

Why do many seniors have trouble using technology?



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According to Eurostat, in the EU, 87 percent of people aged 75 years and over have never been online (Eurostat, 2018). Most technology designed for communication relies on the ability to see, hear and read, meaning due to health conditions, a significant chunk of society are missing out on communication opportunities.

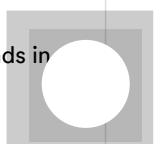
Seniors often struggle with reduced reactivity, making it harder to keep up with fast-paced technology, e.g. platforms that use notifications. 9 percent of seniors at the age of 75 or over have severe visual impairments, and 18 percent have severe hearing limitations in the EU (Eurostat, 2017). Additionally, U.S statistics show that “23% of older adults indicate that they have a physical or health condition that makes reading difficult or challenging” (Pew Research Centre, 2014). There are reasons to believe that those included in these statistics cannot participate fully in mainstream technology.

Health aside, knowledge about technology is also very important to capability, and lack of this is a factor that stops many seniors from participating in communication technology. As many as 77 percent of seniors report that they would require assistance were they to try and learn how to use a smartphone or tablet. Additionally, of those who are already on the internet but do not use social networking sites, 56 percent say they would need help to connect with friends and family (Pew Research Centre, 2014).

The results of these surveys are clear; whatever the reason is, seniors are missing out on communication technology. Subsequently, missing out on these opportunities for communication can leave seniors feeling disconnected and lonely. Having regular contact with a close circle of friends or family can alleviate the feeling of loneliness, a feeling that has been reported to be bad for health.

Interesting facts

- Many seniors struggle with touch screens due to a condition called leathery fingers.
- Many seniors experience reduced mobility and a lower income, which makes it more challenging to meet friends in person.



- Mastering new technology is often complicated as the seniors have no experience in using technology to use as a baseline. Seniors generally have a lesser frame of reference to enable them to absorb new knowledge.
- Numbers from SSB show that 83% of seniors between 64–74 years of age use the internet on a weekly basis or more frequent.
- 96% of seniors over the age of 67 own a mobile phone, but under half own a smartphone (2014 numbers).

¹ SSB (2016). Bruk av IKT i husholdningene & ² Slette-meås, D. (2014). Eldres bruk av digitale verktøy og internett: En landsdekkende undersøkelse av mestring, støttebehov, motivasjon og hindringer.



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