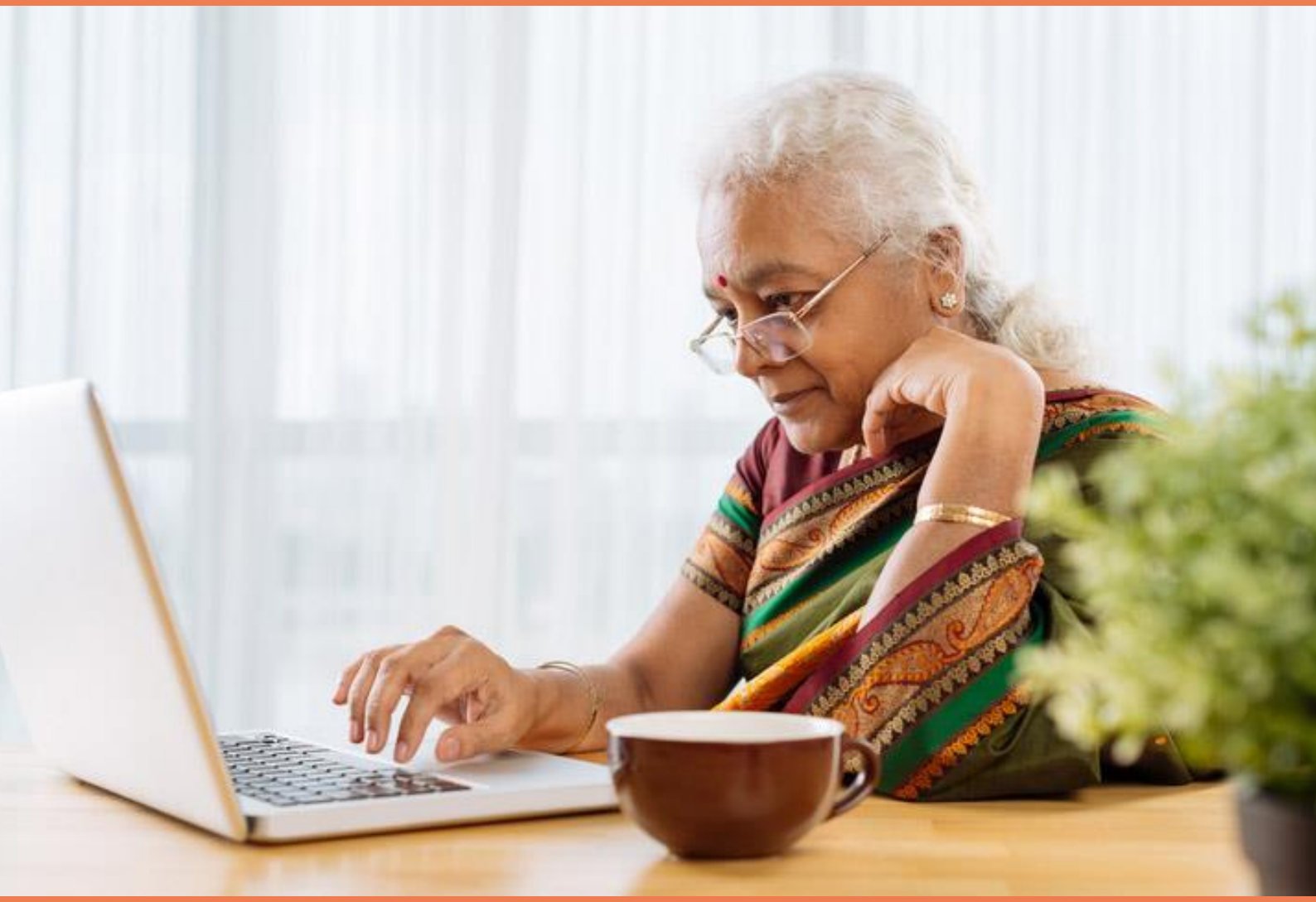
Digital Skills Survey 2023

A report by Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering



August 2023

Redbridge, Barking & Havering age UK

“Sometimes you just need to talk to a real person.

The process is complicated and long-winded online.”

Local Resident

Contents

		Page
1.	Introduction	5
2.	Background	5
3.	Methodology	5
4.	Strengths & Limitations	5
5.	Executive Summary	6
6.	Analysis of Feedback	8
7.	Recommendations	41
8.	Glossary of Terms	43
9.	Distribution and Comment	43
Demographics		Appendix 1

This page is intentionally blank.

1. Introduction

Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Dagenham and Havering is a local charity, which has been working with older people over 50 years. We have dedicated, trained staff, who are making a positive difference to the lives of older people, through a variety of services. This includes the Voices of Experience project, giving older people the opportunity to give their feedback.

2. Background

The survey aimed to gather information on the Digital Skills of older people in Redbridge and to understand how comfortable they are with using digital technology. It also looked at identifying where people felt they needed more support and training. The report reveals where people are feeling digitally excluded from some services and activities and how a lack of digital skills impacts on their lives.

3. Methodology

Participants who could access the internet were emailed an online survey. Those who could not were sent out paper copies. We also visited community groups and assisted living establishments to collect their feedback.

4. Strengths & Limitations

The flexibility of our approach in gathering feedback from people and the variety of methods used are among the project's strengths. A large number of surveys were completed by people of different ages from 50+. A limitation is that the majority of respondents were female and white British. The project does plan to do outreach to more ethnic groups and to encourage more men to participate.

5. Executive Summary of Findings

During April - August 2023, 121 older people in Redbridge completed our survey on digital skills.

This section summarises key findings – see sections 6 - 7 for findings in full.

Survey Response - In Summary

Mobile Phones

- A clear majority of respondents (92%) own a mobile phone. Around two thirds (63%) are considered to be 'smart phones'.
- On age, all respondents aged 50 – 64 own a smart phone, this reduces to 78% for those aged 65 – 74, and to 47% for those aged 75 – 89.
- A broad majority of respondents use their phones for communication, with 85% making or receiving calls and a lesser number (71%) using text messaging. Over half (59%) use WhatsApp and around half (48%) access emails through their phone.
- Fewer than half of respondents utilise their phones for wider purposes, with apps, social media, music/video streaming and general internet use (to browse websites, access information or make bookings) all polling under 50%.
- While half (50%) feel confident to use their phones, a similar number (45%) do not. 43% would like to learn more about their mobile phones.
- On age, 69% of respondents aged 50 – 64 feel confident to use their phones, this reduces to 53% for those aged 65 – 74, and to 39% for those aged 75 – 89.

Computer Devices

- On other devices, just over half of respondents (53%) have a tablet/iPad, with 44% owning a laptop and 29% a home computer.
- A broad majority (84%) have broadband at home and similarly 81% have a landline. Just a quarter of those without the internet at home (26%) would like to acquire it.
- While the majority of respondents (59%) feel confident to use their devices, a sizeable minority (22%) do not.
- On age, 79% of respondents aged 50 – 64 feel confident to use their computer devices, this reduces to 68% for those aged 65 – 74, and to 47% for those aged 75 – 89.

Online Banking

- Half of respondents (50%) use online banking while a similar number (47%) do not. Less than a fifth of respondents (18%) without online banking would like to acquire it.
- On age, 79% of respondents aged 50 – 64 use online banking, this reduces to 69% for those aged 65 – 74, and to 33% for those aged 75 – 89.
- Around three quarters (71%) can get to their bank easily, while a noticeable minority (24%) cannot. Those of general working age (50 – 64) find it most difficult, to visit their bank.

Survey Response - In Summary

Parking

- Over a third of respondents with a mobile phone (39%) are able to use it for car parking, while almost half (48%) are not.
- Half of those who do not pay for parking online (49%) say this has prevented them from going to certain places.

Email

- Around three quarters of respondents (72%) have an email account. Of those without an email account, just 15% would like to acquire one.
- On age, all respondents aged 50 – 64 use an email account, this reduces to 81% for those aged 65 – 74, and to 62% for those aged 75 – 89.
- A broad majority (74%) are confident in using their email account, while 15% are not. Of those who are not confident, around a third (31%) would like to learn more.

Accessing Social Opportunities

- A significant number of respondents (40%) have experienced difficulty accessing social opportunities due to online information or booking, while 44% have not.
- Recent retirees (aged 65 – 74) are most likely to have experienced problems, in accessing social opportunities.

Accessing Services

- Services with an online access requirement have been problematic for 36% of respondents, while 52% have not experienced difficulty.
- Just a third of those experiencing difficulty (33%) were offered an alternative access method.
- 45% of respondents aged 75 – 89 have experienced problems when accessing services, this reduces to 30% for those aged 65 – 74, and to 8% for those aged 50 – 64.

Online Shopping

- Around a third of respondents (36%) do online shopping, while two thirds (63%) do not. Just 17% of respondents who do not currently shop online, would like to.
- 62% of respondents aged 50 – 64 do online shopping, this reduces to 47% for those aged 65 – 74, and to 27% for those aged 75 – 89.

Practical Support

- Just under half of respondents (47%) need assistance to use their devices, while a similar number (44%) do not.
- A broad majority of respondents (84%) have found the assistance to be helpful. Just 9% have not.

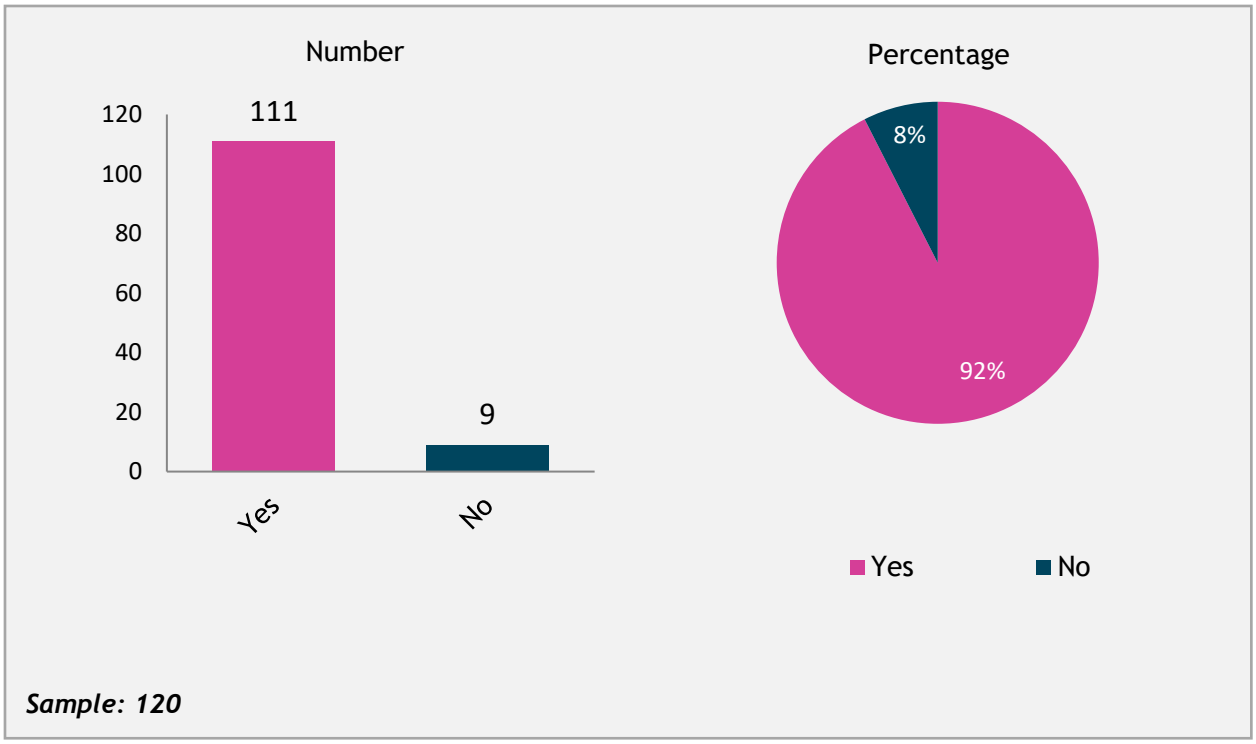
6. Our Survey – Analysis of Feedback

During April - August 2023, 121 older people in Redbridge completed our survey on digital skills.

We asked questions on device ownership and use, skills, training and confidence, and explored how the reliance on technology - to access council and health services, plus wider social opportunities, is impacting the lives of older people in the borough.

The majority of questions were free-text, enabling participants to detail their opinions and experiences.

6.1 Do you own a mobile phone?



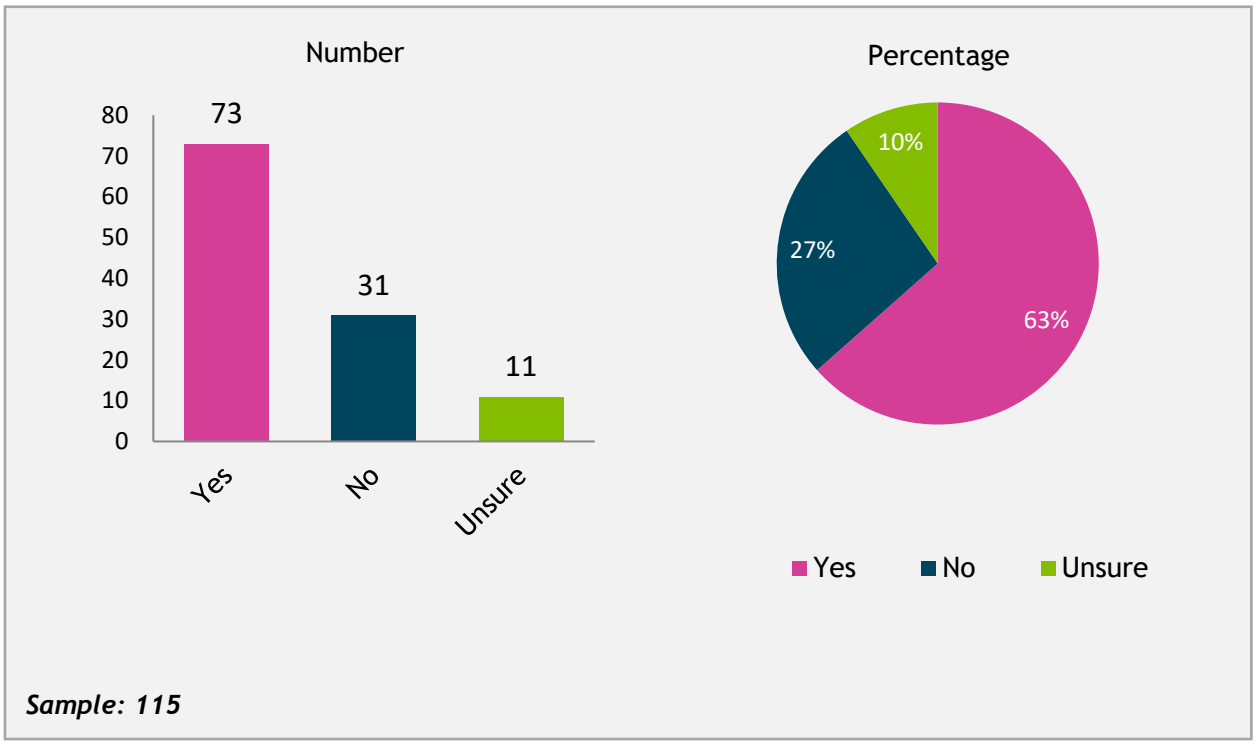
A clear majority of respondents (92%) own a mobile phone.

6.1.1 Impact Scale: Own a mobile phone?

	% Yes
Aged 50 - 64	100%
Aged 65 - 74	97%
All Respondents (Baseline)	92%
Aged 75 - 89	89%

When looking closer at age, we find the oldest respondents (aged 75 - 89) are lesser likely to own a mobile phone, compared with others.

6.2 If you have a mobile phone, is it a smart phone?



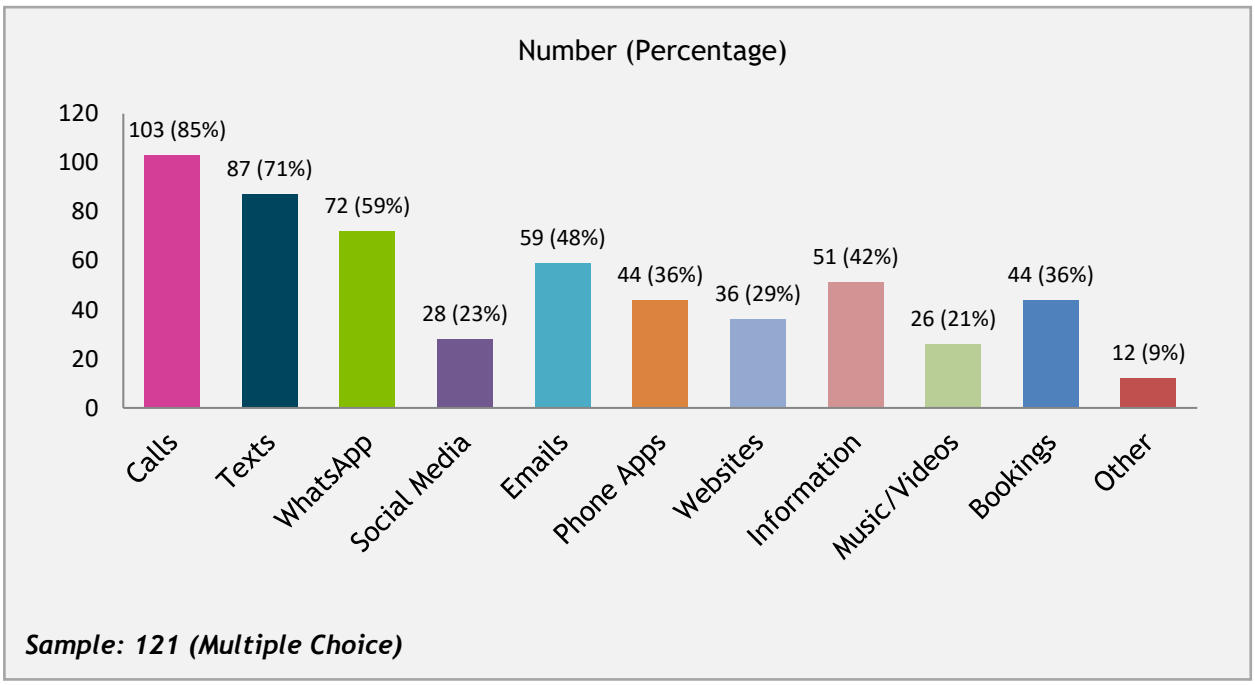
Around two thirds (63%) are considered to be 'smart phones'.

6.2.1 Impact Scale: Is it a smart phone?

	% Yes
Aged 50 - 64	100%
Aged 65 - 74	78%
All Respondents (Baseline)	63%
Aged 75 - 89	47%

All respondents aged 50 - 64 own a smart phone, this reduces to 78% for those aged 65 - 74, and to 47% for those aged 75 - 89.

6.3 If you have a mobile phone, what do you use it for?



Sample: 121 (Multiple Choice)

A broad majority of respondents use their phones for communication, with 85% making or receiving calls and a lesser number (71%) using text messaging. Over half (59%) use WhatsApp and around half (48%) access emails through their phone.

Selected Feedback

"Only for emergencies, do not give my mobile number to anyone at all."

"Only to contact my daughter when I'm in hospital."

"I use my phone to keep in touch with my family and friends abroad."

"My son sends me photos of my grandchildren."

Fewer than half of respondents utilise their phones for wider purposes, with apps, social media, music/video streaming and general internet use (to browse websites, access information or make bookings) all polling under 50%. Examples of wider use include taking photos and recording videos, listening to radio or podcasts, browsing information, accessing health apps and banking.

Selected Feedback

"Take photos and videos, record lectures and talks."

"Listening to radio podcasts and live radio programmes."

"I am frequently looking up info such as news. I check health info on an NHS app."

"I use my phone all the time for a variety of reasons as above and including banking."

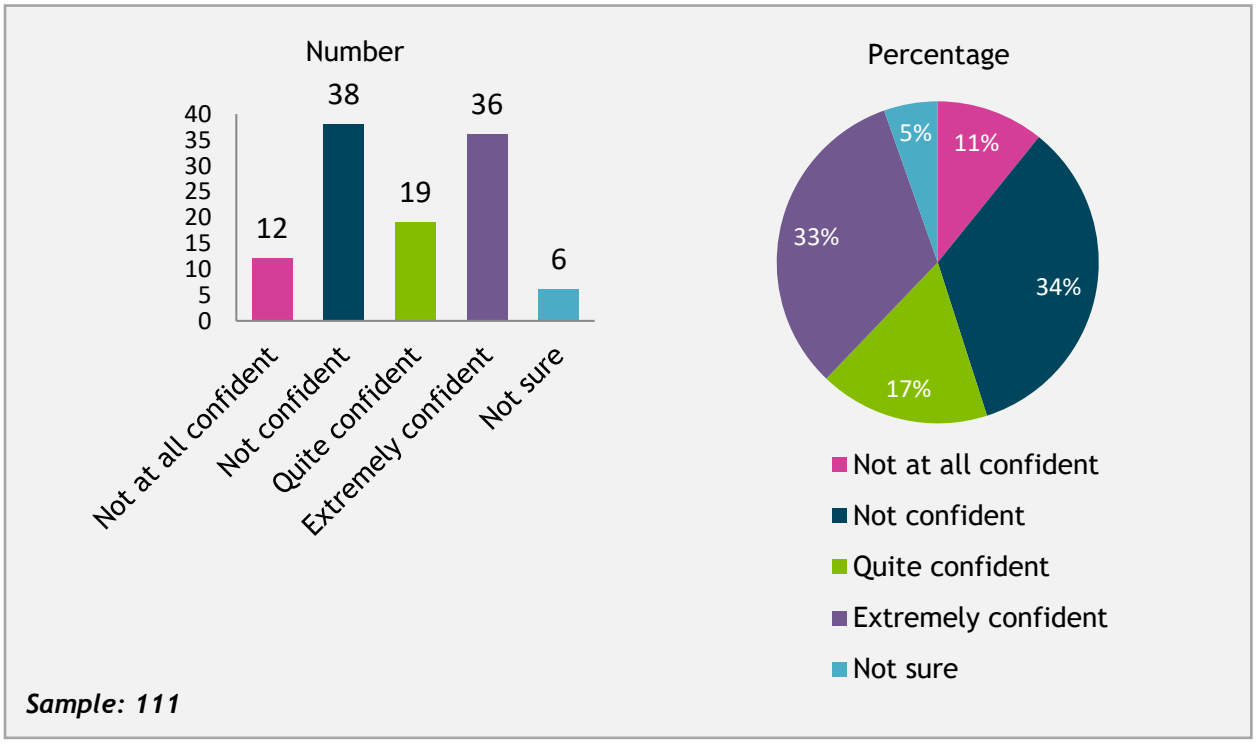
While some respondents use their phones frequently and enthusiastically, others have found some aspects – such as a parking app to be complicated.

Selected Feedback

"I'm glued to my mobile. Same as any 20 year old. I have no idea how older people can possibly do anything without it."

"I'm not confident in using the app for parking, it seems complicated."

6.4 How confident do you feel using your mobile phone?



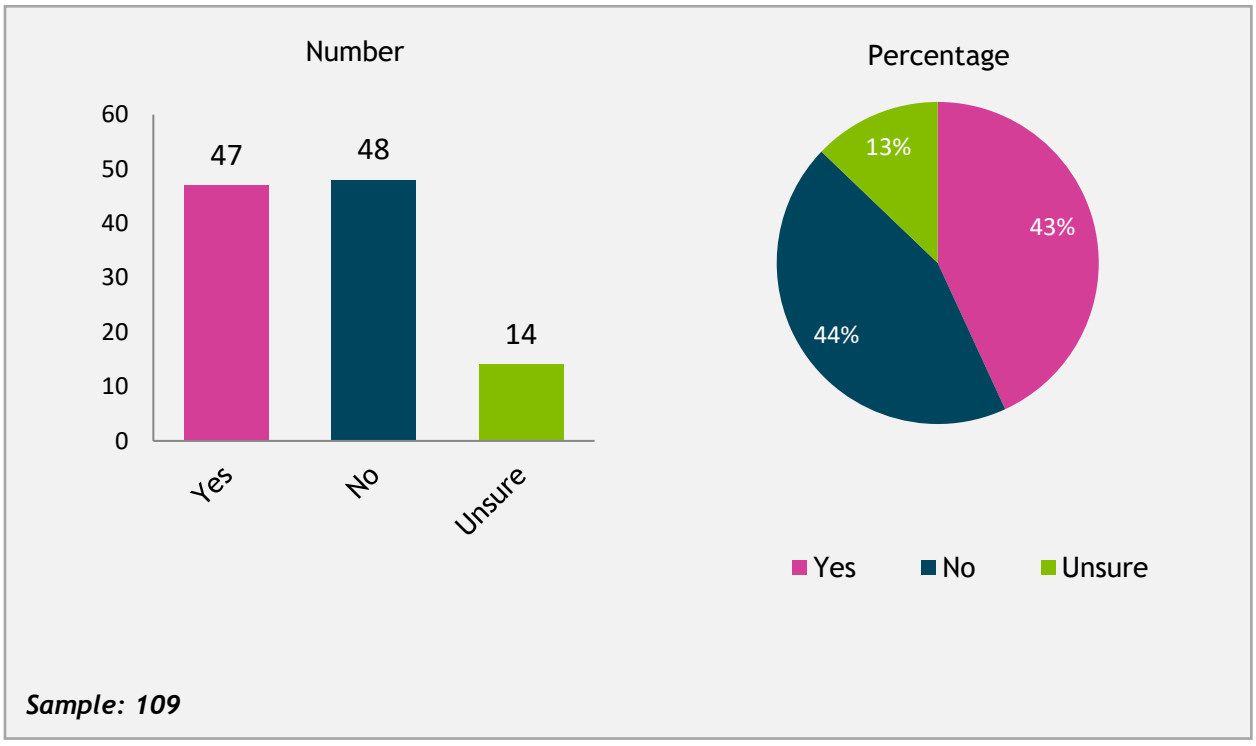
While half of respondents (50%) feel confident to use their phones, a similar number (45%) do not.

6.4.1 Impact Scale: Confident to use a mobile phone?

	% Yes
Aged 50 - 64	69%
Aged 65 - 74	53%
All Respondents (Baseline)	50%
Aged 75 - 89	39%

69% of respondents aged 50 - 64 feel confident to use their phones, this reduces to 53% for those aged 65 - 74, and to 39% for those aged 75 - 89.

6.5 Would you like to learn how to do more things on your phone?



43% would like to learn more about their mobile phones.

Popular learning requests include internet browsing, accessing email and social media, booking health appointments and social events, shopping and banking, use of apps such as WhatsApp, taking photos, managing contacts and general phone use.

How to recognise and avoid scams is also a request.

Selected Feedback

"How to use safely, I'm worried about scams."

"How to avoid scams and recognise bogus phone numbers. Sometimes the hospital rings and it does not appear in my contact list."

Apprehension is expressed by some, in finding the right equipment, and the ability to learn and retain the knowledge. Equipment and cost issues are also highlighted.

Selected Feedback

"I need to update and get a new iPhone, but I'm scared of the process."

"I need someone to show me how to use the phone. I am elderly and it takes time for me to understand. I forget all the time what to do."

"I only have a basic one for emergencies."

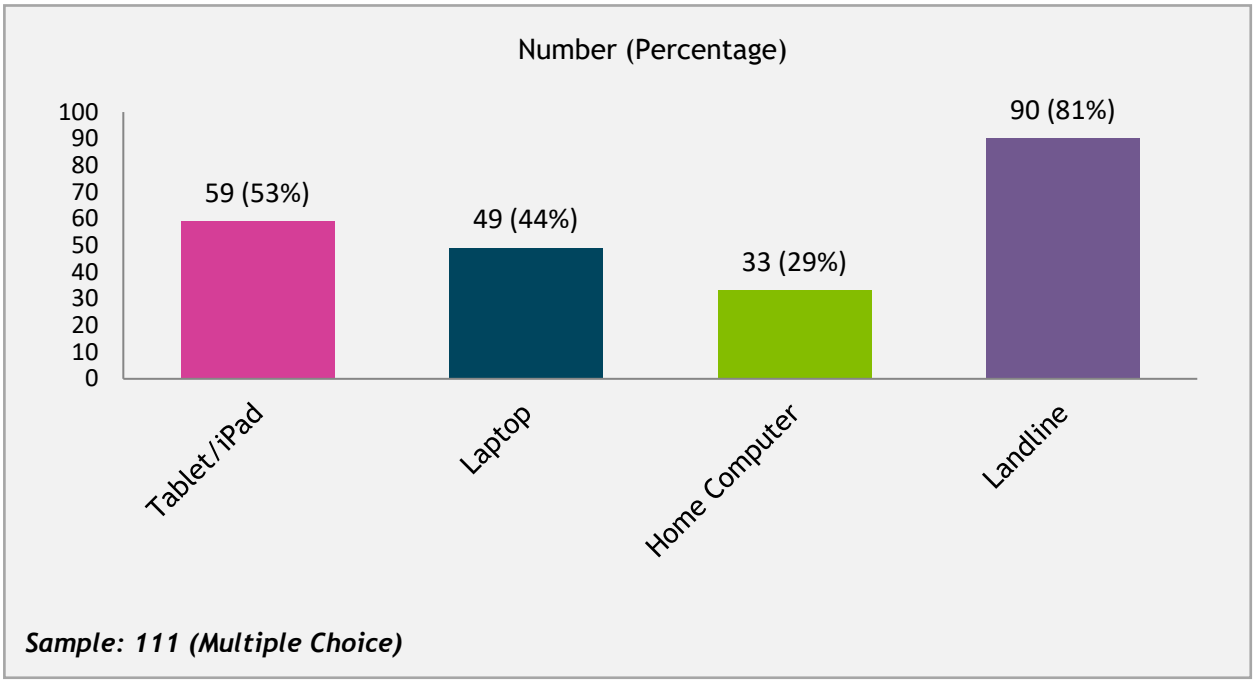
"My phone is pay as you go."

6.5.1 Impact Scale: Would like to learn to do more things, on the phone?

	% Yes
Aged 75 – 89	51%
All Respondents (Baseline)	43%
Aged 50 – 64	38%
Aged 65 – 74	36%

Older respondents (aged 75 – 89) are significantly most likely, to want to learn more about their mobile phone.

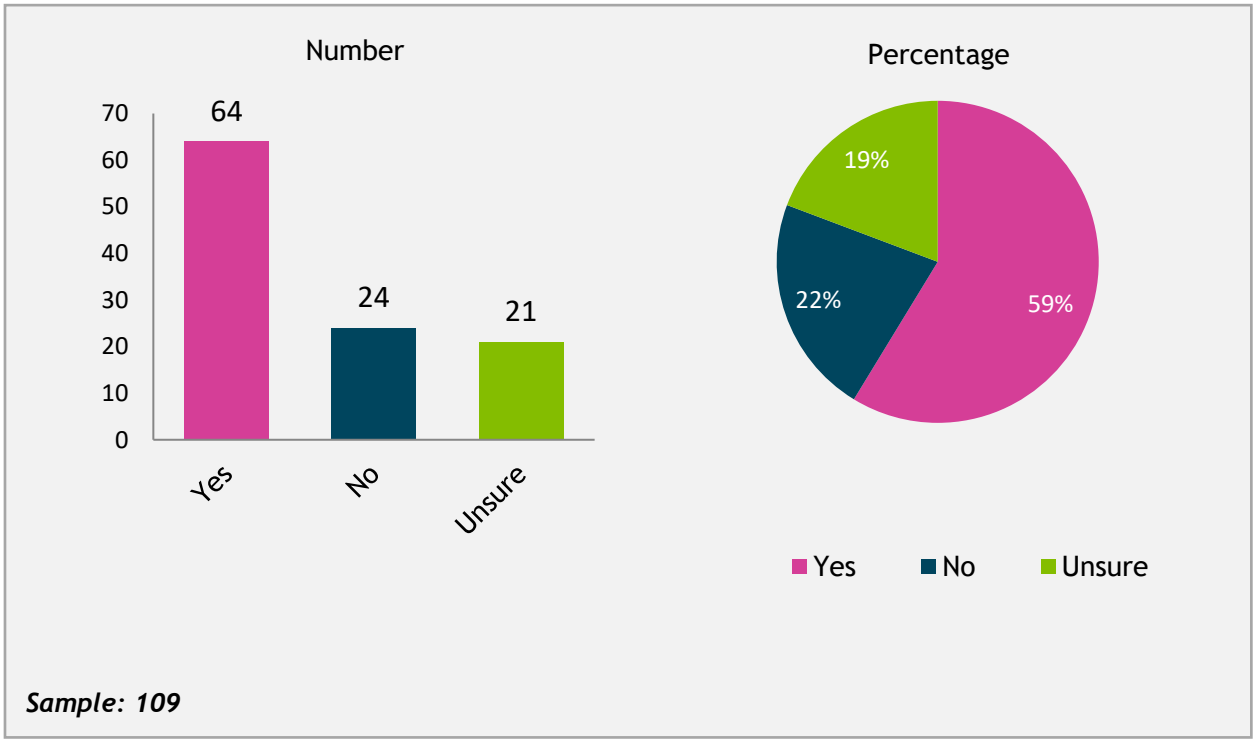
6.6 Do you own any of the following digital devices?



On other devices, just over half of respondents (53%) have a tablet/iPad, with 44% owning a laptop and 29% a home computer. A broad majority (81%) have a landline.

When asking participants about devices they would like to own, tablets/iPads are by far the most common request, with laptops also popular.

6.7 Do you feel confident using the devices you own?



While the majority of respondents (59%) feel confident to use their devices, a sizeable minority (22%) do not.

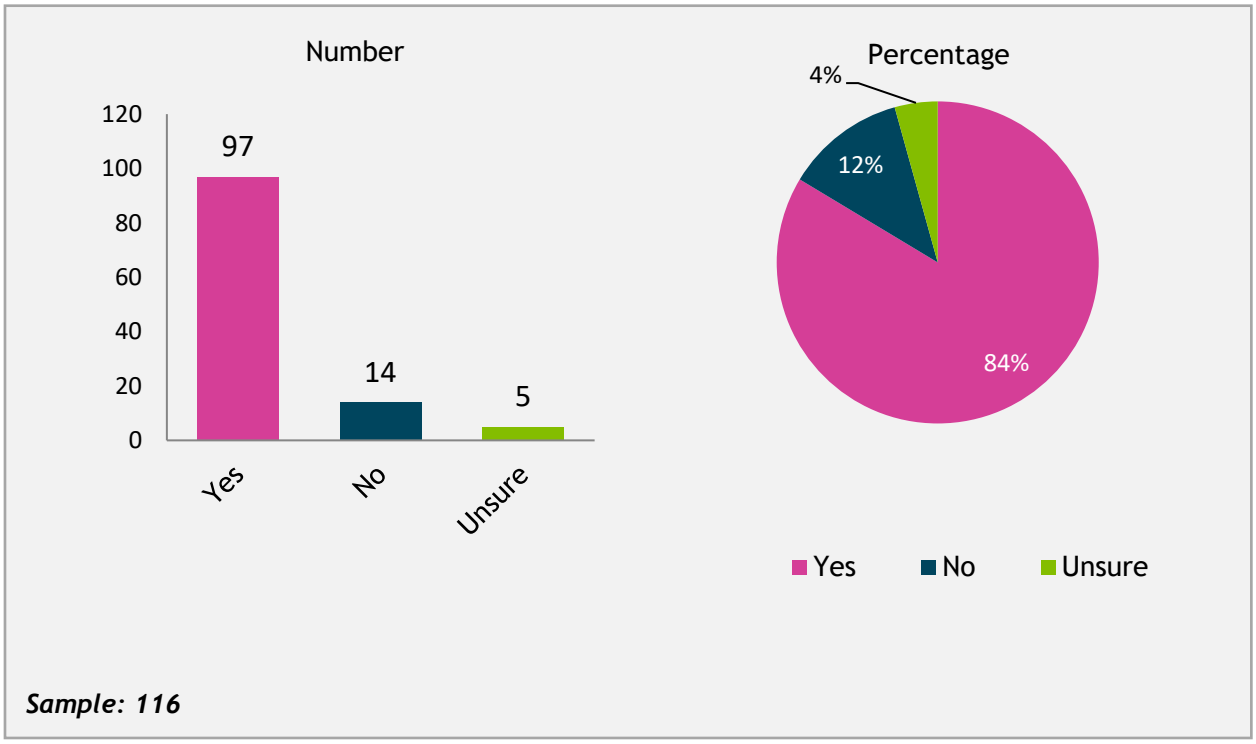
When asking participants which devices they need support with, the majority (60%) cite their laptops, with a slightly smaller number (49%) requesting help with their tablets/iPads. A significantly smaller number (26%) would like to learn more about their phones.

6.7.1 Impact Scale: Feel confident to use computer devices owned?

	% Yes
Aged 50 - 64	79%
Aged 65 - 74	68%
All Respondents (Baseline)	59%
Aged 75 - 89	47%

79% of respondents aged 50 - 64 feel confident to use their computer devices, this reduces to 68% for those aged 65 - 74, and to 47% for those aged 75 - 89.

6.8 Do you have internet (or broadband) access at home?



A broad majority of respondents (84%) have internet (or broadband) access at home.

6.8.1 If NO, is there a reason for this?

Barriers include cost, a lack of interest or need, and a lack of support from device or internet providers.

Selected Feedback

"The cost. I have internet on my phone."

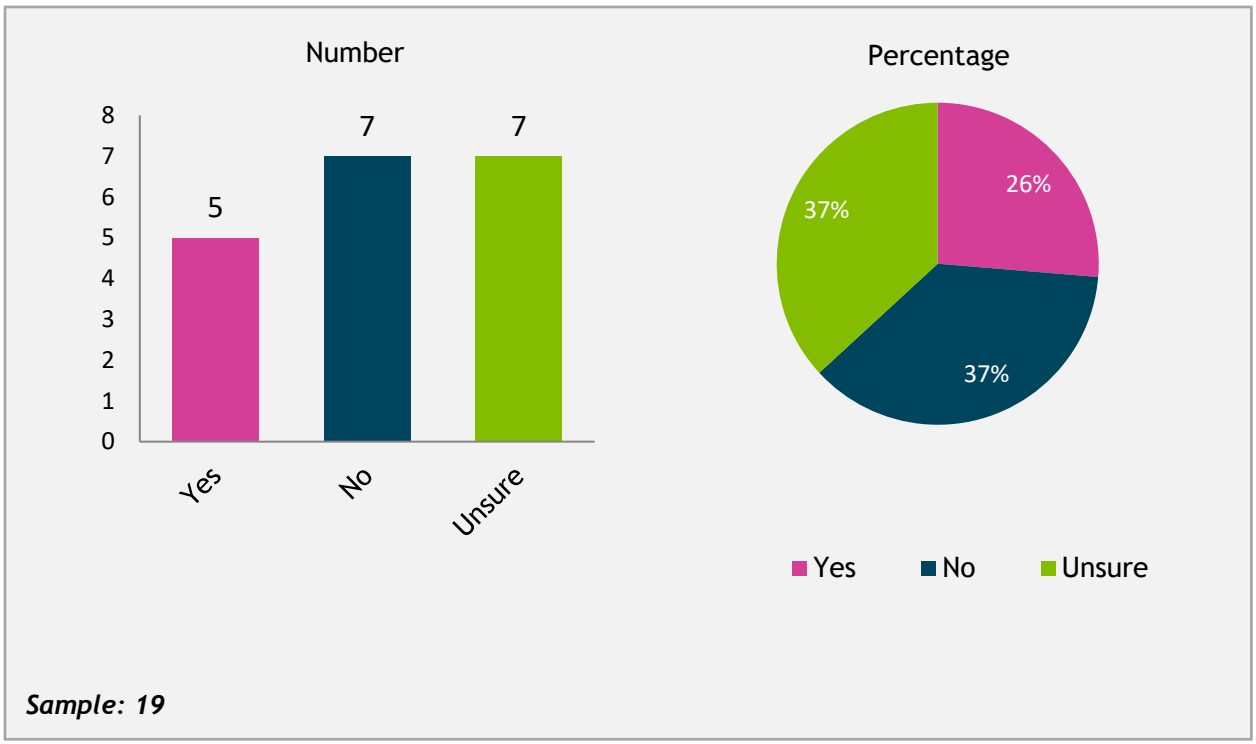
"Too expensive. I got it removed 3 years ago."

"Can not afford and do not require."

"Not interested."

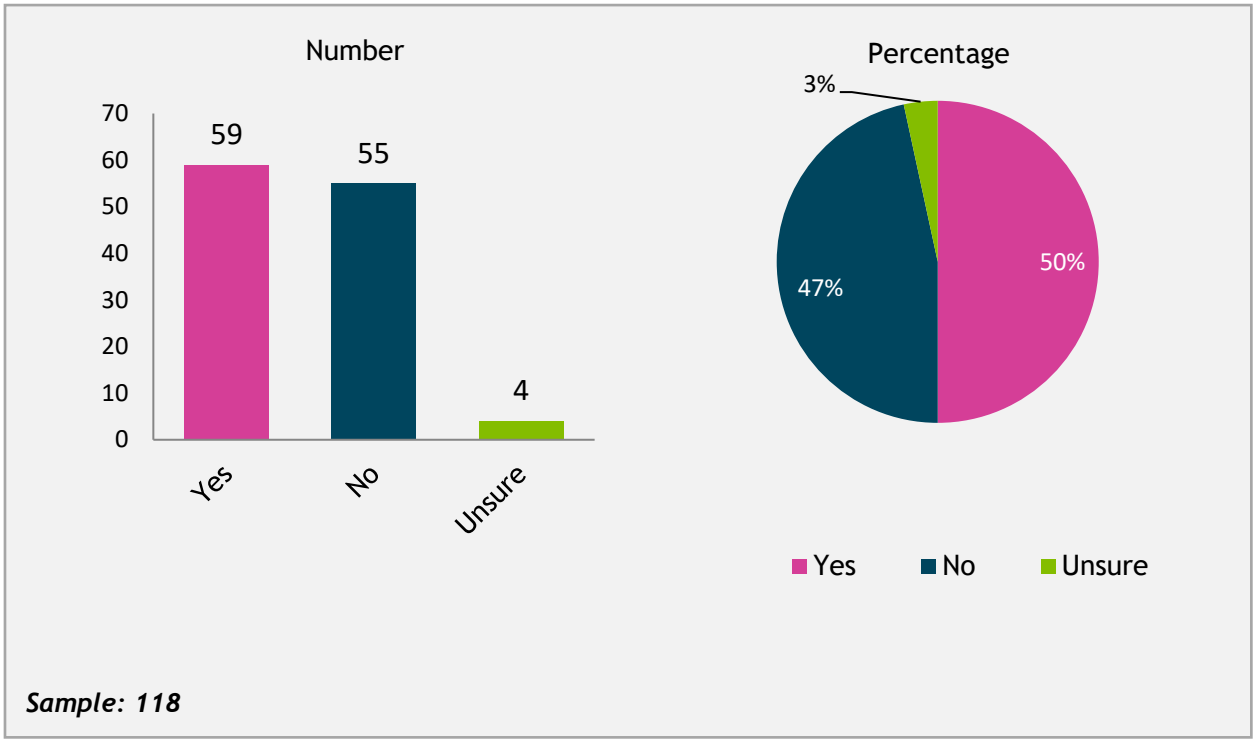
"Had a lot of bother when I had a laptop getting the provider to fix it. They could not be bothered. Were quick enough to deduct money by direct debit. I use a computer in the library."

6.9 If no, would you like to have access to the internet at home?



Just a quarter of those without the internet at home (26%) would like to acquire it.

6.10 Do you use online banking?



Half of respondents (50%) use online banking while a similar number (47%) do not.

6.10.1 Impact Scale: Use online banking?

	% Yes
Aged 50 - 64	79%
Aged 65 - 74	69%
All Respondents (Baseline)	50%
Aged 75 - 89	33%

79% of respondents aged 50 - 64 use online banking, this reduces to 69% for those aged 65 - 74, and to 33% for those aged 75 - 89.

6.10.2 If NO, is there a reason why you don't use online banking?

Those who do not bank online, give a diverse range of reasons. Security and fraud is a key concern.

Selected Feedback
"I do not feel it is safe, and wouldn't trust it."

"Fraud? Like to speak to an actual person plus see statements in front and not disappearing on a screen."

"Do not feel it's safe as I might not recognise a scam."

"Phone stolen and then everything gone."

There is also a worry that mistakes may be made, with complexity (such as having to remember pin numbers) an issue.

Selected Feedback

"Too scared. May make a mistake."

"Not confident enough to use the card."

"Always worried I am not doing it right and always losing my pin numbers."

Online banking is not practical for those with physical or sensory conditions.

Selected Feedback

"Visual difficulty, shaky hands."

Some people prefer a personal touch, or to use cash, while others rely on family members.

Selected Feedback

"I like going to my bank (a very friendly one) and dealing with people."

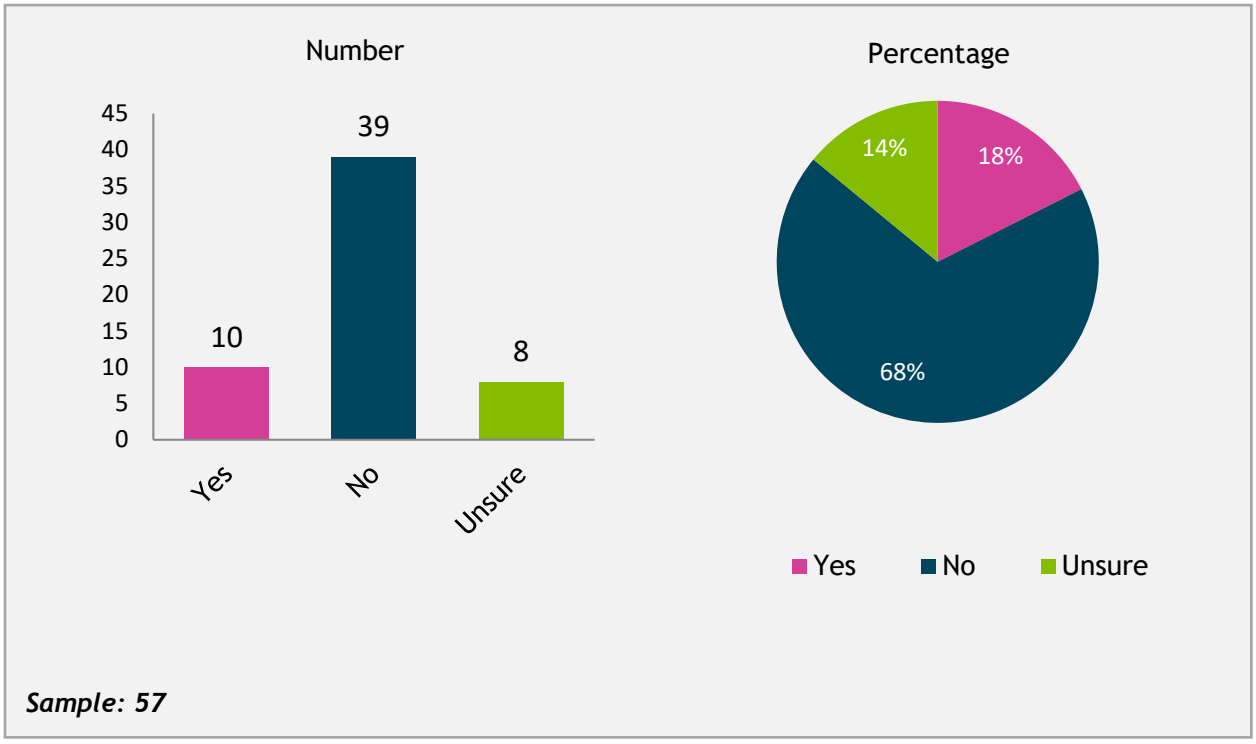
"I like to see a face."

"Because I like cash in my purse."

"Wife banks."

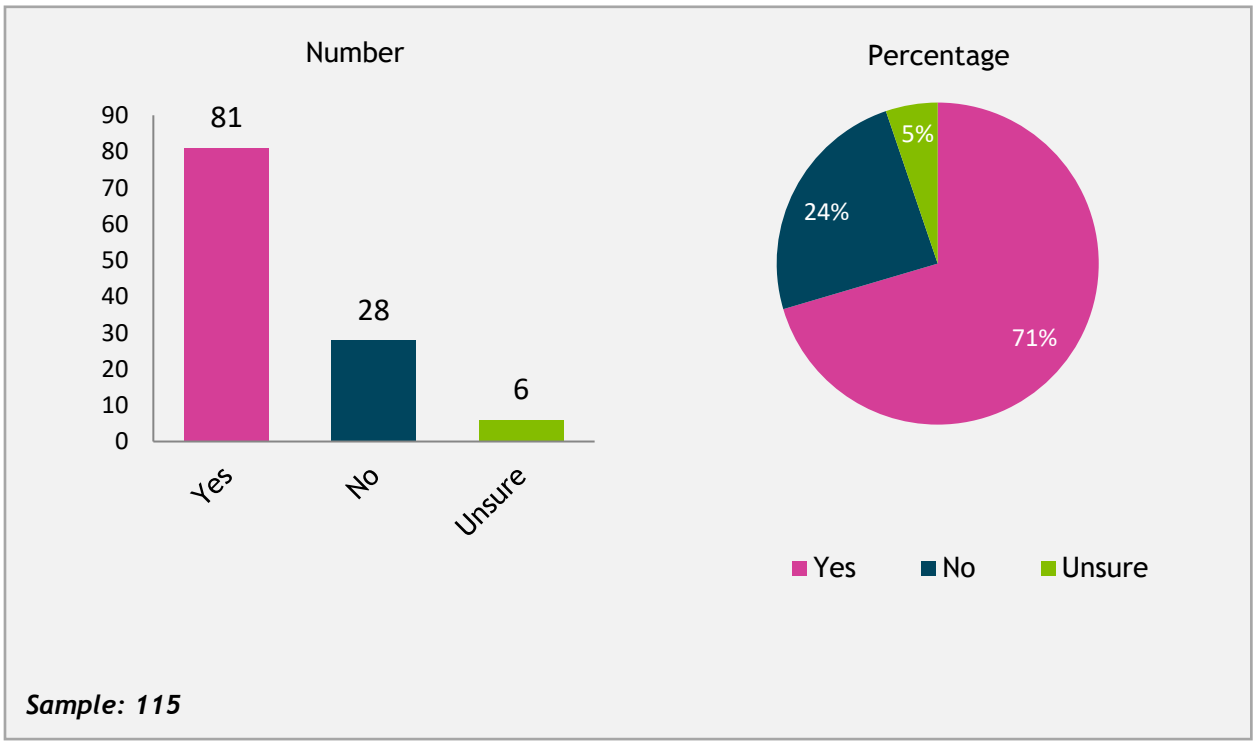
"My husband does telephone banking."

6.11 If NO, would you like to be able to use online banking?



Less than a fifth of respondents (18%) without online banking would like to acquire it.

6.12 Can you get to your bank easily?



Around three quarters of respondents (71%) can get to their bank easily, while a noticeable minority (24%) cannot.

6.12.1 Impact Scale: Can get to the bank easily?

	% Yes
Aged 65 – 74	80%
Aged 75 – 89	72%
All Respondents (Baseline)	71%
Aged 50 – 64	69%

Those of general working age (50 – 64) find it most difficult, to visit their bank.

6.12.2 If NO, do you have problems accessing your bank's services?

Opening times, especially at weekends, along with 'queues at the counter' are cited as barriers. Some respondents are able to use telephone banking.

Selected Feedback

"Banking hours not available on Saturday. All automated."

"Sometimes reduced opening hours plus I'm forced to use a machine which I'm not comfortable with."

"Endless queues at the counter."

"Have arrangements to use phone services where possible."

Family members have provided support, while carers find the 'lack of respite' to be a challenge.

Selected Feedback

"My daughter goes to the bank for me. I have mobility issues."

"I rely on my son to do it."

"Only if taken."

"The problem I have accessing the bank is due to my commitments as a carer. I have limited respite time."

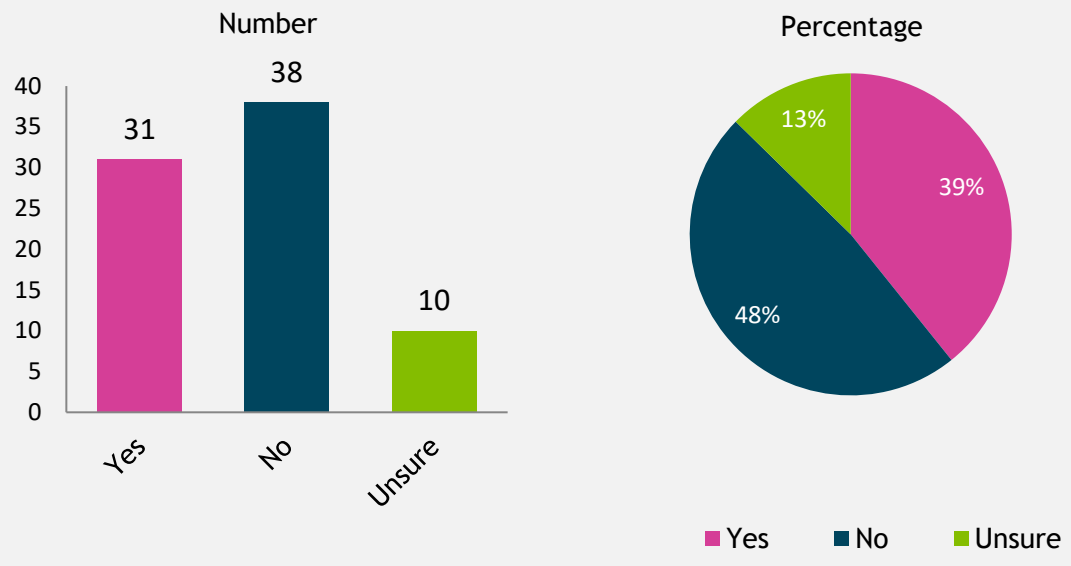
Transport and mobility issues are highlighted.

Selected Feedback

"I cannot walk far. My legs are weak. I find it hard to get to the bus stop. Also the bus driver starts the bus before I sit down."

"Nowhere to park nearby."

6.13 If you have a mobile phone, are you able to use it to pay for car parking online?



Sample: 79

Over a third of respondents with a mobile phone (39%) are able to use it for car parking, while almost a half (48%) are not.

Respondents complain of 'too many apps' and apps that 'don't work'. A need for training and equipment is also cited.

Selected Feedback

"I have 6 parking apps and don't see why paying for parking should be so complicated."

"Ringo doesn't work on my phone even though I have the app."

"I need help to download the app."

"It is not a smart phone and will not run the necessary apps."

Some find the online systems to be inconvenient, or confusing.

Selected Feedback

"This is probably one of the most challenging aspects of online/digital payments - to be standing in a car park trying to pay for parking."

"Very, very inconvenient. There are different apps in each parking area. This is very annoying."

"It's confusing and never sure if it is done correctly."

Security and confidentiality concerns are noted.

Selected Feedback

"I am not very happy with private information being held - location, bank detail, personal details. I would much rather pay by card on a machine and put a ticket in the car."

"I would not wish my details to be kept."

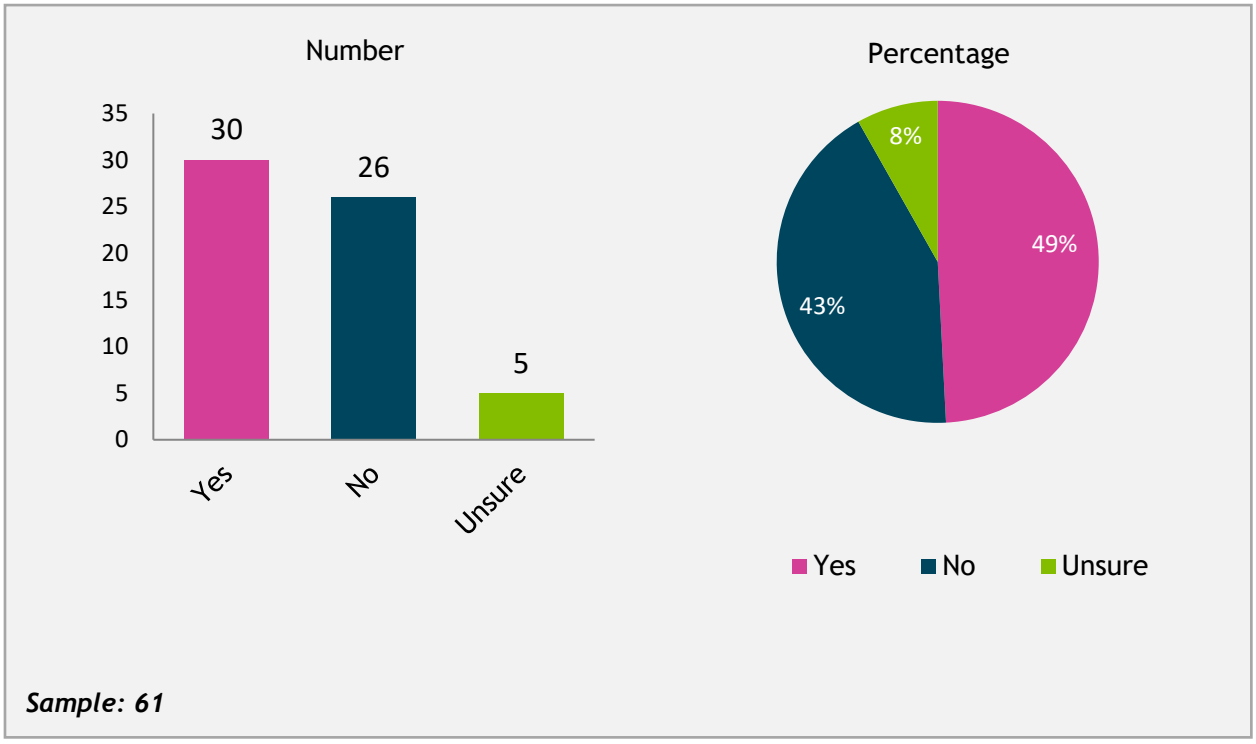
A lack of awareness is also mentioned.

Selected Feedback

"Didn't know I could."

"Wouldn't know where to begin."

6.14 If NO, has this stopped you from going to certain places?

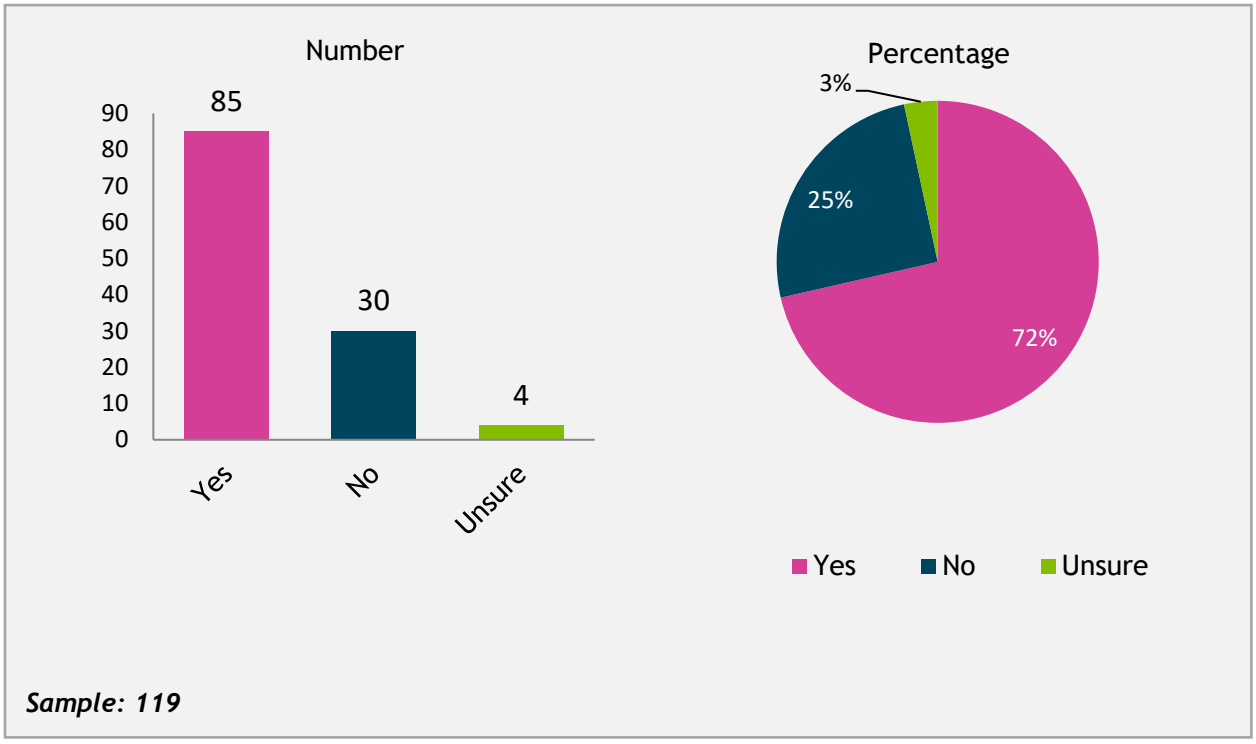


Half of those who do not pay for parking online (49%) say this has prevented them from going to certain places.

Locations mentioned include Epping and Hainault Forests, Fairlop Waters, Valentines Park, Barkingside and Romford High Streets and generally local tube stations, hospitals, supermarkets, forests and parks - which should be 'free to use' according to one person.

This has impacted outings and trips, visits to the shops and church, and visiting friends and relatives.

6.15 Do you use an email account?



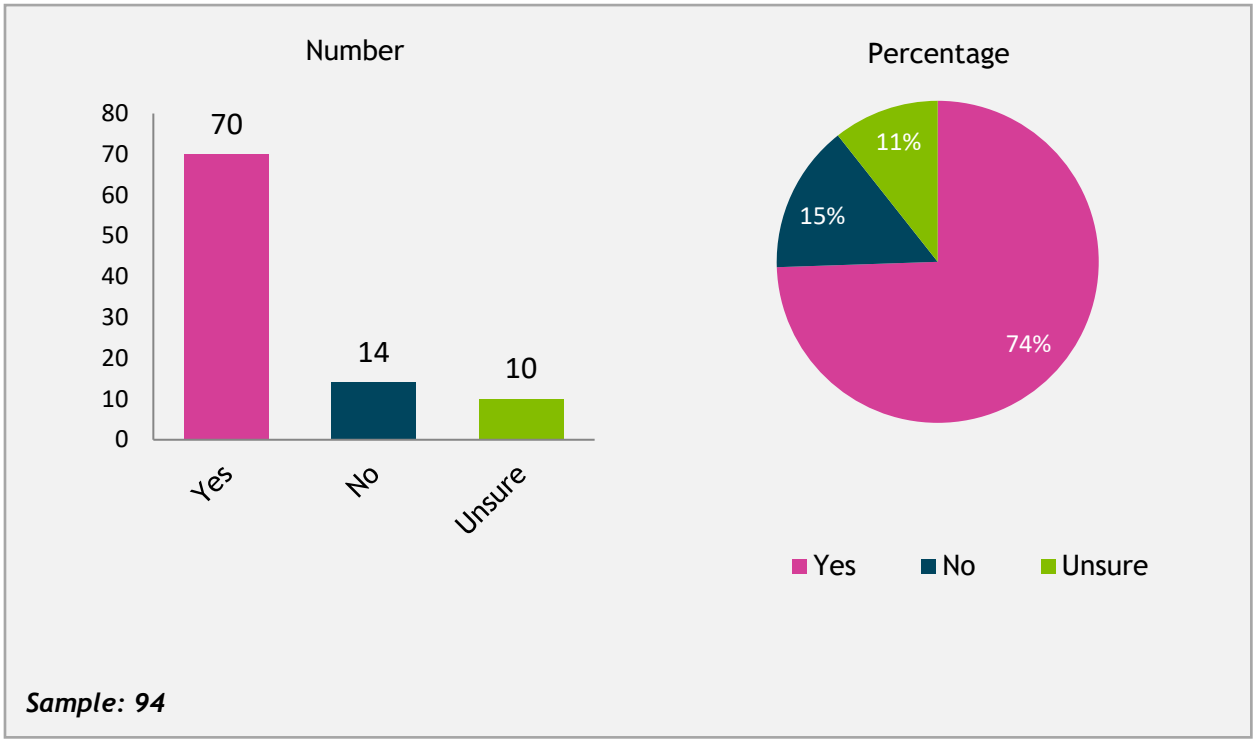
Around three quarters of respondents (72%) have an email account.

6.15.1 Impact Scale: Use an email account?

	% Yes
Aged 50 - 64	100%
Aged 65 - 74	81%
All Respondents (Baseline)	72%
Aged 75 - 89	62%

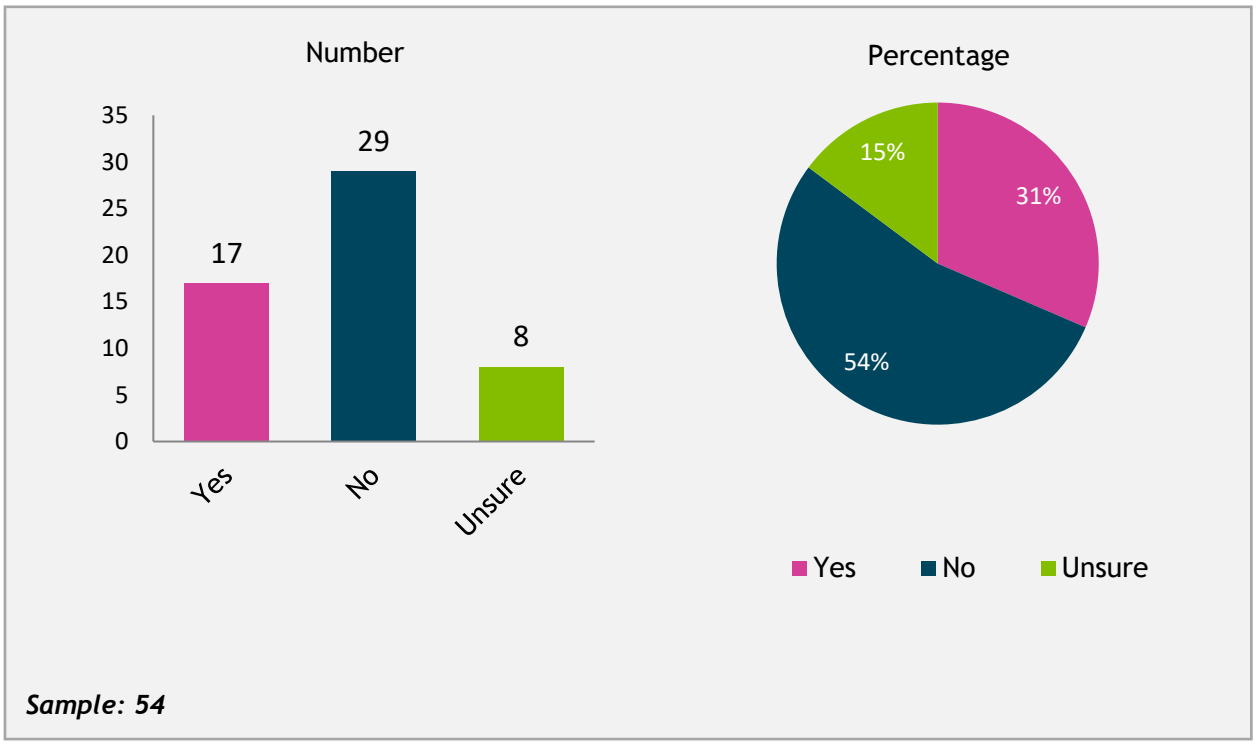
All respondents aged 50 - 64 use an email account, this reduces to 81% for those aged 65 - 74, and to 62% for those aged 75 - 89.

6.16 If YES do you feel confident using your email account?



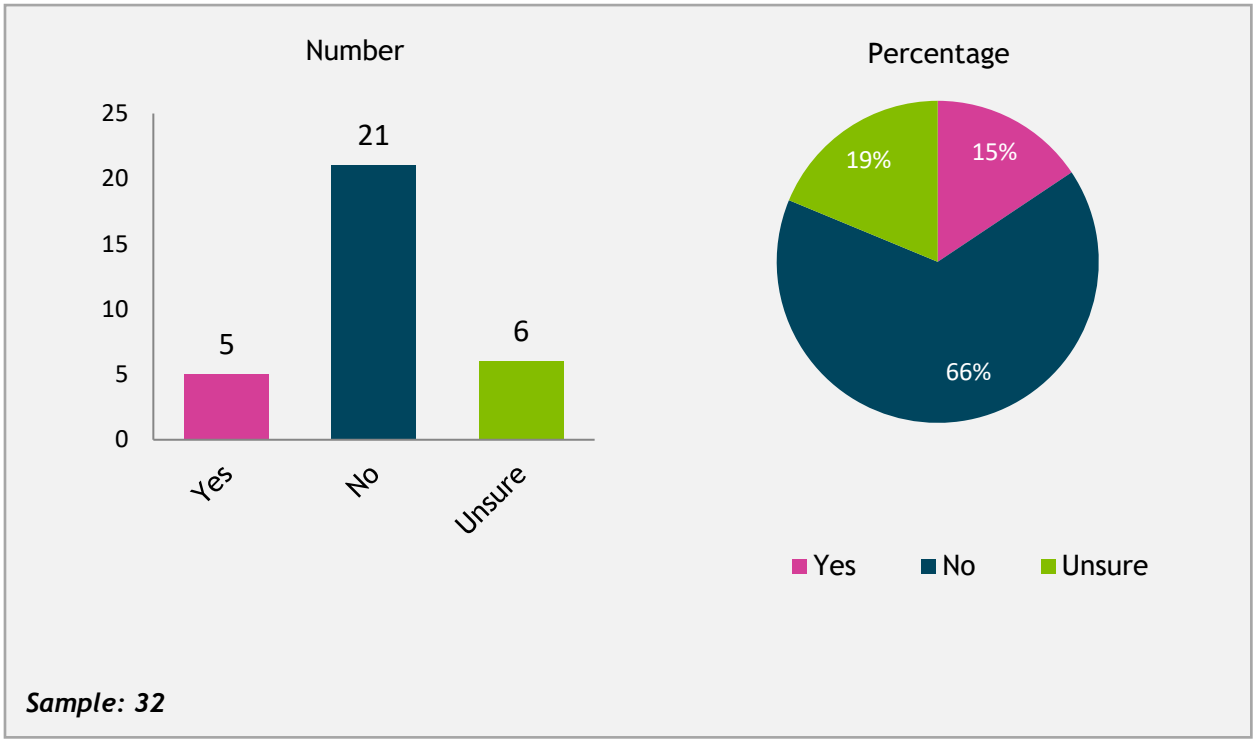
A broad majority (74%) are confident in using their email account, while 15% are not.

6.17 If NO, would you like some help with using your email account?



Of those who are not confident, around a third (31%) would like to learn more.

6.18 If you don't have one, would you like to have an email account?



Of those without an email account, just 15% would like to acquire one.

6.18.1 If NO, what is stopping you using an email account?

Barriers cited include cost, security concerns, a lack of skills or confidence, language issues and conditions such as visual and physical impairments, and dementia.

Selected Feedback
"Cost of everything."
"There is a lot of false information and fraud."
"Don't trust it."
"I do not want a lot of junk mail/scam/messages."
"Lack the confidence."
"I don't know full English."
"Visual impairment and manual dexterity."
"I have dementia so cannot use devices."

Those with family support are less inclined to be interested.

Selected Feedback

"I do not have much interest in digital media. My husband deals with that side of life."

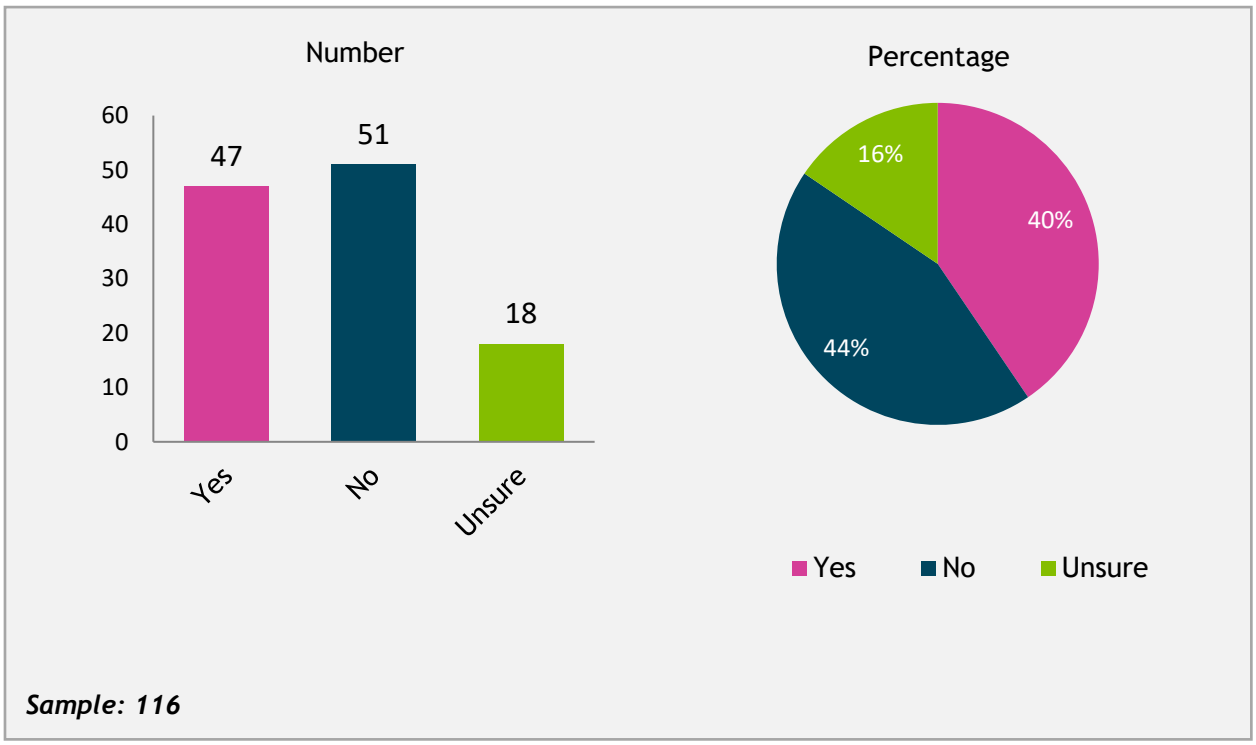
"Don't want one, my niece does whatever needs to be done."

A lack of awareness is mentioned.

Selected Feedback

"Not sure what it is."

6.19 Have you had problems accessing social opportunities, because the information /bookings are online?



A significant number of respondents (40%) have experienced difficulty accessing social opportunities due to online information or booking, while 44% have not.

6.19.1 Impact Scale: Had problems accessing social opportunities?

	% Yes
Aged 65 – 74	46%
All Respondents (Baseline)	40%
Aged 50 – 64	36%
Aged 75 – 89	36%

Recent retirees (aged 65 – 74) are most likely to have experienced problems, in accessing social opportunities.

6.19.2 If YES, please give details of what you have been unable to do?

Respondents have experienced difficulty with holidays, eating out, attending church events, cinema, theatre and social groups, and shopping.

Online booking is commented to be 'difficult', especially systems with a time limit. A lack of knowledge and confidence is expressed.

Selected Feedback

"Find it difficult to follow through what to do."

"Do not always understand what is required and timed out."

"Given up trying - where do I start?"

"Can not use online booking. Not confident and worry."

Those preferring in-person booking complain of limited options, including poor telephone access and an insistence by many providers to use an app.

Selected Feedback

"I much prefer to book in person."

"I would like to see a human being not stare at a screen."

"Sometimes you just need to talk to a real person. Sometimes the process is complicated and long-winded online."

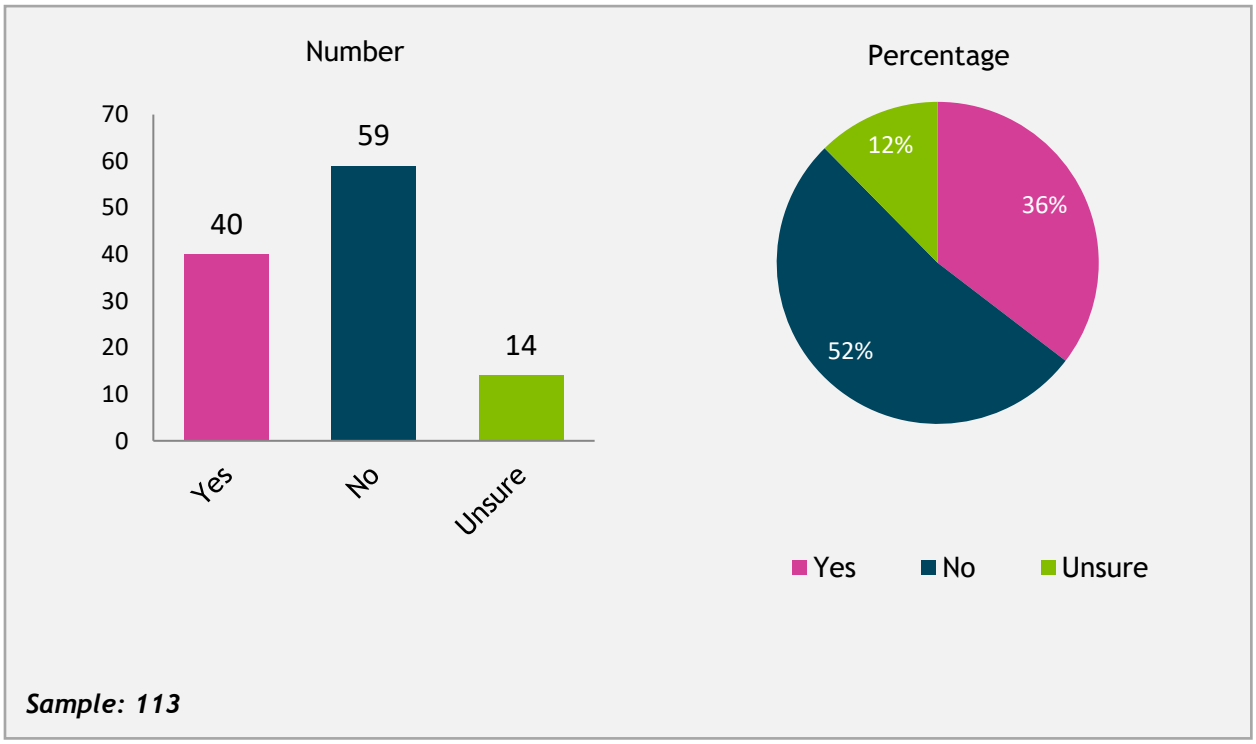
"Most things are only accessible with online communication. Difficult to get telephone contact now."

"Downloading apps, as everything everywhere says download their app."

Some rely on the support of family members.

Selected Feedback
"My wife can book for me."
"Family do it for me."
"Can't book anything, have to get my daughter to do it."

6.20 Are there any services that you couldn't access because you needed to do it online?



Services with an online access requirement have been problematic for 36% of respondents, while 52% have not experienced difficulty.

Respondents have not been able to access medical appointments and prescriptions, benefits, passports, parking tickets and permits (including Blue Badge) and social events. Some have found it difficult to pay utility bills – such as gas and telephone.

6.20.1 Impact Scale: Had problems accessing services?

	% Yes
Aged 75 – 89	45%
All Respondents (Baseline)	36%
Aged 65 – 74	30%
Aged 50 – 64	8%

45% of respondents aged 75 – 89 have experienced problems when accessing services, this reduces to 30% for those aged 65 – 74, and to 8% for those aged 50 – 64.

6.20.2 If YES, please give details.

Comments underscore the importance of good telephone access, plus support of family members.

Selected Feedback

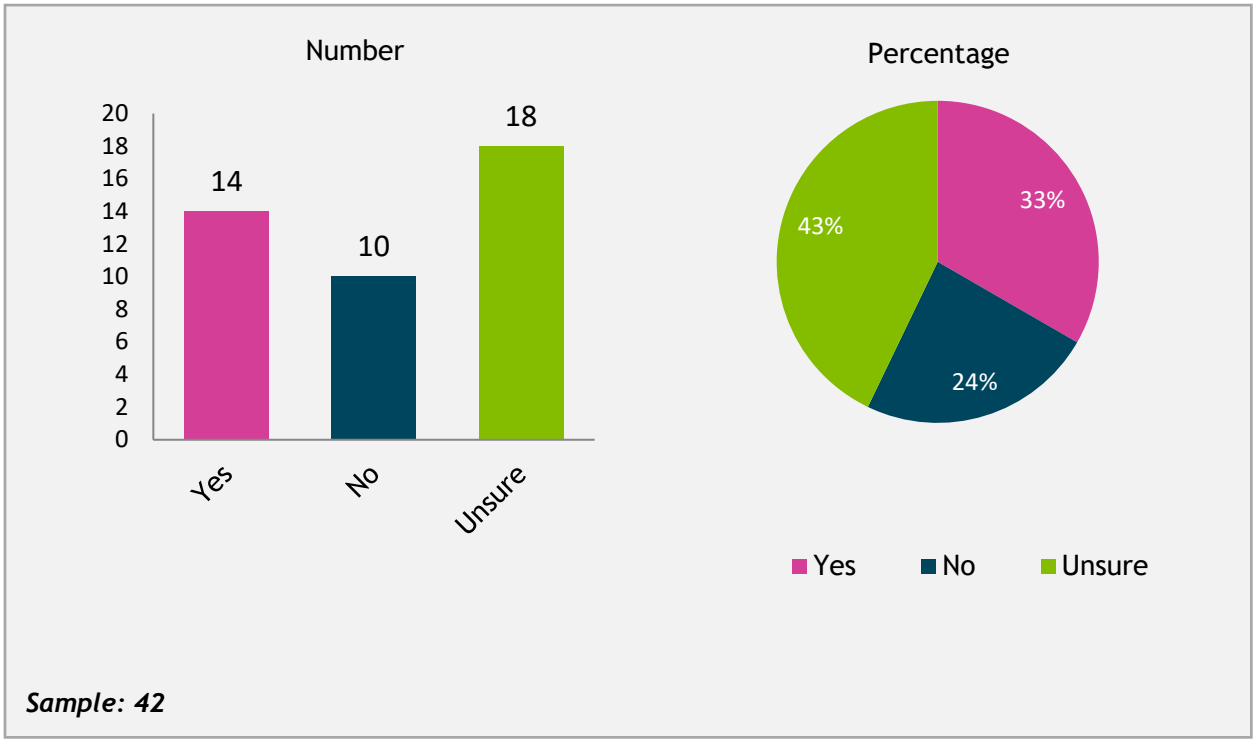
"If I can't do it on the phone, I don't do it. They should think of people who don't have money for the internet."

"Long queues on the telephone and often cut off before getting through."

"When my children come, they have to do for me."

"I have to rely on my son to do everything."

6.21 If YES, did they offer an alternative offline method to access these services?

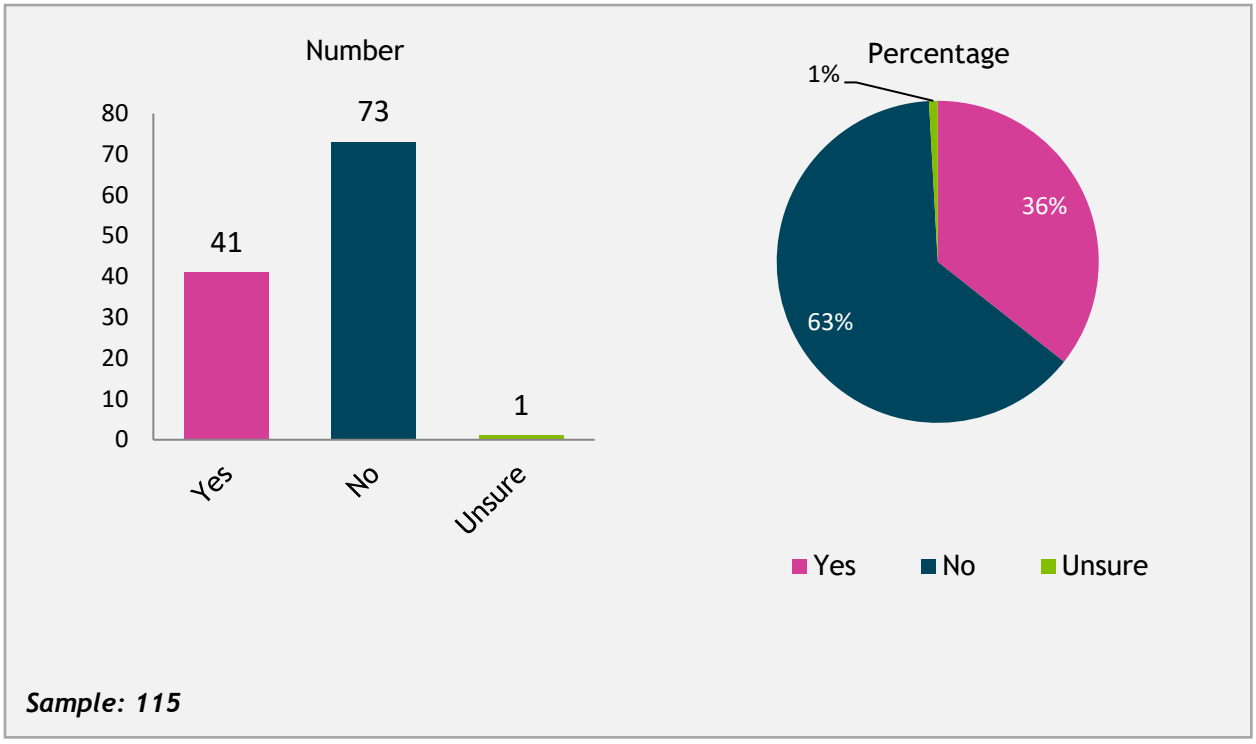


Just a third of those experiencing difficulty (33%) were offered an alternative access method.

In one experience paper alternatives were offered, while in another, staff insisted on the online system – suggesting that friends or family may help. One person says you need to be 'persistent'.

Selected Feedback
"Paper downloaded versions."
"They suggest I ask a friend or neighbour to download."
"If you are persistent."

6.22 Do you do online shopping?



Around a third of respondents (36%) do online shopping, while two thirds (63%) do not.

6.22.1 Impact Scale: Do online shopping?

	% Yes
Aged 50 - 64	62%
Aged 65 - 74	47%
All Respondents (Baseline)	36%
Aged 75 - 89	27%

62% of respondents aged 50 - 64 do online shopping, this reduces to 47% for those aged 65 - 74, and to 27% for those aged 75 - 89.

6.22.2 If NO, how do you do your food shopping? Do you have difficulty with food shopping?

Many respondents rely on the support of family members, with local charities and groups, along with telephone ordering also assisting.

Selected Feedback
"My husband deals with online shopping for food."

"I have dinners delivered. My daughter does the rest."

"Able to do my own, son does heavy shopping."

"A member of Age UK does my weekly shopping."

"Some outlets allow you to phone order."

Some, who do their own shopping find it to be enjoyable, while others are weary of peak times.

Selected Feedback

"I shop in person, I prefer that."

"I am able to do my own shopping and I enjoy it."

"I go to the shops when they are quiet as I cannot cope when they are busy."

Transport options include walking, public transport, dedicated minibuses and driving (including lifts).

Selected Feedback

"Rely on family and public transport."

"Do my own at the moment. We have a minibus twice a week from where I live which I can go on if needed."

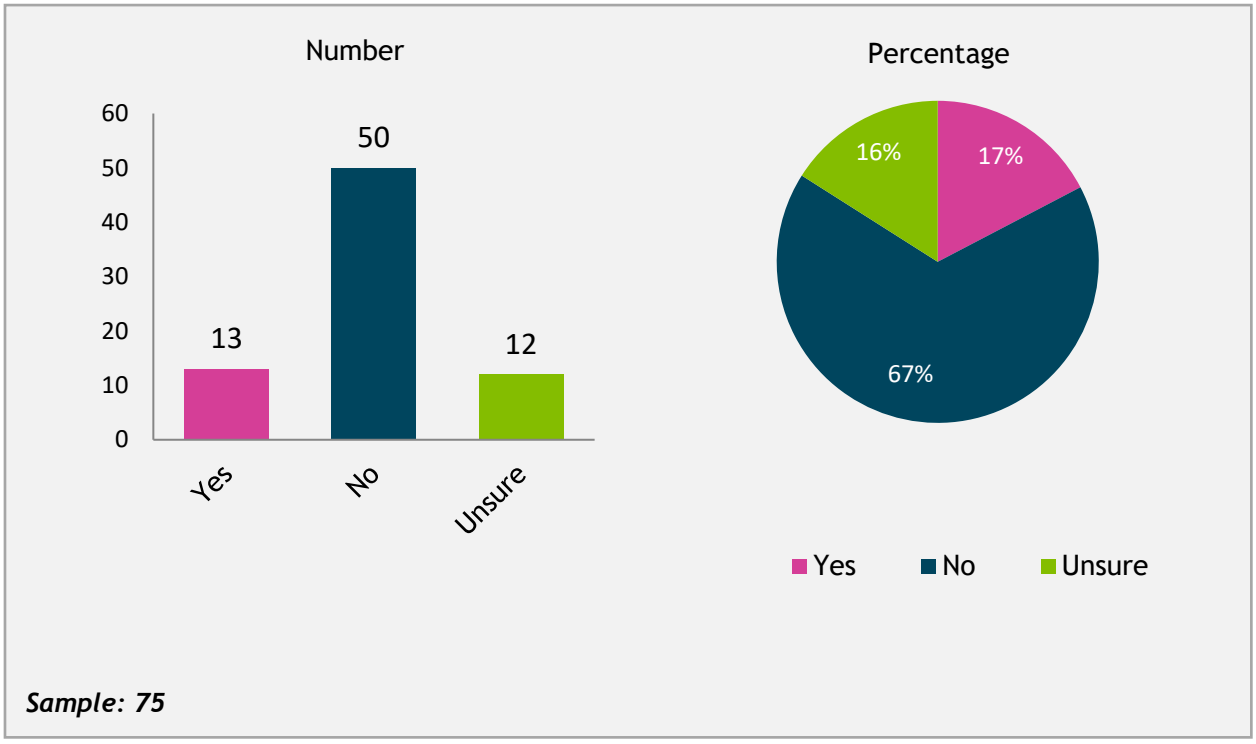
"Someone drives me to the supermarket once a week."

One person highlights seasonal challenges, and the ability to manage larger loads.

Selected Feedback

"It's difficult in winter and/or if I want to buy a lot in one day."

6.23 Would you like to be able to do online shopping?



Just 17% of respondents who do not currently shop online, would like to.

6.23.1 If NO, is there any reason why?

Respondents highlight the benefits of in-person shopping and a sense of independence is expressed - in being able to visit the shop, view what is being bought and what is on offer. For some, a visit to the shop is an opportunity for exercise and social interaction.

Selected Feedback
"I like buying my own groceries."
"Prefer to see what I'm buying and what else is available."
"Prefer to pick own especially veg and fruit. Also do not use self-service."
"Out of date food, people touching what I'm going to eat. You can't get the reduced food online, only if you are in the shop."
"I prefer to do my shopping, so that I can choose what I like, also I like to see other people, sometimes I meet friends in the shop."
"I like to go out of the house."

Families are often available to assist.

Selected Feedback

"Don't feel the need. My family would always do it for us."

"My husband does this and I have no need and no interest. I would prefer to go to the shop."

"My son does my shopping. I give him a list."

Barriers to online shopping include a lack of confidence and confidentiality concerns. Online shopping is not practical for those with long term conditions (such as dementia) and those requiring smaller quantities.

Selected Feedback

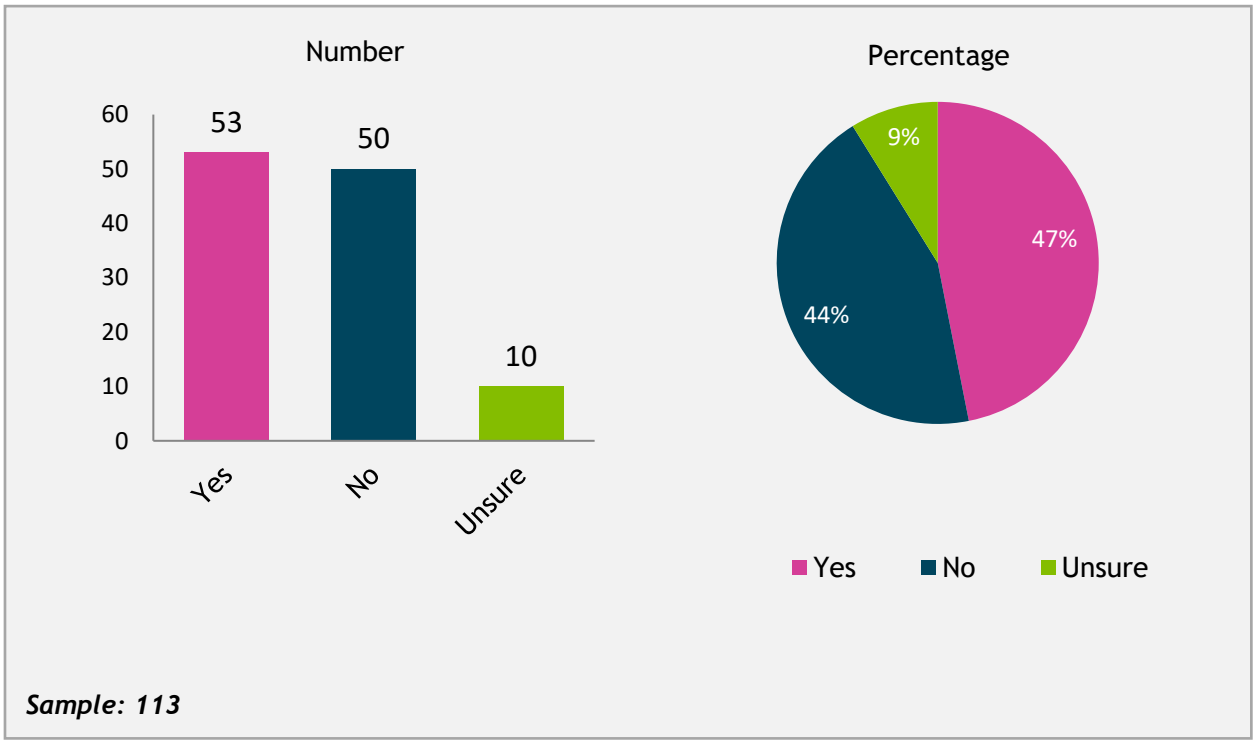
"Not confident enough. And I might make a mistake."

"Safety of personal details."

"I am unable to use mobile phones and computers due to my dementia."

"Only buy small amounts daily."

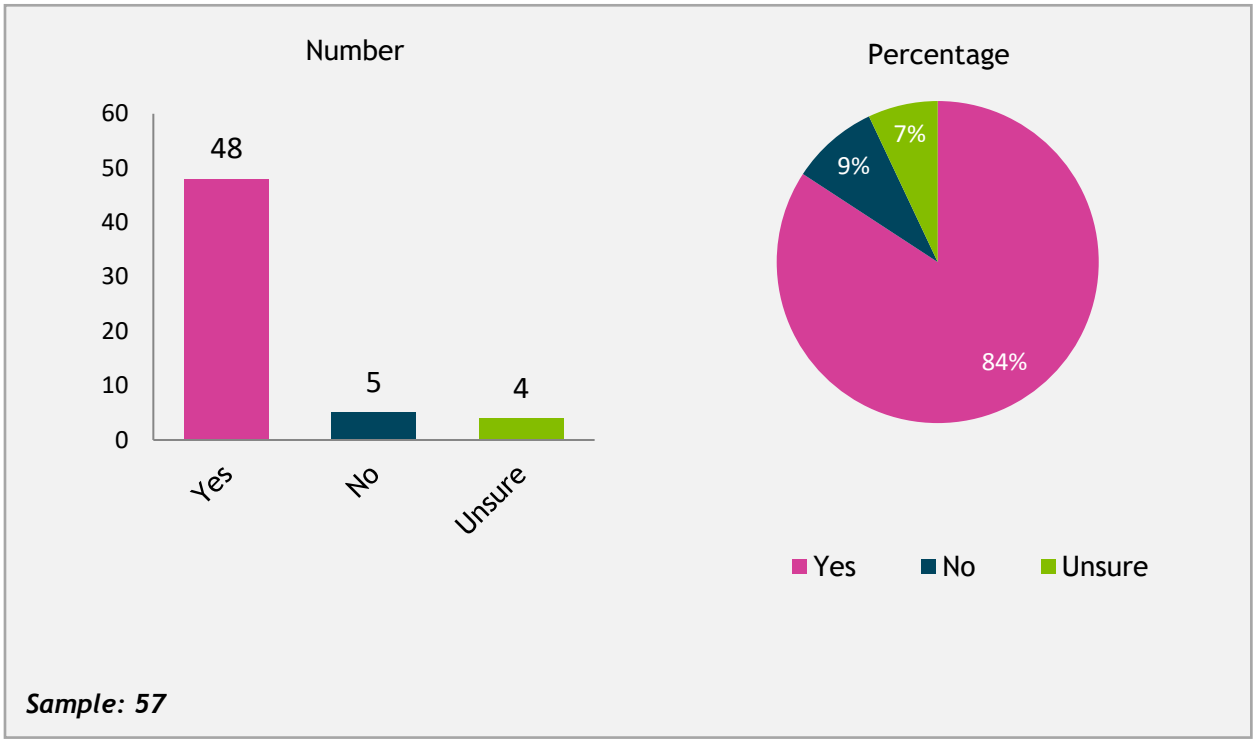
6.24 Do you need someone to help you to use your devices?



Just under half of respondents (47%) need assistance to use their devices, while a similar number (44%) do not.

The vast majority of those assisting are family members, with friends, neighbours, libraries and local support groups also mentioned.

6.25 If YES, do you find this helpful?



A broad majority of respondents (84%) have found the assistance to be helpful. Just 9% have not.

The importance of independence is noted, along with learning from familiar people – who may be more 'patient and understanding'. Learning has helped to boost confidence and those with conditions or impairments express gratitude.

Selected Feedback

"Try to be independent as much as possible."

"Because they have patience."

"They know my circumstances."

"Because their knowledge is greater than mine."

"Helps to boost confidence."

"One to one support is good for me as I'm hearing impaired."

Challenges mentioned include a lack of concentration, memory or understanding, along with skills and training.

Selected Feedback

"Daughter tries to teach me but I don't always get it."

"Can't concentrate."

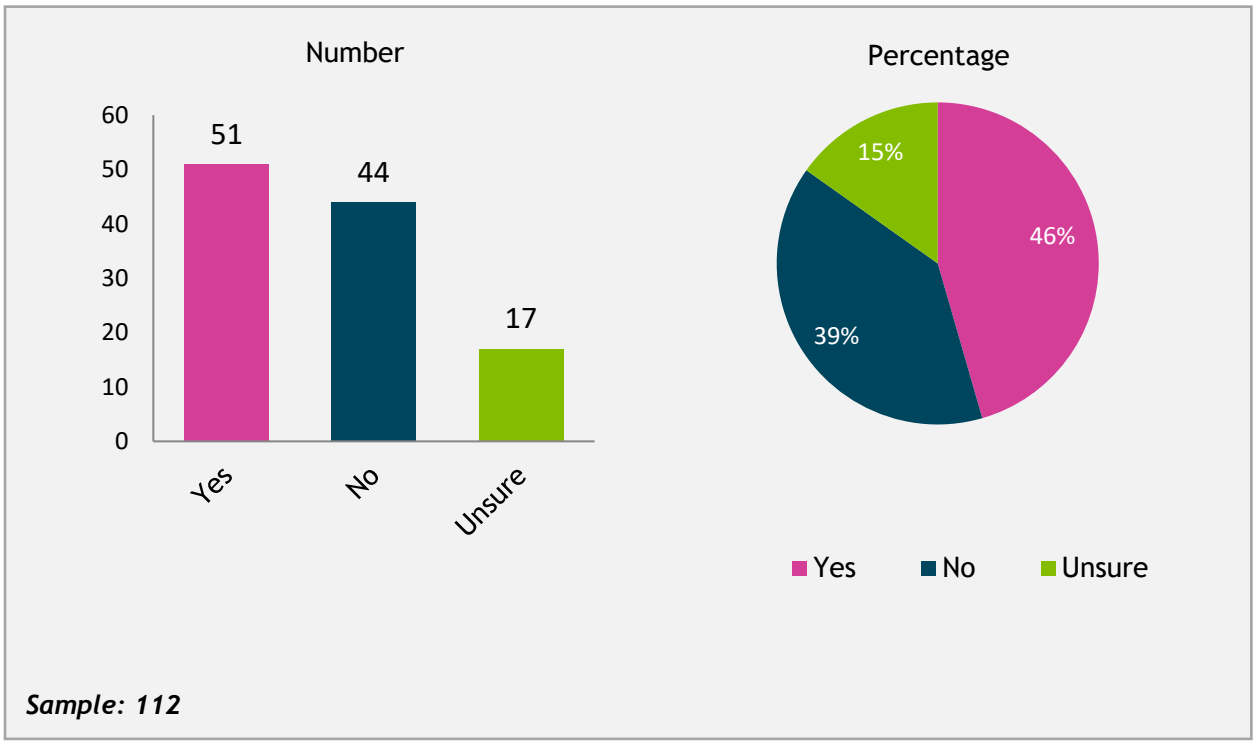
"He tries to explain, but I cannot remember."

"Things happen I do not understand."

"Can't do it myself on old iPad and not skilled enough."

"Sometimes I get stuck with apps I am new to."

6.26 Would you like help to learn/improve your digital skills?



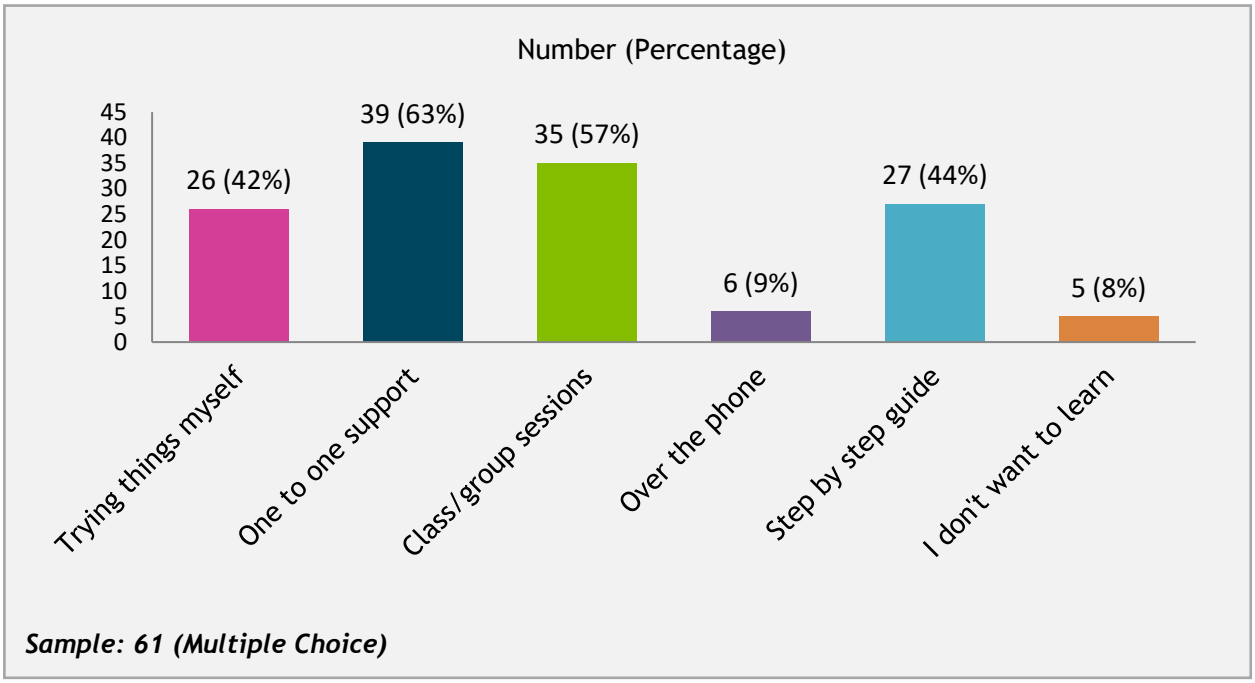
Around half of respondents (46%) would like help to improve their digital skills, while 39% would not.

6.26.1 Impact Scale: Would like help to improve digital skills?

	% Yes
Aged 65 - 74	47%
Aged 75 - 89	47%
All Respondents (Baseline)	46%
Aged 50 - 64	43%

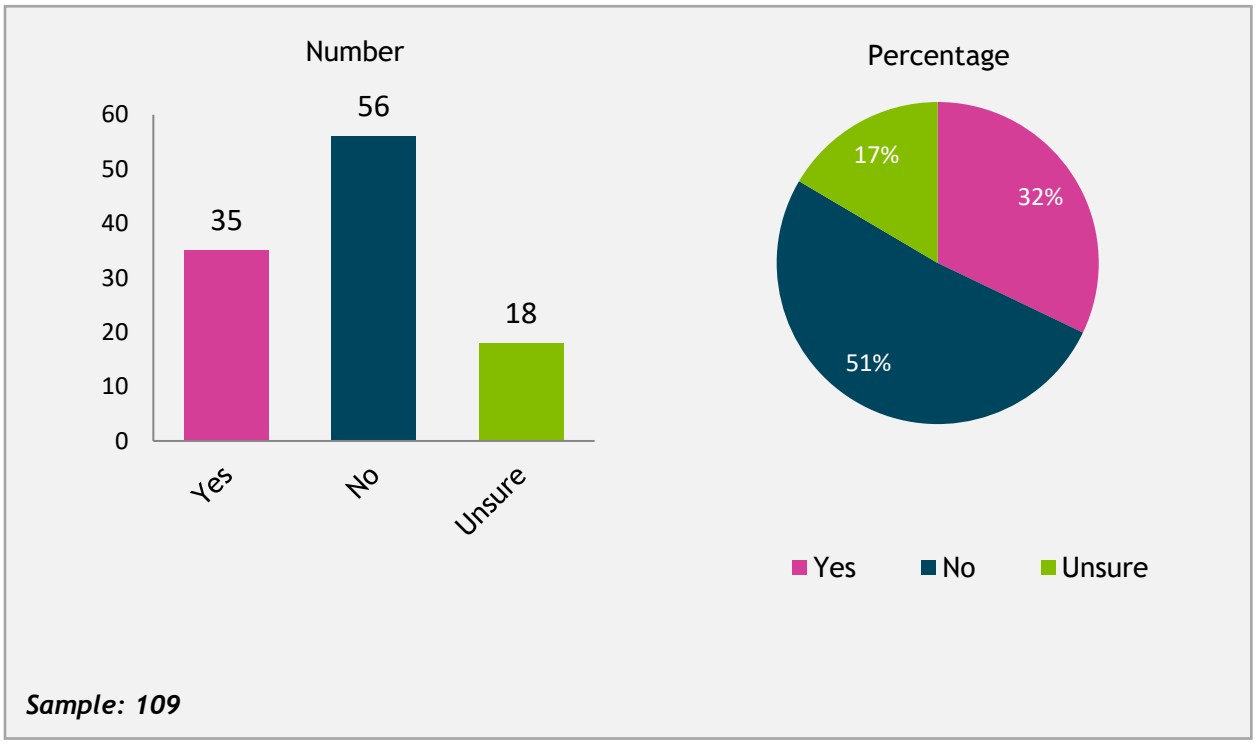
Respondents of all ages would like help, to improve their digital skills (there is just 4% variance among age groupings).

6.27 If YES, how do you prefer to learn digital skills?



Around two thirds (63%) prefer one-to-one support, with over half (57%) preferring group classes or sessions. Step-by-step guides (44%) and self-learning (42%) are also popular.

6.28 Would you like some help from an Age UK Digital Champion, to help you use your mobile phone or other digital device?



A third of respondents (32%) would like to receive help from an Age UK 'Digital Champion' (we have supplied contact details).

6.29 Please give any other comments on how you feel about digital skills and online services:

When asking for any other feedback, we detect themes on inclusion, independence, learning and skills, practical use, and security and equipment.

Selected Feedback

Inclusion

"They must always have places people can access help to access services when digital hurdles arrive."

"Without these services, I'm stuck, helpless - might just as well be on a desert island!"

"I'm personally happy to use online services and feel reasonably adept, but it concerns me that as so much is "going digital" nowadays, many old people are being left out, socially and financially, because they can't access services online."

"Think it's hard for people who haven't or can't use the internet and they shouldn't be penalised."

“A lot of older people have decided they will remain 'computer ignorant'. A useful service for those that wish - but not needed by me.”

“More human evaluation needed, not more computer screens.”

“I wish we could go back to the old days, face to face appointments, face to face interviews.”

“Older people need a lot more support, as it is increasingly difficult to manage without the use of a smart phone e.g. paying for parking, shopping, council services etc.”

“Feel the older generation are being excluded and made to feel inferior.”

Independence

“I think that digital skills are important and would be for me if I lived alone.”

“I would prefer to talk to people and consult catalogues or even visit a shop!”

“I would like to learn more 'how to' because there is a danger of my becoming more isolated due to age and hearing impairment.”

Learning and Skills

“I feel better if someone helps me.”

“I understand the problems that many face. I am fortunate that I have learned how to use and have become confident with digital devices over a long period, both through my occupation and through interest.”

“I feel having more skills will build my confidence when using my digital devices.”

“My brain and fingers work too fast and I make too many mistakes so I am happy with the knowledge that I have. Not everyone is computer literate and would prefer paper.”

“Thank you but I can no longer cope with learning. Seem to have several difficulties.”

“I often ask my cousin to help with completing forms (disabled badge) and uploading supporting information. I am becoming more confident.”

“I have had some IT classes with Age UK & found these very useful and I am sure I can learn more. I have also offered to help people whose IT knowledge is less than mine.”

“Digital skills are good. However, I find it a challenge sometimes. I get frustrated when I can't do what I would like to and have to wait days for someone's help.”

“It moves forward too fast. Just as you learn one thing, it becomes obsolete.”

Practical Use

“Would like to improve (even basically) to do my own shopping online.”

“General information - topics, interests, things to do, clubs etc.”

Security and Equipment

"It is a lack of confidence and knowledge about how the devices work. A fear of making a mistake and opening my device up to hackers. I think online services which are genuine are excellent."

"I do not really do much online as I am very aware of scammers, however I can use online services. Do not think our details are always protected."

"I think that we are relying too much on online services and devices. If power goes off, so do all the computers."

"Not keen, find it very complicated, worry whether online banking is safe and whether it is safe to open mail."

"it's annoying when I lose the broadband connection at home. It happens more and more often."

"I feel too old for new ideas, frightened to get hacked."

7. Recommendations

Based on the analysis of all feedback, Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering would like to make the following recommendations:

7.1 Devices

All respondents aged 50 – 64 own a smart phone, this reduces to 78% for those aged 65 – 74, and to 47% for those aged 75 – 89.

7.1.1 The oldest respondents are statistically half as likely to own a smart phone, compared with the youngest. Issues include cost, accessibility (size of screen for example), support needs and learning and skills. We hope that financial and other practical support is more widely available, to address the inequality of ownership that clearly exists in the borough. The local authority should be working as closely as possible with local support groups, and health and care services, to ensure that the local offer is most effectively coordinated ad maximised.

7.2 Learning and Skills

69% of respondents aged 50 – 64 feel confident to use their phones, this reduces to 53% for those aged 65 – 74, and to 39% for those aged 75 – 89.

Additionally 79% of respondents aged 50 – 64 feel confident to use their computer devices, this reduces to 68% for those aged 65 – 74, and to 47% for those aged 75 – 89.

7.2.1 This suggests a significant skills gap for those aged 75 – 89, who are also significantly most likely to be interested in learning. These respondents cite specific challenges due largely to age –a lack of concentration, memory or knowledge, plus long term conditions, resulting in a level of apprehension. Cost, and lack of equipment are also mentioned. To reduce the skills gap, much more community outreach is required, with more training conducted at convenient venues and in resident's homes. Is enough being done, to recruit and utilise local volunteers?

7.3 Online-Only Access

79% of respondents aged 50 – 64 use online banking, this reduces to 69% for those aged 65 – 74, and to 33% for those aged 75 – 89.

Additionally 45% of respondents aged 75 – 89 have experienced problems when accessing services, this reduces to 30% for those aged 65 – 74, and to 8% for those aged 50 – 64.

7.3.1 While the issues are many, key barriers are a lack of skills and confidence (forms often 'time out' before being completed) and concerns about security and confidentiality. Information online needs to be accessible, simple, and to the point, forms should not be overly complex, and reassurance given about security protocols. Are older people involved in the testing and refining of content? If not we urge local providers to consider this.

Just a third of those experiencing difficulty (33%) were offered an alternative access method. One person, was told by staff to 'find family or friends' to help complete the online form.

7.3.2 Not being offered an alternative to the online option, when service users have clearly expressed difficulties, is not reasonable in our view, and we would even suggest discriminatory. It should be the case - whatever the service, that an alternative access method exists, and that staff are trained to signpost and support older people.

7.4 Email and Telephone

All respondents aged 50 – 64 use an email account, this reduces to 81% for those aged 65 – 74, and to 62% for those aged 75 – 89.

7.4.1 We would like to remind services, based on these statistics, that traditional forms of communication – especially the telephone should be resourced, staffed,

accessible and effective. One person says 'if I can't do it on the phone, I don't do it' and this is widely echoed by respondents.

8. Glossary of Terms

IT	Information Technology

9. Distribution and Comment

This report is available to the general public, and is shared with our statutory and community partners. Accessible formats are available.

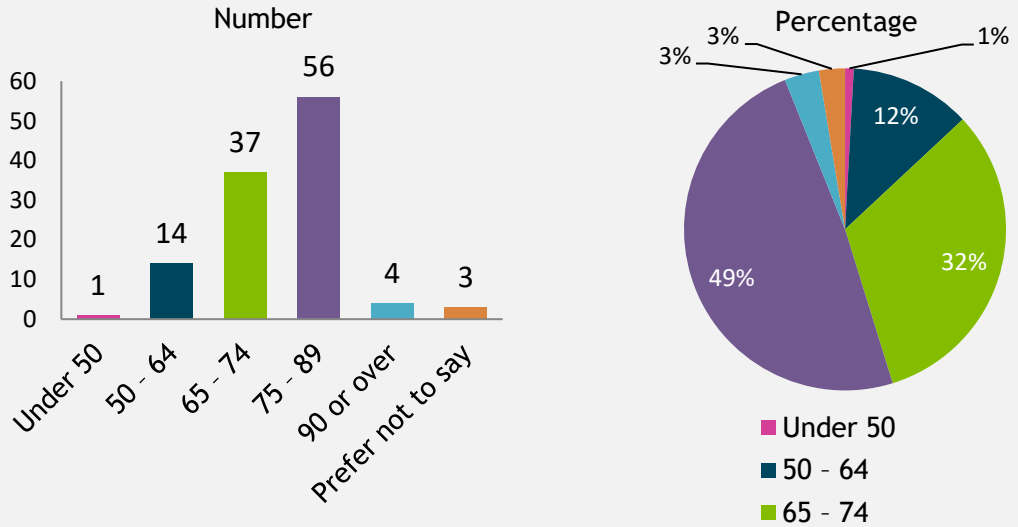
If you have any comments on this report or wish to share your views and experiences, please contact us.

Age UK Redbridge, Barking and Havering, 103 Cranbrook Road, Ilford, IG1 4PU.
Phone: 020 8220 6000
Email: admin@ageukrbh.org.uk
Registered Charity Number: 1088435

Appendix - Demographics

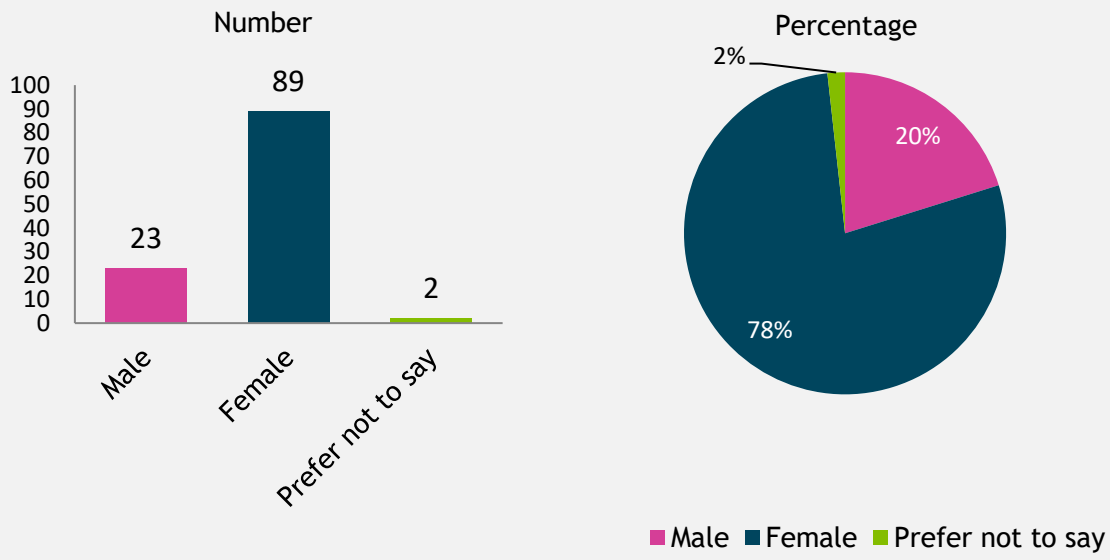
The demographics of participants are stated as follows:

Age



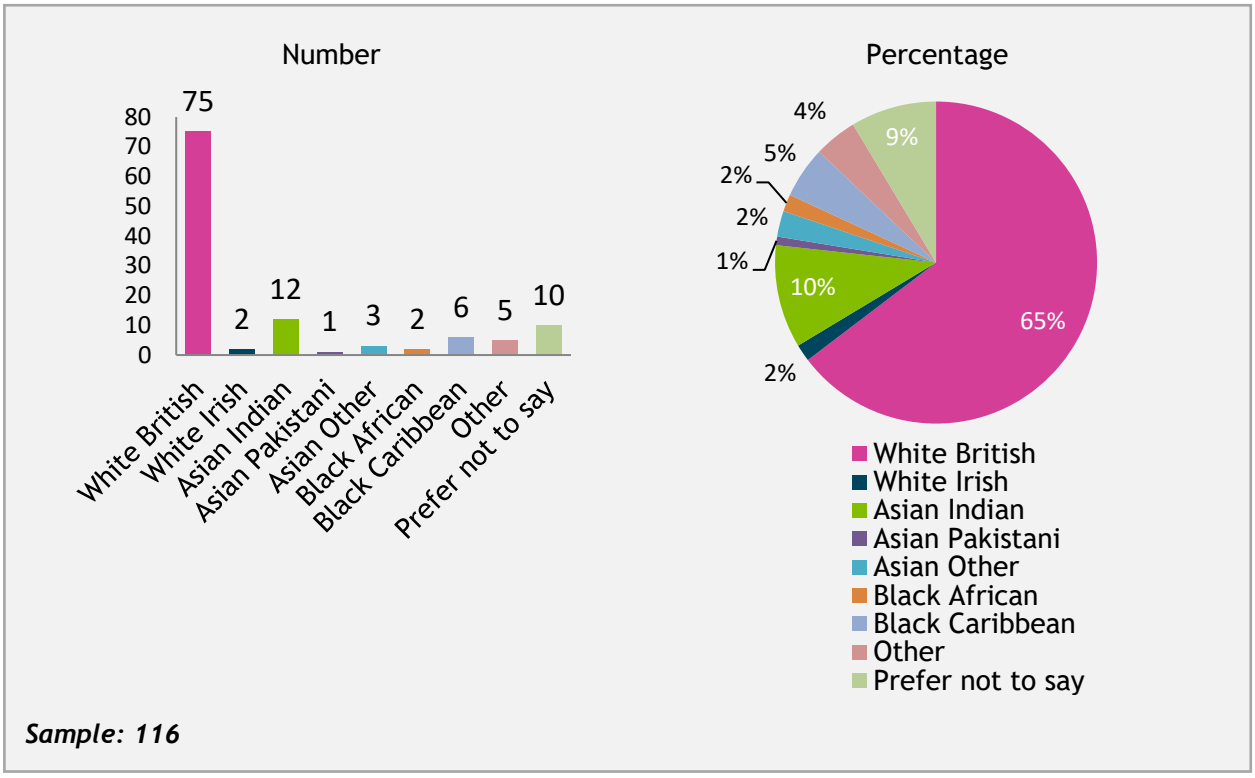
Sample: 115

Gender



Sample: 114

Ethnicity


Number
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
75
2
12
1
3
2
6
5
10
White British
White Irish
Asian Indian
Asian Pakistani
Asian Other
Black African
Black Caribbean
Other
Prefer not to say
Percentage
4%
9%
5%
2%
2%
1%
10%
65%
2%
White British
White Irish
Asian Indian
Asian Pakistani
Asian Other
Black African
Black Caribbean
Other
Prefer not to say
Sample: 116

"I have had some IT classes with Age UK and found these very useful and I am sure I can learn more.

I have also offered to help people whose computer knowledge is less than mine."

Local Resident