

F R Ē A

Digital Solutions Programme for older Irish people in the North of England
Phase 1: 'Building the picture: Community and Digital Research'

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

This report investigates the relationship between older Irish people across the North of England and digital technologies. It explores their level of access, understanding, usage and ambitions with digital technologies.

This report was produced during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, with data collection taking place between June – September 2020. The purpose of the report is to provide a clear understanding regarding how digitally connected older Irish adults are across the North of England. It is particularly relevant that the data collection took place during COVID-19, as this period of time brought into sharp focus the varying levels of access to and understanding of digital technologies that the older age Irish communities have.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to alter everyday living, from grocery shopping, medical appointments, travel to social activities and more, this report provides valuable insight into the rapidly growing levels of isolation and disconnection faced by older Irish people across the North of England.

RESULTS

The report identifies that 65% of Research Participants have an internet or Wi-Fi connection in their home / accommodation and 75% of Research Participants have access to a technology device.

The data findings present a rose-tinted view, suggesting that many older Irish people across the North of England have access to digital technologies, including access to Wi-Fi. Such findings suggest the likelihood that if these individuals are well connected, they too must be digitally engaged. However, commentary provided by Research Participants tells quite a different story, identifying several barriers to being digitally active.

A significant obstacle preventing individuals becoming active online is their personal fears, anxieties, and lack of confidence towards digital technologies. This includes handling and using technology devices. Respondents feared breaking the technology device, being unable to understand how to use it and an overall lack of confidence in their ability to learn a new skill. Such thoughts prevented respondents from being digitally engaged, despite having access to a technology device and a connection to Wi-Fi and /or internet.

Respondents also noted feelings of suspicion and fear regarding using technology devices to become active online. There was discussion regarding how some respondent's friends had money taken from their bank accounts without consent and respondents shared their concerns regarding how to shop online in a safe way without their personal details being shared. For other respondents, they had strong feelings of distrust towards being active online, with reference to social media sites. Comments highlighted the suspicion that some respondents felt, the belief that people were watching your movements online and they had the ability to share your personal information, thoughts and views across social media.

A significant number of respondents recognised how beneficial being digitally engaged would be, discussing how they would like to communicate with family and friends. Others expressed their desire to become digitally active and explore TV, music and film that was meaningful to them, many

with a strong Irish focus. However, the barrier to becoming digitally active was lack of knowledge and training options. Respondents noted that they did not have the support of family or friends who would be able to offer assistance on training, answer questions and explore new activities. Several respondents expressed concerns and viewed themselves as being a burden to relatives and friends if they were to seek assistance with learning and asking questions. Other respondents did not believe their relatives or friends would have sufficient patience and understanding to help them become digitally active.

The process of learning was discussed by respondents, with many noting the importance of learning in a way meaningful to them. Such discussions identified that respondents would appreciate learning in a face-to-face setting, where they can be shown in a step-by-step format and have time and space to capture their own notes for further learning. Most important to respondents was being able to repeat the steps and obtain quick and helpful guidance to overcome any issues in a one-to-one or group setting.

Other barriers to access included, respondents revealing that they had limited or no literacy skills, which prevented learning via notes or 'how to' guides. Such revelations from respondents highlighted their desire to become connected despite their own limitations with reading and writing. However, many respondents presented feelings of fear and shame, commenting that it was important that their family and friends were not made aware of their literacy issues and requested training programmes that could be provided in symbol, picture format or in a one-to-one personal setting.

CURRENT PICTURE

The frank and honest responses provide valuable insight into how older Irish adults across the North of England feel towards digital technologies. Perhaps most importantly is the timing of when this research was conducted, data was collected during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, everyday communication methods had dramatically changed – people were being asked to 'go online', routine daily activities such as grocery shopping, medical appointments and social clubs were suspended, cancelled, or transferred to an online platform.

In the speed of transition from what was considered 'normal' life to the first of a series of national lockdowns and tiered systems, Government announcements included 'Stay Home, Save Lives'. Such direct messaging called on individuals to communicate in new ways, to become more digitally orientated and by doing so, it highlighted a digital divide.

However, it is important to recognise that older Irish people across the North of England were already digitally isolated before the COVID-19 pandemic, but their levels of isolation and disconnection have greatly intensified as a result. Therefore, uncovering the reality that digital isolation of older Irish communities is nothing new; it is an existing problem that the current pandemic situation is escalating further. The data collection and current crisis emphasise the need for immediate action in connecting isolated members of Irish communities across the North of England.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Data collection and Research Participant commentary has provided valuable information in understanding how to connect older Irish adults across the North of England with digital technologies.

It is important to create a people centred digital engagement plan, considering older Irish adults' commentary, skill levels and ambitions. The research has provided an insight into how older Irish adults would feel comfortable using technology devices and actions that help create positive learning environments.

❖ **Technology:**

Essential that the older age group can touch, handle and interact with technology devices before any learning takes place. Such enables individuals to become familiar with weight, texture and feel to alleviate any concerns.

❖ **Fit for Purpose:**

It is important to match individuals with a piece of technology that is suitable to their skill level and needs. A technology audit should be arranged prior to any digital lessons taking place and a plan for digital engagement created. A plan should detail the aim(s) of the individual, the steps required to achieving their goal, while keeping it achievable, focused and fun.

❖ **The Learning Environment:**

How to use digital technologies and become digitally active online is an individual journey. Creating a welcoming, relaxed learning environment is paramount to a successful outcome. Individual circumstances must be considered, including literacy and numeracy levels and sight and hearing issues. Results highlight a strong preference for face-to-face learning, on either a one-to-one or group setting.

❖ **Continued Support:**

To build confidence, skill level and long-term engagement, it is essential that continued support is offered when becoming digital active. The research shows that older Irish adults would like ongoing support, a location or individual they feel comfortable asking questions, they are able to make their own notes for future reference and where they can learn from their peers in a non-judgemental environment. Continued support enables further learning and increased likelihood of long-term digital engagement.

❖ **Creative Programming:**

One of the most important areas of digital engagement for older Irish adults is having an appealing programme. Each learning and activity programme should include the chance to learn new skills while connecting individuals to goods, services and cultural activities which are meaningful to them. It is important that digital engagement is not just about connecting individuals to essential services, but also to personalised activities that enable a sense of freedom.

ACTION

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) completed a report on 'Coronavirus and the social impacts on different ethnic groups in the UK: 2020'. It highlighted that 'most ethnic groups in the UK experienced a worsening of their self-reported mental health between 2019 and April 2020.'

Most alarmingly the report highlighted that almost three in ten White Irish respondents reported an increase in loneliness or continuing to feel lonely between 2019 and April 2020. Those of White Irish ethnicity (28%) were also more likely to report continuing to feel lonely often or to experience an increase in feelings of loneliness compared to respondents from other ethnic groups including, White British (18%), Chinese and other Asian (10%) and Black, African, Caribbean or Black British (11%).

Considering the timing of this report by the ONS and the worsening of the COVID-19 pandemic in the latter months of 2020 and its continuation in 2021, it indicates the likelihood of a further decline in the mental health of Irish individuals living in the UK.

The Digital Inclusion research has highlighted a willingness from Irish communities across the North of England to learn how to become digital active and engaged. There is a clear desire from respondents to feel connected to people, place and things by whatever means possible. It is moving to read respondent commentary that reveals a longing to be independent again, an overwhelming need to connect to family and friends online using their own digital devices and knowledge. It is inspiring that many respondents want to become digitally savvy, have a passion to learn, practice and repeat. Respondents want to put in the work and become proficient and perhaps most importantly, independent.

It is imperative that immediate action is taken to connect older Irish adults with digital technologies and engagement programmes. If this issue is left unresolved, it creates a bleak situation of continued isolation for Irish communities across the North of England, who are already significantly digitally disconnected. Even more worrying is the current and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic situation, which has and will continue to widen the digital divide and leave those most in need behind.

Addressing the digital needs of older Irish adults is essential to combat longer term health issues, including mental and physical health. Taking steps to engage older Irish adults across the North of England to become digital active can help create new forms of communication that enable growing levels of independence, new skills and the empowerment of older Irish adults.

Fréa

Fréa 'sister' charities have begun responding to the concerning findings highlighted in the report. Short term funding has been secured by all three sister charities to take immediate action to address the digital divide.

Digital inclusion programmes have been created, offering remote one-to-one tuition to enable individuals to use a technology device independently, but to also connect them to the cultural, health and wellbeing and entertainment activities on offer from all Fréa sister charities.

Virtual groups have been established, offering beginner level technology advice (e.g: how to turn on a tablet, how to access the internet and how to connect to zoom), to specialised classes including, chess, a women's group, 'Good News Café', weekly music sessions, 'Coffee and Chat', bingo to art and craft classes.

Fréa sister charities have worked collaboratively with external partners, to offer individuals the chance to take part in a wide variety of classes including health and fitness and a focus on mental health through mindfulness, yoga and relaxation delivered by qualified practitioners.

Feedback obtained from individuals attending the variety of groups has been overwhelmingly positive.

- ❖ *I love seeing everyone, it's something to look forward to when every day is the same lately'. It's brilliant!*
- ❖ *I look forward to it each time, as I'm at home shielding and each day is the same. We are learning something new each week.*
- ❖ *I used to see my friends at lunch club so it's nice to see a few of them online on these groups whilst lockdown is on.*

However, Fréa sister charities recognise that it is important to establish longer term, secure digital programmes to truly address the digital needs of older Irish adults across the North of England. Moving forward, Fréa sister charities plan to secure sustainable funding to build on the positive digital inclusion work that has already been completed and to have a dedicated digital inclusion officer at each 'sister' charity. Having such vital resources at each charity location will enable the development of shared learning across the North of England, a strong and diverse digital engagement programme and most importantly growing numbers of older Irish adult participation.

BACKGROUND

Fréa is a Community Interest Company bringing together three independent charities in the North of England: Irish Community Care Manchester, Irish Community Care (based in Liverpool and delivering services in North West) and Leeds Irish Health & Homes. Fréa is from the Irish word *fréamh*, meaning 'root', and reflects how as charities we are anchored and strengthened by our shared heritage, which, through careful cultivation and ambitious growth, enables us to flourish. The work of the charities focuses on improving the health and well-being of vulnerable members of the Irish communities across the Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester metropolitan districts. Over the past 12 months collectively the charities have supported 3500 individuals.

Throughout the past 18 months the partner organisations have been developing activities, networks and future planning. A main area of focus has been developing and utilising resources from each Fréa partner to create a clear, concise and well-rounded offer to the community without replicating resources in the three differing locations and incurring three separate sets of costs. Each project identified by Fréa is carefully managed through the partner organisations, with each organisation taking responsibility for the tasks it has been allocated.

In March 2020, the UK entered 'lockdown' as a result in the escalation of COVID-19. This lockdown situation resulted in the temporary suspension and, in some cases, temporary closure of essential community centres and hubs, outreach programmes, home visits and more. Services across the Fréa partner organisations were and continue to be disrupted, and all organisations had to quickly adapt their communications, programme delivery and interaction with Community Members.

COVID-19 brought into sharp focus how the needs of the Irish community were multiplying and resources across all Fréa partner organisations were stretched. It greatly exposed the additional barriers and disadvantages experienced by older Irish people in our respective communities. Such barriers included access to online activities, knowledge and skills to get active online and access to a technology device.

Fréa identified the importance of working to address this digital divide and utilise the skills, experience and passion that each partner organisation brings to deliver a digital solutions programme. It was recognised by Fréa that the creation and implementation of a digital solutions programme would have to be completed in a phased approach. Phase 1 aims to build the picture and includes community and digital research into the use of digital technologies by the older age group and has resulted in this report.

THE CURRENT PICTURE

There is growing concern regarding increasing levels of social isolation faced by the older age group. This includes a lack of access to and /or knowledge of digital technologies which can provide ways of connecting with people, places and interests.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted how quickly the older age group can become separated from society and their everyday routines. As the situation continues to unfold, it is the older age group who face the increased risk of social exclusion and digital isolation.

In an analysis report of the 2011 Census Data, it discovered that over half a million persons living in England identified as 'White Irish'. Interestingly over 48% of the White Irish census responses were aged 50 -64. The analysis also detailed a growing White Irish overrepresentation in all elderly age groups when compared to all other ethnic groups. These findings further showcase the large numbers of older Irish people living in England, many of them who face the increasing challenges of socialising digitally and becoming active online.¹

A recent 100% Digital Leeds webinar highlighted that 40% of people aged 75 and over are not online. This is a large demographic within the Irish community.

Fréa are aware from their own respective services that once people are connected, their mental health and well-being improves; they are much more in control of important tasks e.g. seeing family virtually, online shopping, meditation, booking GP appointments, pursuing interests and hobbies and overall participating more actively in wider society.

¹ Louise Ryan, Alessio D'Angelo et al., (2014) Analysis of 2011 Census Data. Irish Community Statistics, England and Selected Urban Areas. Social Policy Research Centre: Middlesex University. Available at: <https://www.irishinbritain.org/cmsfiles/Downloads/Reports/Irish-Census-Analysis-Report---England.pdf> (Accessed: 25th September 2020)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To understand how and why older Irish people are digitally excluded.
- ❖ What are the barriers faced by the older age group to become digitally active?
- ❖ Collate community research to identify current levels of digital access and digital needs involving a sample size of 100 older age people. The community research to be carried out across a geographical area encompassing, Leeds, Manchester, Merseyside, Wigan and Cheshire.
- ❖ Understand what programmes, activities and digital functions the older age group are currently using and accessing.
- ❖ Understand what the older age group are interested in accessing and/or achieving if they were able to become active online.
- ❖ Understand what would enable the older age group to become active online.
- ❖ Identify potential solutions that are available and/or needed to enable the older age group to become active online.
- ❖ To understand what activities older Irish people enjoy accessing and build these into our programme as to attract and motivate people who are currently not online.

METHODOLOGY

1.1 OVERVIEW

A total of 100 people were identified to take part in the Digital Solutions Questionnaire. These individuals utilise the services of a Fréa partner organisation and participates in their programming, ranging from drop-in services to community outreach work.

The individuals who took part in the Digital Solutions Questionnaire, will be referred to as Research Participant(s) (RP) for the purposes of this report.

Fréa acknowledge that the number of people who took part in the Digital Solutions Questionnaire is only a snapshot of the number people they interact with and provide services for. Fréa engaged with 3,500 individuals in the past 12 months and it is important to emphasise that the data collected for the Digital Solutions Questionnaire has been obtained from individuals who generally attend clubs, societies and community outreach work provided by each Fréa partner organisation. Therefore, several individuals have not participated in the data collection due to the nature of their interactions with each Fréa partner organisation and COVID-19 restrictions. Such individuals and/or groups include those without a fixed postal address, members from the Irish Traveller and Gypsy Traveller communities and individuals without known contact details (phone number/email address/postal address etc) and other.

Fréa partner organisations offer a wide variety of services, across many disciplines including, but not limited to:

- ❖ Housing support: Accommodation / Tenancy
- ❖ Financial support: Benefits / Debt / Budgeting
- ❖ Mental Health / Physical Health / Wellbeing support
- ❖ Literacy support
- ❖ Isolation
- ❖ Offending
- ❖ Education training and employment
- ❖ Addictions

Therefore, it is crucial to note that Fréa partner organisations work with and help people who are often facing an immediate need(s) and additional layers of complexity in the services they require. As such, digital inclusion is likely to be a service and/or need that falls lower down on a list of services required and/or desired by individuals.

Fréa recognise the challenges and different needs their individual community members face and how the digital inclusion research conducted will have represented a small number of individuals. Fréa will endeavour to include a wider range of individuals and groups in future research projects.

- ❖ The 100 RP sample size was divided across the geographical locations of each Fréa organisation. Irish Community Care Manchester completed 33 questionnaires, Leeds Irish Health and Homes completed 33 questionnaires and Irish Community Care completed 34 questionnaires.
- ❖ Fréa organisations defined the 'older age' group for the purposes of the questionnaire as aged 50 years and above.
- ❖ RP were asked to disclose personal information including, 'Name, Age, Ethnicity and Location'. All RP were made aware before participating in the research that some personal details are required, that all information supplied throughout the questionnaire is kept confidential, anonymous and only used for research purposes.
- ❖ It was accepted by Fréa that all RP had the right to refuse to answer questions regarding their personal details (name, age, ethnicity and location). For SU who did not provide their personal details, the unanswered question(s) are marked with 'Unknown' (UK).
- ❖ It was accepted by Fréa that all RP had the right to refuse to answer questions 1 – 9. For RP who refused to answer a question(s), the unanswered question(s) is marked 'Not Answered' (NA).
- ❖ RP who refused to answer a question(s) were asked to provide commentary and/or reasons for a non-answer. All respondent comments were documented.
- ❖ The questionnaire was conducted by staff and volunteers within each Fréa partner organisation.
- ❖ Individual and group training sessions were held with staff and volunteers to ensure all individuals understood the project aims. Each training session provided hints and tips on conducting the questionnaire, what to do in situations where respondents did not understand the question(s) and contact details of Fréa staff for support.
- ❖ COVID-19 restricted the interaction of staff and volunteers with RP in face-to-face settings, therefore all questionnaires were completed over the phone.

1.2 QUESTIONS

The questionnaire contained 9 questions, which were a mixture of quantitative and qualitative.

RP were asked a series of questions regarding their experiences with technology devices. This included whether they had access to the internet/Wi-Fi, what technology devices they had access to, what they enjoyed doing when they were active online, what would enable them to become more proficient with technology devices and what type of technology devices they currently use within their own home/accommodation. (*Appendix A*)

For the purposes of the questionnaire the term 'active online' is used to refer to a RP having access to a technology device that enables them to access: Internet Search Engines (Google etc), Social Media Sites: Facebook / YouTube etc, Communication Apps: FaceTime / Skype / WhatsApp etc, Reading Apps: Books, newspapers and/or magazines, Entertainment Apps: Radio, music etc, News Apps: Audio and written formats, other. (*Appendix A*)

Multiple Choice Questions

- A total of 7 out of 9 questions were multiple choice. Each RP was presented with a list of options and asked to select 'Yes' or 'No'. If RP were unable to categorise their answer as either yes or no, they were able to select 'Don't Know' or 'Other'. RP who responded with 'Other' were asked to provide details, if applicable and/or willing.
- RP answered the questions in a sequence, beginning at number 1. Depending on how a RP answered, specific questions could be skipped.

Example: Question 2

Do you have access to and/or possession to any of the following technology devices?

Technology Devices	Yes	No
Smart Phone (a phone that has access to the internet)		
Computer &/or Laptop		
IPad &/or Tablet device		
Kindle / similar reading device		
Smart Speaker: (Amazon Echo 'Alexa' / Google Home etc)		
'Dongle' / 'Fire Stick' (similar device for internet/entertainment access)		
Don't know		
Other (please give details)		

If respondent answered **YES** to any of the above, move to Q3. If **NO**, please move to Q5

Open-ended Questions

- All RP were asked at least one open ended question. These questions were designed to provide RP with time to think and make the answer specific to them. All comments made by RP were detailed.

Example:

Question 4)

- A) What do you enjoy [watching, reading, listening, searching for, speaking to, other] on your [device(s)]?

1.3 UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS

The results are presented either in percentage (%) or number format (00).

Example – Percentage (%):

- 77% of RP responded ‘yes’ to having access to and /or possession of a technology device, while 33% of RP noted ‘no’.

Example – Number Format (00):

- 55 RP selected face-to-face help and guidance in a group or one-to-one setting would enable them to become active online.

It is important to note that the results presented in this report are based on the response per question. Therefore, several questions will have a total number of responses less than 100 and several multiple-choice questions will have responses totalling over 100.

The results have been presented in a percentage and/or a total number of respondents. Each graph indicates the total number of RP responses provided for each individual question.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

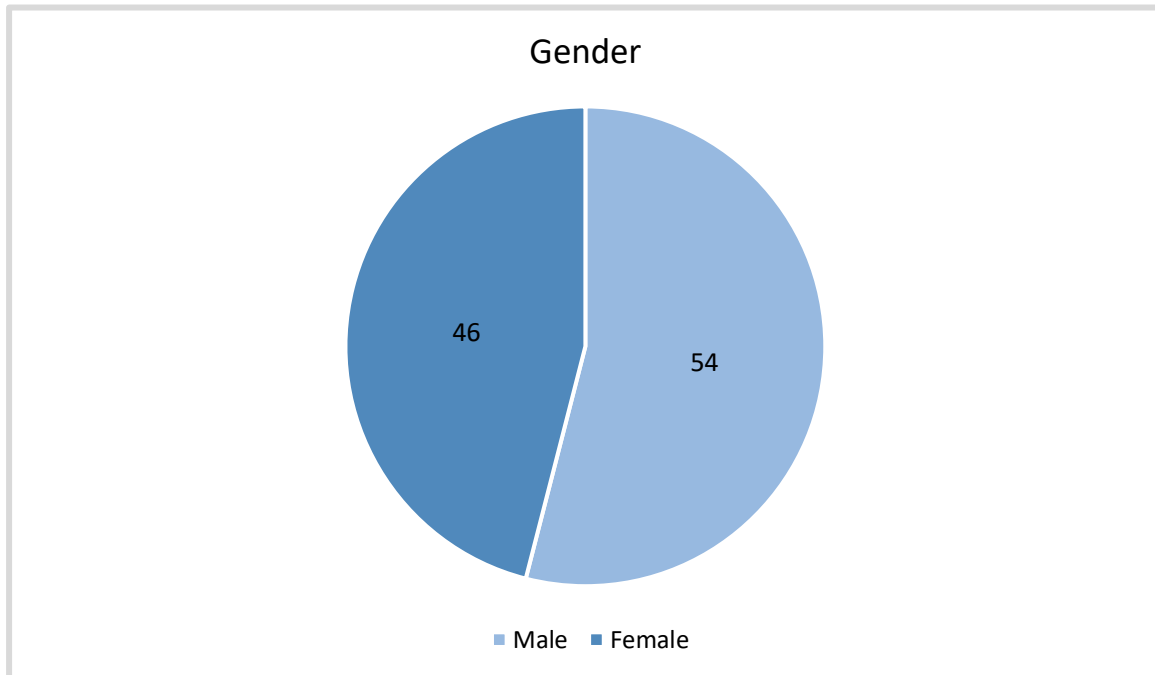


Figure 1: Gender breakdown of Research Participants who took part in the Digital Inclusion Questionnaire.

Figure 1 shows the gender breakdown of RP who participated in the questionnaire. A total of 54 males and 46 females took part.

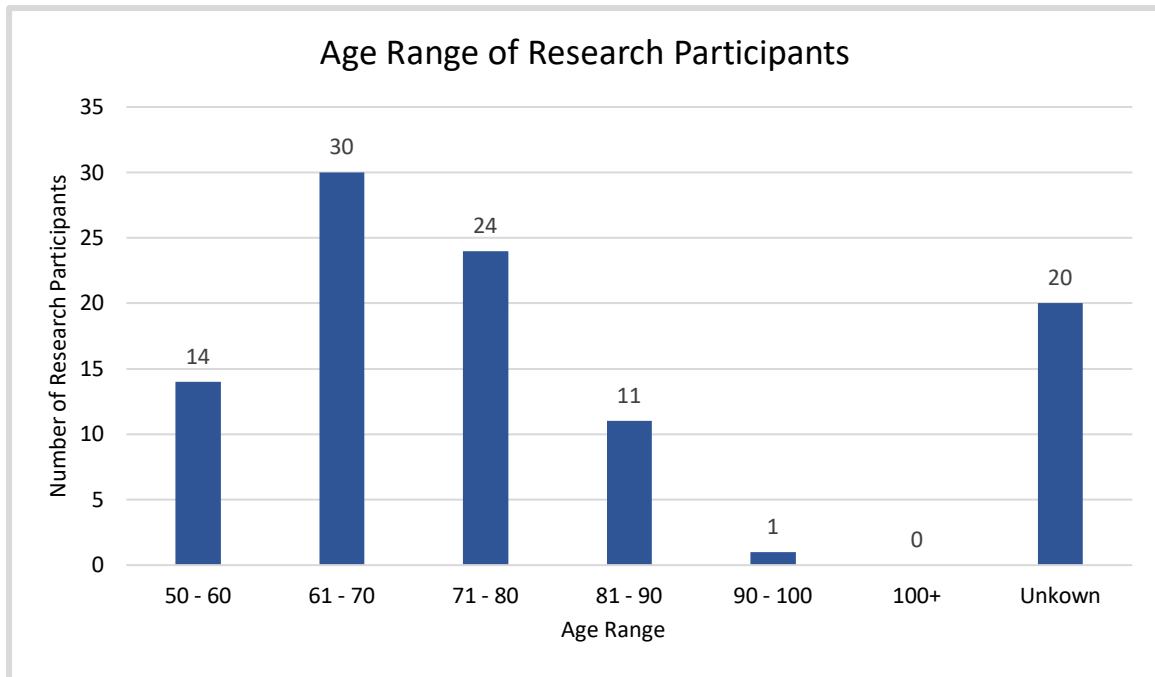


Figure 2: Age range of Research Participants

Figure 2 highlights the age range of the 100 RP who participated. The largest group of RP are aged 61 – 70 years old, making up 30% of the sample size.

There are low numbers of RP participants aged 90 – 100 years and no RP aged 100 or above took part.

It is important to note that 20 RP did not supply their age and are marked ‘unknown’ (UK). This is a substantial amount of the RP sample range and therefore it must be taken into consideration that the remaining age groups would likely have higher participants if age was disclosed by all RP.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

- ❖ 65% of Research Participants have an internet or Wi-Fi connection in their home / accommodation.
- ❖ 75% of Research Participants have access to a technology device.

These figures indicate that the older age group are digitally connected, active online and proficient in using digital technologies. However, the data collected, and RP commentary highlights that a significant number of RP do not have the right technology device to meet their needs, nor have they received appropriate training to use their technology device.

- ❖ RP expressed low confidence and fear towards using digital technologies, with many RP communicating that training was an essential requirement if they were to become successfully active online.
- ❖ 54 men and 46 women took part in the Digital Solutions Questionnaire
- ❖ Age range 61 – 70 years old accounted for 30% of RP. No RP aged 100 years and above took part and 20 RP did not supply their age
- ❖ 65% of RP have an internet connection or Wi-Fi in their home/accommodation.
- ❖ Over 75% of RP have access to and/or possession to a technology device.
- ❖ 63 RP had access and/or possession to a smart phone.
- ❖ 50% of RP had access to either a computer/laptop and/or iPad/Tablet device.
- ❖ 70% RP accessed internet search engines and social media applications.
- ❖ Less than one third of RP accessed online shopping, medical care, reading and news applications.
- ❖ 51 RP believed having access to a technology device would enable them to become active online.
- ❖ 48 RP believed having support on how to use a technology device would enable them to become active online.
- ❖ 46 RP believed they had family, friends, neighbour, carer, other that could provide help and support to enable them to become active online.
- ❖ 55 RP selected face-to-face help and guidance in a group or one-to-one setting would enable them to become active online.
- ❖ A total of 93 RP noted access to a TV remote in their home/accommodation.

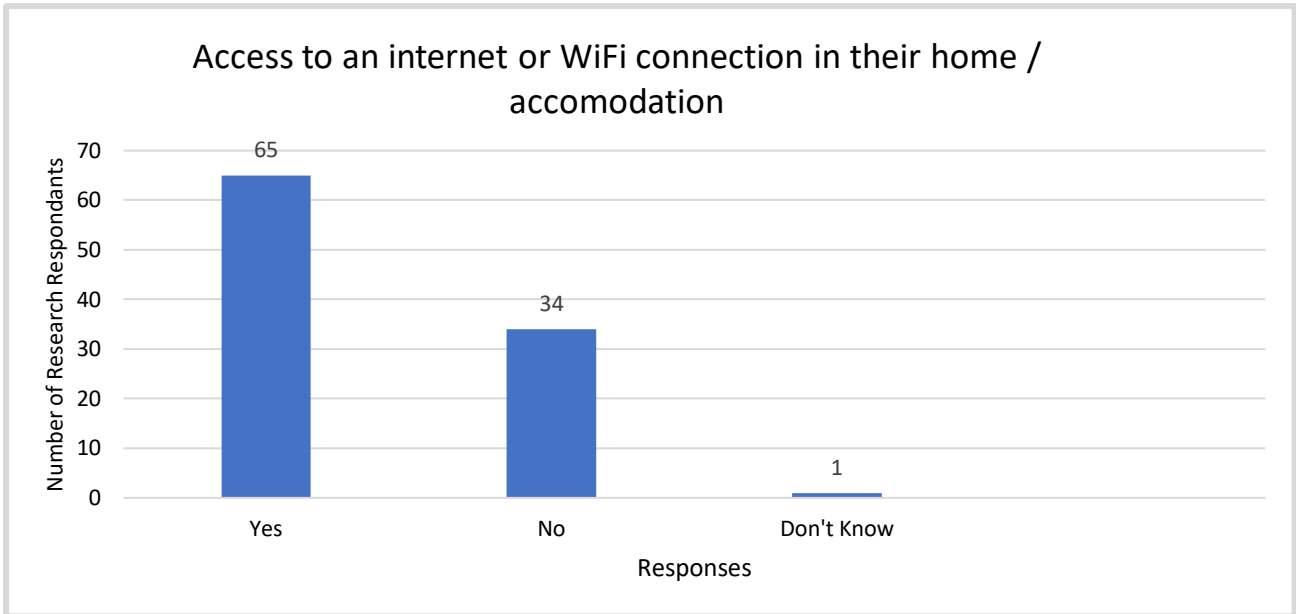


Figure 3: Number of Research Participants who have access to the internet or Wi-Fi connection in their home / accommodation.

Figure 3 displays the proportion of RP who have access to the internet or Wi-Fi in their home / accommodation. The graph highlights that 65 RP have access to the internet or Wi-Fi, 34 RP have no internet or Wi-Fi access in their home / accommodation and 1 RP is not aware if there is any connection available.

The results show a significant number of RP have access to the internet or Wi-Fi, which are key tools to becoming active online and therefore suggest a high likelihood of these RP being in possession and/or having access to digital technologies that require internet and/or Wi-Fi connections.

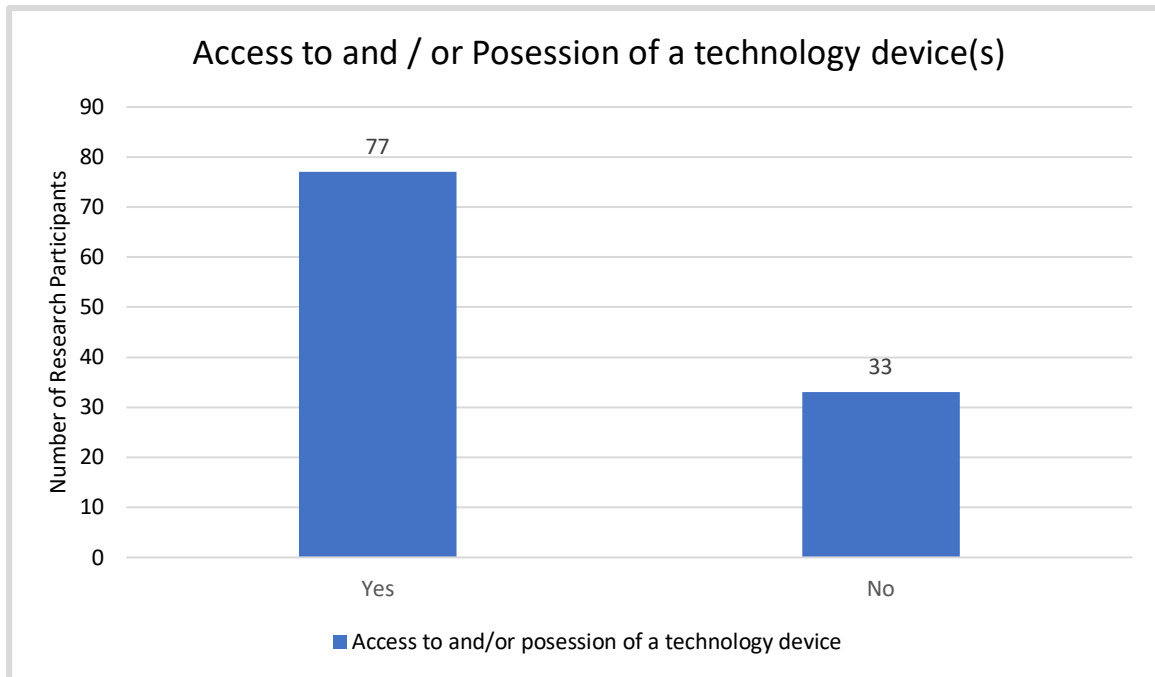


Figure 5: Number of Research Participants who have access to and/or possession to a technology device.

Figure 5 provides a breakdown of RP who have access to and/or possession to a technology device and RP who do not.

Over 75% of RP responded 'yes' to having access to and/or possession of a technology device, while 33% of RP noted 'no'.

These results highlight a significant number of RP have access to and/or possession to a technology device, indicating a high likelihood that these RP are active and engaged online.

It is important to highlight the 33 RP who do not have access to and/or possession to a technology device. These RP account for a third of the sample size and serve as a stark reminder that a large proportion of RP do not have any access and/or possession to a technology device and are therefore more likely to be digitally isolated.

The list of technology devices in Question 2 includes many items that are commonly found throughout UK homes, moreover two thirds (66%) of adults in the UK have a smartphone.²

Therefore it is striking that these common placed technology devices are absent from a third of the RP sample size.

² Ofcom, 'The UK is now a smartphone society', Ofcom [Website], 2015, <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/media/media-releases/2015/cmr-uk-2015>, accessed 25th September 2020.

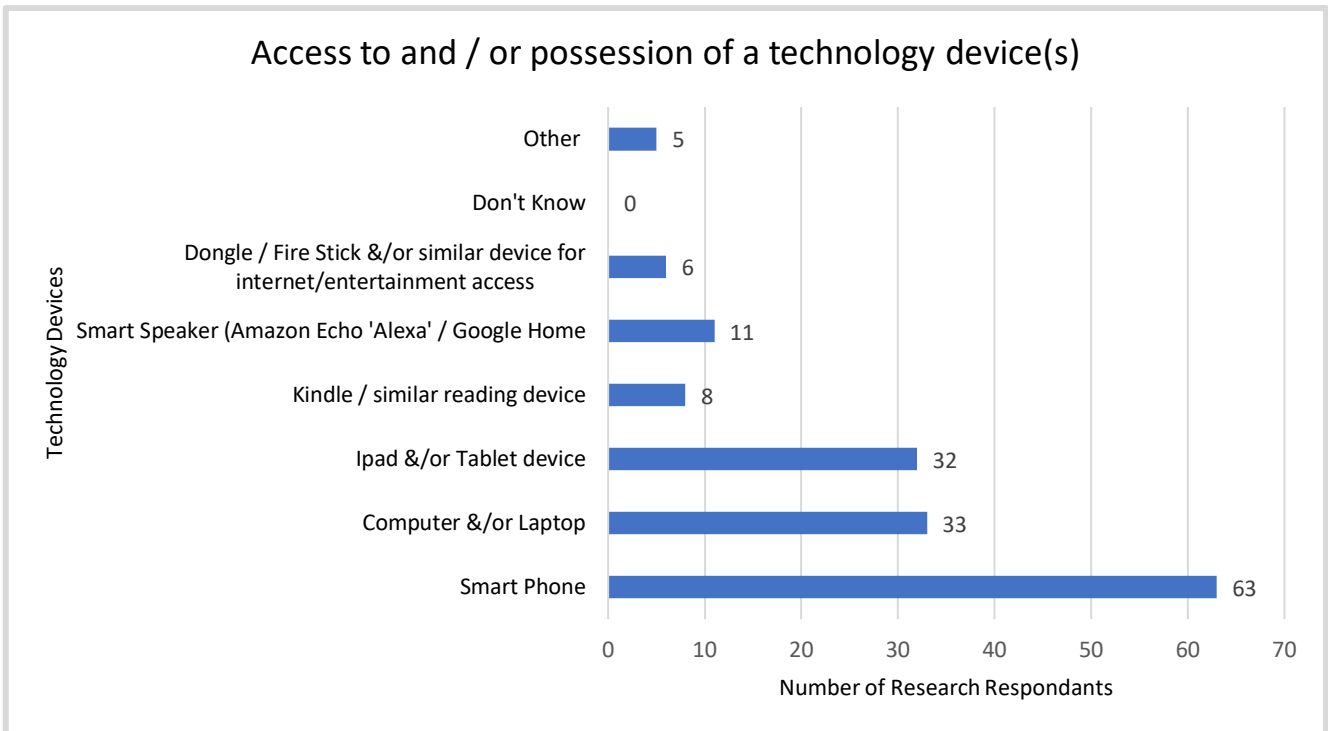


Figure 6: Type of technology devices Research Participants have access and/or possession to

Figure 6 highlights the variety of technology devices RP have access and/or possession to.

A smart phone is the most common technology device that RP have access and/or possession to, accounting for 63 responses. Smart phones enable communication, work, finances, entertainment, shopping and more to take place in a flexible way to meets the needs of the user.

Around 50% of RP had access and/or possession to a computer/laptop and iPad/tablet device. This is a significant number and coupled with smart phones being the most common piece of technology, it highlights that handheld, portable devices are the most popular choice of technology device among RP.

It is important to note that RP made comments in the 'other' section, noting additional technology devices including a Smart TV and a PlayStation 4 (PS4). These devices require a deeper digital knowledge of technology in their installation and use, and therefore act as a reminder that some RP are digitally proficient with other technologies.

Importantly, 2 RP revealed they have access and/or possession to a smart phone and tablet respectively but are not aware of how the technology devices work and how they can use the devices. (*Appendix B*)

- *Bought a phone, but don't know how to set it up so not opened it yet*
- *Tablet, but don't know how to use it*

These comments highlight a significant point, the data showcases a high number of RP have access and/or possession to technology devices, however, it does not take into account RP ability or understanding when using the technology device(s) and whether the technology device(s) is having a meaningful impact on the RP.

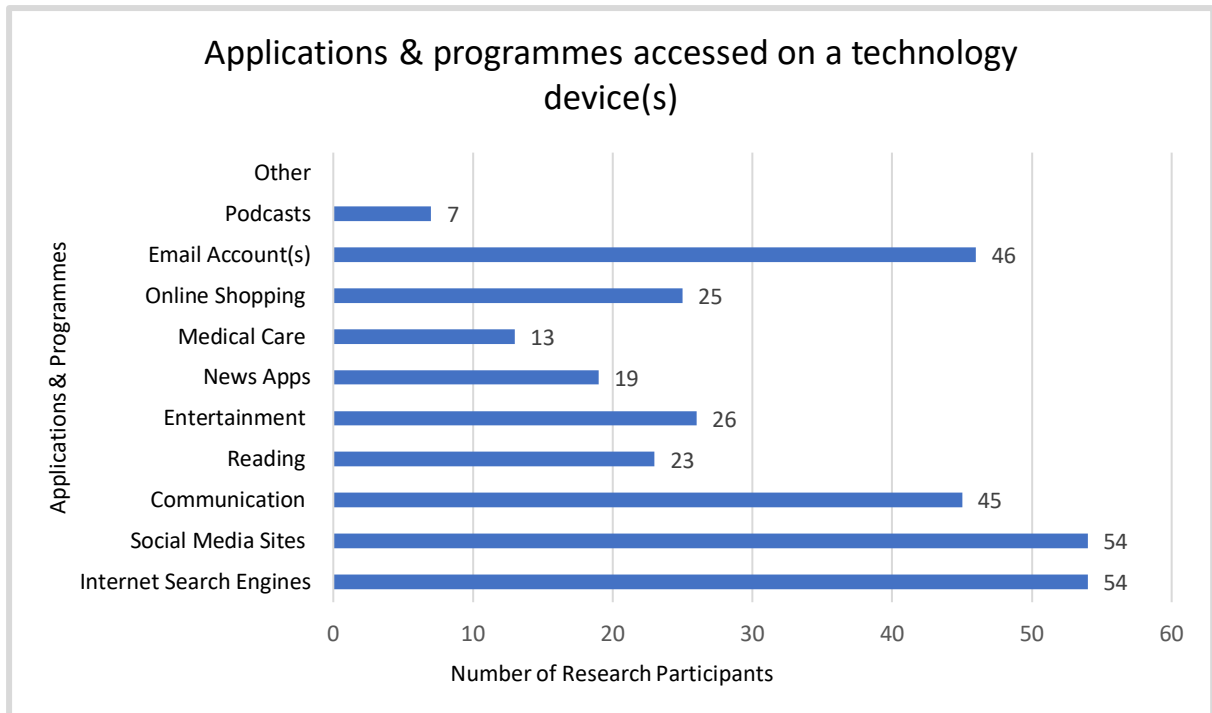


Figure 7: Applications and programmes accessed by Research Participants on technology devices

Figure 7 highlights the variety of applications and programmes RP have accessed via their technology device(s). Figure 7 is created using the data from ‘Question 3 – Have you ever used your device to access any of the following?’. This question was only asked to RP who answered ‘yes’ to having access and/or possession to a technology device. A total of 77 RP answered ‘yes’ to having access and/or possession to a technology device.

It is evident that a large proportion of RP access internet search engines (70%), social media (70%), Communication Apps (58%) and Email account(s) (60%).

These applications are key communication tools and information platforms, suggesting that RP using these applications have access to local, national and international news, can receive regular updates via news outlets, speak and/or video chat with family and friends, communicate via email and enjoy personalised recreational activities (e.g.: listening to music on YouTube, watching a film and/or programme online etc).

Applications with a much lower engagement level included reading apps, entertainment apps, news apps, podcasts, medical apps and online shopping.

It is important to note that during the peak of COVID-19 access to local medical care appointments and the wider healthcare system changed rapidly to meet the demands of the pandemic. Changes included, healthcare and GP appointments moving towards telephone and/or video call appointments, hospital appointments were rescheduled and/or cancelled and shielding was introduced by the UK Government as a measure to protect the older age group.

Shielding, refers to individuals who are classed as ‘clinically extremely vulnerable’ and were advised to take extra precautions during the peak of the pandemic in England. It included the older age group and those with specific health related conditions.³

These rapid changes in the medical system, coupled with large sections of the population shielding meant individuals were encouraged to move towards digital appointments. This included online GP appointments and medication services. Figure 7 shows that less than a third of RP were active in using a medical app, with RP commenting: *(Appendix C)*

- *‘having phone consultations and I expect a need to access medical services online’*
- *‘would like to know how to access my GP as they are moving online’*

Online shopping also received low RP engagement, accounting for only 32%. It is important to highlight online shopping, as during the peak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, shielding was introduced which directly affected the older age groups ability to shop for supplies. Access to shops of all varieties was severely restricted and, in some cases, not possible. It is evident that online shopping is an underutilised tool by RP and indicates potential disadvantages faced by the older age group including, a reduced level of personal freedom and choice, further compounded by COVID-19 and the likely reliance on family, friends, neighbours and local charities to provide food and medical supplies.

Several RP have access and/or possession to a technology device and have used their technology device to access platforms and applications, however, there is low confidence and lack of understanding from RP when using the technology device and accessing applications.

RP noted that they have online accounts and applications but are unsure of how they work, including email accounts. Several RP noted that their email accounts are *‘rarely used’* and they are *‘not confident’* in how they work. Other RP disclosed, they had email accounts set up for specific purposes, including Universal Credit and accounts created by family members, however the email accounts have not been accessed or used since they were originally created.

RP also expressed comments regarding applications and platforms they accessed in the past, but they no longer choose to engage with, use the internet or have any interest in continuing to be digitally active.

- *Can use Facebook but choose not to*
- *Made a conscious decision not to use the internet*

A number of RP were more digitally active and used their technology devices to access,

- *Blood pressure monitor*
- *Online banking*
- *iTunes*

³ British Government, ‘Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19’, Gov.uk [Website], 2021, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>>, accessed 25th September 2020.

This varied mix of interests and uses, showcases that some RP are digitally engaged and have personalised their technology devices to meet their individual needs and interests.

However, several RP expressed concern and lack of knowledge around engaging with their technology device and being digitally active. A RP noted that they *'can only read messages'* they had no ability to respond, while another RP acknowledged that they would *'like to online shop but, worried about card security'*. These RP comments highlight the barriers faced by the older age group, including literacy levels, confidence in using a digital device and the importance of learning and understanding how to use a technology device in a safe way.

The data reflects a high number of RP with access and/or possession to technology device and RP digitally engaged with applications. However, it is apparent that having access to technology device and applications does not mean RP are active online or utilising these applications in a useful and meaningful way. Ultimately the data does not reflect the true level of access or understanding RP have towards digital technologies.

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

The Digital Solutions Questionnaire contained a selection of open-ended questions depending on RP response in question 2.

For RP who confirmed access to a technology device, they answered questions 3, 4A and 4B in a sequence.

- Q4A: What do you enjoy [watching, reading, listening, searching for, speaking to, other] on your device(s)?

Q4A allowed RP to identify and discuss what they enjoy engaging with on their technology device. The question had a list of prompts including ‘watching, reading, listening, searching for, speaking to, other’ – this list was read out to RP to highlight that all types of engagement with a technology device could be included. RP were given time and encouraged to provide responses that were a true reflection of their current engagement levels, disclosing what they liked and/or participated in when using technology devices.

A large proportion of RP responses discussed communication, staying in contact and keeping connected with family and friends. RP talked about the distance they faced between their family and friends, both locally and globally. This distance in many RP cases, was overcome through using video calling and/or video streaming.

- ❖ *Speak to my son in Argentina every week via video calling*
- ❖ *Seeing my son and grandchildren in America*
- ❖ *Helps 6 year old grandson (via face time) with his on line school work*
- ❖ *Speak to family*
- ❖ *Keeping in touch with family via WhatsApp*
- ❖ *Contacting my son who lives in Sweden*
- ❖ *Only use phone to video call with family in Ireland*
- ❖ *Since lockdown I have been watching Mass both locally and internationally. When my brother-in-law died at the beginning of lockdown as a family, we were all devastated that we could not attend the funeral in Ireland, but we were all able to watch this on Facebook. No funerals were being held at the time and the deceased's brother was able to celebrate the mass from Zambia with family members from Canada, the UK and Ireland joining him on Facebook. When the cortege left for the graveyard, I was able to stay online with my sister as at the time she was shielding and not able to attend her husband's funeral. Family were also able to link up on Facebook the night before the funeral as well. This brought great comfort to us all.*
- ❖ *I also follow a page on Facebook with regular live links to my hometown in Ireland.*
- ❖ *My cousin died recently, and I was able to watch the funeral on my daughter's laptop. I am going to miss the Blessing of the Graves this year as I cannot travel to Ireland. I will be able to watch this on Facebook.*
- ❖ *I use my iPhone to keep in touch with family online*
- ❖ *I use Instagram to keep in touch with family online*

It is evident from RP comments that keeping connected with others is extremely important. RP provide an insight into lockdown living and how their communication routines in some cases have been interrupted. Many RP identified video contact as their regular communication tool for family and friends who live globally.

Two RP made comments regarding the bereavement of family and friends during COVID-19 lockdown and how they were able to attend the funeral services digitally, engaging with funeral arrangements in real time and being involved in the process. This insight highlights the importance video technology can play in the lives of the older age group. Video technology enabled RP to say goodbye to family and friends, offer support to others remotely and perhaps even start their own grieving process.

MUSIC

Other RP noted that their technology devices were used for accessing music, with an emphasis on Irish related music and programmes.

- ❖ *Music on YouTube*
- ❖ *Irish Radio*
- ❖ *Listening to Irish Radio*
- ❖ *I listen to RTE Radio*
- ❖ *I listen to Irish Music*
- ❖ *I listen to Irish Music on YouTube*
- ❖ *Music on YouTube*
- ❖ *YouTube - listening to music*
- ❖ *Music and Highland radio*
- ❖ *Listening to the Irish radio show on Sunday on Facebook*
- ❖ *ICCM (Irish Community Care Manchester) YouTube*
- ❖ *Spotify - Scottish and Irish music*
- ❖ *listening to music*
- ❖ *Listening to the radio on smart speaker*
- ❖ *Music on YouTube*
- ❖ *YouTube for music*

Irish music and similar style programmes were largely noted by RP, indicating a strong desire to feel connected to Irish culture and heritage, perhaps enabling RP the chance to recall memories and reminisce.

- Question 4B) What other type of [entertainment, activities, images, music, books, classes, other] would you enjoy watching and/or taking part in?

Question 4B received a varied response, several RP comments related to medical and healthcare appointments. (Appendix E)

- ❖ *Worried about full lockdown and not being able to get food again etc. I can't buy anything online; I can't contact organisations e.g. council for repairs as you have to do it online.*
- ❖ *My iPad is old, my computer is even older, I cannot afford to replace and need to download Foxfire to correspond with my GP – I have serious health problems.*
- ❖ *Online home delivery re: shopping and prescriptions*
- ❖ *Would like to be able to deal with things online in order to reduce queuing time. Would like to do online Shopping*
- ❖ *Healthcare: Booking apps, knowing what is available to look after my health and monitor my condition*

Other RP comments discussed a range of ambitions, learning new skills, including musical instruments and languages. Several RP noted their desire to engage with music and history programmes, with a strong emphasis placed on being able to access Irish related programmes including the sport (GAA) and RTE.

- ❖ *Watching History channels, documentaries, music, sports, nature, wildlife, Meditation classes (mindfulness) online*
- ❖ *History and gardening information*
- ❖ *Music, podcasts, musical workshops*
- ❖ *Learning online and music*
- ❖ *Learn the guitar*
- ❖ *Would like to discover more music and Irish Films. I would like to discover more music and film if I was taught*
- ❖ *Watching football (GAA) / News (would like to access RTE) and Music*
- ❖ *Gardening interests*
- ❖ *Watching TV programmes*
- ❖ *History*
- ❖ *Anything to do with Poetry, Politics and Irish Cultural events*
- ❖ *Music Videos of showbands and old favourites.*
- ❖ *Would like to be able to book my own flights and my niece always does this for me. I would like to video chat with my family but I don't know how this works and would like to watch music videos*
- ❖ *Music*
- ❖ *Online games - interest in chess and draughts*
- ❖ *French and Saxophone Lessons*
- ❖ *Music and concerts*
- ❖ *Would like to be able to watch concerts & be able to access more music, like concerts. Listen to RTE*

However, other RP comments revealed a lack of awareness regarding what technology devices can offer.

- ❖ *I do not understand it enough to know what is available. I have an old computer that was given to me and never set up 10 years ago. I would like to be able to use a computer but do not know how to even set one up*
- ❖ *Not aware of what can be done with many devices, but would like to understand and broaden knowledge*
- ❖ *Unsure of what else can be done on internet / devices so unsure*
- ❖ *Would like to FaceTime my daughter who lives in London and my sister in Ireland, but I am afraid of how this works*
- ❖ *I don't know really; I suppose I would enjoy doing some other things*
- ❖ *Generally, get to know how to use the internet a bit better*

Overall, it is unmistakable that many RP want to connect to Irish history, heritage and stories through music, RTE programmes, Irish film and more. RP have a clear desire to re-engage with programmes they once knew and discover what else is on offer from programme outlets they know and trust (RTE, GAA etc).

RP also want to learn new skills, ranging from learning new languages, musical instruments to being able to access platforms of interest, including gardening, poetry and booking flights.

Several RP want to be able to take control of their healthcare and access online shopping. This indicates that RP recognise that many core services are becoming increasingly digitally orientated and they want to ensure they can avail of these services. Online access to healthcare systems and shopping is more relevant during the current climate of COVID-19 and RP responses highlight a general awareness towards this changing landscape and feelings that they must learn and adapt to ensure they are included.

However, it is important to note that many RP are simply not aware of what technology devices can offer. Several RP do not understand how technology devices can be individually tailored to meet their needs and interests. An overall lack of awareness of technology devices and being active online suggests the increased likelihood of the older age group missing out on vital services in healthcare, reduced access to shopping, lower levels of communication and ultimately digital exclusion.

- Question 5) If you had access to technology devices, what type of [entertainment, activities, images, music, books, classes, other] would you enjoy watching and/or taking part in?

This question was specific to RP who answered 'no' to having access to and/or possession to technology device(s). This question offered RP the chance to think about what a technology device and being active online could offer them. It required RP to remove any preconceived notions about technology devices and any potential personal anxieties around their individual skill level.

(Appendix F)

- ❖ *Like music, maybe something with music - opera, all kinds*
- ❖ *RTE Radio/TV, Gaelic games, newspapers from his local area in Co Mayo*
- ❖ *Read the Irish paper and sport, and hopefully learn a lot more*
- ❖ *Online Mass. Anything Irish*
- ❖ *Using internet for history*
- ❖ *Watching Irish TV RTE etc, I miss that*
- ❖ *Anything Irish really, past events from dance hall years ago that my daughter tells me is online. Country singers videos Big Tom, the Indians and the Wolfe Tones*
- ❖ *I would maybe enjoy historical things, maybe get involved with LIHH Zoom classes if I had knowledge first of using technology devices*
- ❖ *Maybe go on zoom for LIHH if I was shown how to access it and if I had access to a device. Watch my favourite Orchestra, I cannot go and see them this year due to everything that is going on*
- ❖ *General Information. Shopping*
- ❖ *To be able shop online as they miss picking things up, personal stuff*
- ❖ *Watching football*

RP responses highlight a shared passion for engaging with the sights and sounds of Ireland. Identifiable themes of connection to the past, community focus and evoking memories through Irish music, radio, TV, newspapers is evident throughout all RP commentary regarding their ambitions to become digitally active.

Other RP expressed a desire to communicate with their family and friends.

- ❖ *Keep in touch with relations in the USA*
- ❖ *I would like to learn how to FaceTime my sister in Ireland*
- ❖ *Speaking to family and seeing them on video*
- ❖ *Getting in touch with family*
- ❖ *I cannot read or write, my children arranged for internet to be installed during lockdown, so I could video call my family in Ireland. I struggle a lot even to do this as I cannot read what my phone prompts me to do. I think I use WhatsApp I just have to press the video symbol but that sometimes is a challenge as it jumps to something else.*

RP comments indicate a drive to enhance communication skills - recognising that being connected can be more than a phone call. Several RP discuss the use of 'video calls' and 'FaceTime' being an aim if they could become digitally active, highlighting the importance placed on connecting with family and friends in a more meaningful way.

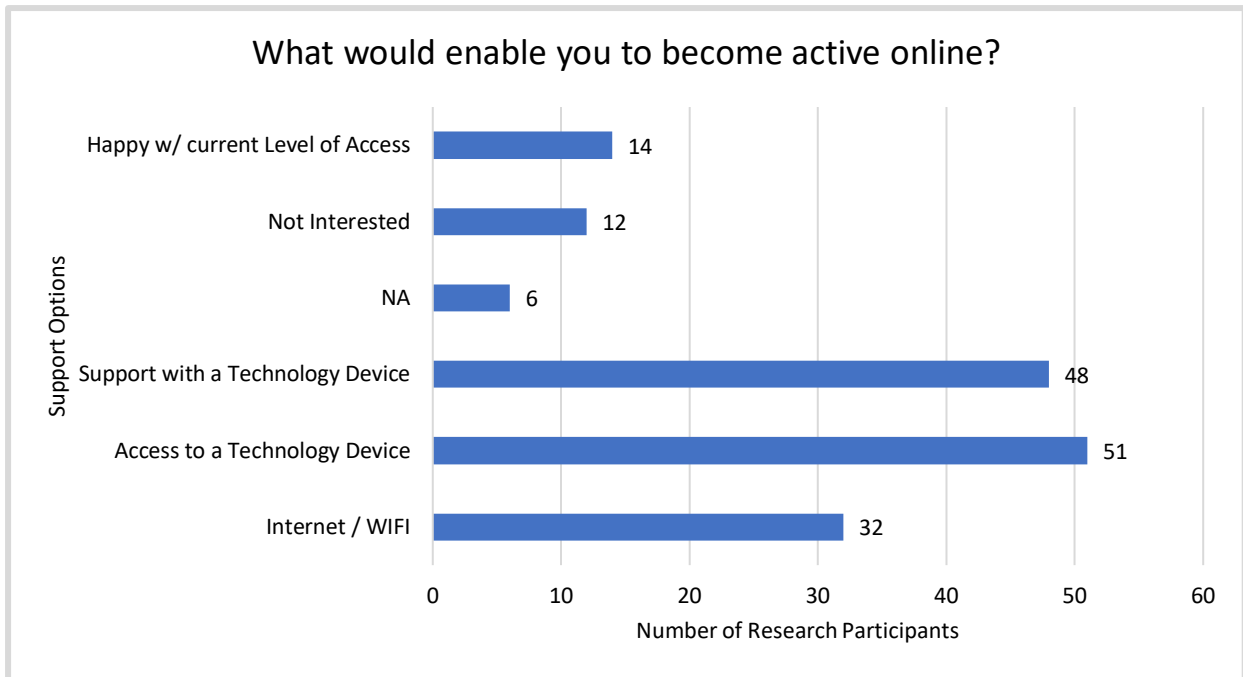


Figure 8: Options that would enable Research Participants to become active online

Figure 8 highlights a variety of options that RP can choose to become active online. It is important to note that ‘Happy with current level of access’, ‘Not interested’ and ‘Not Answered (NA)’ are three additional columns added to the set of results in figure 8. These additional results were added due to high RP verbal and written responses gathered by the Interviewers.

Options ‘having access to a technology device’ and ‘having support on how to use the technology device’ to become active online received 51 and 48 RP responses, respectively. These responses provide a strong indication that RP acknowledge that having access to a technology device does not provide an instant understanding of how the device works or the ability to become active online. The data suggests RP understanding of becoming active online, requires learning, support and training to become proficient in using the device and subsequently being active online.

A total of 32 RP noted that having an internet / WiFi connection would enable them to become active online. This figure can be compared with the data obtained from Question 1 ‘Do you have an internet connection or WiFi in your home / accommodation’ which highlighted that 34 RP did not have internet and / or WiFi in their home. It would be reasonable to suggest that a proportion of these RP responded to the need for internet / WiFi to become active, highlighting a desire among the older age group to become connected online.

A total of 12 RP noted that they were ‘not interested’ in becoming active online, therefore none of the options in Question 6 were applicable. Another 6 RP did not answer the question and are marked as ‘NA’.

Question 6 received a high number of RP comments. A total of 18 RP made comments, reference and/or had conversations regarding the need and/or desire for support to take place and underpin the journey to becoming active online.

- ❖ *Continuing support until I am proficient in it*
- ❖ *Need to be shown more than once*

- ❖ *It would be better to have help from someone outside of my family, that can sit and teach me and understand that I do not know it after being shown once, I need more time to learn*
- ❖ *Would need constant support*
- ❖ *I need to have more confidence but it's hard. I would love to be able to do shopping online as I feel like a burden to my family as I have not left the house since March and they are having to do all my shopping etc.*

The RP comments provide a valuable insight into how the older age group feel towards digital technologies. Assisted teaching, directions and ongoing support is paramount to the older age group becoming comfortable and confident with using digital devices and ultimately becoming active online.

Other RP comments related to feelings of personal fear and/or anxiety towards being active online.

- ❖ *Very worried that he will break the device by doing something wrong*
- ❖ *Greater knowledge on security would give more confidence to go online*
- ❖ *Not confident in ability to learn, has low literacy skills - really feels this is a huge barrier*
- ❖ *Attended a class before but did not feel it was useful and put off accessing any more*

These RP comments reflect the real-life personal barriers that individuals can face, including low literacy skills, previous poor learning experiences, low confidence in ability to understand how technology devices work and fear of breaking and/or damaging the technology device.

Therefore, it is important to recognise that becoming active online for the older age group is an individual process. Individual needs and ability must be considered to ensure a successful and meaningful journey, whether that is learning new skills, re-engaging with digital technologies, or becoming active online for the first time.

Other RP confirmed their access to the internet and/or WiFi and access to a technology device, but unstable connections, digital devices in poor working order, outdated digital devices and a lack of access to digital technologies were preventing them from being active online.

- ❖ *Would like to send emails and although I am active online, a laptop would be better as my literacy and eyesight are not the best, and there is one smart phone in the house and I have 6 children so struggle with access*
- ❖ *When have access to devices, feels confident in using them - it is the lack of access that is the issue*
- ❖ *Access to more up to date technology*

The RP comments highlight an important note regarding levels of access to digital technologies and being active online versus actual levels of engagement. A total of 65 RP confirmed access to the internet and/or Wi-Fi and 77 RP confirmed access to a digital device, however, RP commentary identifies that a significant number of RP are not actively engaged due to lack of confidence, understanding, knowledge, poor condition and working order of a technology device, lack of access and/or unsuitable devices for individual use and anxiety around skill level and ability learn.

Therefore, it is important to understand that the data does not account for RP personal circumstances and needs. It is imperative to understand the individual needs and skill level of a RP to ensure digital engagement can be achieved.

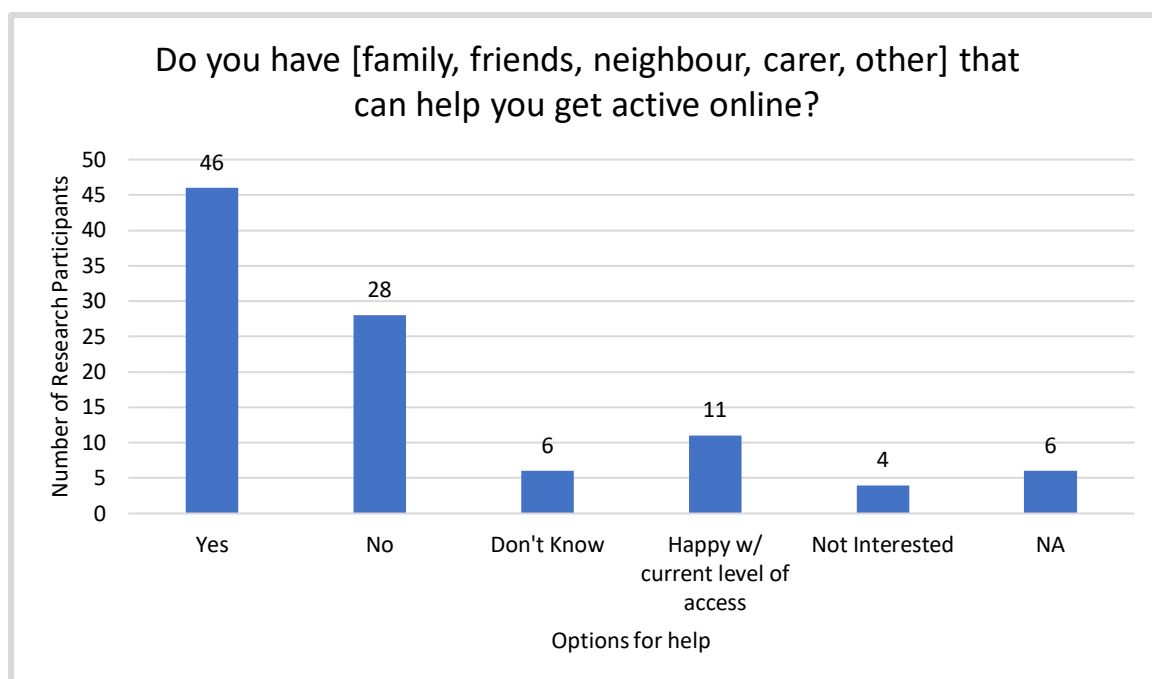


Figure 9: Options who can help Research Participants become active online

Figure 9 provides an overview of the avenues of help and assistance RP have within their own contacts and surroundings to becoming active online, including, family, friends, neighbours, carers and other.

It is important to note that 'Happy with level of access', 'Not Interested' and 'Not Answered (NA)' are three additional columns added to the set of results in figure 9. These additional results were added due to high RP verbal and written responses gathered by the Questioners.

A total of 94 RP responded to the question and 6 are marked as NA.

Around 50% of RP responded 'Yes' to having family, friends, neighbour, carer, other that could help them get active online. This high 'yes' response suggests that digital technologies and online engagement could be taught by trusted individuals in the comfort and familiar surroundings of the RP home and/or accommodation. The 'yes' response also indicates that RP are aware of their close contacts discussing digital technologies and/or they have been in the company of their close contacts when digital technologies have been in use.

It is important to note that approximately 30 RP made further comments. Several RP noted that while they had family who could help them get active online, it came with a level of concern regarding the amount of time it could impact on their family, alongside feelings of anxiety and fear regarding a lack of patience and understanding family members would afford the RP during the learning process. (*Appendix H*)

- ❖ *Family are not patient with me*
- ❖ *I have family but they are working and don't have the time*
- ❖ *My son tried to teach me but I couldn't get the hang of it, don't want to try it again*
- ❖ *I have a daughter but I have never asked her before*
- ❖ *They don't have patience, so I would need a teacher like an IT class*
- ❖ *Daughter can help, but it does depend on her work schedule*

- ❖ *Yes, but it depends on my daughters work schedule*
- ❖ *Family are very busy so not sure how available they would be to help*

A total of 28 RP noted that they did not have anyone who could help them become active online.

- ❖ *[Name] knows nobody with access to the Internet*
- ❖ *No family in locality*
- ❖ *Neighbours and friends are elderly and not able to support with technical devices*
- ❖ *I have a very good family, but they are unable to help me due to work and family commitments*
- ❖ *I don't know - I don't think many people know that I can't read or write - I don't want to disclose this information as its embarrassing and I would feel stupid*
- ❖ *Relatives live too far away for any support*

These comments highlight the range of barriers faced by RP to become digitally active. It is clear that RP require training and support to become active online and while a considerable amount of RP had close contacts who could help, many expressed feelings of anxiety which would ultimately not create a positive learning environment.

Other RP who had no close contacts for help and support with digital technologies are at risk of digital isolation. These RP face personal barriers to accessing technology, including low literacy levels, coupled with a lack of support, creates an environment where access to digital technologies and learning does not take place.

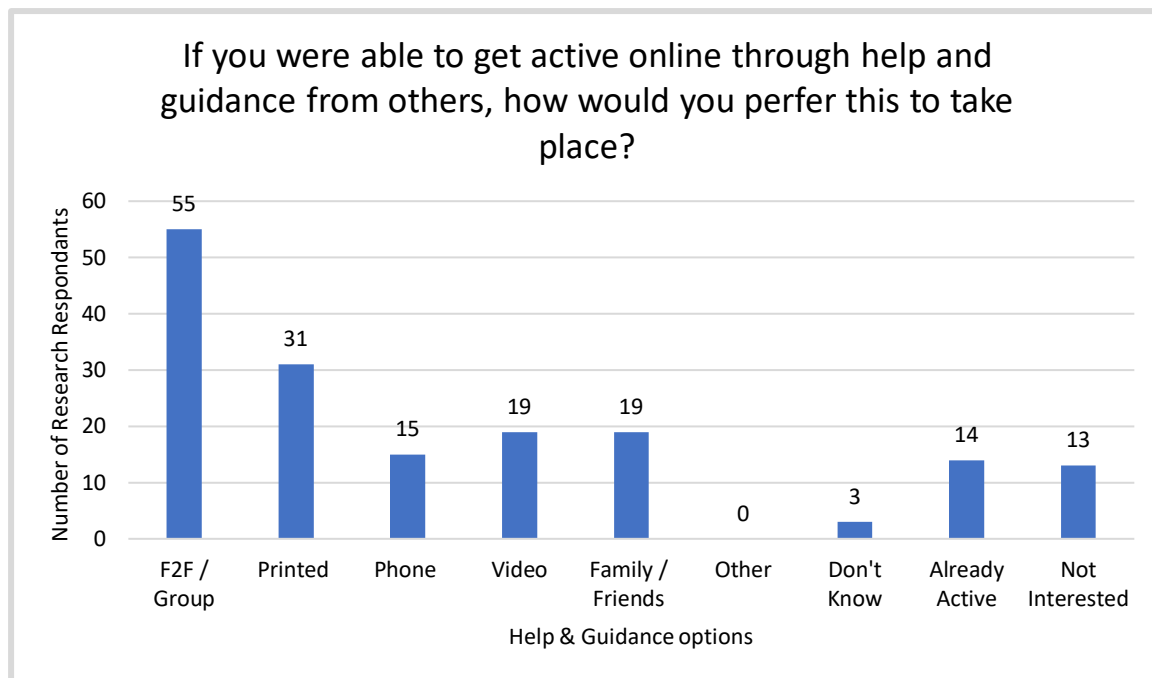


Figure 10: Options for learning how to become active online

Figure 10 highlights the variety of ways RP could obtain help and guidance to become active online. It is important to note that 'Already Active' and 'Not Interested' are two additional columns added to the set of results in figure 10. These additional results were added due to high RP verbal and written responses gathered by the Questioners.

The most selected option with 55 RP responses was, becoming active online through help and guidance from others in a 'face-to-face setting' this included one to one session or a group dynamic.

RP made comments regarding their desire for face-to-face learning; (*Appendix I*)

- ❖ *I would prefer to do it face-to-face due to me having lack of understanding*
- ❖ *1 to 1 is best depending on virus situation, could possibly do it by phone if instructions were clear and slow*
- ❖ *Face-to-face and 1:1 would be the preferred method of support, would feel more comfortable and easier to grasp*
- ❖ *Group, more sociable and I can take my own notes to understand*
- ❖ *Would like face-to-face and great to have written instructions in conjunction*
- ❖ *Would like face-to-face and written instructions to go alongside anything showed/learnt in a face-to-face environment to refer back to*

The comments highlight the importance the older age group place on the learning environment. RP make it explicitly clear that they would feel more comfortable learning face-to-face, where they can receive directions, practice under guidance and take their own personalised notes to accompany the instructions.

Other RP comments identified the need to be physically shown how to use a technology device.

- ❖ *Practical help, eg: Swiping/tapping. Has poor eyesight, left school at a young age and reading is not of a technical ability'*
- ❖ *If shown or taught through the use of symbols, emphasis on pictures and symbols not words*

These responses indicate that becoming active online through face-to-face learning and guidance enables RP of all abilities, including all literacy, numerical and sight levels the chance to learn. RP are highlighting learning in the physical sense, holding the technology device, repeating the tasks, and understanding how to use the digital device through touch, verbal instructions and peer support. It is vital that learning for the older age group is undertaken in an environment comfortable to them, where all abilities are welcome and hands-on learning is encouraged.

Receiving written and picture step by step instructions received 31 RP responses. This provides a great indication that the older age group are willing to try and learn to become digitally active by following instructions that require individual interpretation and action. It showcases a desire to learn and engage with digital technologies, in surroundings comfortable to each RP.

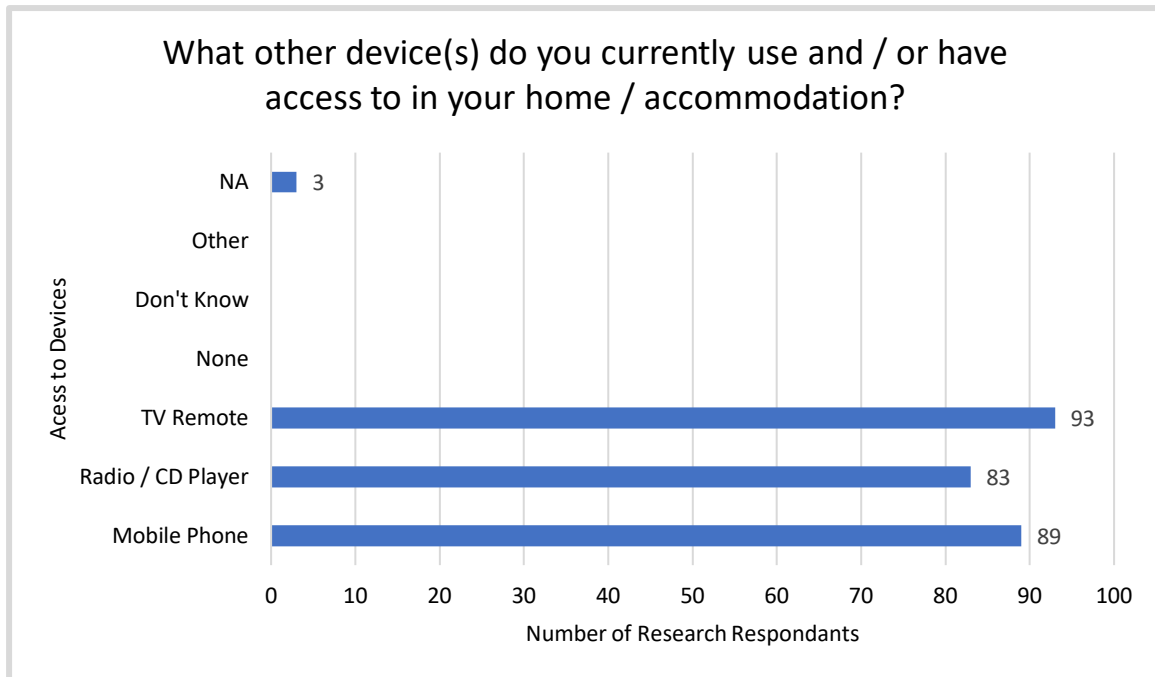


Figure 11: Digital Technologies Research Participants currently use and /or have access to in their home / accommodation

Figure 11 shows a selection of technology items commonly found within the home. It is evident that the majority of RP use and /or have access to a TV remote, radio / CD player and mobile phone, all receiving over 80 responses, respectively.

The results highlight that RP are currently engaged and using digital technologies within their home/accommodation. Such, indicates that RP are using digital technologies of a particular size, roughly handheld size and slightly bigger. These results provide a starting point for interaction, recognising that RP are currently utilising common digital technologies in the home on a regular basis.

CONCLUSION

Older Irish people are experiencing digital isolation, which is likely to worsen as COVID-19 situation continues, coupled with the introduction of localised restrictions and long-term change to essential services.

The changing landscape has and will continue to cause disruption to daily life, but also to the services provided by Irish Community Care Manchester, Irish Community Care and Leeds Irish Health and Homes. These support services are a vital lifeline for many people, they provide a necessary way of checking in on the health and welfare of all users.

Fréa partner organisations will continue to find new ways to overcome the disruption caused by COVID-19 and utilise the findings of this report to implement a 'Digital Solutions Programme'. The programme will ensure the respective communities are connected and engaged through digital technologies.

The data acknowledges that many Research Participants have access to the internet and /or WiFi connection and access to a technology device. However, the commentary provides valuable insight into life behind the screen, uncovering the reality of digital isolation despite having access to technology items.

Research Participants detailed that they lacked confidence in their ability to use digital technologies and were fearful of breaking the equipment. Some were unaware of what digital technologies could do for them, while others noted that literacy and sight problems prevented them from engaging in any meaningful connection with digital technology.

When Research Participants were asked to express what they would like to do, if they had the skills, knowledge and equipment to become active online it became explicitly clear that connecting to family and friends was key, but equally as important was a connection to their culture.

Individuals identified their passion to become connected with culture in the form of music, TV, film, GAA, Irish Radio and more. The words and phrases captured, highlight the desire to feel connected to people, place and memories through hearing an old favourite song, watching a GAA match or a film they had seen many years ago. Research Participants expressed a longing to feel connected, to engage with something they were once so familiar with and describing the comfort it would bring to them if they were to feel connected again.

For many people their forms of communication have changed, they are no longer able to visit family, friends and services like they once did. The desire to see people face-to-face has not gone, with several Research Participants commenting that they would like to learn how to video call – they want to virtually 'see' their family and friends in the absence of their physical presence.

The research has emphasised the current and growing digital isolation of the older age group, but perhaps more significantly it has highlighted a passion and desire from the older age group to become connected. Harnessing the detail uncovered in this report is key to digital engagement, understanding the needs of the older age group and providing them with access to meaningful services and recreational activities is essential to long-term digital inclusion.

Ultimately, getting our communities digitally engaged is imperative to promoting positive health and wellbeing. Our aim is to enable individuals to become digitally active, to take control of their own

lives, from contacting family, friends and services to the personal freedom of online shopping and enjoying activities meaningful to them.

Above all else, the older age group deserve the opportunity to progress on the digital journey ahead, to ensure they are engaged, connected and their voice is heard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TECHNOLOGY

- It is essential that the older age group can touch, handle and interact with technology devices before any learning takes place. The report highlights levels of fear and anxiety from RP regarding the potential of breaking technology devices and in some cases, individuals were simply not aware of what technology devices look like. Therefore, it is important that individuals are afforded the opportunity to handle the device and become familiar with weight, texture and feel to alleviate any concerns.
- The data showcased a large proportion of RP had access to a smartphone (66) coupled with access to a mobile phone (89) and a TV remote (93). These digital technologies indicate a current size and shape that the older age group are actively engaged with. As such it provides an indication that digital technologies introduced to the older age group around handheld size and bigger would likely be a familiar sight, feel and weight, in turn further reducing barriers to becoming active online.

FIT FOR PURPOSE

- It is essential to ensure individuals have access to a piece of technology that is suitable to their skill level and needs. An audit should be completed with every individual to understand what piece of technology they have, if any and what they hope to achieve from becoming more active online and/or becoming active online for the first time.
- For individuals who have access to technology devices, it is important that a plan for digital engagement is created. The plan should detail the aim(s) of the individual and the steps to achieving this goal(s). A plan provides an outline for individuals to understand that they are on a supported journey, their aims are recognised, and guidance is put in place to help them succeed. The plan should be managed in a flexible and responsive manner, e.g.: If an individual's aim(s) or personal circumstances change this can be reflected in the plan without judgement or scrutiny.

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- It is imperative that the older age group learn how to use their technology device and how to access online platforms in order to successfully become active online.
- The research clearly indicates that the older age group placed a high importance on the learning environment, expressing the need for face-to-face learning (one-to-one and/or group setting) and repetition of tasks.
- It is important to be aware that offering learning sessions and support for digital technologies cannot be undertaken with a 'one size fits all' approach. The research suggests several barriers the older age group face when trying to engage with digital technologies:

- 1) Literacy Levels: The research noted that some RP had low literacy levels, including being unable to read or write. It presented feelings of fear, anxiety and embarrassment for the individuals and a barrier to being digitally active. Therefore, all learning needs to be tailored to each individual need based on ability and understanding. For those individuals with low literacy levels, learning and instructions should be offered through verbal instruction and picture and/or symbol printed instructions.
- 2) Sight: For individuals with reduced sight and hearing ability, as noted by RP it is important that they receive instructions in an audio format or through verbal conversation.
 - It may be necessary to adapt the technology device and alter the main settings of the device, that is to make the content on the screen appear larger in size and ensure the zoom in and out feature is easily accessible. Any printed or written instructions should be printed in a large size format and background colours should be adapted to ensure an easy-to-read contrast is achieved.

CONTINUED SUPPORT

- To ensure the older age group become proficient in using digital technologies it is essential to provide ongoing support. The research highlights the older age group have a desire to receive guidance and support on how to use their technologies from an external source, someone who they believe has patience and understanding for their individual learning. RP commentary revealed a call for learning to take place in an environment where tasks can be repeated under the guidance of an instructor. Therefore, it is important to establish digital technology support sessions at a regular date and time to afford individuals the chance to attend and learn.
- It is vital to create a learning environment that is relaxed and open, where individuals are encouraged to seek support from their mentors and peers.
- The learning environment should include an aim(s) for each session but reinforce the point that there is no timeframe on achieving the aim(s).
- The learning environment should enable participants to take their own notes and instructions that are meaningful to them, that can be taken away to encourage practice outside of the programmed support sessions.

CREATIVE PROGRAMMING

- Creating an exciting programme is essential to engaging the older age group in becoming active online.
- RP commentary, noted an overwhelming desire to feel connected to Irish cultural, with references to RTE, GAA, Irish music, TV, film, pictures and more. This detailed and valuable commentary provides a strong platform to create a programme of events, information packs and activities that the older age group can engage with.

- Commentary from RP cannot be underestimated, it is vital information that can be used to ensure the older age group receive maximum benefit from being active online.

APPENDICES

- ❖ Appendix A: Digital Solutions Questionnaire

Appendix B: Service User commentary relating to Question 2: Do you have access to and/or possession to any of the following technology devices?

- ❖ Appendix C: Service User commentary relating to Question 3: Have you ever used your [device(s)] to access any of the following?
- ❖ Appendix D: Service User commentary relating to Question 4A: What do you enjoy [watching, reading, listening, searching for, speaking to, other] on your [device]?
- ❖ Appendix E: Service User commentary relating to Question 4B): What other type of [entertainment, activities, images, music, books, classes, other] would you enjoy watching and/or taking part in?
- ❖ Appendix F: Service User commentary relating to Question 5: If you had access to technology devices, what type of [entertainment, activities, images, music, books, classes, other] would you enjoy watching and/or taking part in?
- ❖ Appendix G: Service User commentary relating to Question 6: What would enable you to become active online?
- ❖ Appendix H: Service User commentary relating to Question 7: Do you have [Family, friends, carer, other] that can help you get active online?
- ❖ Appendix I: Service User commentary relating to Question 8: If you were able to get active online through the help and guidance from others, how would you prefer this to take place?

APPENDIX A

Digital Solutions Questionnaire

[Organisation Name] are carrying out this survey to help us learn about our communities and their experiences with technology devices.

This survey should take around 10 minutes to complete. Anything you tell us will be kept confidential, is anonymous and will only be used for research purposes.

Date of call [dd/mm/yy] / Call time [hh:mm] / Interviewer [name]

- [Name]:
- [Age]:
- Ethnicity: Irish, Irish Descent, Irish Traveller, Gypsy Traveller
- Other (Please give details):
- [Location]:

Question 1.

Do you have an internet connection or WiFi in your home / accommodation?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Question 2.

Do you have access to and/or possession to any of the following technology devices?

	Yes	No
Smart Phone (a phone that has access to the internet)		
Computer &/or Laptop		
iPad &/or Tablet device		
Kindle / similar reading device		
Smart Speaker: (Amazon Echo 'Alexa' / Google Home etc)		
'Dongle' / 'Fire Stick' (similar device for internet/entertainment access)		
Don't know		
Other (please give details)		

If respondent answered **YES** to any of the above, move to Q3. If **NO**, please move to Q5

Question 3.

If **YES** to Q2: Have you ever used your [device(s)] to access any of the following?

	Yes	No
Google (and/or similar Internet Search Engines)		
Social Media Sites: Facebook / YouTube etc		
Communication Apps: FaceTime / Skype / WhatsApp etc		
Reading Apps: Books, newspapers and/or magazines		
Entertainment Apps: Radio, music etc		
News Apps: Audio & written formats		
Medical Care Apps: Online GP, Prescriptions, Healthcare etc		
Online Shopping Apps: Food, clothes etc.		
Email Account(s)		
Podcasts		
Other (please give details):		

Question 4.

B) What do you enjoy [watching, reading, listening, searching for, speaking to, other] on your [device(s)]?

C) What other type of [entertainment, activities, images, music, books, classes, other] would you enjoy watching and/or taking part in?

Question 5.

If you had access to technology devices, what type of [entertainment, activities, images, music, books, classes, other] would you enjoy watching and/or taking part in?

Please allow the respondent time to think & answer. Use Q3 list as a prompt if necessary.

If the respondent notes that they do not know how to use technology, please ask them to think about the question as if they had knowledge and/or help to get active online.*

Question 6.

What would enable you to become active online*?

	Yes	No
Having an internet / WiFi connection?		
Having access to a technology device? [A Smart Phone, Computer &/or Laptop, iPad &/or Tablet device, Kindle / similar reading device, Smart Speaker]		
Having support on how to use the technology device?		
Other (please give details)		

Notes

Question 7.

Do you have [family, friends, neighbour, carer, other] that can help get you active online*?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Notes

Question 8.

If you were able to get active online through help and guidance from others, how would you prefer this to take place?

	Yes	No
Face-to-face: 1-1 / group setting		
Printed: Written and picture step by step instructions		
Phone: Instructions provided via audio communication		
Video: FaceTime / WhatsApp / Zoom etc		
Guidance & instructions given to [family, friends, neighbour, carer, other]		
Other (please give details):		
Don't know		

Notes

Question 9.

What other device(s) do you currently use and/or have access to in your home / accommodation?

	Yes	No
Mobile phone		
Radio / CD Player		
TV Remote		
None		
Don't know		
Other (please give details)		

***Active Online:** For the purpose of this questionnaire, this term refers to having access to a technology device that enables the SU access to: [Internet Search Engines (Google etc), Social Media Sites: Facebook / YouTube etc, Communication Apps: FaceTime / Skype / WhatsApp etc, Reading Apps: Books, newspapers &/or magazines, Entertainment Apps: Radio, music etc, News Apps: Audio & written formats, other]

APPENDIX B

Question 2.

Do you have access to and/or possession to any of the following technology devices?

'Other'

- ❖ Smart TV, PS4, Earbuds
- ❖ PS4
- ❖ I don't want to go online

Comments:

- ❖ Bought a phone but don't know how to set it up so not opened it yet.
- ❖ Tablet but don't know how to use it
- ❖ I don't want to go online
- ❖ Children bring around a computer to order tickets, book holidays etc

APPENDIX C

Question 3.

If YES to Q2: Have you ever used your [device(s)] to access any of the following?

'Other'

- ❖ Email: Yes, but rarely uses it as not confident
- ❖ Medical Apps: No but needs to, as been having phone consultations and expects that he will need to access medical services online
- ❖ Would like to know how, as access to GP's is moving online
- ❖ Email set up but doesn't know how to use it. Son set up music on his phone
- ❖ Can use Facebook, but chooses not to. Has GP access but daughters order prescriptions [Name] said she could do it herself but prefers them to do
- ❖ Can only read - NOT respond to messages
- ❖ DJ'S at lunch club, uses iTunes
- ❖ Wife reads newspaper online
- ❖ Email account only set up for Universal Credit - it is not used or accessed at all
- ❖ Has email but rarely uses it. Would like to online shop but worried about card security
- ❖ Uses WhatsApp to phone Ireland
- ❖ Blood pressure monitor
- ❖ Online Banking
- ❖ I do a lot of wood crafting so buy many tools sometimes. I bought a computer software tool for my crafting, but my laptop is broke so don't use it yet, but maybe in the future.
- ❖ I have 26 diplomas in I.T. but I made a conscious decision not to use the internet as it is full of [word]. It is much friendlier to write a letter.
- ❖ My daughter set up my email, I don't know how to use it
- ❖ Daughter bought a smartphone at the beginning of lockdown which is used to FaceTime with Children and grandchildren

APPENDIX D

Question 4.

D) What do you enjoy [watching, reading, listening, searching for, speaking to, other] on your [device]?

- ❖ Gabor Mate lectures. Support group AA meetings on zoom
- ❖ Helps 6 year old grandson (via FaceTime) with his on line school work
- ❖ Enjoys watching documentaries and soaps on television
- ❖ Watching History channels, documentaries, music, sports, nature, wildlife, Meditation classes (mindfulness) online. Staying connected with people. Various music
- ❖ Can only answer phone - nothing else
- ❖ Echo news. Music on YouTube
- ❖ News and current affairs, Football. Check Facebook very rarely. Do jigsaws on iPad
- ❖ Books on Kindle and iPad
- ❖ I have searched for Ancestry information, family history etc. I have looked for baking recipes
- ❖ Irish Radio, education programmes and reading
- ❖ Music, games, talk, Quiz, puzzles etc.
- ❖ Football, boxing, general research
- ❖ History news, listening to Shaun Atwood podcasts, mediation, and people's stories on how they have survived domestic abuse
- ❖ Animal Programmes
- ❖ Emails, researching COVID-19 and news articles
- ❖ Listening to Irish Radio
- ❖ I listen to RTE Radio, I listen to Irish Music. I listen to mass in Mayo 3 times a week
- ❖ I enjoy FB (Facebook) Marketplace and I listen to Irish Music on YouTube
- ❖ Only use it for texting
- ❖ Search Google, speak to family, search local programmes
- ❖ Watch films / use for communication (FB Messenger) / social media fb / comedies - Western films
- ❖ I look at YouTube and Keep in touch with my daughter
- ❖ reads paper, orders food, uses email, online shopping, online bookmakers, listens to music, plays games
- ❖ Music, reading main news and sports
- ❖ Reading Irish and local newspapers / enjoys DJ at lunch club
- ❖ Newspapers, music and books
- ❖ Does not use internet, only to send messages
- ❖ Booking holidays, playing games, listening to music and emails
- ❖ Has access but no interest
- ❖ Games
- ❖ Music on YouTube. With friends on messenger
- ❖ Documentaries online, social media, keeping in touch w/family via WhatsApp
- ❖ YouTube - listening to music
- ❖ Contacting my son who lives in Sweden
- ❖ Only use phone to video call with family in Ireland
- ❖ Facebook, watching Mass and music on Highland radio
- ❖ Connecting with family in Ireland on FB (Facebook)
- ❖ Watching Mass online, politics, Poetry

- ❖ Since lockdown I have been watching Mass both locally and internationally. When my brother-in-law died at the beginning of lockdown as a family we were all devastated that we could not attend the funeral in Ireland but we were all able to watch this on Facebook. No funerals were being held at the time and the deceased's brother was able to celebrate the mass from Zambia with family members from Canada, the UK and Ireland joining him on Facebook but when the cortege left for the graveyard I was able to stay on line with my sister as at the time she was shielding and not able to attend her husband's funeral. Family were also able to link up on Facebook the night before the funeral as well. This brought great comfort to us all.
- ❖ I was able to connect on line to A Transatlantic Celebration of Yeats Day & Bloomsday with the Embassy of Ireland DC, the Joyce Centre Dublin and the Yeats Society Sligo on 12 June 2020. This session was attended by 160 people and lasted for 2 and a half hours. I then gained links with others who had attended this event.
- ❖ Mass since lockdown began and to do this I had to get my son to set up a Facebook account for me as I did not know how to do this. I also like watching Fair City and the RTE News on the YouTube. I also follow a page on Facebook with regular live links to my home town in Ireland.
- ❖ My cousin died recently and I was able to watch the funeral on my daughter's laptop. I am going to miss the Blessing of the Graves this year as I can't travel to Ireland. I will be able to watch this on Facebook.
- ❖ Listening to the Irish radio show on Sunday on Facebook
- ❖ Doing armchair exercises that ICCM put on Facebook
- ❖ ICCM YouTube
- ❖ Calling my family in Ireland on WhatsApp video call, it is great because its free.
- ❖ I use my laptop to skype call my family in Ireland and friends here as I am shielding through ill health and its been a godsend for keeping in touch with people that I would usually have physical contact with.
- ❖ Don't use devices or internet to any great extent, may look at a FB post if told about it, but not active
- ❖ I use it for FB only (Facebook)
- ❖ Irish Health and Homes IT class and to access Bingo, Zoom and FaceTime
- ❖ Enjoys history research and using Wikipedia, with a keen interest in Royal women
- ❖ Would like to do more online but not confident
- ❖ Spotify: Scottish and Irish Music. Speak to my son in Argentina every week via video calling
- ❖ Horse racing
- ❖ Looking for current information and listening to music
- ❖ Podcast, email, zoom
- ❖ Sports Rugby League & Football, History, Facebook, News, Politics, Music and YouTube
- ❖ Reading, read books online, Irish history, world history, anything history
- ❖ I use my iPhone to keep in touch with family online. I use Instagram to keep in touch with family online. I use Instagram to look at interior design online as I have always had an interest in interior design and in art painting
- ❖ Brand new to a tablet so only uses it to play games and to FaceTime in lockdown. Plays games: Bingo, solitaire and tipping point
- ❖ Enjoys zoom, painting with [name] at LIHH, bingo, craft group online. I don't know how I would have survived without zoom. I look forward to zoom at LIHH
- ❖ No interest
- ❖ Football
- ❖ Rugby and sport
- ❖ No interest

- ❖ Has tried to use the internet, but would like some help in building confidence to use it
- ❖ Social media
- ❖ Listening to the radio on smart speaker and following current events
- ❖ Music on YouTube. Ancestry and tracing family history
- ❖ Catch up/on demand TV and reading books
- ❖ Seeing my son and grandchildren in America. YouTube for music
- ❖ Nothing

APPENDIX E

Question 4B.

What other type of [entertainment, activities, images, music, books, classes, other] would you enjoy watching and/or taking part in?

- ❖ Zoom for socialising and education (Directions Programme)
- ❖ Mainly to keep in better contact with people and worried about full lockdown and not being able to get food again. I would love to know how to use Facebook. I can't buy anything online. I can't contact organisations e.g. council for repairs as you have to do it online
- ❖ Nothing
- ❖ I do not understand it enough to know what is available. I have an old computer that was given to me and never set up 10 years ago. I would like to be able to use a computer but do not know how to even set one up
- ❖ My iPad is old, my computer is even older, I cannot afford to replace and need to download Foxfire to correspond with my GP – I have serious health problems.
- ❖ Online home delivery re: shopping and prescriptions
- ❖ History /Gardening information
- ❖ Looking at holiday destinations and looking at different parts of the world with my adult son who has learning difficulties (when he stays with me at weekend)
- ❖ Classes, Images, Music, Podcasts, Musical workshops. Drumming lessons.
- ❖ Animals sea life documentaries
- ❖ Learning
- ❖ Learning online, Music, Creative tools and apps
- ❖ Learn the guitar
- ❖ Would like to discover more music and Irish Films. I would like to discover more music and film if I was taught
- ❖ Has enough
- ❖ Has enough
- ❖ Watching football (GAA). News (would like to access RTE) and Music
- ❖ Cannot think
- ❖ Gardening interests
- ❖ To look for work. Not aware of what can be done with many devices, but would like to understand and broaden knowledge
- ❖ Si-fi novels, watching films and drawing comic strips
- ❖ Have access, but no interest is going online
- ❖ Watching TV programmes
- ❖ History
- ❖ Soaps. Unsure of what else can be done on internet devices so unsure
- ❖ Anything to do with Poetry, politics Irish Cultural events and Zoom or Teams subscription - to keep in touch with others
- ❖ Music and old episodes of programmes I like Fair City
- ❖ I can only do FaceTime and I am too old to start learning now

- ❖ Music Videos of showbands and old favourites. Would like to FaceTime my daughter who lives in London and my sister in Ireland, but I am afraid of how this works
- ❖ Would like to be able to book my own flights and my niece always does this for me. Would like to video chat with my family but I don't know how this works. Would like to watch music videos
- ❖ Online classes similar to what ICCM are putting online now
- ❖ My daughter does show me very funny videos on Facebook etc but I am afraid to join social media because there is a lot of risks - people can listen to your conversations. I hear that people know your location through these sites which I don't like. They are only for young ones not someone like me. I know someone who has been a victim of fraud
- ❖ Irish Music / Irish TV
- ❖ No interest in being any more active than currently am
- ❖ Don't know - I don't know really, I suppose I would enjoy doing some other things. I would maybe enjoy doing Zoom with LIHH
- ❖ Music and Sci-Fi
- ❖ Online games - interest in chess and draughts
- ❖ French and/ or Saxophone Lessons
- ❖ Facebook, music and concerts
- ❖ Would like to learn how to connect tablet to video conferencing. History, Medical, Adventure Books, Holidays and general things of interest
- ❖ No interest
- ❖ Football
- ❖ Would like to be able to watch concerts & generally browse for things that take my interest
- ❖ Would like to be able to deal with things online in order to reduce queuing time. Would like to do online shopping
- ❖ Be able to access more music, like concerts. Listen to RTE
- ❖ Healthcare: Booking apps, knowing what is available to look after my health and monitor my condition
- ❖ Generally, get to know how to use the internet a bit better
- ❖ Children & grandchildren give help to access information or do shopping for me and my wife
- ❖ Happy with level of current engagement

APPENDIX F

Question 5.

If you had access to technology devices, what type of [entertainment, activities, images, music, books, classes, other] would you enjoy watching and/or taking part in?

Please allow the respondent time to think & answer. Use Q3 list as a prompt if necessary

If the respondent notes that they do not know how to use technology, please ask them to think about the question as if they had knowledge and/or help to get active online*.

- ❖ I like music – maybe something with music – opera, all kind. Messing around – looking things up. Would be interested in ancestry, went to a course in the library and did the basics, would go to library to mess about with it.
- ❖ RTE Radio/TV; Gaelic games; (watches films on TV); newspapers from his local area in Co Mayo
- ❖ Keep in touch with relations in the USA
- ❖ I would like to learn how to FaceTime my sister in Ireland, also read the Irish paper and sport and hopefully learn a lot more
- ❖ Client is averse to using IT though she worked as an office worker and used keyboard
- ❖ Only interested in use of a phone nothing else – texting / maybe a video call
- ❖ Online Mass / Anything Irish
- ❖ Speaking to family and seeing them on video. Using internet for history, haunted houses, wildlife doc's and podcasts on history
- ❖ Unsure of what is available, concerned about low literacy levels and lack of experience with devices
- ❖ No interest in devices, no strong reason as to why no reason
- ❖ Watching Irish TV RTE etc, I miss that
- ❖ Anything Irish really past events from dance hall years ago that my daughter tells me is online / Country singers videos Big Tom, the Indians and the Wolfe Tones
- ❖ I would have to train first. / I would maybe enjoy historical things, maybe get involved with LIHH Zoom classes if I had knowledge first of using technology devices
- ❖ No, I would not access anything at all, I am not interested. I have been watching mass from all over during COVID, however I would rather go in person
- ❖ Everything is online like gas/electric which I find difficult as I cannot do this. Maybe go on zoom for LIHH if I was shown how to access it and if I had access to a device. Watch my favourite Orchestra, I cannot go and see them this year due to everything that is going on
- ❖ General Information. Shopping
- ❖ To be able shop online as they miss picking things up, personal stuff
- ❖ Technology is like religion, you can get hooked up on it and then can't get away. I don't want anything to do with it
- ❖ I don't want to go online
- ❖ Getting in touch with family and maybe watching football
- ❖ I like to do things face-to-face and to be out and about with people
- ❖ No interest

- ❖ I cannot read or write, my children arranged for internet to be installed during lockdown, so I could video call my family in Ireland. I struggle a lot even to do this as I cannot read what my phone prompts me to do. I think I use WhatsApp I just have to press the video symbol but that sometimes is a challenge as it jumps to something else. I do not think I could manage to use another device, if I could I would watch documentaries that might not be on T.V.

APPENDIX G

Question 6.

What would enable you to become active online?

- ❖ Easier public access; the library was mainly full of students using the computers
- ❖ It would need to be continuing support until I am proficient in it
- ❖ Would need face-to-face support to learn
- ❖ Client has a mobile but no batteries and that is her choice. She prefers face-to-face conversations
- ❖ Yes, would welcome support with his phone - only uses it to make and answer calls. It is only a basic phone and he is not able to send a text would need support
- ❖ Access to more update tech
- ❖ Husband needs his computer and is on it a lot as it helps with his Alzheimer's, but we cannot afford it
- ❖ Would like to send emails, although I am active online a laptop would be better as my literacy and eyesight are not the best. Also there is one smart phone in the house and I have 6 children so struggle with access
- ❖ Computer programmes etc / Very comp with IT / Willingness to learn - would like engineering courses
- ❖ Someone to teach me how to use a laptop/iPad
- ❖ I would be willing to have Wi-Fi if I had help to learn to use an iPhone and other devices etc.
- ❖ I have an internet connection, but do not feel the need to use it for anything other than Alexa
- ❖ Comfortable with current level of engagement, but if there was more on offer - would need support on how to use it and what else is available to access
- ❖ Would need constant support
- ❖ Daughter noted that Father is very worried that he will break the device by doing something wrong
- ❖ Already active and happy with skill set - but would be interested in new programmes/classes that require training etc.
- ❖ When has access to devices, feels confident in using them - it is the lack of access that is the issue
- ❖ Not confident in ability to learn / low literacy skills - really feels this is a huge barrier
- ❖ Not interested in learning new skills
- ❖ Has gone on a course before, but has no interest
- ❖ Attended a class before but did not feel it was useful and put off accessing any more
- ❖ Having access to go online and greater knowledge on security would give more confidence to go online
- ❖ Already active - so would like to understand and learn more about Microsoft Packages, become more computer literate, and become more computer confident
- ❖ Lack of knowledge around how best to use the internet and phone. Willingness to learn
- ❖ Would need support - I hear a lot about online scams and that frightens me
- ❖ I would need a lot of support / I would need symbols and signs as I cannot read or write

- ❖ My daughter would help me but I don't have the patience to sit down trying to figure out how it works
- ❖ I only have my mobile and have no internet connection at my property. I don't want the extra costs associated with this as I was made redundant last year, and I have recently had major surgery. It would be nice to be in touch more with my family
- ❖ I need to have more confidence but it's hard. I would love to be able to do shopping online as I feel like a burden to my family as I have not left the house since March and they are having to do all my shopping etc.
- ❖ I am online already, I have internet and WiFi I and use my smart phone and iPad.
- ❖ I am not interested
- ❖ I am not interested
- ❖ Need practice and to keep up to date so I would become good at it
- ❖ Need to be shown more than once, my family do not have time to show me things as they work and they also do not have the patience. It would be better to have help from someone outside of my family, that can sit and teach me and understand that I do not know after being shown once I need more time to learn
- ❖ Respondent has explained that they became disinterested with the use of technology previously, but feels as though they are missing out as more and more services are moving towards the online market
- ❖ Has a smartphone and is currently borrowing an iPad from LIHH but would need support to boost their confidence
- ❖ Already has an internet connection and is reasonably familiar with the use of devices, although occasionally needs help to find the correct question to ask a search engine
- ❖ More learning
- ❖ Confidence
- ❖ Respondent has stated that they are confident with the use of tech and would like to help others to learn
- ❖ A working laptop
- ❖ Internet/ WiFi is very poor and would like it fixed to gain proper access
- ❖ Lessons on technology
- ❖ A class might help me learn the internet better
- ❖ No interest
- ❖ Not that fussed about having internet, have lots of family and friends that visit
- ❖ Happy with current access
- ❖ No interest in anything further

APPENDIX H

Question 7.

Do you have [Family, friends, neighbour, carer, other] that can help you get active online?

- ❖ [Name] knows nobody with access to the Internet
- ❖ Friends when available. ICC Directions support
- ❖ Single man with no family in locality. Social network is in Manchester, comes to ICC drop-in for chat every week
- ❖ My daughter and son access the internet for me If I needed anything. But I would like to be able to do this myself one day
- ❖ [Name] already uses some digital technology and is happy to search google but doesn't want internet banking or online shopping etc.
- ❖ Gets utility bills emailed and accesses the sites to update meter readings. Is happy with the amount of digital tech he uses and has family nearby who would help him if he wanted to explore further
- ❖ Neighbours and friends are elderly and not able to support with technical devices
- ❖ Family / Friend have provided support with use of laptop and setting up emails etc.
- ❖ Grandkids can support
- ❖ Family are not patient with me
- ❖ I have a very good family but they are unable to help me due to work and family commitments
- ❖ I have family but they are working and don't have the time
- ❖ Friend helps with anything I cannot find - I would like to know more about accessing online
- ❖ Daughter lives in my house
- ❖ Brother who is very good at computers and can help
- ❖ Use computer at library - but has been unable to do this since lockdown
- ❖ I don't know - I don't think many people know that I can't read or write - I don't want to disclose this information as its embarrassing and I would feel stupid
- ❖ Son tried to teach me but I couldn't get the hang of it, don't want to try it again
- ❖ I have a daughter, but I have never asked her before
- ❖ LIHH helps a lot using 'learn my way' step by step guide on how to do different things online
- ❖ They don't have patience, so I would need a teacher like an IT class / I don't know what is best for me, in terms of phone and things
- ❖ Only people who can help are LIHH
- ❖ Relatives live too far away for any support
- ❖ Only Support is from LIHH
- ❖ Son who can help
- ❖ My son lives with me so he can help
- ❖ Yes - have 2 daughters but would love to get help from an IT point of view to try and get back online
- ❖ Daughter can help - but it does depend on her work schedule
- ❖ Yes - but depends on daughters work schedule
- ❖ Yes - but family are very busy so not sure how available they would be to help

APPENDIX I

Question 8.

If you were able to get active online through help and guidance from others, how would you prefer this to take place?

- ❖ I would prefer to do it face-to-face due to me having lack of understanding
- ❖ 1 to 1 is best depending on virus situation, could possibly do it by phone if instructions were clear and slow
- ❖ Face-to-face / 1:1 would be the preferred method of support. Would feel more comfortable and easier to grasp
- ❖ Group - more sociable and I can take my own notes to understand
- ❖ I would need to be shown how to video and use FaceTime
- ❖ Face-to-face and would need lots of support
- ❖ Would like face-to-face and great to have written instructions in conjunction
- ❖ Practical help: Swiping /tapping. Has poor eyesight and left school at a young age and reading is not of a technical ability
- ❖ Would like face-to-face and written instructions to go alongside anything showed/learnt in a face-to-face environment to refer to
- ❖ If shown / taught through the use of symbols, emphasis on pictures and symbols not words
- ❖ Accessed a computer course before and didn't get much benefit from it, couldn't understand the class - bad experience and off putting for any other type of learning
- ❖ Accessed computer classes in the past and it has been very off-putting
- ❖ Has done classes before, but feels that it needs to be repeated all the time in order to understand
- ❖ I would like my family to teach me
- ❖ I am not interested in getting online, I am happy with my phone. I went to a computer class once and I am not bothered
- ❖ Unfamiliar with technology as they are not confident with using it
- ❖ I learnt to type on a laptop years ago, I think if shown again I could pick it up
- ❖ Happy to receive all types of support
- ❖ Yes to printed but would need someone to talk me through it

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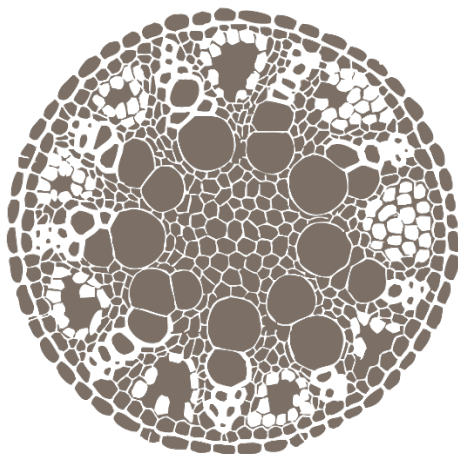
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F R Ē A

Fréa(*) is a community interest company bringing together three independent long established charities in the North of England with shared values, experience and mutual respect.

Irish Community Care Manchester, Irish Community Care (based in Liverpool and delivering services in the North West) and Leeds Irish Health & Homes

(*)The Fréa logo is inspired by the root 'fréamh' in Irish, as we're anchored and strengthened by our shared heritage which through careful cultivation and ambitious growth, enables us to flourish

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