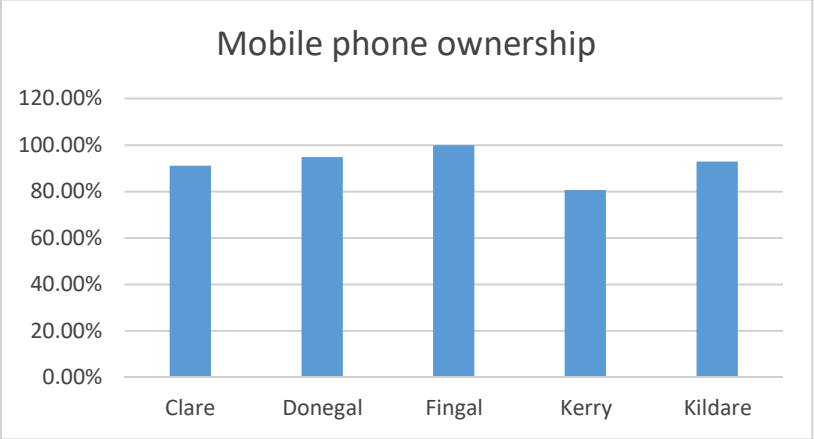


Figure 27 Mobile phone ownership

The chart above shows highest levels of ownership in Fingal and lowest levels in Kerry.

Mobile phone ownership across various communities/population groups:

Further analysis shows that the level of mobile phone ownership decreases by age group. Ownership levels across the three age groups are:

- Respondents aged in their 60's > 95%
- Respondents aged in their 70's > 91%
- Respondents aged 80+ > 81%

There was also a difference in access across urban and rural areas:

- Respondents living in Urban areas > 95%
- Respondents living in Rural areas > 85%

There was a significant difference in ownership across some of the most vulnerable older communities in the five counties:

- Respondents living in nursing homes > 84%
- Respondents from Irish Traveller background 69%
- Respondents from a BAME background > 69%

There was no discernible significant difference in ownership across genders.

Mobile phone use

Further analysis showed that more than 99% actually use the phone, 49% for 'basic' functionality, and 51% 'smart phone' functionality.

The majority of respondents use the phone for basic uses including making phone calls, sending and receiving text message sand for friends and family to contact them:

- making phone calls 97%
- for friends and family to contact me 88%
- sending and receiving text messages 76%

The chart below highlights the additional functionality accessed by respondents who own mobile phones across the five counties.

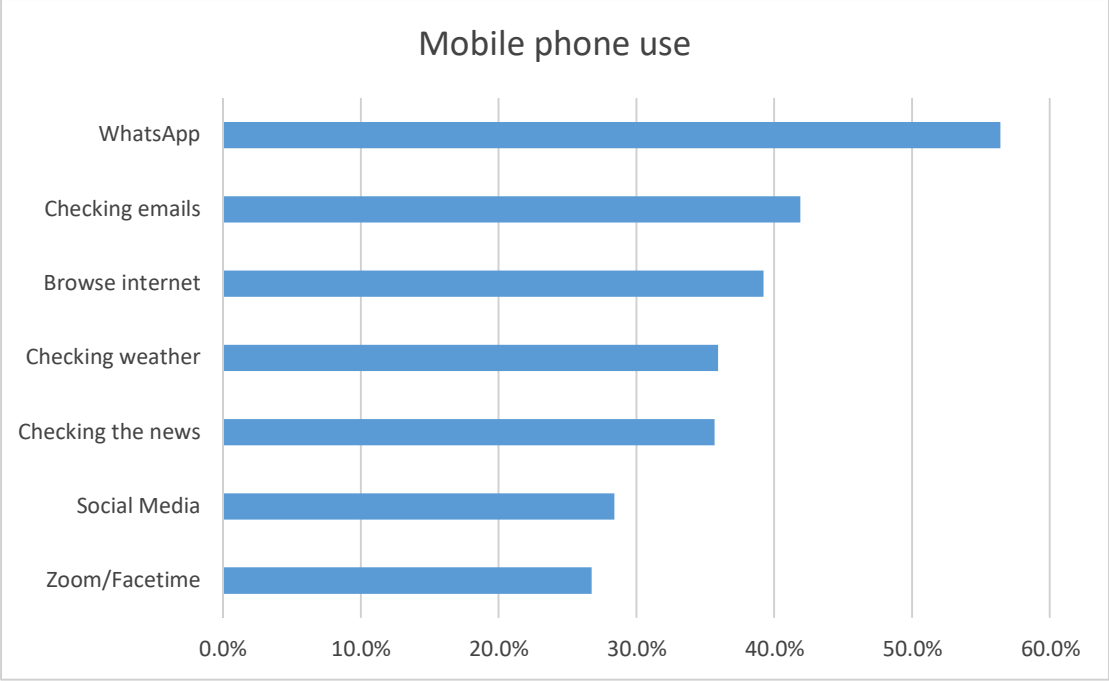


Figure 28 Functionality accessed by mobile phone owners

Other uses specified by respondents included the following:

- Alarms, calendars, appointments
- Bridge
- Calculator
- Check the time
- Checking 'Done Deal'
- Checking the tides
- Church services
- Covid App
- Funerals on line
- Gaming
- Golf bookings
- GPay,
- Horse racing
- Confirming hospital appointments
- Linked in
- Marketing
- Online betting
- Photos
- Playing games
- Reading
- Spotify
- Viber
- YouTube

Skillset in using mobile phone:

The chart below highlights the level of skillset in using a mobile phone. As per the previous two sections of this report, we included a category for 'non-existent'

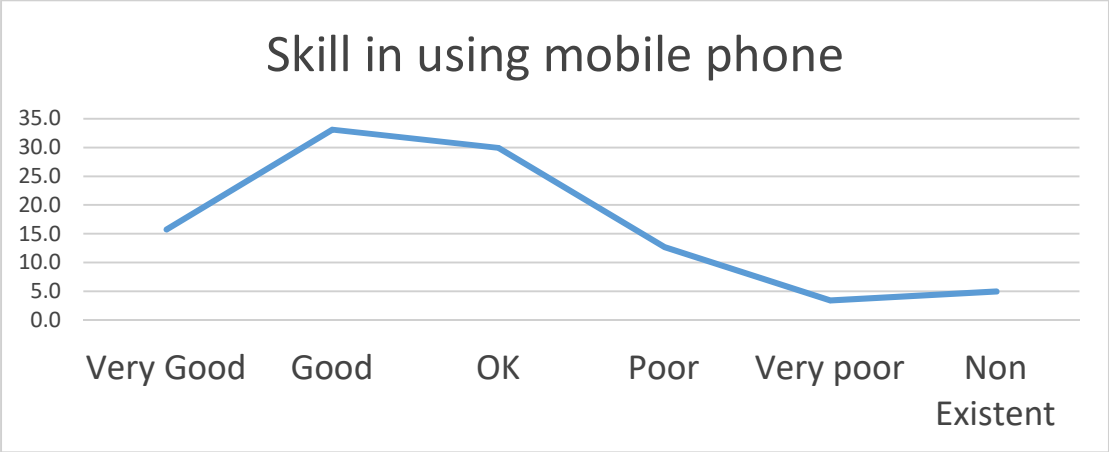


Figure 29 Skillset in using mobile phone

The chart highlights relatively high levels of proficiency is using a mobile phone. It should be noted however that in addition to 49% of respondents indicating they using the phone for basic functionality only, when asked to specify what functionality they actually use on the phone, many did discuss with the peer researchers that they use it more for getting messages and phone calls than actually making calls and messaging themselves.

Reason why respondents do not own a mobile phone:

Less than 10% of respondents indicated that they currently do not own a mobile phone. Of those who indicated that they do not have a mobile phone, 56% live with someone else who does and 41% indicated that no one else in their residence owns a mobile phone.

The chart below highlights the main reasons why respondents do not own a phone:

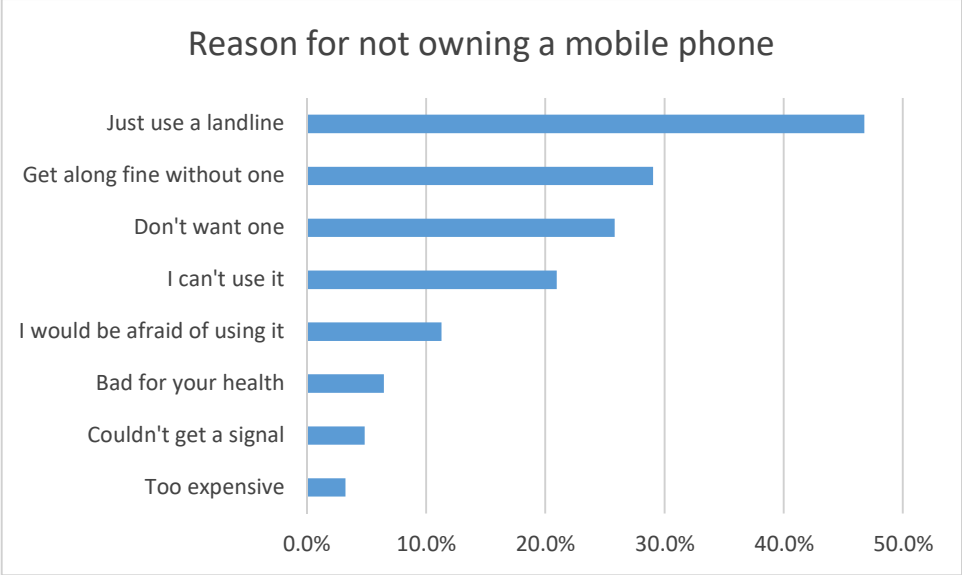


Figure 30 Reason for not owning a mobile phone

Similar to computer and internet access, we can observe that there are three categories of reasons why respondents indicated that they do not own a mobile phone:

- **Motivation** – Almost 70% of respondents said they did not have a phone as they use the landline, had got along without one fine, or were just don't want one (percentage different in table as MR)
- **Knowledge** - Less than a quarter said they simply did not know how to use one or were afraid to use them
- **Access** - 8% cited physical barriers – i.e. expense, or inability to get signal

The chart below shows some further analysis of reason for no phone ownership cross tabulated by age profile.

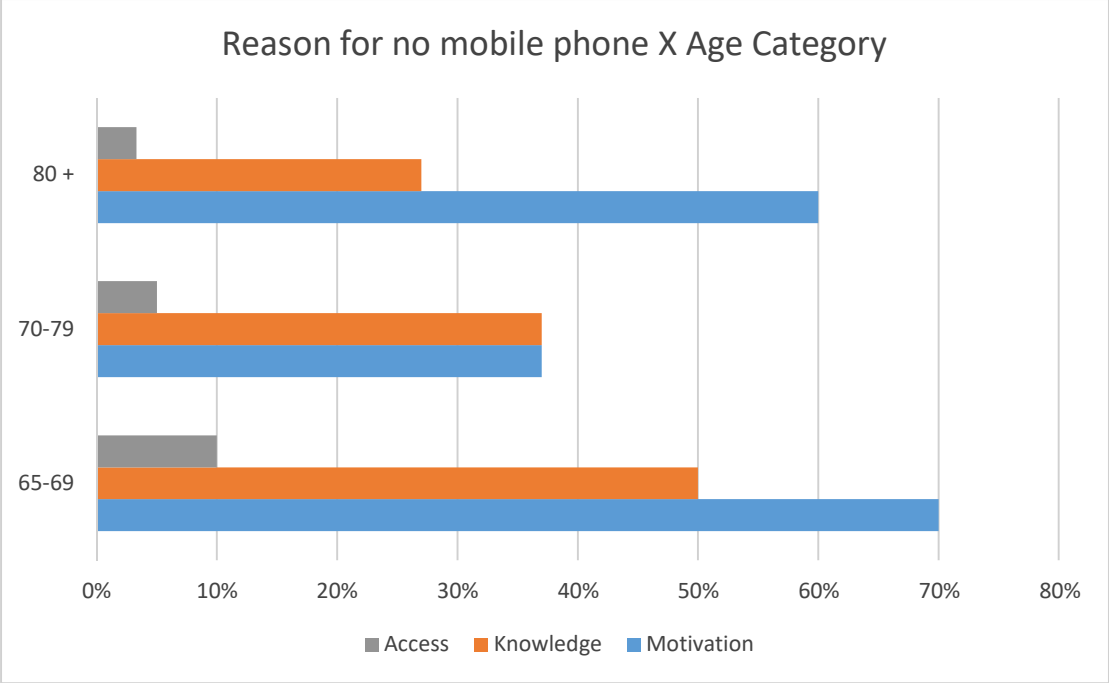


Figure 31 Reason for no mobile phone cross tabulated with age profile

The chart shows that motivation is again the main reason for lack of ownership. It is worth noting the following:

- Issues of 'access' to mobile phone ownership were relatively low. 10% of respondents in their 60's indicated that they do not own mobile phones as they could not get a signal in their area (all located in Kerry and Kildare).
- Motivation is the main reason across respondents aged in their 60's and 80's, but for different reasons. Those who are aged in their 60's indicated that they simply do not want to have a mobile phone. Those aged in their 80's indicated that they do not have one as they got along fine without it all of their life.

Section 9 Recommendations:

The following recommendations are made based on research completed throughout the various phases of this assignment:

1. Make PPI standard practice for research and action planning to address digital exclusion. Including peer researchers in this project enabled a more nuanced understanding of the complex range of interrelating factors driving digital exclusion for older people throughout Ireland.

2. Focus on motivation to access to digital infrastructure at both policy and practice levels. This may well require highlighting the benefits of digital connectivity, rather than focussing on skills development as the traditional entry point for new users – e.g. to increase health and wellbeing, save money through online banking and to keep in touch with friends and family. Highlight other influencing factors identified by older people for increasing online use for example, keeping up to date with and participating in sporting/club activities, church, news, etc.

3. Focus on motivation/end user benefit across all three aspects of the research for computers, mobile phone and broadband ownership.

4. Focus efforts on motivation for computer ownership to older people aged over 80 years.

5. Focus training for respondents aged in their 70's. Promotion of basic training may require inclusion of and focussed promotion on confidence building components to encourage new entrants to take first steps to attend.

6. Provide training for those who already do use the internet, to strengthen their confidence in protecting personal information and increasing confidence and skills on using the internet safely. This will require shifting focus away from training on provision of basic digital skills, towards enabling people to do the things they need and want to online.

7. Provide focussed computer training for older people from the Irish Traveller community. Policy makers should consider the digital exclusion faced by Irish Traveller and BAME communities when carrying out Equality Impact Assessments.

8. Consider targeting internet skills training to rural residents to bridge the gap in capacity between rural and urban residents and mitigate against financial and social isolation in rural areas.

9. Consider specific measures to increase confidence in/address barriers to accessing online banking facilities, and/or lobbying for retention of physical banking facilities for older people.

10. Less than 10% of respondents purchased their computers online, highlighting the importance of access to physical shopping facilities selling computer equipment.

11. A significant proportion of respondents indicated that they simply do not want to engage in online services or connectivity. Essential government or financial services which take a 'digital first/digital only' approach should continue to ensure that other options are available to older people who are experiencing digital exclusion. Peer researchers indicated that the policy of pushing all services online is not a welcome age friendly development amongst their peers.

12. Consider focussing on increasing the use of smart phone functionality given the prevalence of device ownership versus the low prevalence of maximising the functionality of devices. Coupled with higher reliability rates in mobile versus broadband connectivity experienced by older people, this may provide a more accessible route to digital inclusion.

Appendix 1

Straightforward

Research and Development

Age & Opportunity
Digital Literacy Research

Briefing for Age Friendly Programme Managers

21 October 2021

Séamus Mullen & associates

BSc, Dip, SPSS Certified Professional

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SCert™

SPSS Professional Certification

Contents

Introduction and background to research:

We are seeking your help to recruit participants for a survey on digital poverty and its effects on older people throughout Ireland.

In Ireland, a lot of our older people have never used the internet. While we know this, we do not have sufficient information about the locations in counties that are experiencing greater levels of digital exclusion, particularly among older persons.

We are also keen to find out the reasons why people do not or cannot use computers, internet or other digital technology.

In this research we are focussed on five counties including Clare, Donegal, Fingal, Kerry and Kildare.

We want to speak to 200 older people aged over 65 in your county and would like your help to identify people who will be willing to speak to our researchers.

This study is being carried our buy older people, for older people. If you identify someone, please be assured they will speak to a researcher who is already involved in an Older People's Council, or Age Friendly Forum in your County.

Results of the research will help inform policy and will be used to lobby for increased access to services for older people in your county.

Want to know more?

Questions about why we are carrying out this research, please telephone Ciaran Mc Kinney at Age & Opportunity ….

Questions about how we are carrying out the research, population sample, data analysis etc. please contact Séamus Mullen at Straightforward Research and Development at seamus@straightforwardresearch.com

Project plan:

The table below provides a brief outline of the project plan for the coordination of the research. For further details, please contact Seamus Mullen.

Action	Date	Output
✓ Establishment of reference team	September 2021	• Members of reference team identified and engaged • 3 meetings completed at initiation, pre-consultation phase, post-consultation phase
✓ Agreement of research tool and project plan	September 2021	• International literature review completed • Research tool parameters agreed incorporating elements of best practice • Quality indicators for research agreed
✓ Recruitment and training of field researchers	Recruitment by end July 2021 Training by 13 October 2021	• 20 peer researchers recruited • 20 peer researchers completing PPI and engagement training • 20 peer researchers completing baseline skills questionnaire
✓ Coordination of consultation	Primary research conducted Mid October to end November 2021	• Survey sample agreed with researchers and reference group • Wider stakeholders engaged and promotional activity completed • Proactive targeting of research participants with stakeholders • Promotion through Age Friendly Networks, local media, County Councils etc. • Field research completed across 5 counties • Peer researchers completing at least 10 days of research with 50 participants • Telephone and email support provided to field researchers throughout consultation phase • 20 peer researchers completing end of project skills questionnaire
✓ Analysis and completion of report	Analysis and completion of report by March 2022	• Draft research report submitted to Age & Opportunity • Final report signed off by Age & Opportunity

Population Sample required:

Survey Sample:

We have identified a survey sample across the 5 counties.

The overall target for the research is to achieve 1,000 responses across the 5 counties using 20 volunteers.

This will require engagement with at least 200 older people in each county with an average of 50 per field researcher. We are aware now that two of the five counties will have a team of 3 researchers which will increase the number of people they will need to interview to meet the target in those counties. Age & Opportunity has agreed that additional payment will be available to each of the researchers from within the county budget.

In identifying the population sample, we have used the most recent population data available at country level from the Central Statistics Office. Given the different demographic characteristics of each of the five counties involved in the study, we have used 2016 Census Small Area Population Statistics extracted at county level from the ARC GIS system[6].

Assumptions:

- This research will target older people aged 65 and above in each of the five counties.
- The research will target deprived communities throughout the counties, a list of which is provide din the following section of the report.
- While the research will seek to include minority communities throughout the five counties, the age profile of minority ethnic communities across Ireland is predominantly a youthful population profile. For example:
    - Approximately 0.7% of the population profile in Ireland identifies as **Irish Traveller** (this is smaller in the 5 counties at 0.44% of the population). Approximately 1.4% of the total Traveller population are aged over 65 years of age. Widening the age grouping to include travelers aged over 50 increases that percentage to just over 5%. Accounting for population, this equates to approximately 239 travelers in total throughout the 5 counties. **We recommend researchers attempt to interview 10 people from an Irish Traveller background throughout the five counties.**
    - Approximately 6% of males and 7% of females were aged over 65 in Ireland at the time of the 2016 Census. The population profile of Black and Ethnic Minority Background is significantly youthful. According to the CSO, the age profiles of minority ethnic groups mostly reflect patterns of immigration in Ireland over the last 20 years. For example,

[6] https://cso.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4d19cf7b1251408c99ccde18859ff739

profile of persons with a 'Chinese' ethnic or cultural background reflects a spike of persons aged 20-24, which can be explained by the large proportion of persons of 'Chinese' ethnicity studying here. Therefore, across all minority ethnic groups, approximately 0.5% are aged over 65. **In total throughout the study, figures required to be interviewed from this population group are minimal and would reflect around 1-2 in each county.**

- 3.7% of population aged over 65 are resident in nursing homes. **We recommend up to 8 people in each county living in nursing homes are targeted in the research**.

Should you wish to discuss in more depth, full details on the calculations used in the population sample are available from Séamus Mullen, research coordinator.

The following sections outline the populations required at county level across all five counties.

Clare

The table below provides a breakdown by age of the target numbers by age and gender for the county. The table assumes a total of 3 researchers in the team in County Clare.

	Number of Interviews		
	County	**Per researcher**	**%**
Age			
65-69	70	**17**	34.9
70-79	86	**22**	43.3
80+	44	**11**	21.9
Male	96	**24**	47.7
Female	104	**26**	52.3
Total per researcher	200	**66**	

The table below highlights priority areas of focus sorted by most deprived ED's in the County according to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index[7]:

ED_Name	NUTS4
MOVEEN	Clare
KILRUSH URBAN	Clare
KILKEE	Clare
ENNIS NO. 2 URBAN	Clare
ENNIS NO. 1 URBAN	Clare
KILBALLYOWEN	Clare
KILLOFIN	Clare
MOYARTA	Clare
RAHONA	Clare
MULLAGH	Clare

[7] https://www.pobal.ie/research-analysis/

KILFEARAGH	Clare
CLOONADRUM	Clare
KNOCKNABOLEY	Clare
ENNIS NO. 4 URBAN	Clare
COORACLARE	Clare
KILLANENA	Clare
KINTURK	Clare
LOUGHEA	Clare
KILMIHIL	Clare
BALLYCANNAN	Clare
DRUMELLIHY	Clare
FORMOYLE	Clare
KILFENORA	Clare
SCARRIFF	Clare
RATH	Clare
Corlea/Cahermurphy (Scarriff Road)	Clare
KILLADYSERT	Clare
MAGHERAREAGH	Clare
KILLIMER	Clare
GLENMORE	Clare
ENNIS NO. 3 URBAN	Clare
CAHERHURLEY	Clare
KILTORAGHT	Clare
KILMURRY	Clare
ENNISTIMON	Clare
KILLARD	Clare
CLOONEY	Clare
KNOCK	Clare
COOLREAGH	Clare
TULLIG	Clare
EINAGH	Clare
KNOCKNAGORE	Clare
KILCHREEST	Clare
KILMURRY	Clare
DOONBEG	Clare
BALLYNACALLY	Clare
CREEGH	Clare
RUAN	Clare
RINEALON	Clare
CLOONCOORHA	Clare
TULLYCREEN	Clare
DERRYNAGITTAGH	Clare
DERREEN	Clare
KILRUSH RURAL	Clare
ANNAGH	Clare
SMITHSTOWN	Clare

KILFIDDANE	Clare
BALLYEA	Clare
KILKISHEN	Clare
MILLTOWN MALBAY	Clare
DRUMMAAN	Clare
CLENAGH	Clare
DYSERT	Clare
ST. MARTIN'S	Clare
FEAKLE	Clare
BALLYVASKIN	Clare
FURROOR	Clare
BALLYNAHINCH	Clare
GLENDREE	Clare
KILLINABOY	Clare
BALLAGH	Clare
NEWMARKET	Clare
Inishcaltra North/Inishcaltra South	Clare
LISDOONVARNA	Clare
COOLMEEN	Clare
LISCASEY	Clare
MOUNTELVA	Clare
BALLYSTEEN	Clare
KILTANNON	Clare
CAHERMURPHY	Clare
CAPPAVILLA	Clare
MUCKANAGH	Clare
DRUMCREEHY	Clare
Glenroe/Ballyeighter	Clare
GLENINAGH	Clare
TULLA	Clare
O'BRIENSBRIDGE	Clare
CLOONUSKER	Clare
CORROFIN	Clare
KILLALOE	Clare
Noughaval/Castletown	Clare
CLOONANAHA	Clare
KILLANNIV	Clare

Donegal

The table below provides a breakdown by age of the target numbers by age and gender for the county. The table assumes a total of 4 researchers in the team in County Donegal.

	Number of Interviews		
	County	**Per researcher**	**%**
Age			
65-69	66	**16**	*32.8*
70-79	88	**23**	*44.2*
80+	46	**11**	*23*
Male	96	**24**	*48*
Female	104	**26**	*52*
Total per researcher	200	**50**	

The table below highlights priority areas of focus sorted by most deprived EDs in the County according to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index

ED_Name	NUTS4
DOOCHARRY	Donegal
ARAN	Donegal
GRAFFY	Donegal
INISHKEEL	Donegal
RAPHOE	Donegal
GLENTOGHER	Donegal
CROVEHY	Donegal

CARTHAGE	Donegal
MEENACLADY	Donegal
CLONLEIGH SOUTH	Donegal
GROUSEHALL	Donegal
GORTAHORK	Donegal
STRAID	Donegal
RUTLAND	Donegal
GLENLEHEEN	Donegal
TEMPLECARN	Donegal
CASTLEFINN	Donegal
CROSS ROADS	Donegal
CLONLEIGH NORTH	Donegal
FANAD WEST	Donegal
KILGOLY	Donegal
LETTERMACAWARD	Donegal
CARRICKART	Donegal
BINBANE	Donegal
ST. JOHNSTOWN	Donegal
PETTIGOE	Donegal
GREENFORT	Donegal
DUNAFF	Donegal
BALLYLIFFIN	Donegal
DUNLEWY	Donegal
MINTIAGHS	Donegal
GLENEELY	Donegal
CREESLOUGH	Donegal
ILLIES	Donegal
CORKERMORE	Donegal
ALTNAPASTE	Donegal
FINTOWN	Donegal
CRANFORD	Donegal
MAGHERACLOGHER	Donegal
CLOGHARD	Donegal
BALLYSHANNON URBAN	Donegal
CONVOY	Donegal
ANNAGARY	Donegal
DESERTEGNY	Donegal
DOE CASTLE	Donegal
TIEVESKEELTA	Donegal
KINCRAIGY	Donegal
KILLYGORDON	Donegal
URNEY WEST	Donegal
CARRICKBOY	Donegal

CREENASMEAR	Donegal
CARNDONAGH	Donegal
DUNGLOW	Donegal
BUNCRANA URBAN	Donegal
MULMOSOG	Donegal
KNOCKALLA	Donegal
CROWKEERAGH	Donegal
BALLINTRA	Donegal
CLOGHAN	Donegal
STRANORLAR	Donegal
LAGHY	Donegal
CULDAFF	Donegal
GLENGESH	Donegal
MAGHERY	Donegal
GLENTIES	Donegal
LARGYMORE	Donegal
CARROWKEEL	Donegal
FANAD NORTH	Donegal
DUNFANAGHY	Donegal
ARDARA	Donegal
GLENNAGANNON	Donegal
MILLFORD	Donegal
KILLYBEGS	Donegal
BUNDORAN URBAN	Donegal
LETTERMORE	Donegal
INCH ISLAND	Donegal
MALINBEG	Donegal
GLENEELY	Donegal
ARDMALIN	Donegal
BALLYARR	Donegal
TREANTAGHMUCKLAGH	Donegal
GLENCOLUMBKILLE	Donegal
THREE TREES	Donegal
KILMACRENAN	Donegal
MANORCUNNINGHAM	Donegal
INVER	Donegal
DUNKINEELY	Donegal
BONNYGLEN	Donegal
NEWTOWN CUNNINGHAM	Donegal
TURMONE	Donegal
BURT	Donegal
CASTLEFORWARD	Donegal
FIGART	Donegal

KILLYGARVAN	Donegal
MALIN	Donegal
KILLEA	Donegal
KILCAR	Donegal
EANYMORE	Donegal
BUNCRANA RURAL	Donegal
CAVANGARDEN	Donegal
DAWROS	Donegal
DOOISH	Donegal
CHURCH HILL	Donegal
BALLINTRA	Donegal
ROSGUILL	Donegal
GLEN	Donegal
MEENCARGAGH	Donegal
CLIFF	Donegal
GARTAN	Donegal
MOVILLE	Donegal
SEACOR	Donegal
TULLYNAUGHT	Donegal
GOLAND	Donegal
LETTERKENNY URBAN DISTRICT	Donegal
LOUGHKEEL	Donegal
RATHMELTON	Donegal
REDCASTLE	Donegal
RATHMULLAN	Donegal
FAHAN	Donegal
BALLYSHANNON RURAL	Donegal
WHITECASTLE	Donegal
KNOCK	Donegal
CROWNARAD	Donegal
MAGHERABOY	Donegal
CASTLECARY	Donegal
TANTALLON	Donegal
KILLYMASNY	Donegal
BIRDSTOWN	Donegal
GLENALLA	Donegal
ROSNAKILL	Donegal
FEDDYGLASS	Donegal
ARDS	Donegal
KILDERRY	Donegal
LETTERKENNY RURAL (PT.)	Donegal
TEMPLEDOUGLAS	Donegal
DONEGAL	Donegal

TAWNAWULLY	Donegal
BUNDORAN RURAL	Donegal

Fingal

The table below provides a breakdown by age of the target numbers by age and gender for the county. The table assumes a total of 3 researchers in the team in Fingal.

	Number of Interviews		
	County	**Per researcher**	**%**
Age			
65-69	75	**25**	*37.5*
70-79	88	**29**	*44.1*
80+	37	**12**	*18.4*
Male	96	**31**	*46*
Female	104	**35**	*54*
Total per researcher	200	**66**	

The table below highlights priority areas of focus sorted by most deprived EDs in the County according to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index

ED_Name	NUTS4
BLANCHARDSTOWN-CORDUFF	Dublin Fingal
BLANCHARDSTOWN-TYRRELSTOWN	Dublin Fingal
BLANCHARDSTOWN-MULHUDDART	Dublin Fingal
BALBRIGGAN URBAN	Dublin Fingal
BLANCHARDSTOWN-COOLMINE	Dublin Fingal
KILSALLAGHAN	Dublin Fingal
BALBRIGGAN RURAL	Dublin Fingal
SWORDS-GLASMORE	Dublin Fingal
BALSCADDEN	Dublin Fingal
BLANCHARDSTOWN-ROSELAWN	Dublin Fingal
RUSH	Dublin Fingal
TURNAPIN	Dublin Fingal
GARRISTOWN	Dublin Fingal
SWORDS VILLAGE	Dublin Fingal
BLANCHARDSTOWN-BLAKESTOWN	Dublin Fingal
CLONMETHAN	Dublin Fingal
BALDOYLE	Dublin Fingal

Kerry

The table below provides a breakdown by age of the target numbers by age and gender for the county. The table assumes a total of 4 researchers in the team in Kerry.

	Number of Interviews		
	County	**Per researcher**	**%**
Age			
65-69	75	**17**	37.5
70-79	88	**22**	44.1
80+	37	**11**	18.4
Male	96	**24**	46
Female	104	**26**	54
Total per researcher	200	**50**	

The table below highlights priority areas of focus sorted by most deprived EDs in the County according to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index

ED_Name	NUTS4
KILSHENANE	Kerry
ARDAGH	Kerry
Cloon/Daoire Ianna	Kerry
Ceann·igh/Mßistir Gaoithe	Kerry
CARRIG	Kerry
BALLYDUFF	Kerry
TRALEE URBAN DISTRICT	Kerry
ENNISMORE	Kerry

TARMON	Kerry
CLOONTUBBRID	Kerry
LISLAUGHTIN	Kerry
TARBERT	Kerry
KERRYHEAD	Kerry
LISTOWEL URBAN	Kerry
LACKABAUN	Kerry
BALLYHEIGE	Kerry
KILMURRY	Kerry
KILLURY	Kerry
GLANLOUGH	Kerry
KNOCKNAGASHEL	Kerry
LIXNAW	Kerry
BROSNA	Kerry
MAUM	Kerry
DERREEN	Kerry
KILGOBBAN	Kerry
KILTOMY	Kerry
CARKER	Kerry
PORTMAGEE	Kerry
NEWTOWNSANDES	Kerry
GULLANE	Kerry
KILGARRYLANDER	Kerry
DROMMARTIN	Kerry
CASTLEISLAND	Kerry
GLANBEHY	Kerry
KILLEHENNY	Kerry
CAHER	Kerry
MOUNT EAGLE	Kerry
CAUSEWAY	Kerry
BALLYNORIG	Kerry
TRIENEARAGH	Kerry
LOUGHBRIN	Kerry
GLANMORE	Kerry
CASTLECOVE	Kerry
ARDFERT	Kerry
CURRANS	Kerry
LICKEEN	Kerry
BAURTREGAUM	Kerry
SHRONOWEN	Kerry
GLANLEE	Kerry
KILMEANY	Kerry
CORDAL	Kerry
CURRAGHBEG	Kerry
LISTOWEL RURAL	Kerry
MILLBROOK	Kerry

BALLINCLOHER	Kerry
KILTALLAGH	Kerry
KILFLYN	Kerry
GNEEVES	Kerry
URLEE	Kerry
COOM	Kerry
DUAGH	Kerry
TRALEE RURAL (PT.)	Kerry
BALLYCONRY	Kerry
EMLAGH	Kerry
ABBEYDORNEY	Kerry
BALLYEGAN	Kerry
LEITRIM	Kerry
KILMALKEDAR	Kerry
ROCKFIELD	Kerry
BANNA	Kerry
KILLINANE	Kerry
TAHILLA	Kerry
LISSELTON	Kerry
GUNSBOROUGH	Kerry
KILLORGLIN	Kerry
LOUGHCURRANE	Kerry
BEAL	Kerry
KILLAHAN	Kerry
CURRAGHMORE	Kerry
TEERANEARAGH	Kerry
LACK	Kerry
VALENCIA	Kerry
MOYNSHA	Kerry
KILLEENTIERNA	Kerry
KILFEIGHNY	Kerry
ASTEE	Kerry
BALLYDUFF	Kerry
BALLINSKELLIGS	Kerry
CASTLEGREGORY	Kerry
INCH	Kerry
BAHAGHS	Kerry
BALLYSEEDY	Kerry
KILNANARE	Kerry
BALLINVOHER	Kerry
ARDEA	Kerry
NOHAVAL	Kerry
MINARD	Kerry
KILGOBNET	Kerry
CARAGH	Kerry
O'BRENNAN	Kerry

RATHEA	Kerry
BOOLTEENS	Kerry
BLENNERVILLE	Kerry
DROMORE	Kerry
VENTRY	Kerry

Kildare

The table below provides a breakdown by age of the target numbers by age and gender for the county. The table assumes a total of 3 researchers in the team in Kildare.

	Number of Interviews		
	County	**Per researcher**	**%**
Age			
65-69	76	**25**	*37.9*
70-79	86	**28**	*42.9*
80+	38	**13**	*19.3*
Male	96	**31**	*47.6*
Female	104	**35**	*52.4*
Total per researcher	200	**66**	

The table below highlights priority areas of focus sorted by most deprived EDs in the County according to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index

ED_Name	NUTS4
ATHY WEST URBAN	Kildare
KILBERRY	Kildare
KILPATRICK	Kildare
SKERRIES	Kildare
ATHY EAST URBAN	Kildare
WINDMILL CROSS	Kildare
KILKEA	Kildare
ROBERTSTOWN	Kildare
CARBURY	Kildare
CHURCHTOWN	Kildare

ATHY RURAL	Kildare
MONASTEREVIN	Kildare
GRANGEMELLON	Kildare
DROICHEAD NUA (NEWBRIDGE) URBAN	Kildare
CASTLEDERMOT	Kildare
BERT	Kildare
BALLYSAX WEST	Kildare
BALLITORE	Kildare
KILMEAGE SOUTH	Kildare
DUNMANOGE	Kildare
BALLYNADRUMNY	Kildare
BALLYBRACKAN	Kildare
KILDARE	Kildare
BALLYSAX EAST	Kildare
KILMEAGE NORTH	Kildare
RATHANGAN	Kildare
CLONCURRY	Kildare
LULLYMORE	Kildare
BELAN	Kildare
HARRISTOWN	Kildare
FONTSTOWN	Kildare
KILRAINY	Kildare
CARRIGEEN	Kildare
JOHNSTOWN	Kildare
NURNEY	Kildare
TIMAHOE SOUTH	Kildare
RATHERNAN	Kildare

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