



Pew Research Center

Internet & Technology

<http://www.pewinternet.org/2017/05/17/barriers-to-adoption-and-attitudes-towards-technology/>

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TECH ADOPTION CLIMBS AMONG OLDER ADULTS

Older adults: Barriers to adoption and attitudes towards technology

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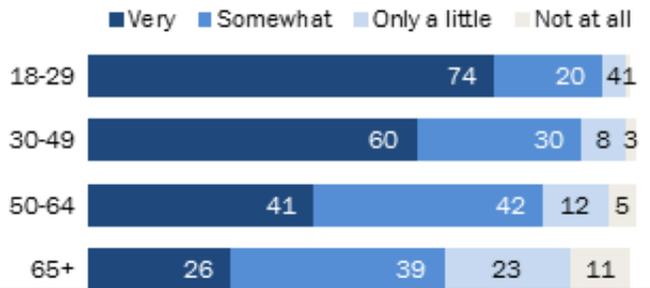
Digital technology has transformed the way people communicate, get news, shop and even find love. And as more tasks migrate online, there are unique barriers and challenges that may hinder some older Americans from going online and using new technology. But despite these challenges, many seniors have a positive outlook about technology and the benefits it can provide. And once online, many older adults engage deeply with online content and activities.

1

One challenge facing older adults with respect to technology is the fact that many are simply not confident in their own ability to learn about and properly use electronic devices. For example, just 26% of internet users ages 65 and over say they feel very confident when using computers, smartphones or other electronic devices to do the things they need to do online, according to a 2015 Pew Research Center survey. Roughly one-third describe themselves as only a little (23%) or not at all (11%) confident in their ability to use electronic devices to do necessary online activities.

Seniors are less confident when using electronic devices

% of U.S. internet users who say they feel ___ confident when using computers, smartphones or other electronics to do the things they need to do online, by age



2

Similarly, a 2016 report from the Center found that “digitally ready” Americans – meaning those who have already acquired digital skills and have acquired the ability to find trustworthy information online – tend to be disproportionately under the age of 65. Meanwhile, older groups make up a larger share of those who are described as “digitally unprepared.”

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 13- Nov. 15, 2015. “Tech Adoption Climbs Among Older Adults”

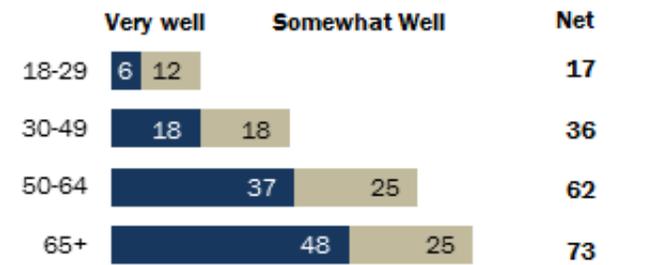
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3

Hand in hand with this lack of confidence in their own ability to use digital technology, seniors are also more likely than those in other age groups to say they need others to show them how to use new devices. Around three-quarters of Americans ages 65 and up say the statement, “When I get a new electronic device, I usually need someone else to set it up or show me how to use it,” describes them either very (48%) or somewhat (25%) well.

Most seniors say they need help using new electronic devices

% of U.S. adults who say the statement, ‘When I get a new electronic device, I usually need someone else to set it up or show me how to use it,’ describes them very or somewhat well, by age



Note: NET category calculated prior to rounding. Source: Survey conducted Oct. 13- Nov. 15, 2015. “Tech Adoption Climbs Among Older Adults”

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4

Older adults may also face physical challenges that might make it difficult to use or manipulate devices. Some 28% of U.S. adults ages 65 and up say they have physical challenges, disabilities, or limitations that keep them from participating fully in work, housework, or other physical activities.

5

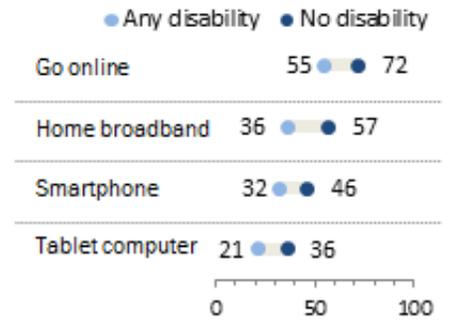
And seniors who report that they have a disability of any kind are less likely than those who do not have a disability to have broadband at their home. While 57% of seniors have broadband at their home, only 36% of seniors with a disability have broadband at their home.

1

Once online, most seniors make the internet a standard part of their daily routine. Roughly three-quarters of older internet users go online at least daily, including 17% who say they go online about once a day, 51% who indicate they do so several times a day and 8% who say they use the internet almost constantly. Among older adults who own smartphones this figure is even higher: 76% of these smartphone-owning older adults use the internet several times a day or more.

Only around a third of disabled seniors say they have home broadband

% of U.S. adults ages 65 and older, in each group, who say they have or use the following



Source: Survey conducted Sept. 29-Nov. 6, 2016.

"Tech Adoption Climbs Among Older Adults"

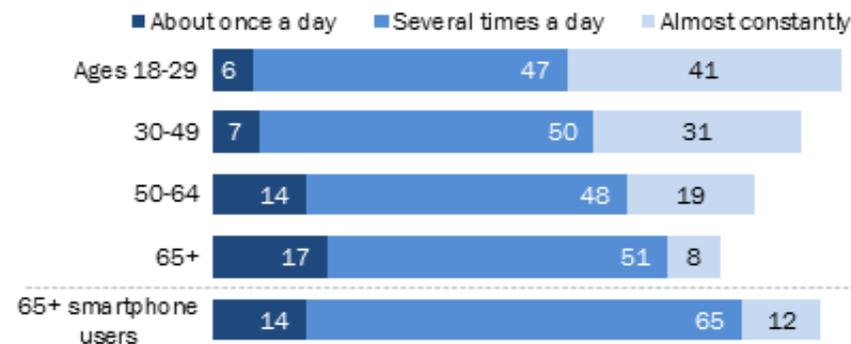
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2

Similarly, a relatively small share of older adults use social media –but those who use these platforms tend to be highly active and engaged. For instance, fully 70% of older adults who use Facebook indicate that they log in to the service on a daily basis.

Roughly three-quarters of internet users ages 65 and up say they go online daily

% of U.S. internet users who say they use the internet ...



Source: Survey conducted Mar. 7-April 4, 2016.

"Tech Adoption Climbs Among Older Adults"

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3

And even though playing video games is much more common among younger adults, many seniors are taking part in this tech-based activity. One-in-four adults ages 65 or older say they play online video games (<http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/12/15/gaming-and-gamers/>), according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in 2015.

4

Despite these concerns and challenges, there are a number of areas in which seniors hold relatively positive views of technology and technology-related topics. For instance, at a broad level, 58% of seniors feel that technology has had a mostly positive effect on society, while just 4% feel that impact has been mostly negative.

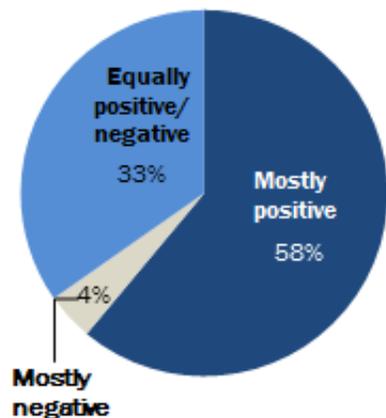
Although older adults are less inclined than other age groups to say they like trying new technology, some seniors do show a strong preference for early tech adoption. On a six-item index that classifies Americans' preferences for new technology and products, around one-in-five adults ages 65 and older (21%) hold strong preferences for being early tech adopters.

5

Seniors also place a high value on the importance of home broadband service, according to a survey conducted by the Center in 2017. The vast majority of adults ages 65 and older say they believe having access to high-speed internet at home is either essential (42%) or important (49%). This puts older Americans on par with Americans of other ages when it comes to the importance of home broadband service.

Most seniors say technology has had a mostly positive effect on society

% of U.S. adults ages 65 and up who say technology has had a ___ impact on society



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 2-28, 2016.

"Tech Adoption Climbs Among Older Adults"

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2. Due to the nature of the surveys associated with this data, certain Americans with disabilities are likely undercounted. The figures reported are from phone surveys that were conducted via landlines and cellphones and likely under covered adults who are deaf or have difficulty speaking. In addition, our surveys **do not cover** those living in institutionalized group quarters, which may include some severely disabled individuals. ↩
3. Read more on technology adoption by disability status in Pew Research Center's 2017 blog post, "**Disabled Americans are less likely to use technology.**" ↩
4. Pew Research Center created an "early adopter index" that classifies Americans' preferences for new technology products based on six survey questions. See Pew Research Center's 2016 blog post "**28% of Americans are 'strong' early adopters of technology.**" ↩