



## Briefing

# Facts and figures about digital inclusion and older people

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## Introduction

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

## Summary of key statistics:

### Internet use

- 19% of people aged 65+, around 2.4 million, use the internet less than once a month.

### Digital Skills

- 48% of people aged 75+ in the UK and 29% of people aged 65-74, are unable to complete all eight of the tasks required to set someone up for success online.
- 6% of people aged 75+ in the UK and 4% of people aged 65-74 in the UK, do not have the skills required to thrive in a digital society in day-to-day life.
- 12% of people aged 65+ in the UK and 13% of people aged 65-74, do not have the skills needed in the workplace.

### Online activities

- 91% of regular internet users in the UK aged 65+, browsed the internet at least once a month.
- 87% of regular internet users in the UK aged 65+, used the internet at least once a month for emails.
- 54% of recent internet users in the UK aged 65+, used the internet for online shopping at least once a month.
- 63% of recent internet users in the UK aged 65+, used the internet at least once a month for online banking.
- 65% of recent internet users in the UK aged 65+, used the internet at least once a month to look at and/or post on social media.
- 31% of recent internet users in the UK aged 65+, used the internet at least once a month to stream music or video.
- 30% of recent internet users in the UK aged 65+, used the internet at least once a month for gaming.

## Mobile phone use

- 67% of people in the UK aged 65+ and 88% aged 55-64 use a smartphone.
- 26% of people in the UK aged 65+ and 9% aged 55-64 use a standard mobile phone.
- 7% of people in the UK aged 65+ and 3% aged 55-64 do not use a mobile phone.

## Prevalence of internet use among older people in the United Kingdom over time<sup>1</sup>:

### *Number of people aged 65+ online in 2022-23:*

- One in five (19%) people aged 65+, equivalent to 2.4 million, used the internet less than once a month or never used the internet for personal use.
- Four in five (81%) people aged 65+, equivalent to 10.5 million, used the internet at least once a month for personal use.
- 15% (920,00) of older **men** aged 65+ and 22% (1.5 million) older **women** aged 65+, used the internet less than once a month or never used the internet for personal use.
- 5 million (85%) older **men** and 5.5 million (78%) older **women** aged 65+, used the internet at least once a month for personal use.
- Of those people aged 65+ who provide **care**, one in seven (14%), equivalent to 300,000, used the internet less than once a month or never used the internet for personal use.
- Of those people aged 65+ who provide **care**, over four in five (86%), equivalent to 1.8 million, used the internet at least once a month for personal use.
- Of those people aged 65+ **living alone**, one in three (30%), equivalent to 1.4 million, used the internet less than once a month or never used the internet for personal use.
- Of those people aged 65+ **living alone**, over two in three (70%), equivalent to 3.2 million, used the internet at least once a month for personal use.

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<sup>1</sup> Authors analysis of Understanding Society: Wave 14, 2022-2023. [data collection]. 18th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 6614, DOI: [10.5255/UKDA-SN-6614-19](https://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6614-19). Available via UK Data Service (<https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/>)

- Of older people in the UK aged 65+ who said they are having **difficulties with their finances**, one in five (22%), equivalent to 490,000, used the internet less than once a month or never used the internet for personal use.
- Of older people in the UK aged 65+ who said they are having **difficulties with their finances**, four in five (78%), equivalent to 2.2 million, used the internet at least once a month for personal use.

The proportion of people regularly using the internet has been increasing and yet a considerable number of older people are not internet users or use it rarely. Among people aged 75+ in the UK, three in ten (29%; 1.9 million) do not use or rarely use the internet, compared to one in ten (10%; 640,000) aged 65-74 and 3% (300,000) of those aged 55-64.

## Devices used by older people in the United Kingdom who are online<sup>2</sup>:

- At the end of 2024, among people aged 65+ in the UK who go online:
  - Three in four (77%) used a smartphone to go online; and for around one in ten (11%) this was the only device they used to go online.
  - Two in three (67%) used a desktop or laptop computer to go online; and for one in eight (12%) this was the only device they used to go online.
  - Half (51%) used a tablet to go online; and for 5% this was the only device they used to go online.
- At the end of 2024, among people aged 55-64 in the UK who go online:
  - Nine in ten (90%) used a smartphone to go online; and for one in five (20%) this was the only device they used to go online.
  - Three in five (61%) used a desktop or laptop computer to go online; and for 4% this was the only device they used to go online.
  - Almost half (46%) used a tablet to go online; and for 3% this was the only device they used to go online.

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<sup>2</sup> Ofcom. January 2025. *Adults' Media Literacy Tracker. Adult's Media Literacy Core Survey 2024 Data Tables. Table 30.* [online] Available at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/our-research/statistical-release-calendar-2025#AML> Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025.

## Digital Skills among older people in the United Kingdom<sup>3</sup>:

The Essential Digital Skills (EDS) framework was created in 2018 and has been measured by Lloyds Banking Group, on behalf of the Department for Education, since 2019. In 2022 it was updated to reflect more accurately the current technological landscape and opportunity for digital activities. The EDS framework is made of three components – the Foundation Level, Essential Digital Skills for Life and Essential Digital Skills for Work.

### *The Foundation Level:*

- Almost half (48%) of people aged 75+ in the UK in 2024, three in ten (29%) aged 65-74, and one in seven (15%) aged 55-64 are unable to complete all eight of the tasks required to set someone up for success online.

### *Essential Digital Skills for Life:*

- 6% of people aged 75+ in the UK in 2024, 4% aged 65-74, and 2% aged 55-64 do not have the skills required to thrive in a digital society in day-to-day life<sup>4</sup>.

### *Essential Digital Skills for Work:*

- Over one in ten (12%) people aged 65+ in the UK in 2024, 13% aged 65-74 and 8% aged 55-64 do not have the skills needed in the workplace.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Lloyds Bank. 2024. *2024 Consumer Digital Index. The UK's largest study of digital and financial lives. Essential Digital Skills Data Tables* [online] Available at <https://www.lloydsbank.com/banking-with-us/whats-happening/consumer-digital-index.html>. Accessed 20th May 2025.

<sup>4</sup> To thrive in a digital society day-to-day is to have the skills required to be digitally proficient in day-to-day life, which is defined as a person being able to do at least one task within each of the five Life skills of Communication, Handling Information and Content, Transacting, Problem Solving and Being Safe and Legal Online.

<sup>5</sup> To have the skills required to be digitally proficient in the workplace, one must be able to do at least one task within each of the five Work skills of Communication, Handling Information and Content, Transacting, Problem Solving and Being Safe and Legal Online.

## Activities recent internet users in UK carry out online during 2022-23<sup>6</sup>

### *Browsing:*

- Among regular internet users in the UK aged 65+, nine in ten (91%) use the internet at least once a month for browsing websites, with 9% using the internet for this activity less than once a month or never use it.
- 8% (470,000) of older **men** aged 65+ and 11% (740,000) older **women** aged 65+, used the internet less than once a month or never used the internet for browsing websites.
- 5.5 million (92%) older **men** and 6.2 million (89%) older **women** aged 65+, used the internet at least once a month for browsing websites.
- Of those people aged 65+ who provide **care**, one in ten (9%), equivalent to 190,000, used the internet for less than once a month or never used the internet for browsing websites.
- Of those people aged 65+ who provide **care**, nine in ten (91%), equivalent to 1.9 million, used the internet at least once a month for browsing websites.
- Of those people aged 65+ **living alone**, one in eight (13%), equivalent to 570,000, used the internet less than once a month or never used the internet for browsing websites.
- Of those people aged 65+ **living alone**, over four in five (87%), equivalent to 4 million, used the internet at least once a month for browsing websites.
- Of older people in the UK aged 65+ who said they are having **difficulties with their finances**, around one in ten (11%), equivalent to 320,000, used the internet less than once a month or never used the internet for browsing websites.
- Of older people in the UK aged 65+ who said they are having **difficulties with their finances**, around one in ten (89%), equivalent to 880,000, used the internet at least once a month for browsing websites.

### *Emailing:*

- Among regular internet users in the UK aged 65+, almost nine in ten (87%) use the internet at least once a month for emails, with around thirteen percent (13%) using the internet for this activity less than once a month or never using it.

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<sup>6</sup> Authors analysis of Understanding Society: Wave 14, 2022-2023. [data collection]. 18th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 6614, DOI: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-6614-18. Available at <https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8806>

## Online shopping

- Among regular internet users in the UK aged 65+, more than half (54%) use the internet at least once a month for online shopping, with almost one in two (46%) using the internet for this activity less than once a month or never using it.
- Around 43% (2.6 million) of older **men** aged 65+ and 49% (3.4 million) older **women** aged 65+, shopped online less than once a month or never shopped.
- Around 3.4 million (57%) older **men** aged 65+ and 3.6 million (51%) **women** aged 65+, shopped online at least once a month.
- Of those people aged 65+ who provide **care**, around two in five (43%), equivalent to 910,000, shopped online less than once a month or never shopped online.
- Of those people aged 65+ who provide **care**, more than half (57%), equivalent to 1.2 million, shopped online at least once a month.
- Of those people aged 65+ **living alone**, around one in ten (52%), equivalent to 2.4 million, shopped online less than once a month or never shopped online.
- Of those people aged 65+ **living alone**, around one in two (48%), equivalent to 2.2 million, shopped online at least once a month.
- Of people in the UK aged 65+ who said they are having **difficulties with their finances**, over half (55%), equivalent to 1.6 million, shopped online less than once a month or never shopped online.
- Of people in the UK aged 65+ who said they are having **difficulties with their finances**, around one in seven (45%), equivalent to 1.3 million, shopped online at least once a month.

## Online banking:

- Among regular internet users in the UK aged 65+, around three in five (63%) use the internet at least once a month for online banking, with more than one in three (37%) using the internet for this activity less than once a month or never using it.
- Around 33% (2 million) of **men** aged 65+ and 41% (2.9 million) **women** aged 65+, used online banking less than once a month or never used it.
- Around 4 million (67%) **men** aged 65+ and 4.2 million (59%) **women** aged 65+, used online banking at least once a month.

- Of those people aged 65+ who provide **care**, around two in five (37%), equivalent to 770,000, used online banking less than once a month or never used it.
- Of those people aged 65+ who provide **care**, more than three in five (63%), equivalent to 1.3 million, used online banking at least once a month.
- Of those people aged 65+ **living alone**, around two in five (41%), equivalent to 1.8 million, used online banking less than once a month or never used it.
- Of those people aged 65+ **living alone**, around three in five (59%), equivalent to 2.7 million, used online banking at least once a month.
- Of people in the UK aged 65+ who said they are having **difficulties with their finances**, around two in five (43%), equivalent to 1.2 million, used online banking less than once a month or never used it.
- Of people in the UK aged 65+ who said they are having **difficulties with their finances**, around three in five (57%), equivalent to 1.6 million, used online banking at least once a month.

### *Social Media:*

- Among recent internet users in the UK aged 65+, two in three (66%) use the internet at least once a month for looking at and/or posting on social media, with more than one in three (35%) using the internet for this activity less than once a month or never using it.

### *Streaming:*

- Among recent internet users in the UK aged 65+, around one in three (31%) use the internet at least once a month to stream music or videos, with over two in three (69%) using the internet for this activity less than once a month or never using it.

### *Gaming:*

- Among regular internet users in the UK aged 65+, three in ten (30%) use the internet at least once a month for browsing websites, with over two in three (70%) using the internet for this activity less than once a month or never using it.

## **Ethnicity and internet use:**

### **Frequency of internet use**

- Most people aged 65+ in each ethnic group used the internet at least once a month: 82% of White British, 87% of White other, 83% of Mixed, 75% of Asian and 68% of Black older people.
- 18% of White British, 13% of White other, 17% of Mixed,; 26% of Asian and 32% of Black people aged 65+ use the internet less than once a month or never use the internet.

### **Browsing the internet**

- 91% of White British, 94% of White other, 88% of Mixed, 79% of Asian and 80% of Black people aged 65+ used the internet to browse websites at least once a month.
- 9% of White British, 6% of White other, 12% of Mixed, 21% of Asian, 20% of Black people aged 65+ used the internet to browse websites less than once a month or never browsed websites.

### **Online shopping**

- 55% of White British, 59% of White other, 42% of Mixed, 31% of Asian, 33% of Black Of those older people in each ethnic group, aged 65+ who used the internet to shop online at least once a month, around.
- 45% of White British, 41% of White other, 58% of Mixed, 69% of Asian, 67% of Black people aged 65+ used the internet to shop online less than once a month or never shop online.

### **Online banking**

- 64% of White British, 61% of White other, 57% of Mixed, 56% of Asian, 56% of Black people aged 65+ use the internet for online banking at least once a month.
- 36% of White British, 39% of White other, 43% of Mixed, 44% of Asian, 44% of Black people aged 65+ use the internet for online banking at least once a month or never bank online.

# Activities recent internet users carry out online during 2022-23<sup>7</sup> - The Nations

## England

- 17% of people aged 65+, around 1.9 million, have limited use or do not use the internet.
- 9% of people aged 65+ in England, around 970,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for browsing websites
- 12% of people aged 65+ in England, around 1.3 million, have limited use or do not use the internet for emailing.
- 45% of people aged 65+ in England, around 4.9 million, have limited use or do not use the internet for online shopping.
- 36% of people aged 65+ in England, around 3.9 million, have limited use or do not use the internet for online banking.
- 35% of people aged 65+ in England, around 3.8 million, have limited use or do not use the internet to look at and/or post on social media.
- 69% of people aged 65+ in England, around 7.4 million, have limited use or do not use the internet to stream music or video.
- 70% of people aged 65+ in England, around 7.6 million, have limited use or do not use the internet for gaming.

## Wales

- 20% of people aged 65+ in Wales, around 130,000, have limited use or do not use the internet.
- 10% of people aged 65+ in Wales, around 67,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for browsing websites
- 16% of people aged 65+ in Wales, around 110,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for emailing.
- 51% of people aged 65+ in Wales, around 350,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for online shopping.

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<sup>7</sup> Authors analysis of Understanding Society: Wave 14, 2022-2023. [data collection]. 18th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 6614, DOI: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-6614-18. Available at <https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8806>

- 41% of people aged 65+ in Wales, around 280,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for online banking.
- 33% of people aged 65+ in Wales, around 230,000, have limited use or do not use the internet to look at and/or post on social media.
- 71% of people aged 65+ in Wales, around 480,000, have limited use or do not use the internet to stream music or video.
- 74% of people aged 65+ in Wales, around 510,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for gaming.

## **Scotland**

- 23% of people aged 65+ in Scotland, around 250,000, have limited use or do not use the internet.
- 11% of people aged 65+ in Scotland, around 12,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for browsing websites
- 17% of people aged 65+ in Scotland, around 190,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for emailing.
- 49% of people aged 65+ in Scotland, around 550,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for online shopping.
- 41% of people aged 65+ in Scotland, around 460,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for online banking.
- 35% of people aged 65+ in Scotland, around 390,000, have limited use or do not use the internet to look at and/or post on social media.
- 67% of people aged 65+ in Scotland, around 750,000, have limited use or do not use the internet to stream music or video.
- 68% of people aged 65+ in Scotland, around 760,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for gaming.

## **Northern Ireland**

- 42% of people aged 65+ in Northern Ireland, around 140,000, have limited use or do not use the internet.
- 11% of people aged 65+ in Northern Ireland, around 4,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for browsing websites
- 27% of people aged 65+ in Northern Ireland, around 94,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for emailing.

- 61% of people aged 65+ in Northern Ireland, around 210,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for online shopping.
- 48% of people aged 65+ in Northern Ireland, around 160,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for online banking.
- 37% of people aged 65+ in Northern Ireland, around 130,000, have limited use or do not use the internet to look at and/or post on social media.
- 68% of people aged 65+ in Northern Ireland, around 230,000, have limited use or do not use the internet to stream music or video.
- 73% of people aged 65+ in Northern Ireland, around 250,000, have limited use or do not use the internet for gaming.

## Reasons for not using the internet in England 2021-2023<sup>8</sup>

- 31% (equivalent to 4 million) of people aged 65+ in England, feel their IT skills are not good.
- 22% (equivalent to 2.9 million) of people aged 65+ in England, do not trust the internet.
- 3% (equivalent to 380,000) of people aged 65+ in England, do not have access to broadband.
- 3% (equivalent to 410,000) of people aged 65+ in England, do not have access to good enough equipment.
- 2% (equivalent to 260,000) of people aged 65+ in England, say their vision is not good enough to use the equipment.
- 1% (equivalent to 180,000) of people aged 65+ in England, say their health problems stop them from using the equipment.
- 29% (equivalent to 3.7 million) of people aged 65+ in England, feel they have no reason to use the internet.
- 6% (equivalent to 810,000) of people aged 65+ in England, say that it takes too much time to use the internet.

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<sup>8</sup> Authors analysis of English Longitudinal Study of Ageing: Wave 10, 2021-2023 [data collection].

## Smartphone use among older people in the UK<sup>9</sup>

- At the end of 2024, among people aged 65+ in the UK:
  - around two in three (67%), equivalent to 8.7 million, personally used a smartphone.
  - around nine-in-ten (88%), equivalent to 11.4 million, personally used a standard mobile phone.
  - around one-in-ten (12%), equivalent to 1.6 million, did not use or were unsure if they used a mobile for personal use.
  
- At the end of 2024, among people aged 55-65 in the UK:
  - almost nine in ten (89%), equivalent to 7.8 million, personally used a smartphone.
  - more than nine in ten (96%), equivalent to 8.5 million, personally used a standard mobile phone.
  - around one in twenty-five (4%), equivalent to 350,000, did not use or were unsure if they used a mobile for personal use.

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<sup>9</sup> Ofcom. January 2025. *Adults' Media Literacy Tracker. Adult's Media Literacy Core Survey 2024 Data Tables. Table 20.* [online] Available at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/our-research/statistical-release-calendar-2025#AML>. Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025.

## Further information about Age UK's digital work

Age UK works locally and nationally to support older people to gain and extend digital skills. In our view, most older learners need ongoing support, tailored to their needs and preferences, and often this is most effective when delivered on a one-to-one basis. An effective approach is using Digital Champions who are staff and volunteers who have been trained to have the skills and knowledge to support older people in their community to gain digital skills and stay safe online. More information about can be found on our website and many local Age UK organisations also run their own digital support services<sup>10</sup>.

However, as mentioned at the start of this paper, Age UK believes that those who cannot or do not want to get online should still be able to access the support and services they need. We have carried out a range studies to explore digital exclusion and its impact for older people. For example, our work has: looked at the difficulties that those who do not use the internet have in accessing local authority services and considered the impact of the pandemic for older people who were not online. See Age UK's website for policy and research reports<sup>11</sup> and for information about Age UK's Offline and Overlooked campaign which aims to ensure that everyone can access the services they need - so that being offline doesn't mean being overlooked<sup>10</sup>. [iii]

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/programmes/digital-skills/> and <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/services/in-your-area/it-training/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/publications/reports-and-briefings/> Reports on digital inclusion and exclusion are found in the 'Active Communities' section. <sup>10</sup> [iii] <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/campaigning/offline-overlooked/>