



## Seniors and Technology

Although the number of seniors that have smart phones, computers and other digital devices is increasing, there still remains a notable digital divide between younger and older Americans. Seniors that are more affluent, and more highly educated, report owning and using various technologies at rates similar to adults under 65. However, those who are older, less affluent or with lower levels of educational attainments continue to have a distant relationship with digital technology.

- Out of 47.7 million Americans over the age of 65; 78% have a cellphone (of some kind); 32% have a tablet; 52% have a desktop or laptop computer.
- 4 out of 10 seniors now own smartphones (2017 research), more than double the share that did in 2013.
- Internet use and broadband adoption among seniors varies across demographic groups (age, income, and education). 59% use the internet; 71% go online every day per a USC study.
- Social Media use among older Americans is steadily increasing, although this group is still small. About 49% per a USC study.



Some of the benefits of technology for seniors include:

- Social connection – video chat & social media keeps seniors in touch with long distance loved ones. 81% of older adults who use social media report socializing with others on a daily basis.
- Safety – Seniors living alone can get help with the push of a button. RFID, GPS tracking systems (for early Alzheimer's & Dementia patients), and home monitoring systems are a great way for seniors to remain independent longer.

- Exercise – Video games gets seniors’ bodies and minds moving. Many nursing homes and assisted living communities have already recognized the recreational and exercise benefits that Nintendo’s Wii sports games offer for the elderly. For mental exercise, seniors could try games such as Tetris (special recognition), Trivial Pursuit (fact, recall), or Mahjong (Memory and matching).
- Medication Management – Smartphone apps can help prevent medication errors and set reminders.

92.1 million Americans will be 65+ by 2050; this presents a huge potential for designers to engage the growing number of older Americans with technology. Areas that developers should consider include vision changes and limitations; fine motor skill changes and limitation, as well as memory and cognitive issues. Apps and devices that help manage conditions, treatment and/or encourage and enable health living include:

- Smart pill boxes
- Medical alert systems
- Fall detection systems
- Remote patient monitoring devices and apps
- Health tracking apps and devices

Some of these apps and devices already exist, but a USC study found that only 18% of 65+ Americans felt comfortable learning to use a new technology device and 56% indicate they need assistance when using social media sites. Therefore, new design recommendations such as large buttons that do not require precise clicking or tapping selection, and key information up top and in front, keep font sizes adjustable and adequately sized (at least 16 pixels), offer adjustable contrast ratios, among others.

Technology can definitely benefit seniors if they can gain the confidence to learn and use it.

The following website was sourced and referenced for this article:

<http://www.pewinternet.org/2017/05/17/technology-use-among-seniors/>

<https://www.caregiverstress.com/geriatric-professional-resources/5-benefits-of-technology-to-share-with-seniors-and-their-caregivers/>

<https://gerontology.usc.edu/resources/infographics/designing-technology-for-the-aging-population/>



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