Essential Digital Skills Report 2021

Third Edition – Benchmarking the Essential Digital Skills of the UK

LLOYDS BANK

The 2021 Essential Digital Skills report measures the fundamental digital tasks needed to access the online world, as well as the digital skills needed for life and work. This is the third measure of its kind.

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Executive summary

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LLOYDS BANK

"There are 1.9 million fewer people completely offline than before the pandemic"

It has been fifteen months since we last connected over the Essential Digital Skills results. In May 2020, the scale and persistence of Covid-19 was not yet understood. We were not to know that we would be plunged into lockdown multiple times and that our 'new normal' would continue into 2021 and assumedly 2022.

At the time of publication, last year's Essential Digital Skills survey shone a light on the pre-pandemic state of the nation. It revealed the challenging backdrop to a world where digital was becoming ever necessary; for working from home, for connecting with friends and family, for essential services and eventually for Government initiatives like Track and Trace.

This year's data – over one year on – illustrates the impact of lockdown on both the digital divide and the workforce. And, as you might expect, it has had an impact on our very research itself. Due to lockdown constraints, this year our survey of over 4,000 people across the UK, has been conducted with adults aged 18+ and for the first time had to be done via telephone rather than face-to-face.

10 million reasons to prioritise digital skills support in the UK today

At a headline level, the last year has seen digital adoption remain broadly flat. An estimated 41.9 million adults in the UK today have the Essential Digital Skills they need for day-to-day life. They are able to communicate, transact, problem solve, stay safe online and handle information.

The headline data indicates that one-fifth, (21%) of our population, circa 11.0 million, are digitally disadvantaged, lacking Essential Digital Skills for Life. With 91% of this group (c.10.0 million) lacking the Foundation Level, it indicates that the biggest hurdle to climb is the fundamentals themselves.

The number of UK adults with the Foundation Level has returned back **to the 2019 baseline**

- c.10.0 million are not able to access the Internet themselves and lack the most basic digital tasks
- c.6.5 million cannot connect to Wi-Fi by themselves
- c.4.9 million cannot turn on a device and log into any accounts or profiles they have by themselves.

The data indicates that, given we are measuring the extent to which people can undertake key tasks by themselves, the impact of isolation has meant many people have not been able to maintain the required skills. This is a point of reflection for us all – digital proficiency, and learning overall, requires ongoing support for millions across the UK; we must ensure support is not a one off, but continuous lifelong learning is in place.

In line with previous years, the estimated 10.0 million lacking the Foundation Level are most likely to be people in three distinct groups; those aged 65+, people with impairments and those with no formal qualifications. But while we create personas, we must understand it is targeted interventions across where these groups intersect, that are key areas for action. From the end of October, we will be providing open-sourced interactive data tables, from this year's survey, enabling you to toggle between different fields and demographic groups to suit your needs.

The headline view does, however, mask that there has been progress in digital inclusion. **There are around 1.9 million fewer people who are digitally excluded than before the pandemic.** There have been remarkable efforts from digital champions, community partners and personal networks. Many rapid response initiatives were able to deploy devices, data and support to people remotely against all the odds during the pandemic, so it is very encouraging to see the digitally excluded group shrinking in size.

One-third of the workforce yet to power up

The work data paints an altogether different picture. In just one year, **an estimated 5.6 million more working adults have the skills needed to thrive in UK workplaces.** 64% now have Essential Digital Skills for Work, with around 6.1 million fewer working adults having zero workplace digital skills. Overall, our workforce is improving, and **importantly skillsets are not just diversifying, they are deepening;** more people are able to undertake more tasks independently – indicating greater confidence as well as capability.

We cannot rest on our laurels – in total **circa 11.8 million (36%) of the workforce lack Essential Digital Skills for Work.** 8% of the workforce lack the Foundation Level (the very fundamentals of connecting to the Internet) and whilst a further 7% have achieved this level, they lack any workplace digital skills. This indicates that a number of workers still need the very essentials of digital skills before they can thrive in an increasingly digital UK.

Reflecting on who are the employees most likely to need support – the data indicates these are workers aged 55-64, individuals working part-time, those in the service sector, and those with no formal qualifications. This year's insight also shines a light on the gender digital divide with women not making the same gains at work in terms of their digital skills. As ever, the dynamics of sector variations across regions in the UK mean that some geographies are pre-determined to have differing digital abilities. For employees, however, the type of industry they work in and their organisation's size remains a key determiner.

This report does not hold all the information. The 2021 Consumer Digital Index* brings to life the attitudinal data and human motivations and stories. Community impact projects like 'Power 2 Connect' are constantly telling the real individual stories that should be our motivators for doing more.

I hope this report provides policymakers, employers and community organisations with the evidence needed to create a truly digitally-enabled workforce and an inclusive society.

In the last 12 months, there are c.1.9 million fewer people who are digitally excluded

c.11.0 million lack the digital skills needed for everyday life – 91% (c.10.0 million) of whom are missing the most basic digital skills

64% (c.20.9 million) of working adults now have EDS for work – c.5.6 million more adults have the skills needed to thrive in UK workplaces

c.11.8 million (36%) working adults still lack the digital skills needed for work

The 2021 Consumer Digital Index, the first in this report series released in May 2021, brings to life the attitudinal and behavioural data on digital and financial capability – read to find out more*

* lloydsbank.com/banking-with-us/whats-happening/consumer-digital-index.html

Foreword

Supported by

Department for Education

Alex Burghart MP
Minister for Skills
Department for Education

Department for Digital, Culture Media & Sport

Chris Philp MP
Minister for Technology and the Digital Economy
DCMS

We would like to thank Lloyds Bank for their continued support for digital skills in the UK and for this year's Essential Digital Skills report.

Essential Digital Skills are crucial to accessing and getting on in work, taking up opportunities for further learning and participating in our digital society, including accessing vital services and staying connected. We know that most jobs now need these skills and that a significant proportion of vacancies cannot be filled without them. This report tells us that more people are online than ever before and that the UK workforce is the most digitally skilled it has ever been, with 5.6 million more now having the Essential Digital Skills for Work. This will unlock opportunities for every single one of those people.

Despite this fantastic improvement, we know there is still progress to be made. There are still ten million people lacking the Foundation Level tasks, such as opening an Internet browser or connecting to Wi-Fi. We must continue to build on the progress made this year, ensuring all adults can gain the digital skills needed to participate in modern life, access further study, and find and progress in work. For these reasons, this is a government utterly committed to raising the UK's digital know-how.

The digital entitlement, which we introduced in August 2020, allows adults to boost their digital skills by studying Essential Digital Skills qualifications for free. We have also committed to making Essential Digital Skills training more accessible and flexible – building on recent innovations in online learning, such as The Skills Toolkit, which offers a wide range of free online courses in Essential Digital Skills, as well as AI, coding, and cybersecurity.

Over the last year we have seen how access to technology makes a huge difference to people's lives. That is why we launched our £2.5 million Digital Lifeline Fund, providing tablets preloaded with data and free tech support to over 5,000 people with learning disabilities, helping them to connect online, access services, and seek employment.

We know that Essential Digital Skills provide a pathway to gaining higher level skills, and we are continuing to invest in the advanced technical digital skills that the economy needs.

For example, we are expanding Skills Bootcamps across the country, offering free, flexible courses in job-specific skills – including software development, digital marketing, and data analytics – and providing a fast-track to an interview with a local employer. Our Free Courses for Jobs offer supports eligible adults to access over 400 fully funded Level 3 courses, including digital qualifications in areas such as cybersecurity, coding, network architecture, and systems support.

There are now 25 digital apprenticeships, from Level 3 to Degree Apprenticeship, covering a range of roles including cybersecurity, software development and AI, providing the digital skills training that individuals and employers need. At Level 4 and 5, the first approved Higher Technical Qualifications in digital occupations, such as cybersecurity technologist, will be ready for teaching from September 2022.

For 16–19-year-olds, digital T Levels offer a prestigious, high-quality technical option at Level 3, supporting progression to occupations such as software development. But it is not just occupations in the digital sector where good digital skills are needed, the relevant digital skills are built into every T Level qualification.

There will be different priorities and needs in different areas, and we are continuing to support the establishment of Local Digital Skills Partnerships in Local Enterprise Partnership or Combined Authority areas. These bring together local cross-sector stakeholders on the design, development, and delivery of digital skills programmes to upskill the workforce, tackle digital inclusion and raise awareness of the importance of digital skills.

We are delighted that Lloyds Bank continue to engage with this vital work and are grateful for their active membership in the Digital Skills Partnership.

"Together we can make the digital age accessible to everyone"

The Essential Digital Skills Framework

In 2018, The Tech Partnership, Lloyds Bank and the Department for Education consulted with over 350 cross-sector organisations, to establish a new baseline for digital skills that UK citizens need for work and everyday life (the framework prior to this was Basic Digital Skills).

The creation of this baseline is led by Lloyds Bank in partnership with Ipsos MORI. It has become a framework for an annual study tracking year-on-year changes in digital skills and assessing the range of online tasks that people in the UK are able to perform.

On behalf of Lloyds Bank, Ipsos MORI interviewed a sample of 4,129 participants aged 18+ in the UK (Great Britain and Northern Ireland) via their telephone Omnibus between 12th March and 25th April 2021. Quotas were set by age, gender, working status, property tenure, region and device ownership. This ensured interviews were conducted with a sample representative of the UK population aged 18+.

It should be noted that due to the impact of Covid-19, this year's Essential Digital Skills survey was carried out by telephone, rather than face-to-face. This means some caution should be taken when making exact comparisons with previous years. As far as possible, all questions have been asked in exactly the same way as previous years.

The data is weighted to represent the known population of this audience. This report includes population estimates from the survey data based on ONS 2020 mid-year estimates for the UK. Full details of the range of extrapolation based on the margin of errors are available online in the Technical note*.

Results are based on a large and representative sample, however once particular sub-groups are explored in more detail, for example by region or age, sample sizes become much smaller. Therefore, greater movement between research years (2019-2021) is needed to ensure statistical significance (95% confidence level), and that the results are indicative of the real world. Directional changes that are not statistically significant are still likely to be indicative of what is truly happening.

For more information on the methodology and sample sizes, refer to *pages 51-54* in the Appendix

The change in methodology from the face-to-face interviews used in previous years to telephone interviews has changed the ages represented by the survey.

In previous years the research has surveyed those aged 15+, however for 2021 the sample represents adults 18+. Therefore data from 2019 and 2020 included in this report have been re-calculated on a sample of 18+ to ensure direct comparability.

These data points are likely to differ from those reported in the Lloyds Bank Essential Digital Skills reports for 2019 and 2020 which were based on those 15+. Only the data points featured in this report should be used for comparison purposes.

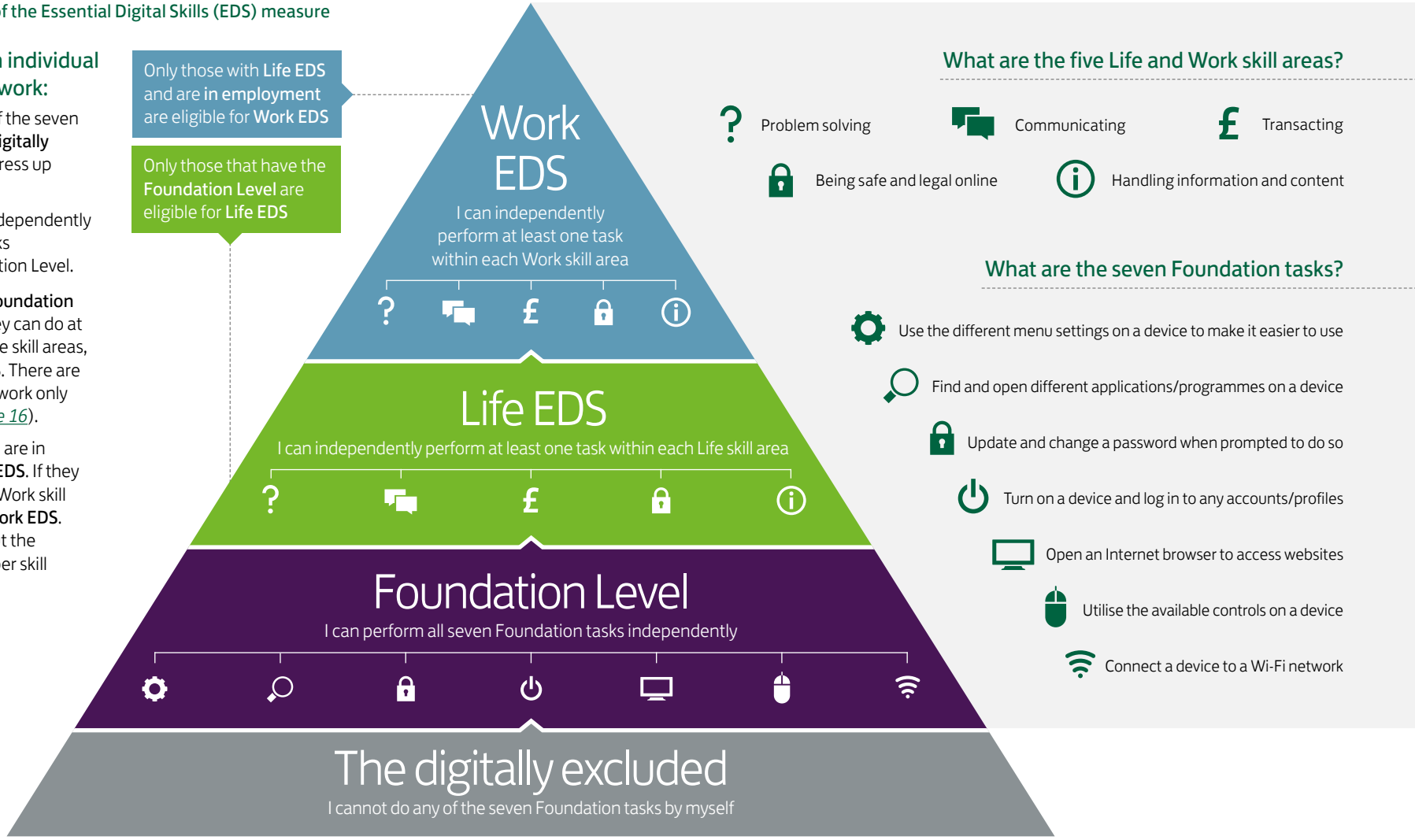
* lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/banking_with_us/whats-happening/210922-lloyds-ipsos-moriessential-digital-skills-technical-note.pdf

The Essential Digital Skills Framework

Figure 1. **Simplified representation of the Essential Digital Skills (EDS) measure**

Figure 1 demonstrates how an individual progresses through the framework:

1. Firstly, adults who cannot do any of the seven Foundation tasks are considered **digitally excluded** and are ineligible to progress up the framework.
2. Secondly, adults must be able to independently complete all seven Foundation tasks (*see page 10*) to attain the Foundation Level.
3. Thirdly, only those who have the **Foundation Level** are eligible for **Life EDS**. If they can do at least one task in each of the five Life skill areas, they are classed as having **Life EDS**. There are 29 Life tasks in total, but the framework only requires one task per skill (*see page 16*).
4. Lastly, only those with Life EDS and are in employment are eligible for **Work EDS**. If they can do one task in each of the five Work skill areas they are classed as having **Work EDS**. There are 17 Work tasks in total, but the framework only requires one task per skill (*see page 24*).



Key terminology

Due to the nuances of the framework, a number of key terminology have been defined to clarify the different definitions within the framework and how this relates to the tasks, skills and levels.

Level

There are three levels within the Essential Digital Skills Framework:

- The Foundation Level
- Life Essential Digital Skills (EDS)
- Work Essential Digital Skills (EDS)

Skills

The same five skills areas are used within Life and Work EDS:

- Communicating
- Handling information and content
- Transacting
- Problem solving
- Being safe and legal online

Tasks

There are specific tasks that demonstrate an individual's proficiency across different levels:

- Seven tasks within Foundation (also referred to as fundamental tasks)
- 29 tasks within Life
- 17 tasks within Work

Glossary Term	Definition	Level Summary
Without the Foundation Level	I do not have the Foundation Level – I can do 0-6 of the Foundation tasks by myself	There are seven Foundation tasks that comprise the Foundation Level. An individual needs to perform all seven tasks without assistance to have the Foundation Level and advance to the next step of the framework (Life EDS). **They cannot progress to Life EDS unless they have the Foundation Level.**
No Foundation tasks or Digitally Excluded	I cannot do any of the seven Foundation tasks by myself	
Partial Foundation Level	I can do 1-6 of the Foundation tasks by myself	
The Foundation Level	I can do all seven Foundation tasks by myself	
Without Life EDS	I do not have Life EDS – this means I am either without the Foundation Level (can do 0-6 of the Foundation tasks by myself) or I have the Foundation Level and have only 0-4 of the Life skills	There are 29 Life tasks in total, split across five skill areas: Communicating, Handling Information and Content, Transacting, Problem Solving and Being Safe and Legal Online. Once they have attained the Foundation Level, an individual needs to perform at least one task within each of the five Life skill areas without assistance. This is Life EDS. All 29 Life tasks are not required to have Life EDS. **Partial Life Skills allows an individual to progress to Partial Work Skills. However, they cannot progress to having Work EDS unless they have all five Life Skills (Life EDS).**
Zero Life Skills	I do not have any of the five Life skills – this means I cannot do any of the 29 Life tasks (I already have the Foundation Level)	
Partial Life Skills	I have 1-4 of the five Life skills – this means I can do at least one task in 1-4 of the five Life skill areas (I already have the Foundation Level)	
Life EDS or Essential Digital Skills for Life (EDS for Life)	I have all five Life skills – this means I can do at least one task in each of the five Life skill areas	
Without Work EDS	I do not have Work EDS – this means I either do not have the Foundation Level (can do 0-6 of the Foundation tasks by myself) or I have the Foundation Level and have only 0-4 of the Work skills (I may have Life EDS or be without Life EDS)	There are 17 Work tasks in total, split across five Work skill areas: Communicating, Handling Information and Content, Transacting, Problem Solving and Being Safe and Legal Online. An individual **needs to be in employment** to qualify for Work EDS. Once they have attained the Foundation Level and Life EDS, an individual needs to perform at least one task within each of the five Work skill areas without assistance. This is Work EDS. **An individual may have Partial Life Skills which allows them to progress to Partial Work Skills. All 17 Work tasks are not required to have Work EDS.**
Zero Work Skills	I do not have any of the five Work skills – this means I cannot do any of the Work tasks (I may have Life EDS or be without Life EDS but do have the Foundation Level)	
Partial Work Skills	I have 1-4 of the Work skills – this means I can do at least one task in 1-4 of the five Work skill areas and I also have the corresponding Life skill (I may have Life EDS or be without Life EDS but do have the Foundation Level)	
Work EDS or Essential Digital Skills for Work (EDS for Work)	I have all five Work skills – this means I can do at least one task in each of the five Work skill areas, and I also have Life EDS and the Foundation Level	

1

Essential Digital Skills – the Foundation Level

This chapter explores the most basic digital tasks needed to access the online world.

c.42.9 million

(81%) have the Foundation Level, a return to baseline year results

c.10.0 million

(19%) do not have the Foundation Level and are unable to complete all seven tasks

c.1.9 million

more adults are now online and able to complete some of the fundamental digital tasks

Essential Digital Skills – the Foundation Level

To have the foundations of Essential Digital Skills, is to be able to access the Internet by yourself. A number of things must be true for this to be the case, including an individual being able to use a device, connect to a Wi-Fi network and create and update passwords (there are seven tasks in total). In the UK today in 2021, c.10.0 million people (19%) are unable to do this. c.2.8 million people (6%) are completely digitally excluded (are able to do zero Foundation tasks) and unable to participate in a digital world.

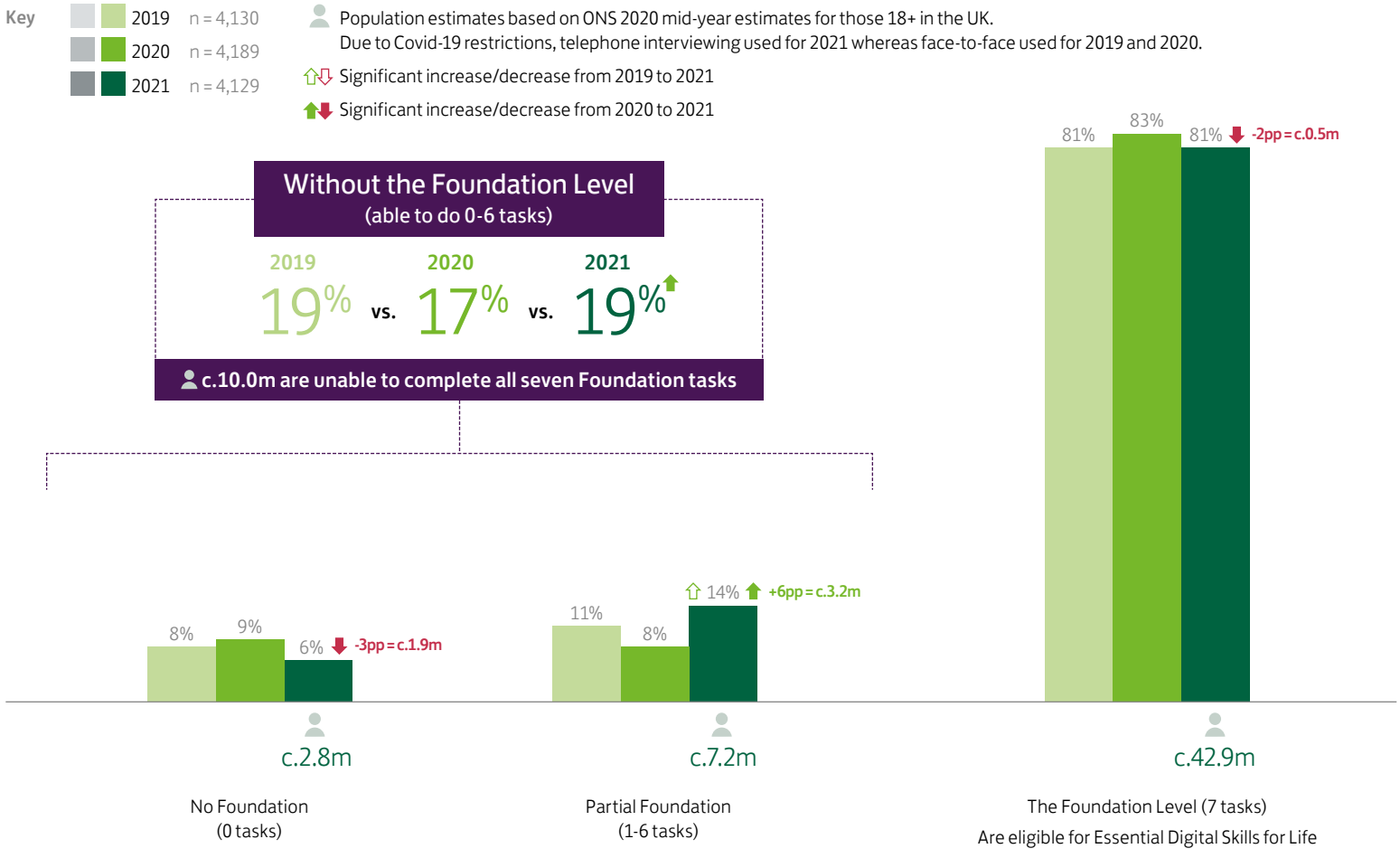
For more information on the profile of the digitally excluded, *see Appendix A*

More people are online than ever before

Overall the data indicates that whilst the amount of people who have the Foundation Level remains relatively flat year-on-year, this masks the fact that c.1.9 million (plus three percentage points) more people are now showing basic digital abilities, which is also demonstrated in the 2021 Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index* (1.5 million more people are now online).

In addition, an estimated 7.2 million (14%) are now able to do 1-6 tasks (an increase of six percentage points or c.3.2 million in the last year). Although fewer are digitally excluded and from the Consumer Digital Index data we know that more are online, this is still a group who need support as they cannot do the full suite of fundamental tasks and are on the cusp of having the Foundation Level.

Figure 2. **Proportion of adults 18+ that can do the listed number of the Foundation Level tasks (being able to do all seven Foundation tasks is a prerequisite to EDS for Life), 2019, 2020 and 2021**



Caveat: The proportion of those with the Foundation Level has declined, however due to the increased population size this group is larger in absolute terms.

*Consumer Digital Index 2021, lloydsbank.com/consumerdigitalindex

Foundation task-level view

Figure 3 shows the ability of UK adults to carry out each of the fundamental tasks. Compared to 2020, being able to connect to a Wi-Fi network remains one of the tasks that fewer UK adults can do by themselves (87% in 2020 and 2021). Given lockdown restrictions, it is feasible that people have perhaps not needed to connect to new and different Wi-Fi networks as often.

Tasks that those with Partial Foundation are the least likely to be able to do

Considering those who can do 1-6 tasks, the tasks they are the least likely to be able to do are:

Find and open different applications on a device

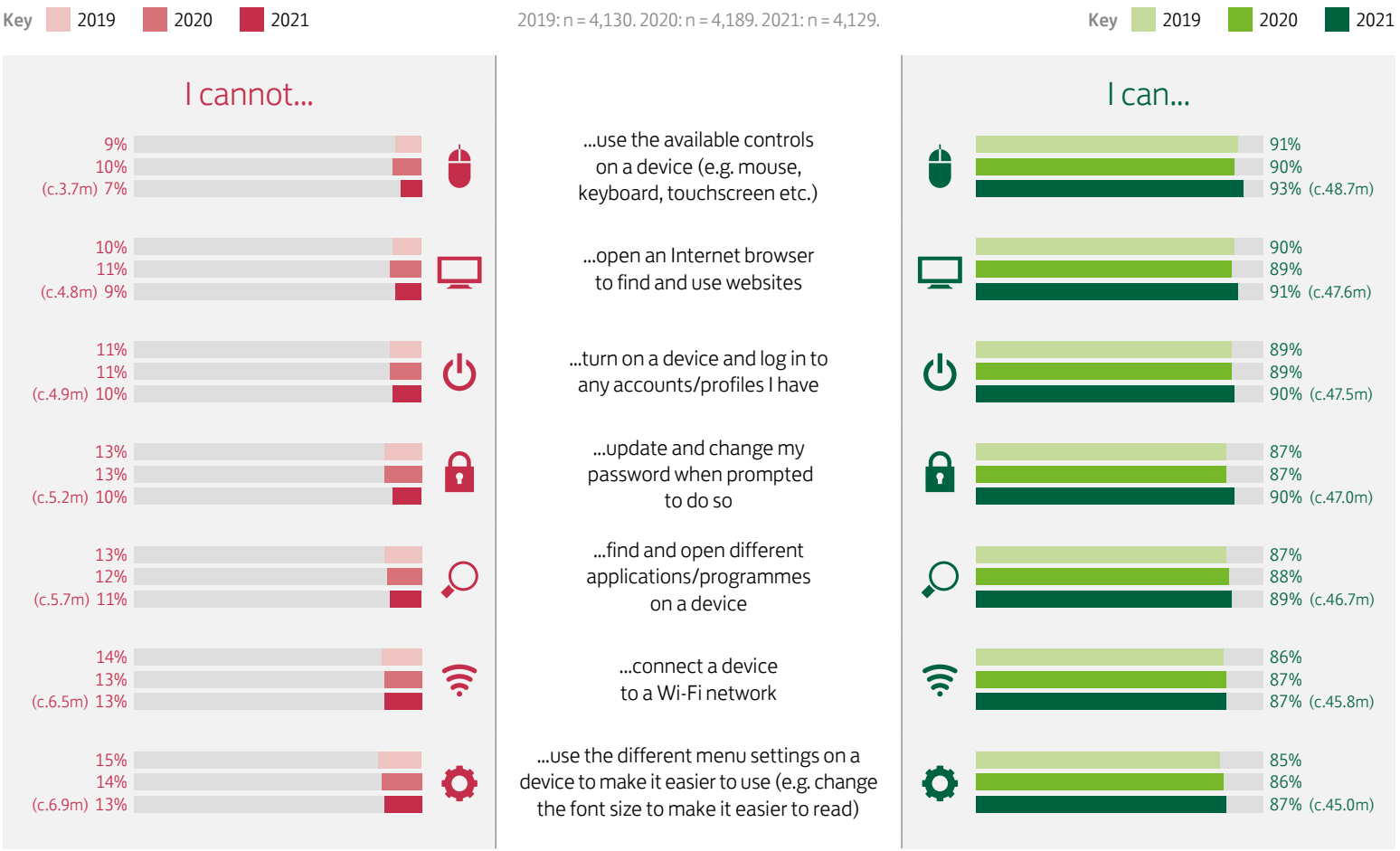
Connect a device to a Wi-Fi network

Use different menu settings to improve accessibility

Indicating these are the key barriers for someone being able to use the Internet by themselves.

Foundation Level tasks are the gateway to digital skills, and it is important that as many UK adults as possible can perform these tasks independently. There is an important role for charities, government and organisations to provide adequate encouragement, support, motivation and training to help those less digitally skilled, particularly the digitally excluded in these fundamental skills.

Figure 3. **Proportion of adults 18+ who can/cannot do each of the seven Foundation tasks (prerequisite to EDS for Life and Work), 2019, 2020 and 2021**



Numbers in brackets are population estimates based on ONS 2020 mid-year estimates for those 18+ in the UK

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Fewer adults have the foundations needed for Essential Digital Skills

In 2021, an estimated 42.9 million people (81%), can do all seven Foundation tasks, two percentage points lower than last year. This sees a return to levels seen in 2019. Given the increase amongst those with Partial Foundation (1-6 tasks), people have potentially moved from having the Foundation Level to Partial Foundation.

In the past year, whilst restrictions have been in place, a lack of regular face-to-face support from others who may have assisted people with their digital skills, could have encouraged a lack of confidence in completing the tasks by themselves.

East Midlands sees a step change in digital ability

Figure 4 shows how the regions compare to the rest of the UK in terms of those who can do all seven tasks. London (84%), South East (83%), East Midlands (82%) and North East (82%) are slightly ahead of the UK average (81%). Wales continues to have the lowest proportion of adults with basic digital ability. The East Midlands has significantly improved since it ranked bottom alongside Wales in 2020.

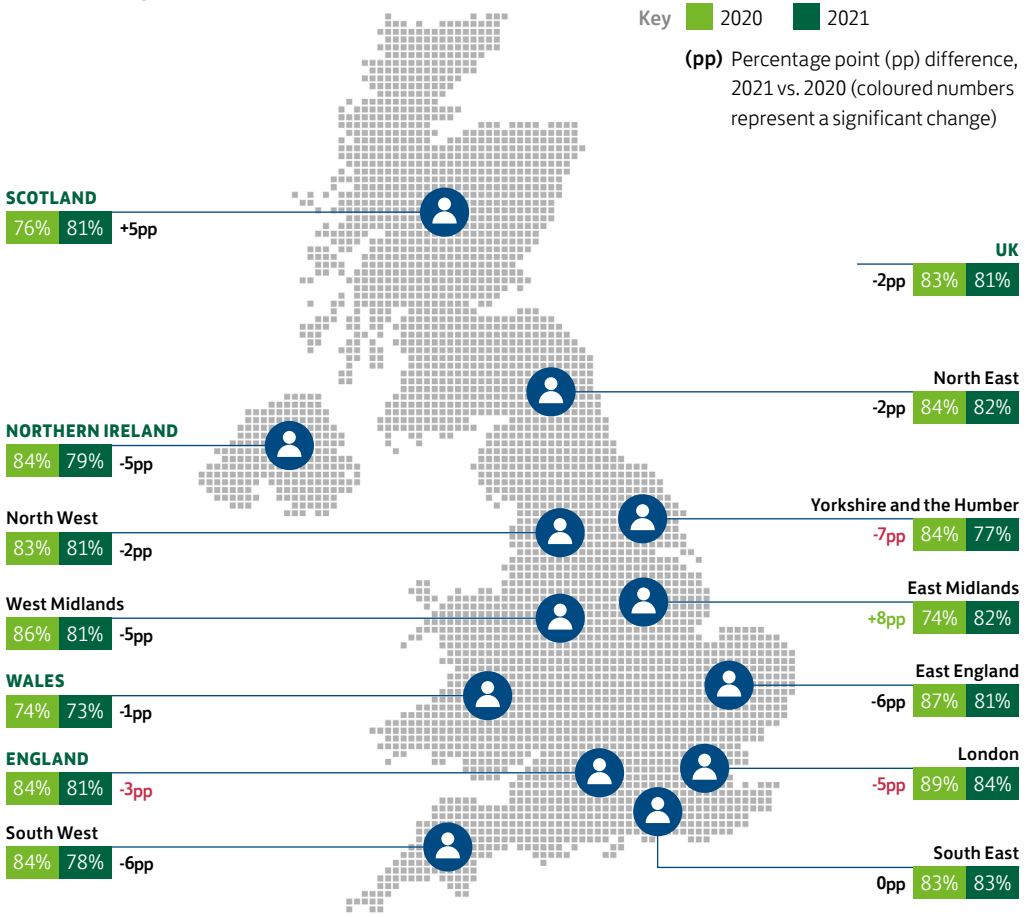
Across the three-year data trend, fluctuations are seen. For example, 2019 saw Scotland at 83%, moving to 76% in 2020 and resting at 81% this year (*Appendix 1*). Several regions and nations have also seen a decline year-on-year, the most noticeable being Yorkshire and the Humber (minus seven percentage points), London (minus five percentage points) and England (minus three percentage points). Once an individual has achieved the Foundation Level, perhaps it needs to be practiced and maintained as digital skills are not a fixed state (this was also demonstrated in the 2021 Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index, page 10).

Most regions report fewer with the Foundation Level, but in contrast also report fewer adults who are digitally excluded.

As seen in the UK overall, in most regions fewer adults now have the Foundation Level than in 2020. However, exploring the data further (*Appendix 2*), in both England and Scotland, fewer are digitally excluded (able to do zero Foundation tasks) than reported in 2020. This is seen in particular in the East Midlands, North West and South East. In most regions, more adults are now able to do at least one Foundation task but not all seven (Wales is an exception, where it is stable).

For more information on Partial Foundation across the regions, refer to *Appendix 3*.

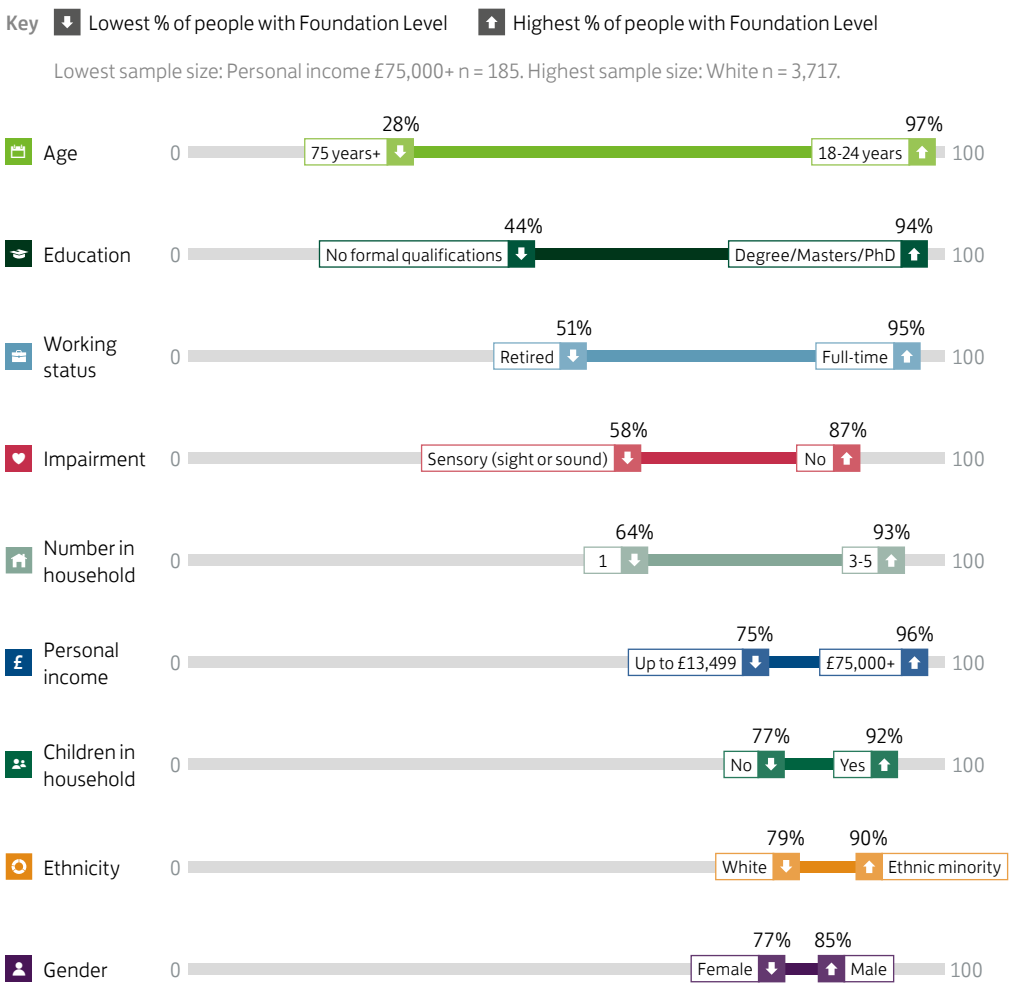
Figure 4. **Proportion of adults 18+ that have the Foundation Level (can do all seven tasks), split by nation and region, 2020 and 2021**



Lowest sample size: Northern Ireland n = 147. Highest sample size: England n = 3,458.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2020

Figure 5. **Proportion of adults 18+ across different demographics that have the Foundation Level, 2021**



Age remains the greatest correlating factor

Figure 5 shows the proportion of adults who have the Foundation Level across a range of demographic groups, highlighting those who are the most and least likely to have all seven tasks.

Age continues to retain the greatest correlation with having the Foundation Level, ranging from just 28% of those 75+ to nearly all 18-24-year-olds (97%). As seen in previous years, education and working status are also highly correlated. Those with a university qualification and those working full time are the most likely to be able to do all seven tasks.

The skills gap by age has grown

Compared to 2020, the proportion of those 75+ with the Foundation Level has decreased by five percentage points (*Appendix 4*). Given the pandemic lockdown, this means c.3.7 million people aged 75+ have been unable to access or use the Internet by themselves. Those aged 18-24 with the Foundation Level has decreased by two percentage points, meaning c.0.1 million fewer younger adults are able to progress to Life EDS.

In order to close the gap, the focus should be on those tasks which those aged 75+ are least likely to be able to do:

- Connecting devices to a Wi-Fi network (41% can)
- Using different menu settings to make devices easier to use (44% can).

High educational attainment amongst older adults helps reduce the gap

Focusing on those aged 65+, of whom 49% have the Foundation Level (*Appendix 5*), it becomes apparent that educational attainment within this age group is linked to having improved digital skills; 75% of those 65+ with a university degree have the Foundation Level compared to just 42% without a university degree (*Appendix 6*). Similarly, 97% of 18-34-year-olds with a university degree have the Foundation Level, compared to a significantly lower 93% among those without higher level qualifications. Educational attainment within each age group therefore plays a key role.

Those with vocational qualifications have lower levels of digital exclusion

Stability is seen since 2019, amongst those with vocational qualifications who have the fundamental digital skills. However, in 2021, 4% of this group are completely digitally excluded compared to 9% in 2020, suggesting this group is upskilling and digital access is improving (*Appendix 7*).

Those who live alone are less likely to have the Foundation Level

Only 64% of those who live alone have the fundamental digital skills, compared to 87% living in a household of two or more. Those in a household of 3-5 people are the most likely to have these skills (93%) (*Appendix 8*).

Those 65+ are more likely to live alone, however when you exclude this group the skills gap persists. 84% of those under 65 and living alone have the Foundation Level, compared to 92% of those under 65 living in a multi-person (2+) household. This suggests that overall, those in a multi-person household benefit from having others around them to initially support and develop the confidence to carry out the fundamental digital skills independently.

Multiple demographic groups impact digital skills

As seen on *page 45* those from an Ethnic minority group are more likely to have the Foundation Level than those from a White background. Ethnic Minorities are less likely to live alone than those from a White ethnic group (19% vs. 29% respectively)*, hence household size and ethnicity are inter-linked and both correlate with being able to carry out the fundamental digital tasks.

Those who live alone are more likely to be aged 65+, retirees and identify as having an impairment (6% of UK adults), than those who live with others (*Appendix 9*). These are all demographic groups which individually are associated with a lower likelihood of having the Foundation Level. Of those 65+ who are retired, live alone and have an impairment, just under one-third (31%) of this group have the Foundation Level (compared to the 49% of over-65s in general), indicating the impact of intersectionality on digital skills.

The profile of the digitally excluded

The role of intersectionality is further demonstrated if we compare the profile of those who are digitally excluded (unable to do any of the seven Foundation tasks) compared to those with Partial Foundation (*see Appendix 10*).

Those who can do zero Foundation tasks are more likely to be (compared to those who have Partial Foundation):

- Aged 75+
- The lowest social grades (DE)
- Not working
- Living alone
- Having no formal education
- Living with a sensory impairment that affects their day-to-day lives

Lack of Internet and device access is not solely behind digital exclusion

Looking at the group who are unable to do any of the seven Foundation tasks, the data reveals that some do have Internet access and digital devices at their disposal. 28% have Internet access and whilst this is significantly lower than those with one to six Foundation tasks (91%), it indicates that providing Internet access does not necessarily mean people will go online (*see Appendix 11*). Over one-fifth (22%) of the digitally excluded group have a smartphone, tablet or PC/laptop in their home, and therefore have the equipment to live in a digital world, yet still have none of the seven fundamental tasks deemed necessary to do so.

Access alone is not enough. Understanding why those who have the equipment to access the Internet, yet still cannot do the most fundamental digital tasks, is not included within our data set. However, in a period when digital access has been crucial, it does raise the question as to whether they have enough support and know-how to 'go online'. Motivation, confidence, as well as perceived ability, are likely to be key reasons behind this and are as important to consider, as the provision of Internet access.

There is an opportunity for mobile network providers, handset and device manufacturers to partner with digital skills specialists to provide more support, guidance and encouragement to perform these tasks. This could provide the step change needed for those lacking the fundamental skills from access to inclusion.

*ONS April 2019: ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/families-and-households/latest

2

Essential Digital Skills for Life

This chapter explores the digital skills that are needed for everyday life.

c.41.9 million

(79%) have Essential Digital Skills for Life

c.11.0 million

(21%) lack the Essential Digital Skills needed for everyday life

c.40.5 million

(76%) can use video and communication tools like FaceTime and Skype

Essential Digital Skills for Life

To be considered as having Essential Digital Skills for Life, an individual must be able to do all seven Foundation Level tasks, as well as demonstrating ability in each of the five Life skill categories. Please *see page 7* for a description of the Essential Digital Skills framework.

EDS for Life remains stable year-on-year

As shown in figure 6, in 2021, in addition to the c.10.0 million adults who don't have the Foundation Level, there are also c.1.0 million who don't have EDS for Life. Compared to 2020, c.2.0 million more people now have the digital skills needed for everyday life.

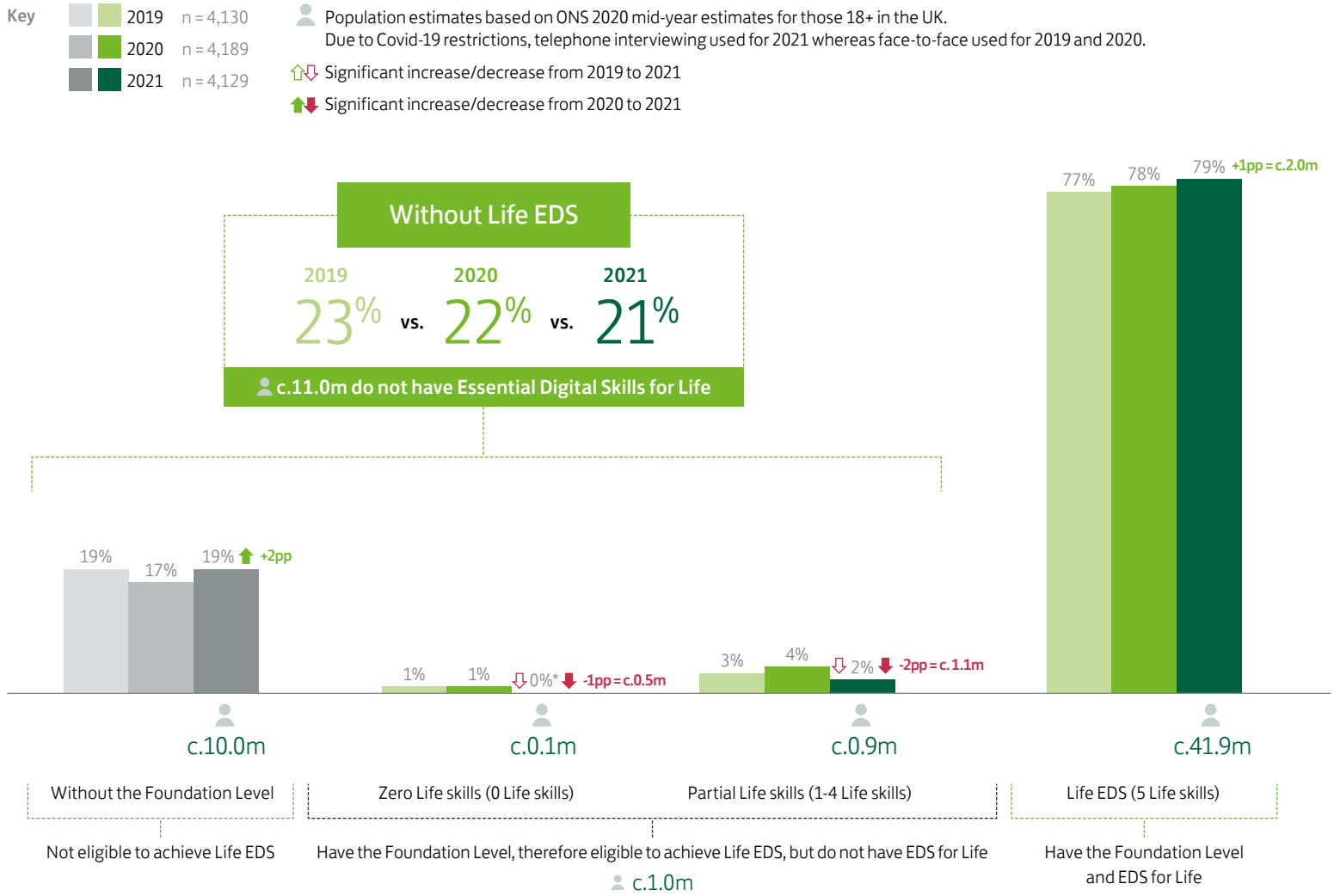
Compared to both 2019 and 2020, there are significantly fewer adults with Zero Life or Partial Life skills. As there are more people lacking the Foundation Level, it indicates that in the last 12 months, some people with Zero/Partial Life skills have become unable to do the fundamental tasks online independently.

As with the digitally excluded (zero Foundation tasks), those lacking Essential Digital Skills for Life are more likely to be either female, aged 65+ or living alone.

c.41.9 million
(79%) UK adults **have** Essential Digital Skills for Life

c.11.0 million
(21%) UK adults **lack** Essential Digital Skills for Life

Figure 6. **Proportion of adults aged 18+ and their level of Essential Digital Skills for Life, 2019, 2020 and 2021**



* Zero life skills data for 2021 is less than 1%, but greater than 0

The 29 Life tasks

Figure 7. **Proportion of adults 18+ who can do the listed 29 Life tasks across the five Life skills, 2019, 2020 and 2021**

Communicating — 80% c.42.8 million

I can communicate with others digitally using email or other messaging applications (e.g. WhatsApp or Messenger)
77%
79%
80% (+1pp) c.42.3 million

I can share documents with others by attaching them to an email
77%
78%
78% (0pp) c.41.3 million

I can set up an email account
77%
79%
77% (-2pp) c.41.0 million

I can communicate with others using video tools (e.g. FaceTime or Skype)
71%
74%
76% (+2pp) c.40.5 million

I can use word processing applications to create documents (e.g. a CV or a letter)
75%
77%
75% (-2pp) c.39.8 million

I can post content on social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat) for example messages, photographs, video etc.
70%
74%
72% (-2pp) c.38.3 million

£ Transacting — 80% c.42.5 million

I can set up an account online that enables me to buy goods or services (e.g. Amazon account, eBay, John Lewis etc.)
76%
78%
78% (0pp) c.41.4 million

I can use credit/debit cards or other forms of online payment to buy goods/services online (e.g. PayPal, WorldPay)
76%
78%
78% (0pp) c.41.3 million

I can access and use public services online, including filling in forms (e.g. vehicle tax, voting registration, ordering repeat prescriptions, booking doctor appointments)
75%
77%
77% (0pp) c.41.1 million

I can upload documents and photographs when this is required to complete an online transaction
74%
77%
76% (-1pp) c.40.3 million

I can manage my money and transactions online securely, via websites or Apps (e.g. bank account)
72%
76%
75% (-1pp) c.40.1 million

? Problem solving — 79% c.42.3 million

I can use the Internet to find information that helps me solve problems
78%
79%
79% (0pp) c.42.0 million

I can use online tutorials, web chat, FAQs and forums to solve problems
70%
72%
70% (-2pp) c.37.3 million

I can use online tutorials, web chat, FAQs and forums to improve my skills in using the Internet and digital apps/products/services
68%
72%
67% (-5pp) c.35.3 million

Please *see Appendix 12* for those who **cannot** do the Life tasks

Top bar: 2019 n = 4,130
Centre bar: 2020 n = 4,189
Bottom bar: 2021 n = 4,129

2021 estimated population based on ONS 2020 mid-year estimates for those 18+ in the UK.

(pp) Percentage point (pp) difference, 2021 vs. 2020 (coloured numbers represent a significant change).

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

The 29 Life tasks

Figure 7. **Proportion of adults 18+ who can do the listed 29 Life tasks across the five Life skills, 2019, 2020 and 2021**

Handling information and content — 80% c.42.6 million

I can use search engines to find the information I'm looking for (e.g. search for news using a browser such as Chrome, Internet Explorer or Safari)
78%
80%
80% (0pp) c.42.4 million

I can recognise what information or content may, or may not, be trustworthy on websites/apps
74%
77%
76% (-1pp) c.40.2 million

I can organise my information and content using files and folders (either on my device, across multiple devices, or on the Cloud)
72%
75%
74% (-1pp) c.39.4 million

I can use the Internet to stream or download entertainment content (e.g. films, music, games or books)
72%
76%
74% (-2pp) c.39.3 million

I can use bookmarks to save and retrieve websites and information
71%
74%
72% (-2pp) c.38.0 million

I can store information online and access content from a different device (e.g. using the Cloud)
67%
72%
69% (-3pp) c.36.6 million

Being safe and legal online — 80% c.42.8 million

I can respond to requests for authentication (e.g. reactivate an account when I've forgotten my password)
77%
78%
78% (0pp) c.41.6 million

I can recognise and avoid suspicious links in email, websites, social media messages and pop-ups and know that clicking on these links is a risk
76%
77%
78% (+1pp) c.41.6 million

I am careful with what I share online as I know that online activity produces a permanent record that can be accessed by others
77%
78%
78% (0pp) c.41.5 million

I can keep the information I use to access my online accounts secure, by using different and secure passwords for websites and accounts
76%
78%
78% (0pp) c.41.3 million

I make sure not to share or use other people's data or intellectual property without their consent
76%
77%
75% (-2pp) c.40.2 million

I can assess the risks and threats involved in carrying out activities online and act accordingly
73%
75%
75% (0pp) c.39.7 million

I can identify secure websites by looking for the padlock and 'https' in the address bar
73%
76%
74% (-2pp) c.39.4 million

I can set privacy settings on my social media and other accounts
73%
75%
72% (-3pp) c.38.6 million

I can update my computer security systems when necessary to prevent viruses and other risks
71%
74%
72% (-2pp) c.38.4 million

To see the trend of the five Life skills across 2019, 2020 and 2021, please *refer to Appendix 13*.

Please *see Appendix 12* for those who **cannot** do the Life tasks

Top bar: 2019 n = 4,130
Centre bar: 2020 n = 4,189
Bottom bar: 2021 n = 4,129

2021 estimated population based on ONS 2020 mid-year estimates for those 18+ in the UK.

(pp) Percentage point (pp) difference, 2021 vs. 2020 (coloured numbers represent a significant change).

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Fewer people can do all 29 Life EDS tasks

Figure 8 also highlights that c.4.0 million fewer people in 2021 have the ability to do all of the Life tasks (from 52% to 43%). It is not necessary to complete all 29 tasks in order to have Life EDS, but it is helpful to understand the movements and depth of skill.

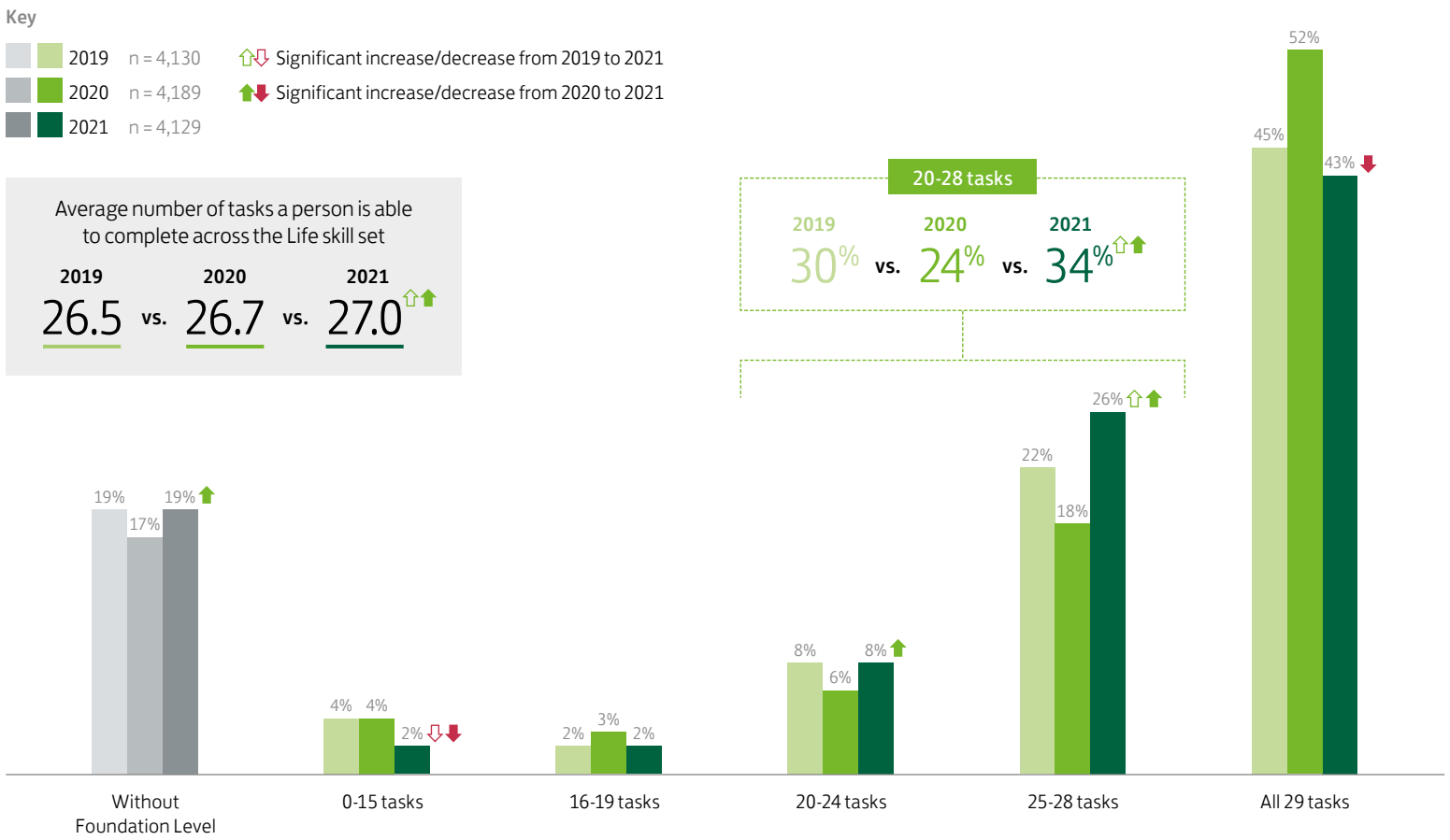
Compared to those with 20-28 tasks, people with all 29 tasks have a higher propensity of being:

- Males
- Ages 18-34
- Those with a university degree

See Appendix 14 for more details.

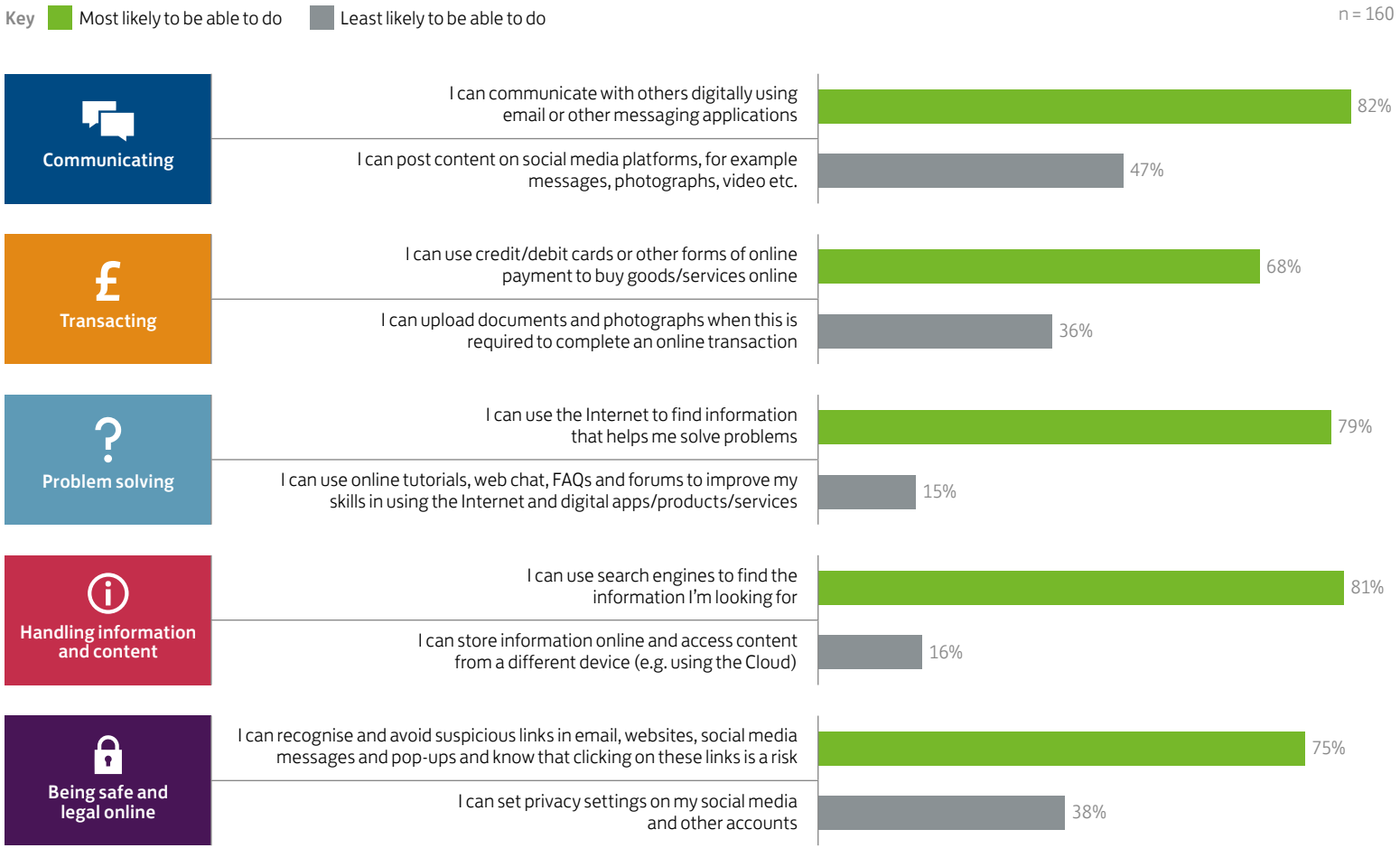
The decline in those who can do all 29 Life tasks is driven by both males and females and is seen across all age groups and levels of working status. As displayed in *figure 7*, there are six tasks that have declined significantly compared to 2020, driving this change.

Figure 8. **Proportion of adults 18+ who can do the listed number of tasks within Life EDS, 2019, 2020 and 2021**



Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Figure 9. **Proportion of adults 18+ with ability to do 1-19 Life tasks, and the tasks they are most and least likely to be able to do within each Life skill**



Identifying the Life tasks that are the hardest to attain

The top ranking tasks in each Life skill area, are the tasks that the most people can do. These act as the gateway tasks to achieving the skill, as being able to complete one task, results in having the skill.

Amongst people who can do a relatively low number of Life tasks (1-19), the gateway tasks to achieving each Life skill (and therefore EDS for Life) can be done by at least three-quarters of this group. Transacting is the exception where, at most, two-thirds are able to do the top ranking task in this skill area (see figure 9 for task).

Despite the overall transacting skill sitting at a comparable level to the others, the transacting tasks are the hardest tasks to attain for this group.

For the full set of Life tasks that this group can do, please *refer to Appendix 15*.

Essential Digital Skills for Life by region

Figure 10 shows the proportion of adults in each region that have Life EDS compared to the UK average (79%). The furthest behind are Wales (71%), the South West (75%) and Yorkshire and The Humber (75%). Conversely, London and the South East have the highest proportion with Life EDS (82%) and East England and the North East (80%) are also slightly ahead of the UK average.

The East Midlands shows significant improvement

Life EDS at a UK average has remained stable compared to 2020 (increasing by just one percentage point) and this is the case across most regions. Four of the twelve regions report a directional increase of at least three percentage points. On the other hand, five regions report at least a three-percentage point decrease.

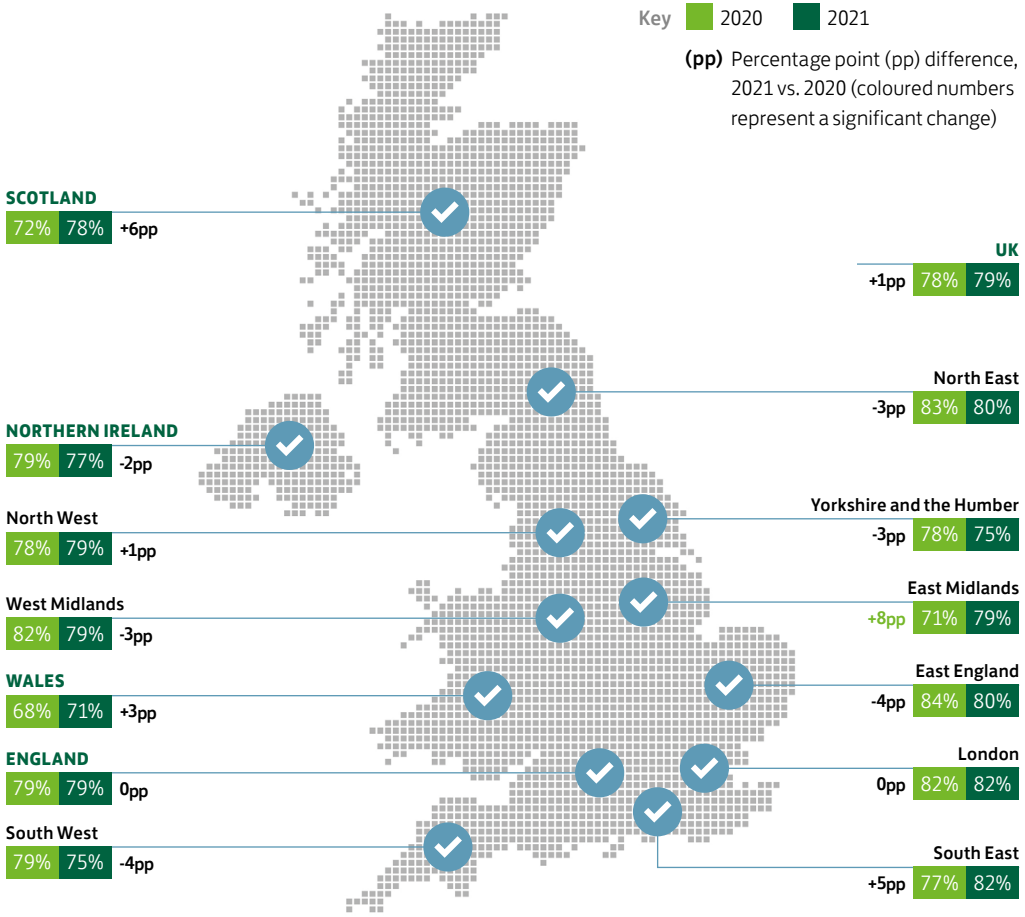
Only the East Midlands reports a significant change, with an increase of eight percentage points relative to 2020 (from 71% to 79%). This mirrors the trends seen at the Foundation Level (*see page 12*). As a result the East Midlands moves from the bottom two regions in 2020, along with Wales, to being on par with England and the wider UK average.

The ability to do each of the 29 Life tasks has increased for the East Midlands, with the biggest improvements seen for:

	2021	2020
Communicating with others digitally using email or other messaging applications (e.g. WhatsApp or Messenger)	81%	69%
Managing my money and transactions online securely, via websites or apps (e.g. bank account)	78%	66%
Communicating with others using video tools (e.g. Facetime or Skype)	76%	61%
Posting content on social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat) for example messages, photographs, video etc.	72%	60%

For the full list of 29 Life tasks that the East Midlands can do, please *refer to Appendix 16*.

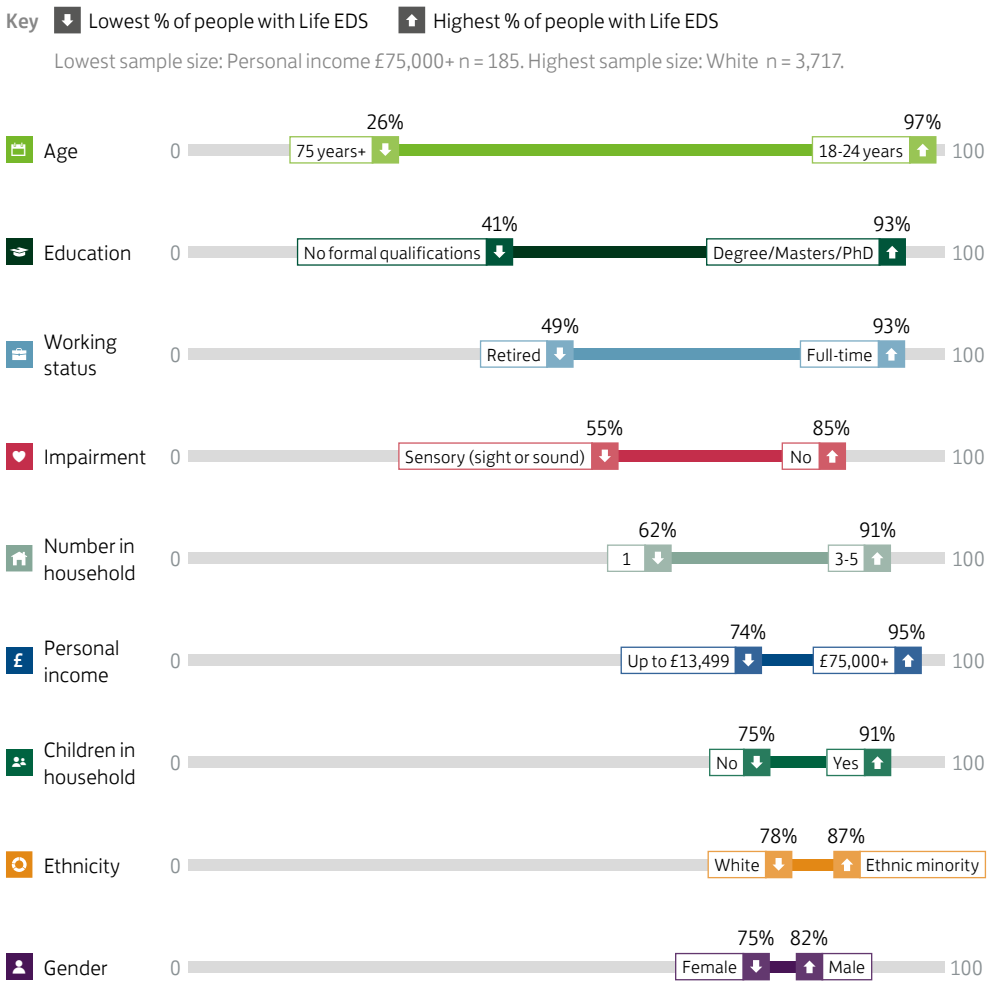
Figure 10. **Proportion of adults 18+ that have Life EDS, split by nation and region, 2020 and 2021**



Lowest sample size: Northern Ireland n = 147. Highest sample size: England n = 3,458.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2020

Figure 11. **Proportion of adults 18+ across different demographics that have Life EDS, 2021**



Age and education continue to correlate the most with Life EDS

Figure 11 shows the proportion of adults who have Life EDS across a range of demographic groups and highlights the populations at either end of the spectrum. In line with previous studies, age, education and working status are the greatest determiners of having EDS for Life. The correlation with education and Life EDS is similar to that seen for the Foundation Level, which further illustrates education is key to having digital skills at the most basic level, as well as having digital skills for life.

The age skills gap has widened further

The skills gap between those least likely (75+) and most likely (18-24) to have Life EDS, has increased from 68 percentage points to 71 percentage points, similar to the Foundation Level. This is a result of fewer of those aged 75+ having Life EDS this year (26% compared to 28% in 2020), whilst those aged 18-24 have improved slightly (96% to 97%) (*Appendix 17*).

The Foundation Level is the biggest barrier for those without Life EDS

As highlighted on *page 16*, there are c.11.0 million adults (21%) without Life EDS. The biggest obstacle facing this group is their lack of fundamental digital tasks, as c.10.0 million of this group are without the Foundation Level and can only complete 0-6 Foundation tasks (those without the Foundation Level are represented within the without Life EDS group).

Who are the c.11.0m without Life EDS?

To improve the effectiveness of interventions, this data brings to life the likely profile of this group. There are significant differences for the c.11.0 million when compared to the UK average, such as:

9-in-10 are from a White background (91%),
compared to 86%, UK average

Nearly three-quarters (73%) do not work,
compared to 39%, UK average

Over half (59%) are aged 65 or older,
compared to 24%, UK average

Half (52%) are living with at least one impairment,
compared to 32%, UK average

Just under half (45%) have no formal qualification,
compared to 16%, UK average

One-quarter (24%) earn at least £13,500 per annum,
compared to 48%, UK average

3

Essential Digital Skills for Work

This chapter explores the digital skills that are needed in the workplace.

c.20.9 million

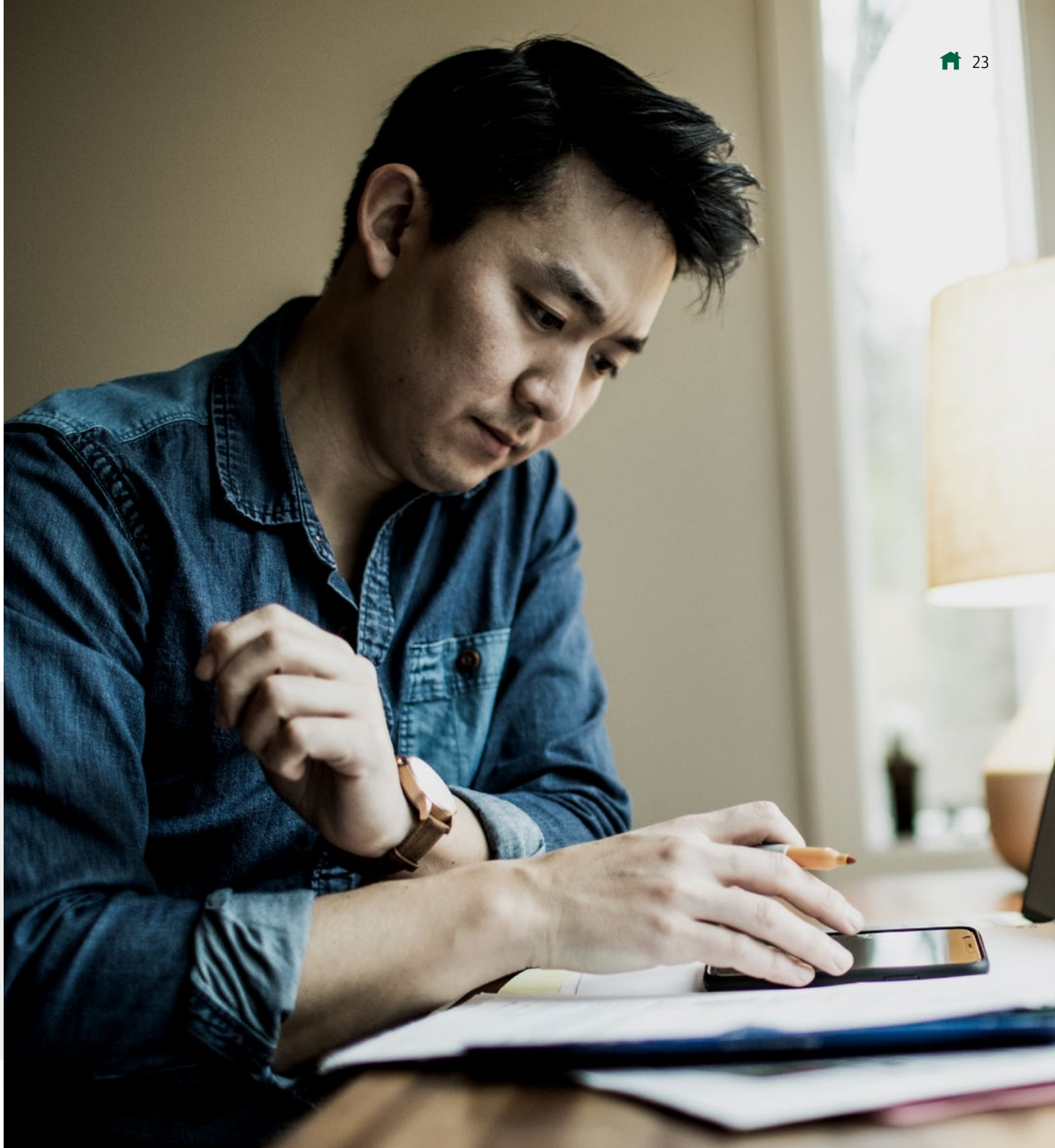
64% of working adults have the Essential Digital Skills for work

c.5.6 million

Since 2020, there are c.5.6 million more working adults that now have the digital skills needed in the workplace

c.11.8 million

36% of working adults still don't have the digital skills required for work



Essential Digital Skills for Work

Having Essential Digital Skills for Work has become even more crucial in the last year. The impact of the pandemic has resulted in many people working virtually, and service providers and businesses moving their interactions online for the first time, or in different ways. Please *see page 7* for a description of the Essential Digital Skills framework.

c.5.6 million more of the UK workforce have EDS for Work compared to 2020

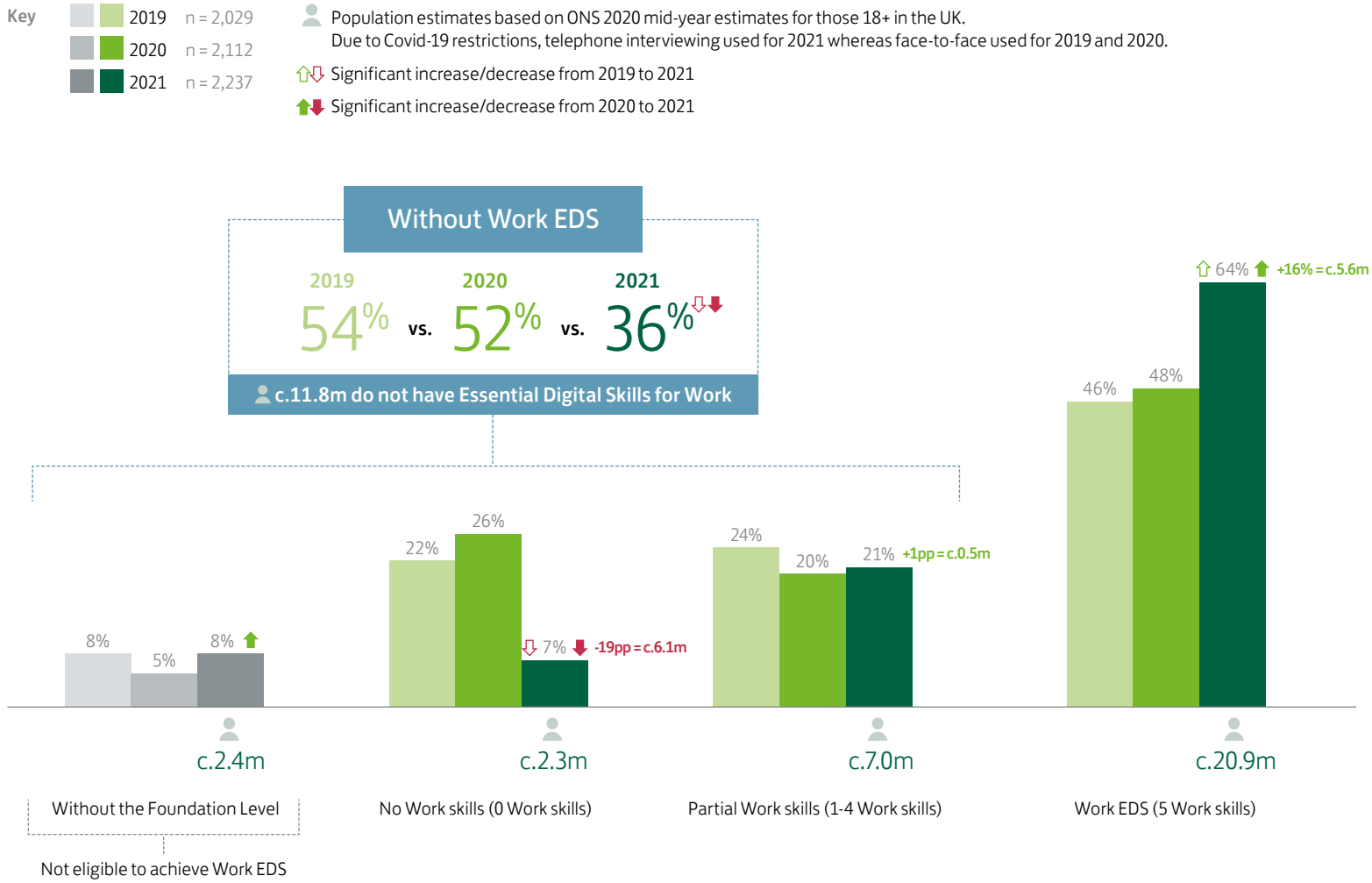
Figure 12 shows that 64% (c.20.9 million) of the UK working population have Work EDS, a significant increase of 16 percentage points from 2020. This is a very positive trend in a year where ways of working have been hugely disrupted by restrictions implemented due to the pandemic.

c.20.9 million
64% of UK working adults **have** Essential Digital Skills for Work

c.11.8 million
36% of UK working adults are **without** Essential Digital Skills for Work

For more information on the profile of those with zero workplace digital skills, *see Appendix 17a*

Figure 12. **Proportion of working adults aged 18+ and their level of Essential Digital Skills for Work, 2019, 2020 and 2021**

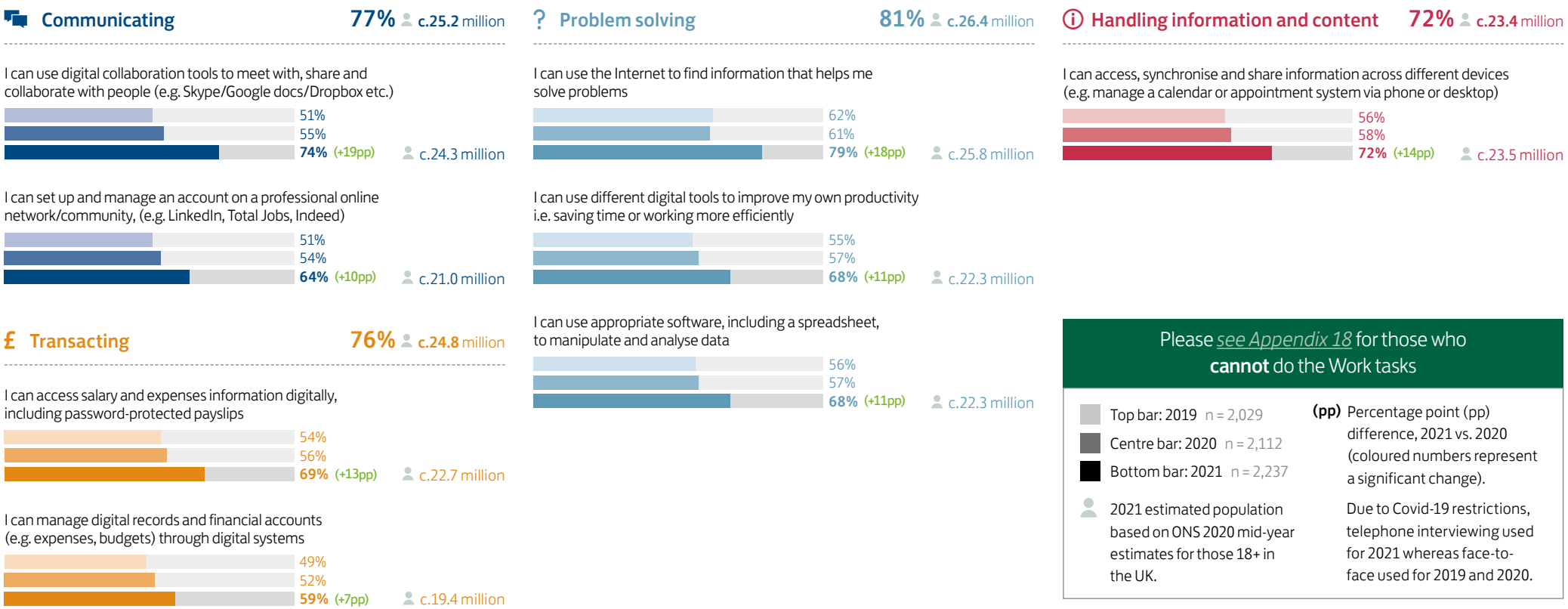


The 17 Work tasks

Significantly more people in the UK workforce can undertake key tasks at work

The pandemic has accelerated digital adoption in the UK workplace, resulting in the most digitally advanced workforce to date. The data on subsequent pages outlines the 17 key digital work tasks the UK workforce are able to undertake, all of which have improved significantly.

Figure 13. **Proportion of working adults 18+ who can do the 17 listed tasks across the five Work skills, 2019, 2020 and 2021**



Please *see Appendix 18* for those who **cannot** do the Work tasks

Top bar: 2019 n = 2,029
Centre bar: 2020 n = 2,112
Bottom bar: 2021 n = 2,237

2021 estimated population based on ONS 2020 mid-year estimates for those 18+ in the UK.

(pp) Percentage point (pp) difference, 2021 vs. 2020 (coloured numbers represent a significant change).

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

The 17 Work tasks

Figure 13. **Proportion of working adults 18+ who can do the 17 listed tasks across the five Work skills, 2019, 2020 and 2021**

Being safe and legal online

83% c.**27.3** million

I make sure not to share or use other people's data or intellectual property without their consent

61%
60%
78% (+18pp) c.25.7 million

I can recognise and avoid suspicious links in email, websites, social media messages and pop-ups and know that clicking on these links is a risk

59%
59%
78% (+19pp) c.25.6 million

I can keep the information I use to access my online accounts secure, by using different and secure passwords for websites and accounts

60%
59%
76% (+17pp) c.25.0 million

I can respond to requests for authentication (e.g. reactivate an account when I've forgotten my password)

61%
60%
76% (+16pp) c.24.9 million

I can identify secure websites by looking for the padlock and 'https' in the address bar

58%
57%
76% (+19pp) c.24.9 million

I am careful with what I share online as I know that online activity produces a permanent record that can be accessed by others

59%
60%
76% (+16pp) c.24.8 million

I can assess the risks and threats involved in carrying out activities online and act accordingly (e.g. use security software)

58%
58%
73% (+15pp) c.23.9 million

I can update my computer security systems when necessary to prevent viruses and other risks

52%
55%
62% (+7pp) c.20.3 million

I can set privacy settings on my social media and other accounts

50%
53%
60% (+7pp) c.19.7 million

Please *see Appendix 18* for those who **cannot** do the Work tasks

Top bar: 2019 n = 2,029
Centre bar: 2020 n = 2,112
Bottom bar: 2021 n = 2,237

2021 estimated population based on ONS 2020 mid-year estimates for those 18+ in the UK.

(pp) Percentage point (pp) difference, 2021 vs. 2020 (coloured numbers represent a significant change).

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

To discover more about the Work related tasks, visit the Essential Digital Skills interactive data tables (due for release end of October).

To see the trend of the five Work skills across 2019, 2020 and 2021, please *refer to Appendix 19*.

Fewer UK working adults have no Essential Digital Skills for Work

There are c.6.1 million fewer UK working adults (19 percentage point drop) who are unable to do any of the Work Skills. There are only c.2.3 million (7%) of the workforce unable to do any of the 17 work tasks (0 tasks).

The group lacking any Essential Digital Work Skills are (for more information *see Appendix 20*):

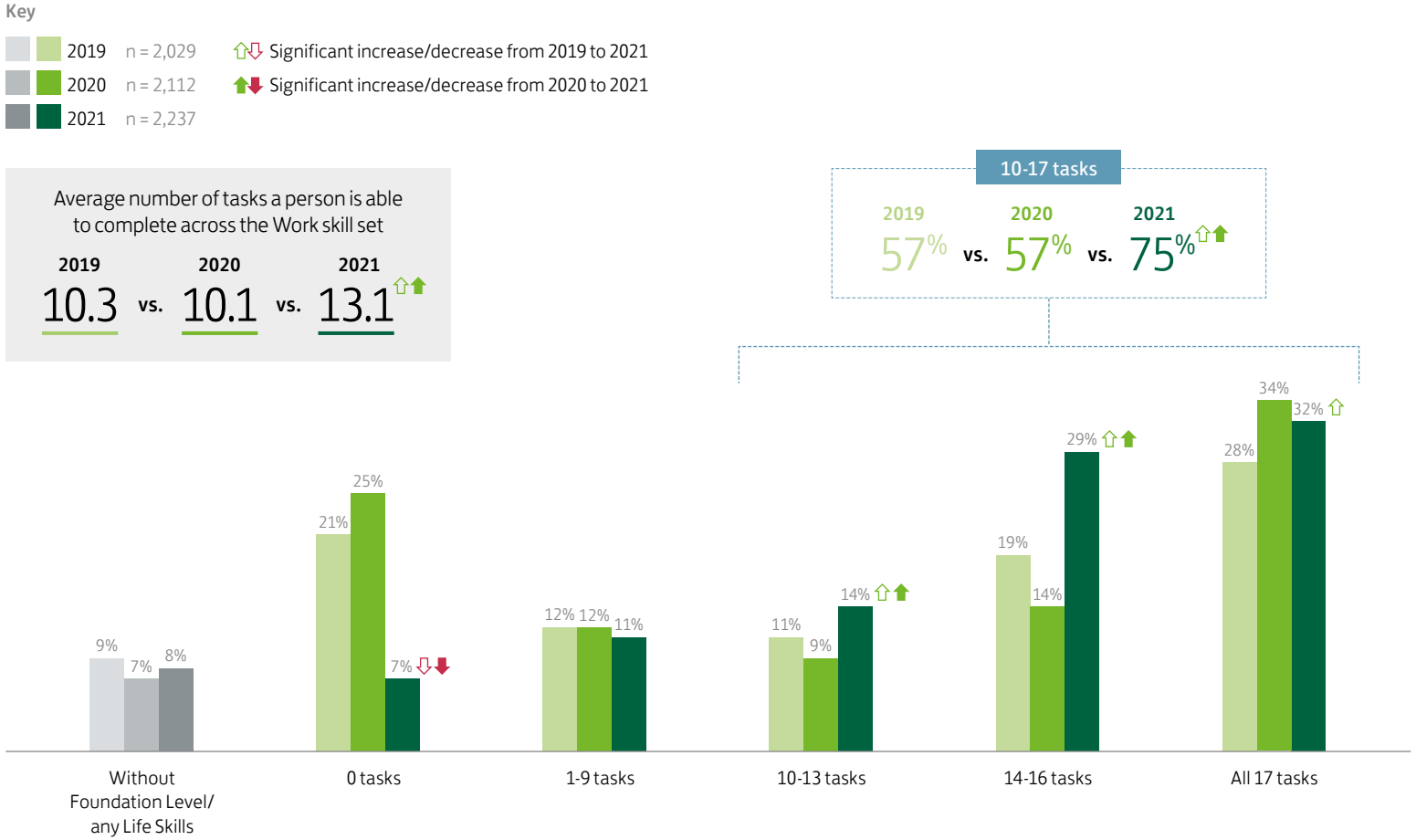
- Older (aged 55-64)
- Work part-time
- Work in the service industry
- Either have no formal qualifications or GCSE/O-Level/CSE as their highest level of educational attainment

The workforce is building its digital proficiency

As well as improvements in Work EDS overall and improved ability to do each of the individual 17 Work tasks, the total number of average tasks an individual can complete has also significantly increased to 13.1 out of 17, from 10.1 in 2020.

A significant proportion of working adults are now able to do ten or more digital tasks (75% versus 57% in 2020, figure 14). c.6.3 million more of the working population can now do at least ten Work tasks (an increase of 18 percentage points).

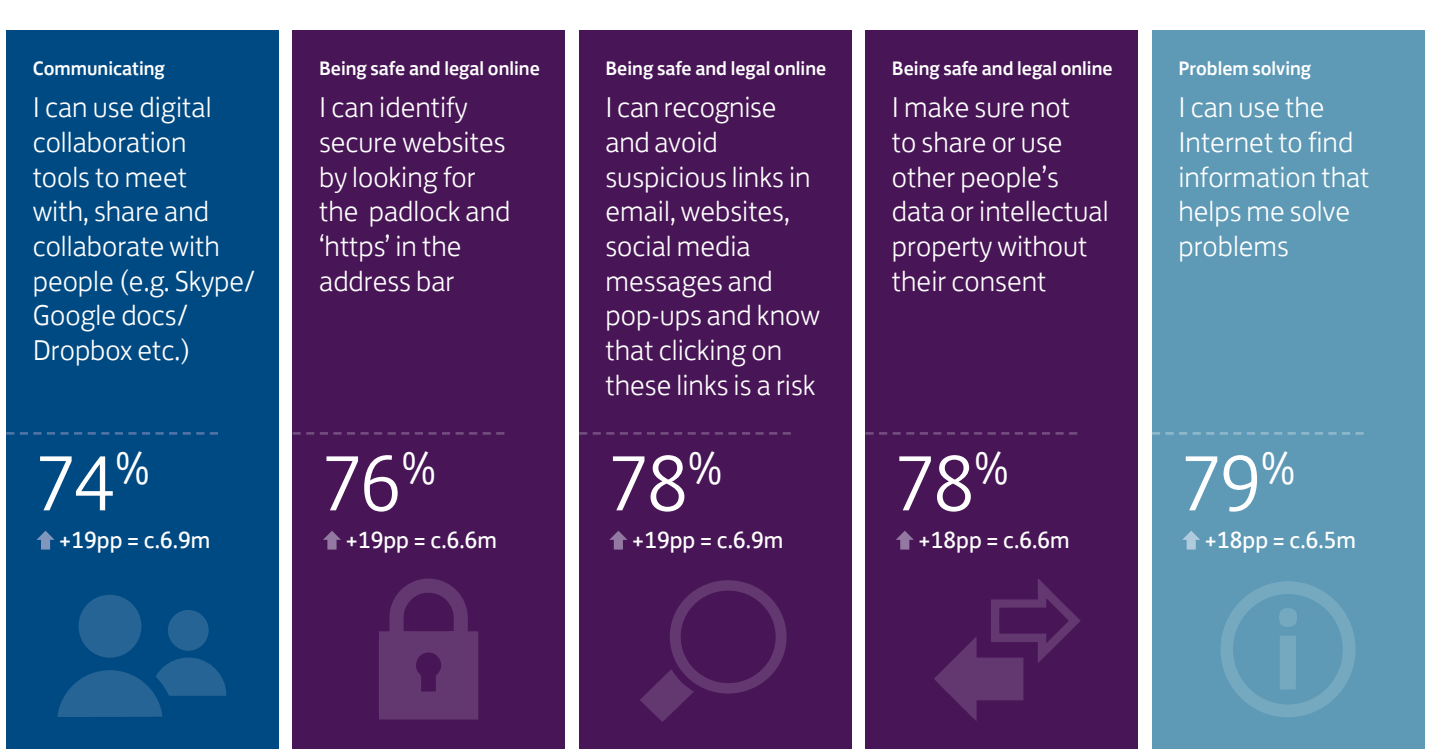
Figure 14. **Proportion of working adults 18+ who can do the listed number of tasks within Work EDS, 2019, 2020 and 2021**



Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

The UK workforce has made progress to being safe and legal online

Some of the key tasks that the UK workforce are better able to do, with improvements of at least 18 percentage points are:



Video calls and digital collaboration has formed part of the fabric of the working day for many workers since the pandemic, and improvements on this task were perhaps to be expected. It is also encouraging that three of the top five improvements are from the Being Safe and Legal Online skill area, as online scams have been at an all-time high throughout the pandemic*.

As seen with the Foundation Level, digital tasks are likely to be fluid. Whilst some people have had to work from home for the first time, key workers may have worked in the same manner they did pre-pandemic, and furloughed workers may have had varied working experiences. Employers and support organisations should encourage and signpost their colleagues to free digital skills training – for example the Lloyds Bank Academy**.

* ft.com/content/e820cc8a-090c-4632-95f3-cb295d3d31ad

** Lloyds Bank Academy: lloydsbankacademy.co.uk

Significant improvement in Work EDS seen across all super-regions

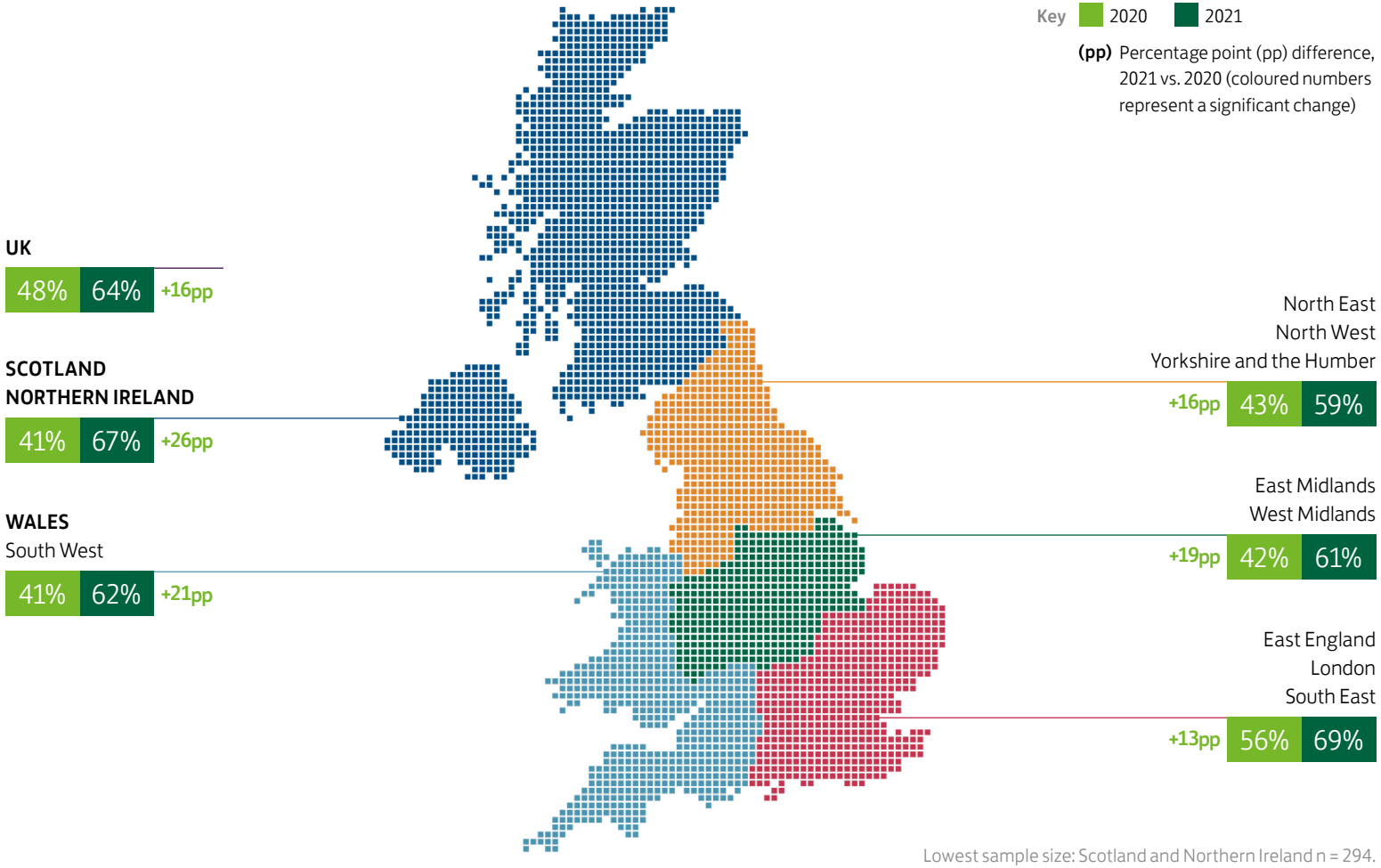
Figure 15 shows the proportion of working adults with Work EDS in each of the defined 'super-regions'*. The super-regions are aggregations of closely located regions within the UK and have been created to allow a regional lens of the Work EDS data.

All of the super-regions mirror the overall UK picture, with significantly more working adults having Work EDS in 2021. East England, London and the South East were the only super-region ahead of the UK average in 2020. Whilst it remains ahead of the UK average (by five percentage points) the super-region comprising Scotland and Northern Ireland is also ahead (by three percentage points).

Encouragingly, the two super-regions furthest behind last year, the South West and Wales along with Scotland and Northern Ireland, report the greatest increases and have made even greater progress in terms of Work EDS than other parts of the UK.

In 2020, the gap between the lowest and highest regions in terms of Work EDS was 15 percentage points, however with the strong improvements seen across the board, this has halved (eight percentage points), helping to close the workplace digital skills gap across regions.

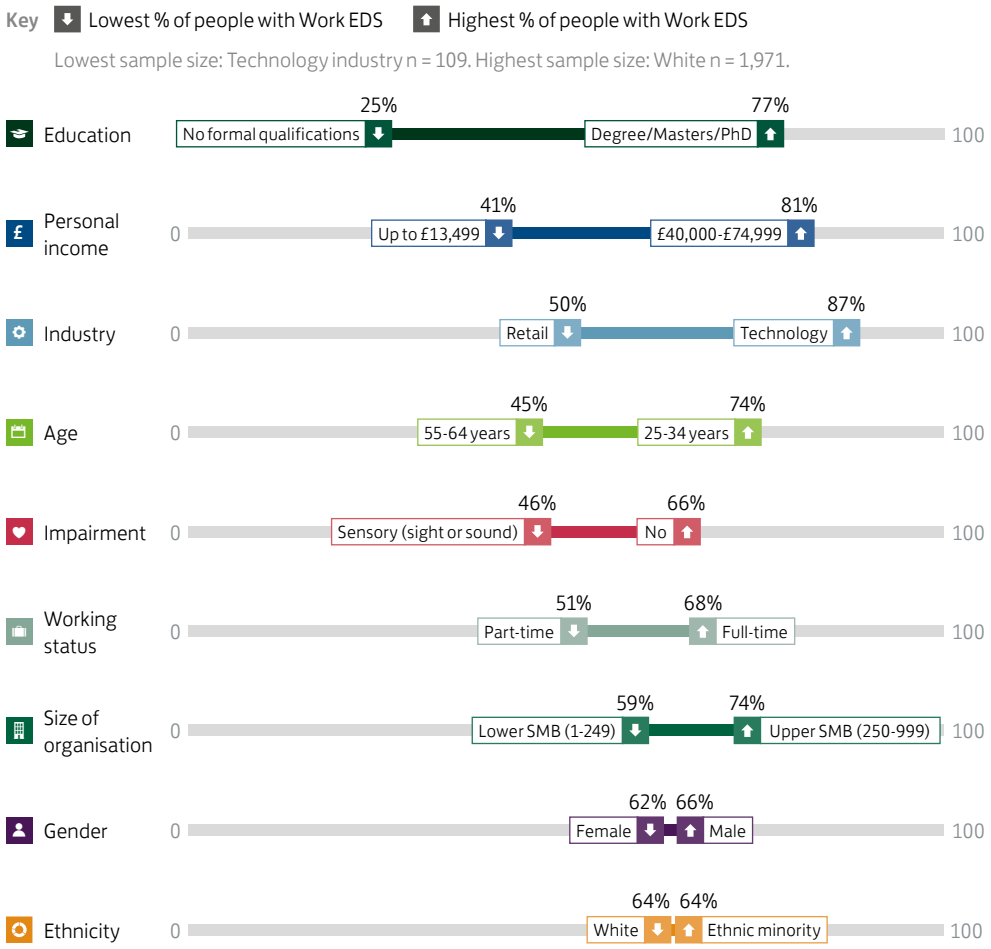
Figure 15. **Proportion of working adults 18+ that have Work EDS, split by super region, 2020 and 2021**



Lowest sample size: Scotland and Northern Ireland n = 294.
Highest sample size: East England, London and South East n = 792.
Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2020.

*At the individual region level, sample sizes become too small when looking just at the working population.

Figure 16. **Proportion of working adults 18+ across different demographics that have Work EDS, 2021**



An individual's education level is the biggest correlating factor – not age

Figure 16 shows different demographics and associated sub-groups within the working population, with the highest and lowest proportion of adults with Work EDS. This indicates someone's likelihood of having EDS for Work and the most polarised demographics.

Education, income and industry have the greatest correlation with an individual's ability to have Work EDS.

Although an uplift in Work EDS is seen across all demographic groups, the rate of percentage increase differs between sub-groups and for some demographics the skills gap is widening. The greatest uplift for Work EDS was seen for 18-24-year-olds (*Appendix 21*).

The workforce has a widening age skills gap

Compared to last year, there was an increase of 24 percentage points in those aged 25-34 with Work EDS. This increase is eight times higher than seen for 55-64s (increase of three percentage points). Consequently, the skills gap between the two age groups has widened (from eight to 29 percentage points) (*Appendix 22*).

A key age group for focus are workers aged 45+. Below this age, seven-in-ten (73%) have Work EDS, but this tails off and continues to decline with age. Many workplaces have a diverse workforce and this older age group should not be forgotten and present a tangible group to target for upskilling.

Work EDS has almost doubled amongst entry age workers

In 2020, Work EDS for those aged 18-24 (37%) was similar to those aged 65+ (35%) meaning many young people were starting their careers with limited digital skills for the workplace. However, in 2021, for the 18-24-year-olds, Work EDS has almost doubled to 70% who are now in close proximity to the most highly skilled age group (25-34). Necessity is potentially behind these big improvements for the youngest workers, as they start their working lives and are thrown into the very different working environments due to the pandemic.

Males are at an advantage with the greatest improvement in Work EDS

In 2021, 66% of working males have Work EDS, jumping from 47% in 2020 (*Appendix 23*). Females have also seen a 12-percentage point improvement, resulting in 62% of females having full EDS. The balance between the genders has shifted; females used to lead over males by three percentage points (50% versus 47% in 2020). Now they are four percentage points behind men. This could be due to factors such as childcare responsibilities falling unevenly upon females during the pandemic*, with females also more likely to have been furloughed**.

Exploring the data further, presence of children in the home further exacerbates the digital disadvantage to females in the workplace. However, at the Foundation Level and EDS for Life, this actually levels the playing field for men and women (*Appendix 23a*).

* ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/half-mothers-say-they-have-taken-more-childcare-responsibilities-their-partners-during-lockdown

** wbg.org.uk/analysis/hmrc-data-prompts-concern-of-gender-furlough-gap/

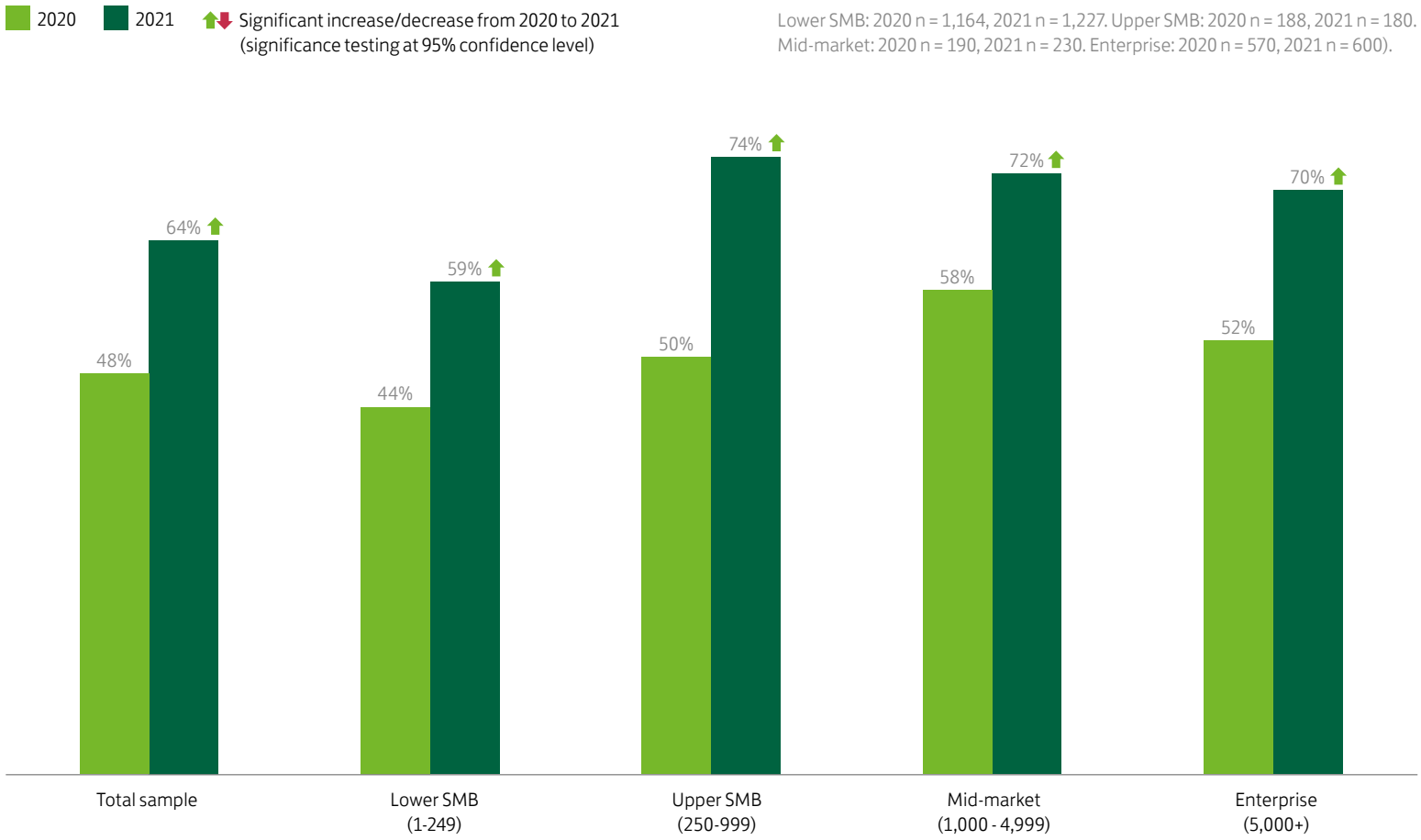
Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Smaller organisations show significant improvement

People working at small or microbusinesses are least likely to have essential workplace digital skills. The tasks they're least likely to be able to do are managing digital records and financial accounts (e.g. expenses, budgets) through digital systems (56%), setting privacy settings on my social media and other accounts (57%), setting up and managing an account on a professional online network/community, (e.g. LinkedIn, Total Jobs, Indeed) (60%) and updating my computer security systems when necessary to prevent viruses and other risks (60%).

In contrast, organisations of 250-999 employees have seen the biggest shift. In 2020 50% of them had EDS for Work, this year it is 74%. The data indicates that the group with the least amount of annual change is organisations sized 1,000 to 4,999 – indicating that more focus on digital upskilling or support needs to be offered.

Figure 17. **Proportion of working adults aged 18+ and their level of Essential Digital Skills for Work, split by organisation size, 2020 and 2021**



Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2020.

Tech industries continue to lead for Work EDS

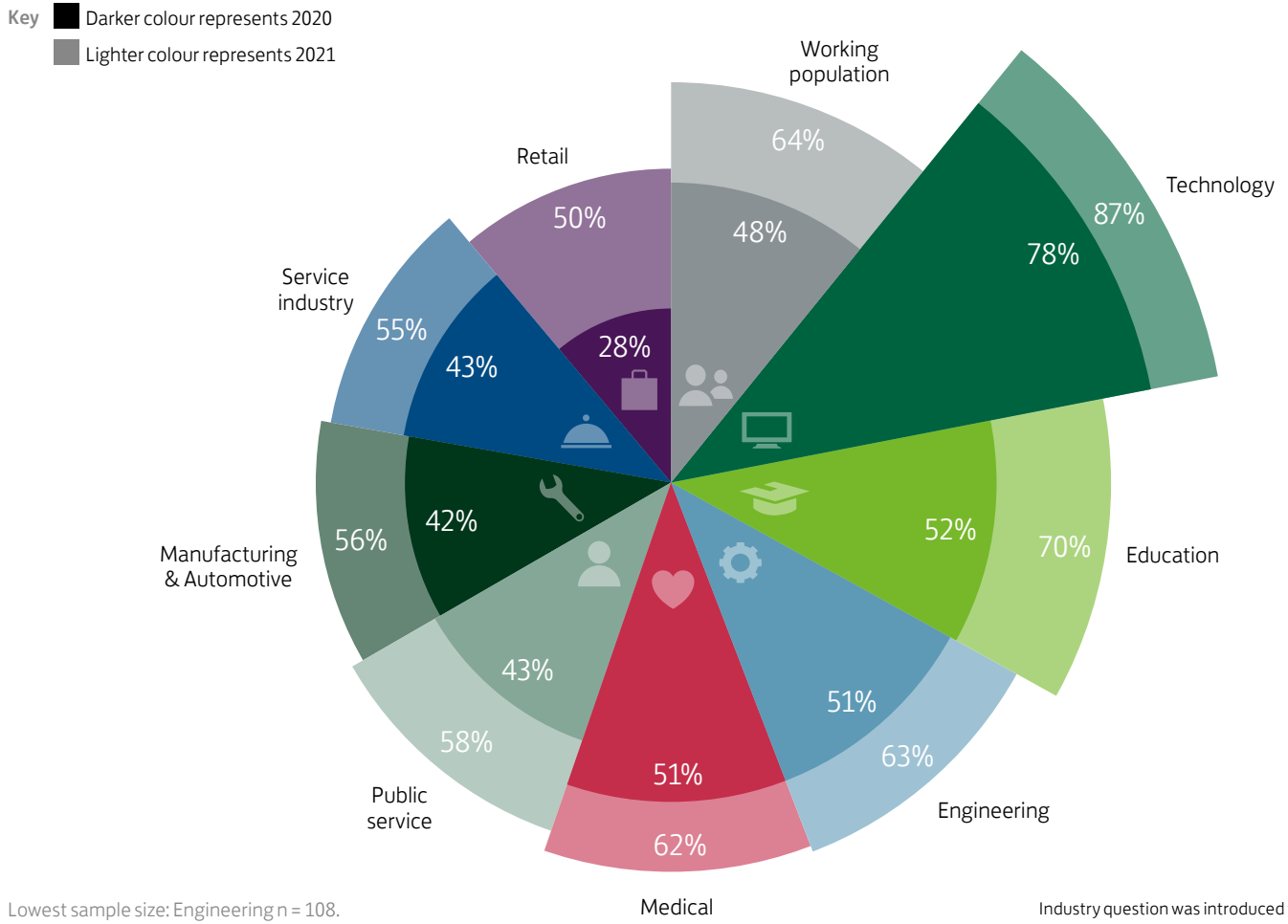
Figure 18 shows all industries have seen an uplift in Work EDS. Compared to the average of the UK working population (64%), those working in technology (87%) and education (70%) are ahead. While those who work in retail (50%), the service industry (55%), and manufacturing and automotive (56%) are the furthest behind.

Those working in retail or manufacturing and service industries are more likely to lag behind in those tasks that fall under the Communicating, Transacting and Problem Solving skills. Whereas those who work in the service industry are more likely to lag behind on Being Safe and Legal Online tasks.

However the tech industries have seen the least improvement year-on-year

Tech industries have seen a modest improvement in comparison, but remain ahead with the highest levels of Work EDS. This may be a result of the industry already having a high level of digital skills, or there was potentially less disruption to their way of working if they were already set up for remote working.

Figure 18. **Proportion of working adults 18+ that have Work EDS, split by industry, 2020 and 2021**



Lowest sample size: Engineering n = 108.
Highest sample size: Education n = 302.

Industry question was introduced to EDS questionnaire in 2020 so data is not available for 2019. Analysis by industry is done amongst the industries with a robust enough base size to be able to compare data for 2021 and 2020.

The retail industry has almost doubled its digital capability in the last year (up 22 percentage points) but continues to be last

Three million people are employed in retail in the UK as of 2019*, the country's biggest private sector employer. Many frontline retail staff have been furloughed due to the pandemic prompting closures of non-essential businesses. As a result of the pandemic there has also been an impetus for retailers to move online.

Those working in retail are no longer an outlier and are much closer to other industries than in 2020. The gap between the lowest performing sectors has narrowed to five percentage points (from fourteen percentage points) between retail and the service industry.

The age profile of those in retail is balanced from those aged 18-24 (20%) to those aged 55-64 (19%). This indicates that the improvements are not solely driven by younger people.

Other industries such as Service, Manufacturing and Automotive and Public Service are just above Retail but have not made as significant progress for Work EDS in the last year, so mustn't be forgotten when tailoring and targeting support. It is also of note that despite the pandemic, only 62% of the Medical industry have EDS for Work – tailored support for this area could benefit those who are in most need.

Retail show the greatest improvements for Work EDS – an increase of 22 percentage points

Marked improvements for those working in education, a sector highly disrupted by the pandemic

Figure 18 shows a strong improvement of 18 percentage points for those working in Education. The past year has necessitated that educators transition from a physical classroom to a virtual model almost overnight, a feat which may have required digital upskilling.

Those working in Public Service have also shown a strong improvement, but they remain behind the UK average. Those whose work spans across Education and Public Service are the most likely to claim that they have improved their digital ability in the last 12 months (*see Appendix 24* for definition and likelihood of each sector to claim their have improved their digital ability in the last 12 months).

The Communicating Work skill has improved the most pan-industry

Although working from home became more common for workers during the pandemic, it was not a practice adopted by all**. Despite this, communicating has been crucial and it is the only Work skill to significantly increase across all eight industries.

The Communicating skill consists of two tasks and the task of being able to use digital collaboration tools to meet with, share and collaborate with people (e.g. Skype/Google docs/Dropbox etc.) is the only task where ability has increased significantly across all industries. The task of being able to set up and manage an account on a professional online network/community, (e.g. LinkedIn, Total Jobs, Indeed) significantly increased for three industries: Retail, the Service industry and Manufacturing and Automotive. These are the industries with the lowest levels of Work EDS, but also acutely affected by job losses*** since the pandemic began in the UK. It's plausible that in this environment these workers have upskilled and are using professional online networks to seek work. Despite their marked improvements, these three industries are still behind other industries for both tasks (*see Appendices 25 and 26*).

* researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06186/SN06186.pdf

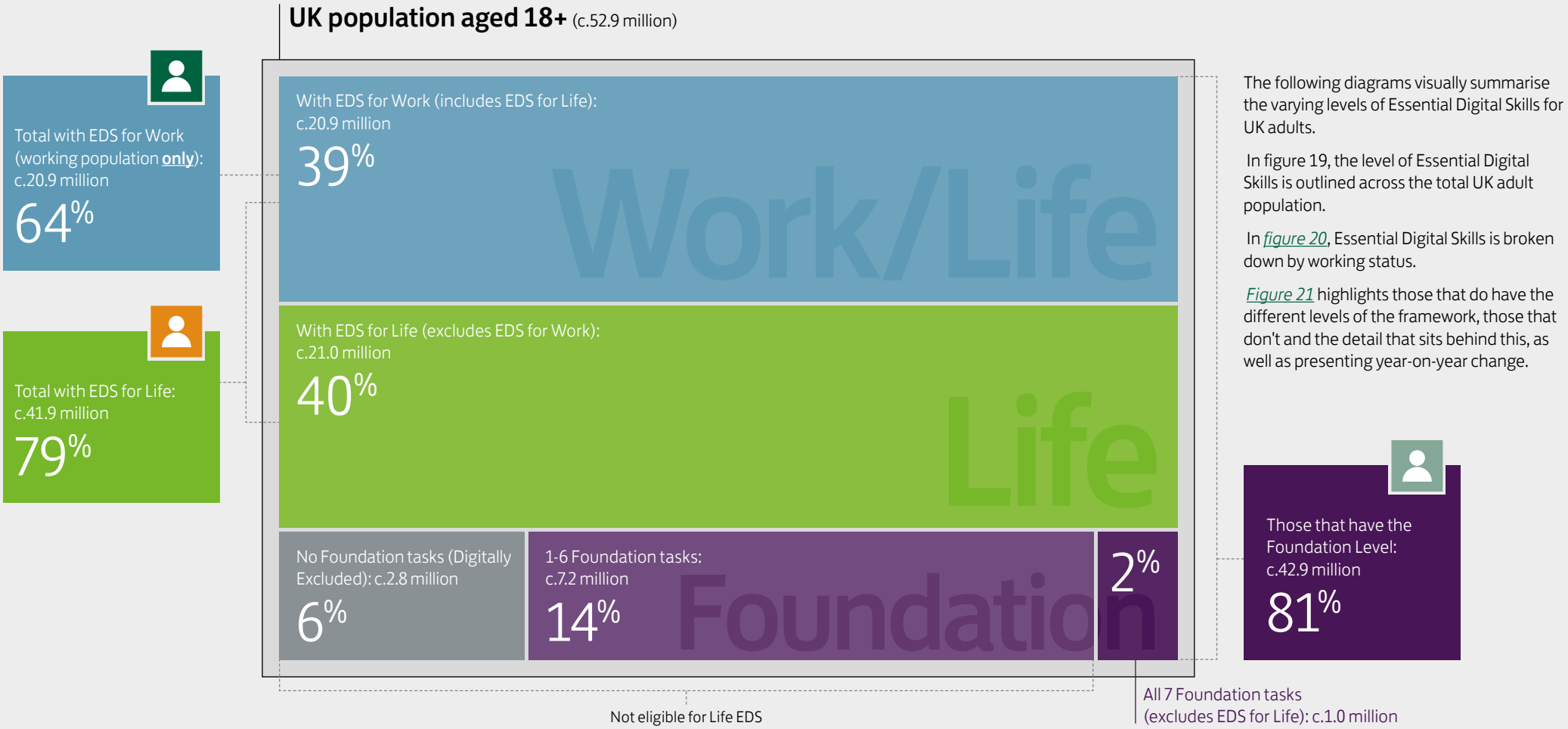
** theguardian.com/world/2021/may/17/home-working-doubled-during-uk-covid-pandemic-last-year-mostly-in-london

*** news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-crisis-where-jobs-have-been-lost-across-the-uk-12029604

Population diagrams

Figure 19. **Proportion of total UK adult population aged 18+ (c.52.9 million) split by Work and Life EDS or Foundation tasks they are able to do, 2021**

n = 4,129



The following diagrams visually summarise the varying levels of Essential Digital Skills for UK adults.

In figure 19, the level of Essential Digital Skills is outlined across the total UK adult population.

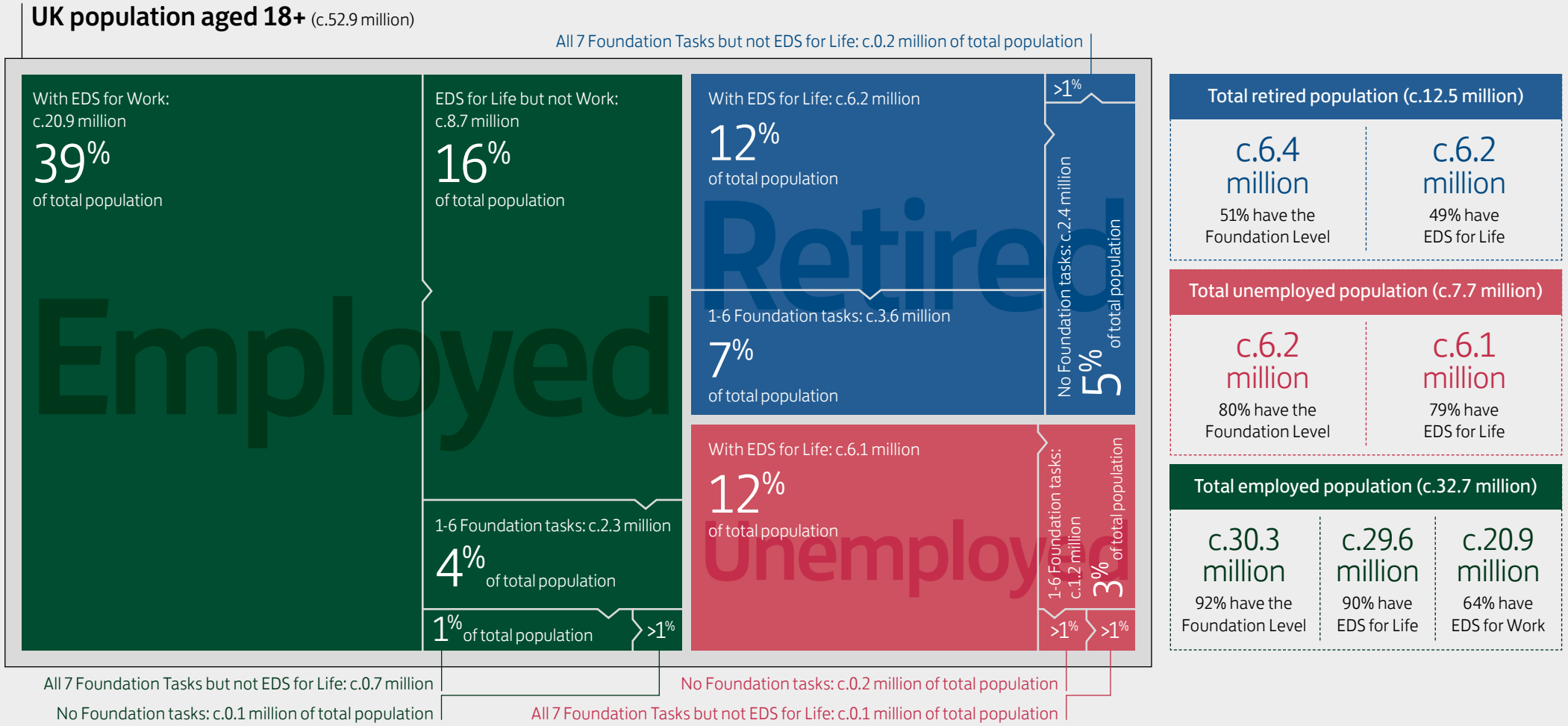
In *figure 20*, Essential Digital Skills is broken down by working status.

Figure 21 highlights those that do have the different levels of the framework, those that don't and the detail that sits behind this, as well as presenting year-on-year change.

All populations extrapolated from ONS mid-year 2020 estimates of 52.9 million people aged 18+ in the UK (100%).

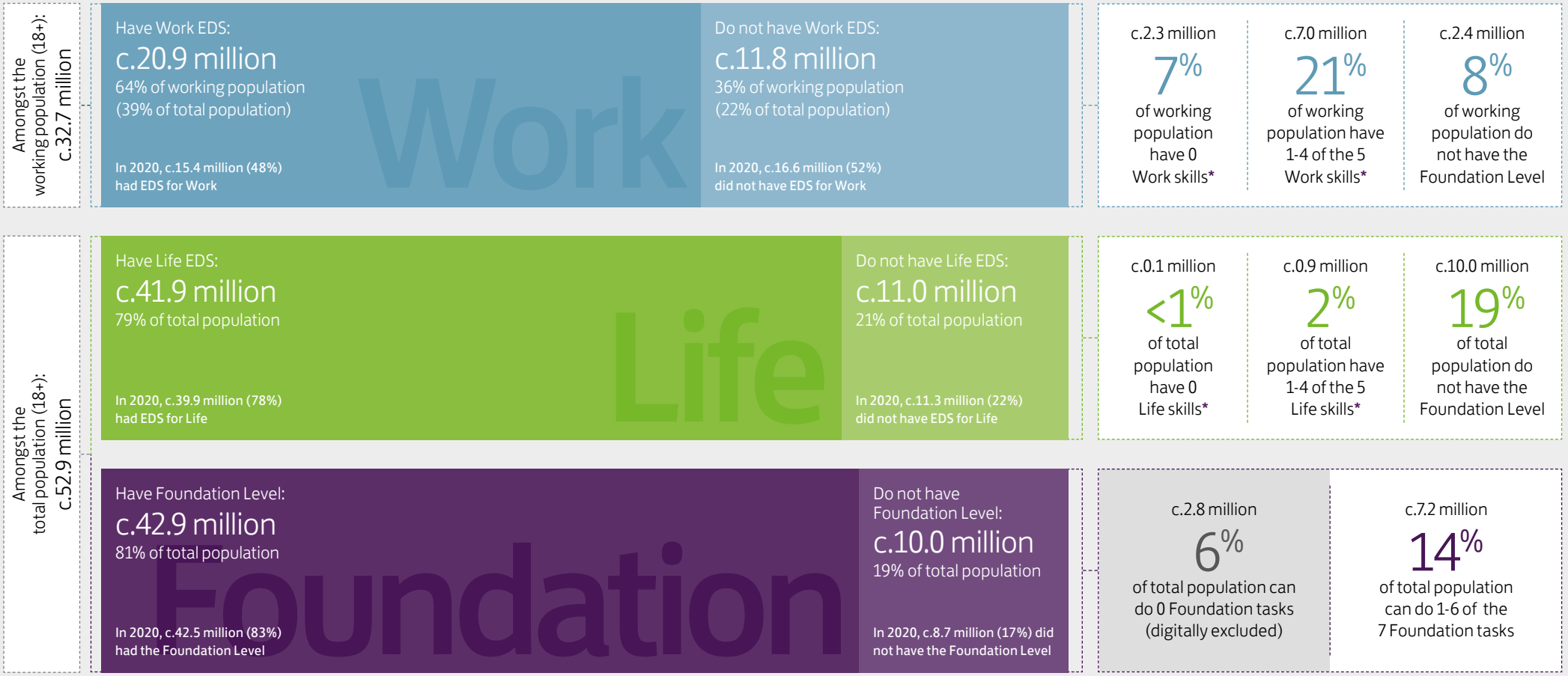
Figure 20. **Proportion of total UK adult population aged 18+ (c.52.9 million) split by Work and Life EDS or Foundation tasks they are able to do, 2021**

n = 4,129



All populations extrapolated from ONS mid-year 2020 estimates of 52.9 million people aged 18+ in the UK (100%). Population numbers sum to 52.7 million rather than 52.9 million due to rounding.

Figure 21. **Proportion of adults 18+ who do or do not have the Foundation Level, Life EDS or Work EDS, 2021**



All populations extrapolated from ONS mid-year 2020 estimates of 52.9 million people aged 18+ in the UK (100%).
Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

*But have Foundation Level

4

Spotlights

This section focuses on different demographics and their digital skills. Spotlights on those 65+, having an impairment, ethnicity and working groups are explored in more detail.

Spotlight on those aged 65+

Key takeaways

- Almost half of all people 65+ now have EDS for Life and Work.
- Over one-third of those 65+ believe their digital skills have improved in the last year.
- Driven by progress within tasks in the 'Communicating' skill, over half have been more able to stay in touch with family and friends, during a time when social distancing and government restrictions allowed for little else.
- There are also now fewer aged 65+ who are completely digitally excluded.
- Tasks such as adjusting menu settings and connecting to Wi-Fi are the two hardest tasks for this group to achieve.
- It is apparent that those aged 75+ are driving this lower skill level.

Age is a key correlating factor for digital skills uptake. Compared to 2020, similar numbers of those 65+ have the Foundation Level and Essential Digital Skills for Life (49% and 47% respectively). Lower levels of digital skills amongst those 65+ are driven by the oldest age group (75+) with just over one-quarter having the Foundation Level (28%) and a similar proportion having Life EDS (26%).

c.1.0 million fewer aged 65+ are digitally excluded; 80% now online

Importantly, there are significantly fewer aged 65+ (c.1.0 million) who are digitally excluded (unable to do any of the Foundation tasks). Last year 29% were digitally excluded, this year it is 20%.

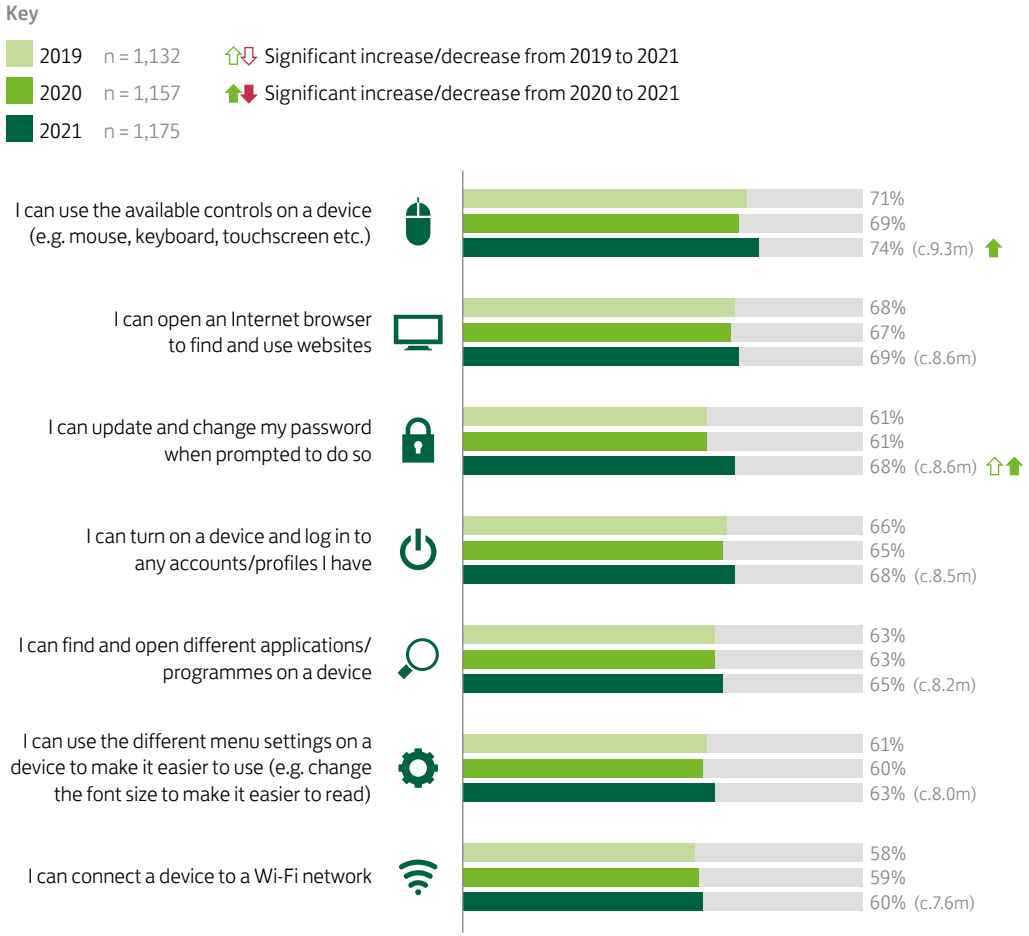
Although only half (49%, c.6.2 million) of those 65+ have the Foundation Level, c.1.5 million more people are able to undertake at least some of the fundamental digital tasks independently (*see Appendix 27*).

A greater number the 65+ age group can:

Use the available controls on a device (e.g. mouse, keyboard, touchscreen etc.): c.9.3 million	74% ↑ 69%
Update and change my password when prompted to do so: c.8.6 million	68% ↑ 61%

Barriers to achieving the Foundation Level are not purely down to lack of access to the Internet. Six in ten (60%) of those 65+ have a smartphone, and whilst this group are more likely to be able to do each of the Foundation tasks (a lead of at least 19 percentage points), there is still room for improvement. Connecting to Wi-Fi and adjusting menu settings are also the two hardest tasks for this group to achieve (figure 22).

Figure 22. **Proportion of adults 65+ that can do each of the seven Foundation Level tasks (prerequisite to EDS for Life and Work), 2019, 2020 and 2021**



Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

16% of those 65+ only lack the ability to do one or two tasks

For one-sixth of this age group, only one or two activities stand in the way of them having the full range of Foundation tasks. Having conducted analysis on the group of people who are lacking the ability to do one to two tasks, the activities they are least likely to be able to do are:

Connect a device to a Wi-Fi network
54% (c.1.0 million)

Use different menu settings to improve accessibility
67% (c.1.4 million)

58% of those 65+ have been more able to keep in touch with friends and family

Even amongst those 65+ and living alone, at least half (53%) claim they have been more able to keep in touch with friends and family. The greatest uplift in ability amongst those 65+ compared to before the pandemic in 2019 are seen for tasks that fall into the Communicating skill.

Those 65+ are almost twice as likely to have a visual impairment than those aged 18-64, so learning to adjust menu settings on a device could make their digital life easier

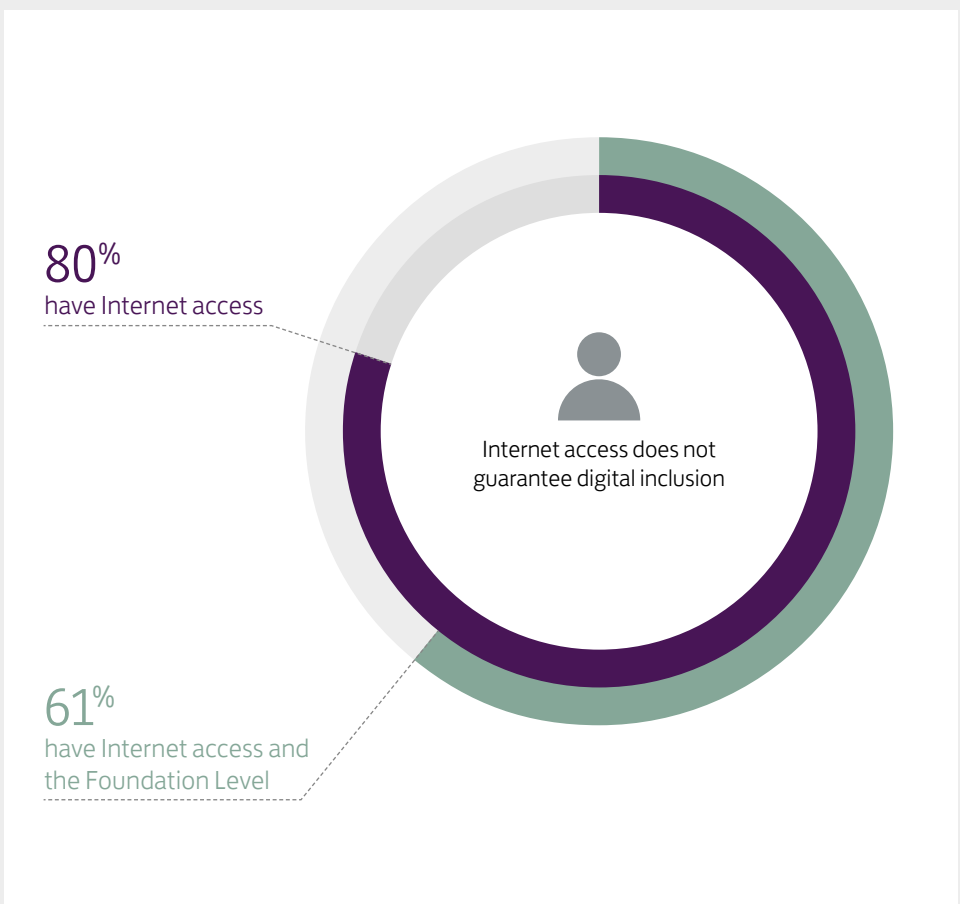
Compared to before the pandemic more aged 65+ can now communicate with others digitally using email or other messaging applications, or communicate with others using video tools (both up four percentage points from 2019)

Those 65+ who have a smartphone: n = 774

Can connect a device to a Wi-Fi network
82%

Can use different menu settings to improve accessibility
83%

Figure 23. **Proportion of those 65+ who have Internet access and the Foundation Level, 2021** n = 1,012



Spotlight on those with an impairment

Key takeaways

- Impairments are leading to a digital disadvantage at all levels, and that disadvantage is compounded for those who have multiple impairments.
- Whilst there has been progress, people with vision and hearing disabilities have the lowest level of digital skills.
- Whilst c.3.7 million more people with an impairment have improved their capability in the last year, one-third of people with an impairment do not have the Foundation Level.
- Of the c.11.0 million people who do not have EDS for Life, more than half are living with an impairment.
- The most challenging tasks are adjusting menu settings and connecting to Wi-Fi networks (23% and 22% respectively can't do).
- When it comes to Work EDS, 30% more people with an impairment have EDS for Work, however the challenge of staying safe and legal online persists.
- Those with an impairment under the age of 35 have improved Work EDS at five times the rate of those over the age of 35 with an impairment.

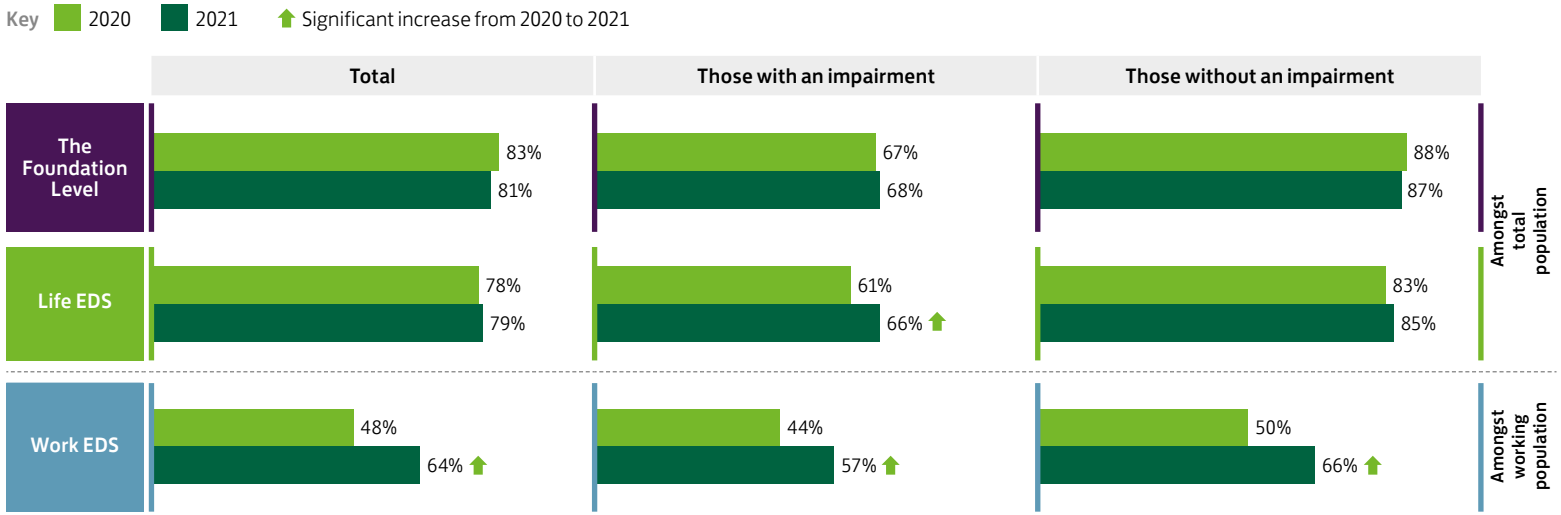
According to the survey, in the UK today, there are c.17.1 million adults who identify as having an impairment*. The data shows that people with an impairment are less likely to have digital skills at all levels than people without. Those with an impairment are 28% less likely to have the digital skills needed for everyday life. However compared to 2020, more people with an impairment now have Internet access (an increase of five percentage points, equivalent to c.5.1 million more).

Double the difference

Between 2020 and 2021, there is an increase of five percentage points for people with an impairment who have attained Essential Digital Skills for Life. This compares to two percentage points for those without an impairment (see figure 24).

People with an impairment are 28% less likely to have digital skills at the Foundation and Life levels

Figure 24. **Proportion of adults 18+ with and without an impairment, who have the Foundation Level, Life EDS or Work EDS, 2020 and 2021**



Total (2020 n = 4,189, 2021 n = 4,129. Working population: 2020 n = 2,112, 2021 n =2,237). Those with any impairment* (Total: 2020 n = 1,092, 2021 n = 1,368. Working population: 2020 n = 323, 2021 n = 485). Those with no impairment (Total: 2020 n = 2,958, 2021 n = 2,713. Working population: 2020 n = 1,725, 2021 n = 1,728).

* For details of the impairment question, please *see page 52*. Any impairment includes addiction, sensory, physical, learning or memory, mental health and social or behavioural.
Impairment question was introduced to EDS questionnaire in 2020 so data is not available for 2019

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2020

Figure 25. **Proportion of adults 18+ in the UK with and without an impairment who can do the listed Foundation Level tasks, 2021**

	Without impairment	With impairment	Mental health	Learning or memory	Physical	Sensory
No Foundation (0 tasks)	3%	10%	4%	9%	13%	15%
Partial Foundation (1-6 tasks)	9%	22%	19%	25%	26%	26%
Foundation Level (7 tasks)	87%	68%	77%	67%	61%	58%
FOUNDATION TASKS						
I can use the available controls on a device (e.g. mouse, keyboard, touchscreen etc.)	96%	87%	93%	89%	83%	81%
I can open an Internet browser to find and use websites	94%	84%	90%	85%	79%	75%
I can turn on a device and log in to any accounts/profiles I have	94%	83%	90%	85%	80%	75%
I can update and change my password when prompted to do so	94%	81%	89%	81%	77%	74%
I can find and open different applications/programmes on a device	93%	80%	88%	82%	77%	72%
I can connect a device to a Wi-Fi network	92%	78%	85%	78%	72%	69%
I can use the different menu settings on a device to make it easier to use (e.g. change the font size to make it easier to read)	92%	78%	82%	76%	72%	69%

Have impairment: n = 1,368. Mental health: n = 451. Learning or memory: n = 541.
Physical: n = 856. Sensory: n = 494. Without impairment: n = 2,713.

One-third (32%) of people with an impairment lack Foundation Digital Skills

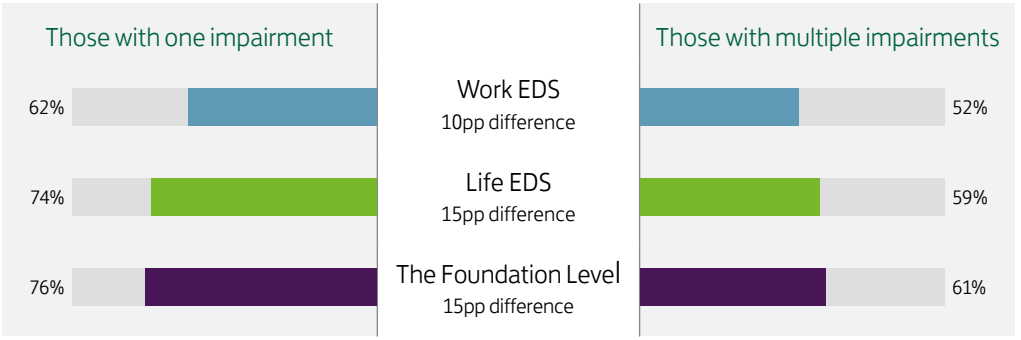
As seen in figure 25, adults with an impairment are less likely to be able to do each of the Foundation Level tasks than those without an impairment. In particular being able to connect to a Wi-Fi network and being able to use menu settings to make devices easier to use, are the skills they are most likely to lack. For more information on various types of sensory impairment and the Foundation tasks, *see Appendix 28*.

People with multiple impairments are the most digitally disadvantaged

More than half (56%) of adults with an impairment report having more than one condition that affects their day-to-day lives. This figure relates to 18% of adults aged 18+ in the UK. Those with just one impairment are more likely to have digital skills at all levels of the framework, than those with multiple conditions (see figure 26), although the skills gap is smaller for Work EDS. With a focus on the working environment, employees with multiple impairments are most likely to struggle with the transacting, problem solving and being safe and legal online skills, compared to those with just one impairment, with a lag of at least nine percentage points. In terms of life skills, those with multiple impairment are equally disadvantaged across all skill areas (*Appendix 29*).

Having multiple impairments therefore presents a focus area for further support to improve accessibility.

Figure 26. **Proportion of adults 18+ with one or multiple impairments who have the Foundation Level, Life EDS and Work EDS, 2021**



Those with one impairment: n = 592. Those with multiple impairments: n = 776.

Figure 27. **Proportion of the UK aged 18+ with an impairment who can do the listed Work tasks, 2021**

Key: Communicating; Handling information and content; Transacting; Problem solving; Being safe and legal online

	2020 n = 323	2021 n = 485
I can use digital collaboration tools to meet with, share and collaborate with people (e.g. Skype/Google docs/Dropbox etc.)	51%	68%
I can set up and manage an account on a professional online network/community, (e.g. LinkedIn, Total Jobs, Indeed)	48%	58%
I can access, synchronise and share information across different devices (e.g. manage a calendar or appointment system via phone or desktop)	55%	66%
I can access salary and expenses information digitally, including password protected payslips	52%	65%
I can manage digital records and financial accounts (e.g. expenses, budgets) through digital systems	46%	51%
I can use the Internet to find information that helps me solve problems	57%	73%
I can use appropriate software, including a spreadsheet, to manipulate and analyse data	52%	61%
I can use different digital tools to improve my own productivity i.e. saving time or working more efficiently	53%	58%
I make sure not to share or use other people's data or intellectual property without their consent	57%	73%
I can recognise and avoid suspicious links in email, websites, social media messages and pop ups and know that clicking on these links is a risk	57%	70%
I can keep the information I use to access my online accounts secure, by using different and secure passwords for websites and accounts	54%	70%
I am careful with what I share online as I know that online activity produces a permanent record that can be accessed by others	56%	70%
I can respond to requests for authentication (e.g. reactivate an account when I've forgotten my password)	56%	70%
I can identify secure websites by looking for the padlock and 'https' in the address bar	53%	70%
I can assess the risks and threats involved in carrying out activities online and act accordingly (e.g. use security software)	53%	67%
I can update my computer security systems when necessary to prevent viruses and other risks	48%	55%
I can set privacy settings on my social media and other accounts	48%	52%

c.2.3 million more disabled workers have EDS for Work

The number of people with an impairment with Work Essential Digital Skills has increased significantly by c.2.3 million in 2021 – 57% now have Work EDS compared to 44% in 2020 (*see figure 24*).

Under-35s have improved Work EDS at five times the rate of those aged 35+

One of the groups with the most noticeable digital progress is that of younger working-age people. There has been an increase of 27 percentage points in terms of working adults under 35 with an impairment who now have workplace skills. Amongst this group for those over 35, there has been an increase of just five percentage points.

The skills gap is not uniform – tasks concerning Being Safe and Legal Online are much weaker for those with an impairment

Delving into the five Work skills, people both with and without an impairment have kept pace on tasks in the Communicating and Problem Solving skills. However, those without an impairment show stronger improvements for the other Work skills (Transacting, Handling Information and Content and Being Safe and Legal Online).

For each of the 17 individual Work tasks, those with an impairment are on average nine percentage points behind. The skills gap is greatest for being able to use different digital tools to improve their own productivity i.e. saving time or working more efficiently – 58% of working adults with an impairment can do this lagging behind by 13 percentage points.

For working adults with an impairment, there are gaps of at least ten percentage points for the following tasks (compared to working adults without an impairment):

70% are able to recognise and avoid suspicious links in email, websites, social media messages and pop-ups and know that clicking on these links is a risk

61% can use appropriate software, including a spreadsheet, to manipulate and analyse data

52% can set privacy settings on their social media and other accounts

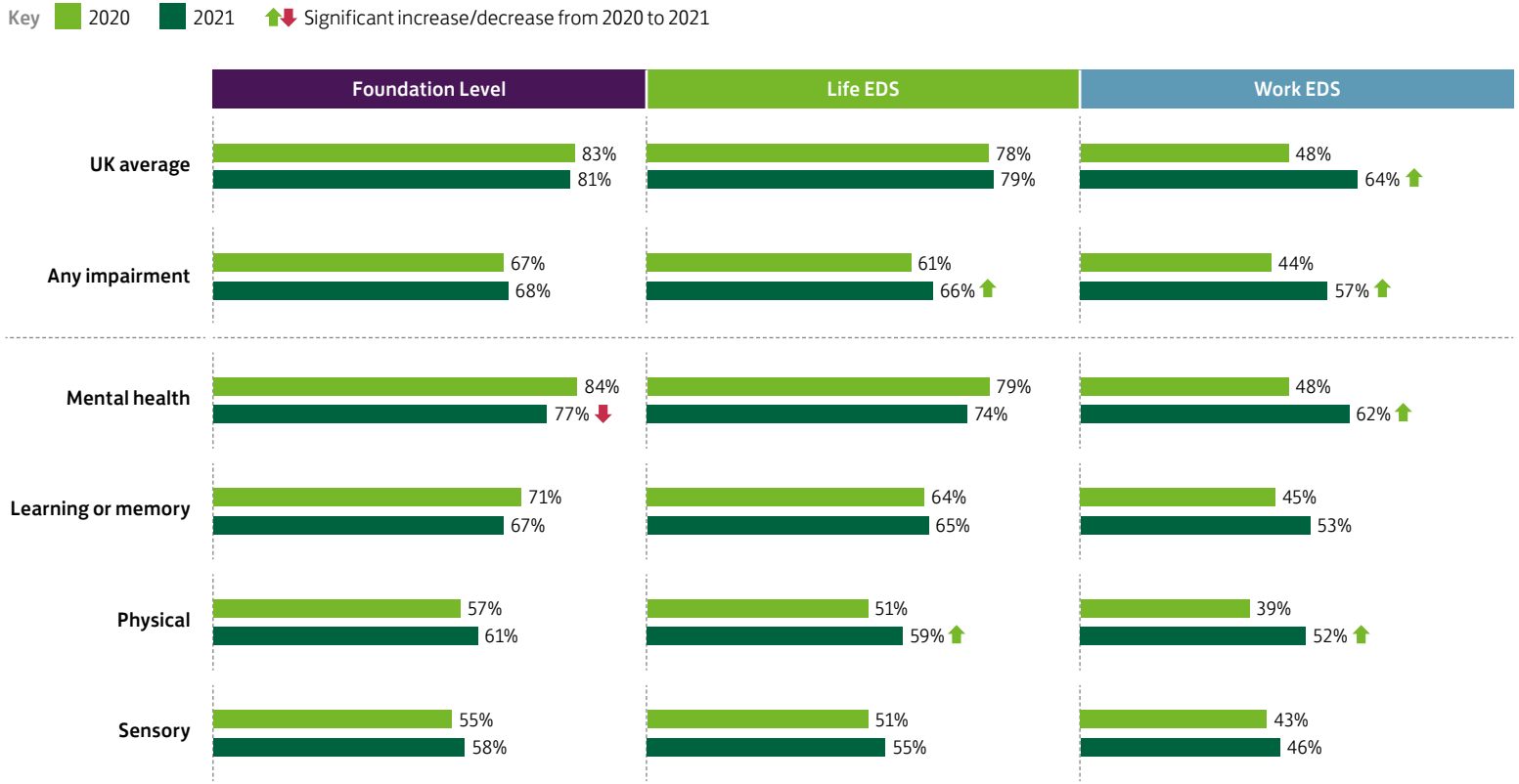
51% can manage digital records and financial accounts (e.g. expenses, budgets) through digital systems

This indicates the skills gap is not completely uniform and to narrow the impairment skills gap, focus should centre on these tasks (*see Appendix 30*).

The following section explores the digital capabilities of people with different forms of impairment. In line with the FCA Financial Lives Survey*, the data has been categorised to better understand the different needs of people living with mental health challenges, physical impairments, sensory and visual impairments.

Whilst Work EDS has improved for all impairment groups, those with a sensory impairment lag behind and require focused work-based support

Figure 28. **Proportion of those aged 18+ with different impairments who have Foundation Level, Life and Work EDS 2020 and 2021**



All adults Those with any impairment 2021: 2020 n = 1,092, 2021 n = 1,368. Any sensory impairment: 2020 n = 330, 2021 n = 494. Any physical impairment: 2020 n = 600, 2021 n = 856. A learning or memory impairment: 2020 n = 265, 2021 n = 541. A mental health condition: 2020 n = 336, 2021 n = 451.

Working adults Those with any impairment 2021: 2020 n = 323, 2021 n = 485. Any sensory impairment: 2020 n = 80**, 2021 n = 162. Any physical impairment: 2020 n = 115, 2021 n = 237. A learning or memory impairment: 2020 n = 76**, 2021 n = 190. A mental health condition: 2020 n = 144, 2021 n = 182.

* fca.org.uk/publications/research/financial-lives

**Caution: Low base size

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2020

Pandemic working has seen millions of workers with mental health conditions improve their digital skills

The impact of the pandemic on mental health has been widely discussed. Research conducted by UK mental health charity Mind, indicates that more than two-thirds of adults with mental health problems have reported their mental health worsening during lockdown*. Mind suggest that as a direct consequence of the pandemic, many without previous experience of mental health problems may now develop them. The Centre for Mental Health predicts this could be up to as many as ten million people needing new or additional mental health support as a direct consequence of the crisis**.

In this data set, there are now four percentage points more people in the UK with a mental health condition (compared to 7% in 2020). In particular there has been an increase of seven percentage points in terms of 18-24 year olds living with this type of impairment. 75% of 18-24 year olds with a mental health condition also have one or more other impairments, typically associated with lower levels of digital skills.

Despite this, adults with a mental health condition are overall more likely to have digital skills at each stage of the framework (in comparison to those with other impairments). Across the last year, workers with mental health conditions have seen an increase of 14 percentage points in the essential digital skills needed for work, the largest improvement compared to other impairment types.

Those with a physical impairment have seen marked improvements

Amongst adults with a physical impairment*** the Foundation Level is trending upwards and has increased by four percentage points with strong improvements for Life EDS and Work EDS (up eight and thirteen percentage points respectively).

As noted on *page 40*, those with an impairment have significantly improved in terms of Life EDS and adults with physical impairments are behind this uplift, especially those with stamina, breathing or fatigue conditions (*Appendix 31*).

Those with a sensory impairment report the lowest level of digital skills

Figure 25 indicates that relative to other types of impairment, those adults with a sensory impairment† are the least likely to have the Foundation Level. However they have improved significantly across four of the fundamental tasks in 2021.

These adults split into Hearing and Vision impairments (note, a person can feature in both). Just over half of adults with a hearing impairment have the Foundation Level – the lowest sub-group. Those with a visual impairment are more likely to have the Foundation Level, this still lags 17 percentage points behind those without an impairment (*Appendix 32*).

Those with a sensory impairment are also the least likely to have both Life EDS and Work EDS.

* mind.org.uk/media-a/5929/the-mental-health-emergency_a4_final.pdf?

** centreformentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/publication/download/CentreforMentalHealth_COVID_MH_Forecasting3_Oct20_0.pdf

*** A condition or illness affecting mobility, dexterity, stamina, breathing or fatigue that affects their ability to do day-to-day activities

† A condition or illness related to their hearing or vision that affects their ability to do day-to-day activities

Spotlight on ethnicity

Over the last few years, ethnic minority groups have shown continued improvements, and 2021 is no different. Adults in ethnic minority groups remain more likely to have the Foundation Level, Life and Work skills, as well as being able to complete more tasks within each of the skills compared to White ethnic groups.

Ethnic minorities show the greatest improvement for digital skills

Those from an ethnic minority group continue to lead on the fundamental digital skills. Although the proportion of all UK adults with the Foundation Level has dropped overall, this increased for those from an ethnic minority group. A higher proportion of ethnic minority groups have Essential Digital Skills in 2021, whilst the White ethnic population shows stability. This increased level of digital skills is mirrored in the workplace – 64% of ethnic minority employees have the digital skills needed for work today.

In each year to date, the proportion of adults from an ethnic minority group who have the Foundation Level has been ahead of those from the White ethnic group. This is even more evident in 2021 with the gap widening to 11 percentage points, driven by improvements amongst ethnic minorities (up six percentage points).

It is important to note that the make-up of the ethnic population within this sample skews more towards the younger age groups, and age as we have seen is highly correlated with digital skills*. However even when isolating the data to those aged 25+, the same patterns are seen.

56% more ethnic minority workers have the digital skills needed for the workplace, compared to 2020

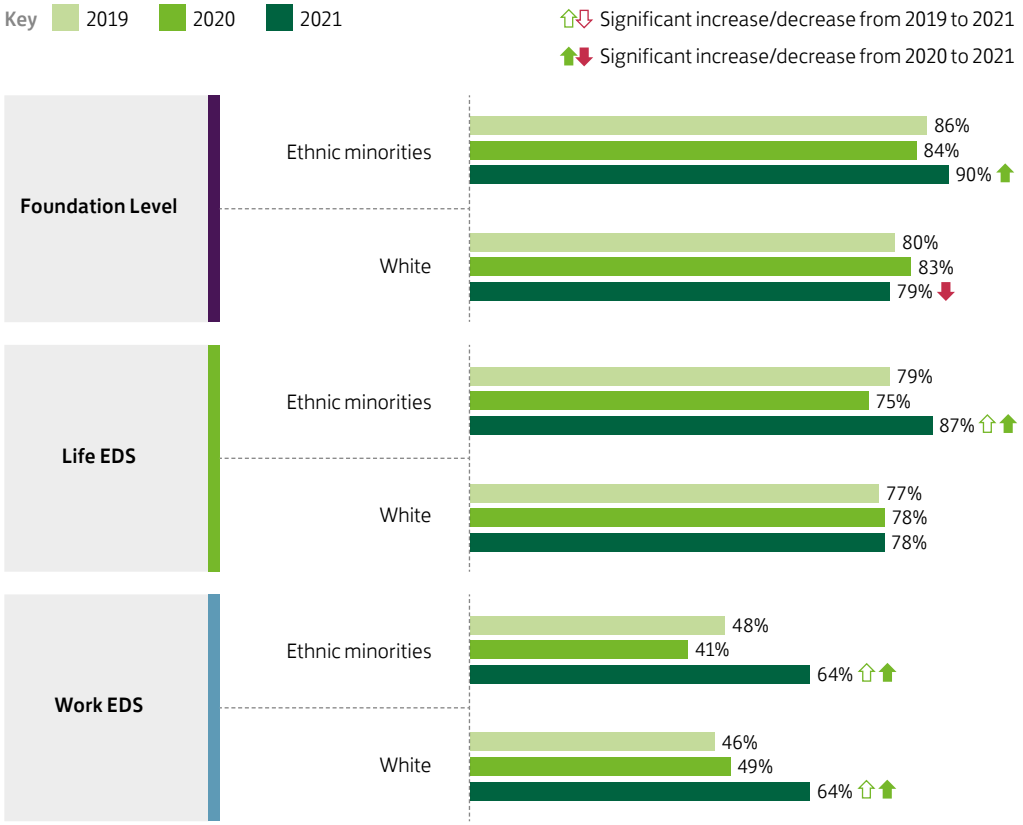
When it comes to workplace digital skills, in 2020 working adults from ethnic minority groups lagged behind the White ethnic group (41% and 49% respectively). However, in 2021 working adults across White and ethnic minority backgrounds are now on a par (both 64%).

In just one year, there has been a 50% increase in the proportion of ethnic minority workers who have Essential Digital Skills for Work (a higher increase than seen with the White ethnic group).

There are fewer ethnic minorities with no work skills compared to those from a White ethnic background

At the other end of the spectrum, there are also fewer workers from an ethnic minority background with zero workplace digital skills (*Appendix 33*).

Figure 29. **Proportion of adults 18+ from an ethnic minority or White ethnic group that have the Foundation Level, Life EDS and Work EDS, 2019, 2020 and 2021 (Work EDS expressed as proportion of working adults)**



Ethnic minorities: 2019 n = 471, 2020 n = 533, 2021 n = 388. White: 2019 n = 3,647, 2020 n = 3,646, 2021 n = 3,717. Working ethnic minorities: 2019 n = 255, 2020 n = 304, 2021 n = 251. Working White: 2019 n = 1,768, 2020 n = 1,804, 2021 n = 1,971.

* ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/age-groups/latest

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Spotlight on working groups

Throughout the pandemic, digital transformation in the workplace in the UK has accelerated. However, the impact of this distribution is asymmetric – not all working groups or industries have been affected equally.

In this chapter, digital skills will be explored amongst workers who work part-time compared to full-time.

Full-time workers are most likely to have digital skills

This year working adults continue to exhibit greater digital skills compared to those not working. Working adults have a lead of 29 percentage points over non-workers for the Foundation Level. Those who work are also more likely to have Life EDS than non-workers (90% and 61% respectively). Once in the workplace, those employed full time are the most likely to have Work EDS (68%) compared to part-time workers (51%) and the self-employed (61%). As shown on pages 12 and 21 , in terms of digital ability the retired are on the lowest end of the spectrum.

In previous years, those who are self-employed had the highest levels of Work digital skills than full- and part-time workers. However, in 2021 Work EDS is highest for those in full-time employment. Perhaps the impact of the pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on the self-employed, particularly for those without the support of a team – over a third of those who are self-employed work by themselves (35%).

Part-time workers are at a digital disadvantage, but demographic profile plays a role

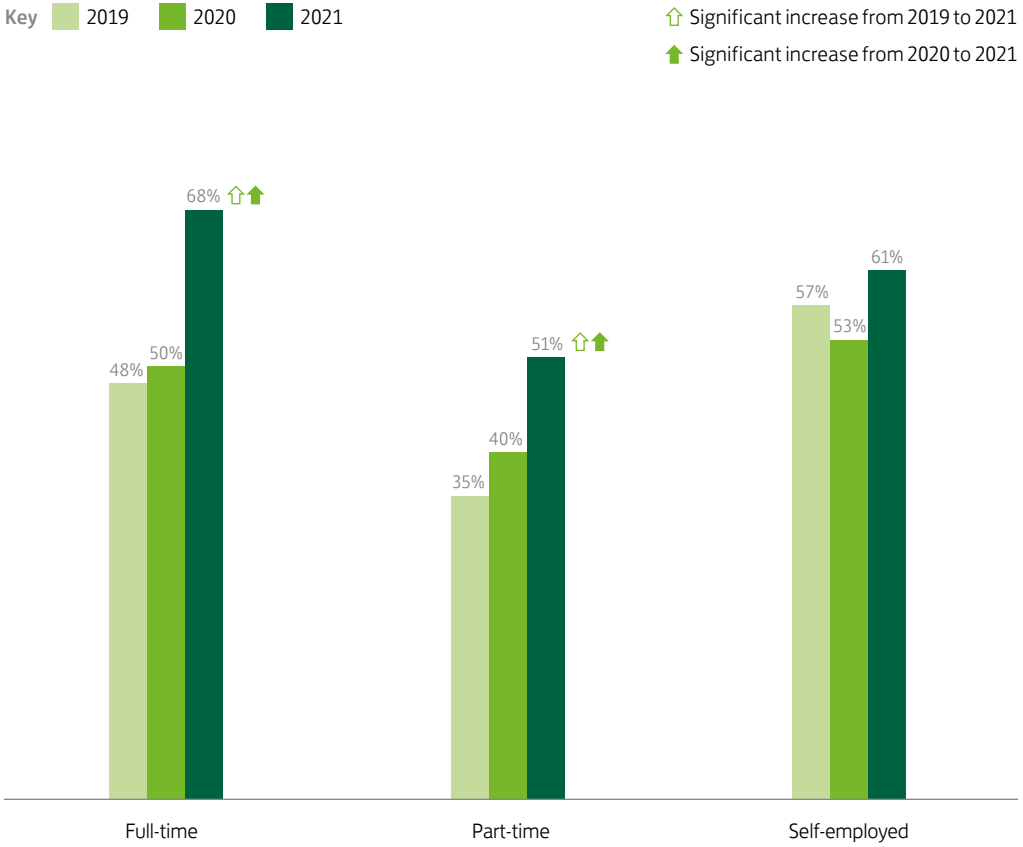
Part-time workers and the self-employed are similar in terms of attaining the Foundation Level and Life EDS (*Appendix 34*). In comparison to full-time workers, those working part-time are more likely to be female, older, have an impairment and have no formal qualifications – all attributes are correlated with lower digital ability amongst the total sample. Part-time workers are also more likely to work in the retail and service industries. Perhaps these roles are weighted towards the frontline and may provide less exposure to technology or opportunities to acquire digital skills for Work.

There are c.6.1 million fewer in the UK workforce with zero Work skills

The proportion of people with no Work skills, but the basic Foundation Level, has seen a sharp drop of 19 percentage points (c.6.1 million), (*page 24*) demonstrating there are now many more people equipped with some of the skills needed in the workplace. This still leaves c.2.3 million workers with no work skills despite having the fundamental skills.

Figure 30 shows Work EDS has increased across all working groups. However, the level of improvement is seven percentage points higher amongst full-time workers compared to part-time workers, meaning that part-time workers are at an even greater digital disadvantage in 2021. Equal opportunities for training across both industry and working status are vital.

Figure 30. **Proportion of working adults 18+ that have Work EDS, split by working status, 2019, 2020 and 2021**



Full-time: 2019 n = 1,305, 2020 n = 1,380, 2021 n = 1,499. Part-time: 2019 n = 485, 2020 n = 462, 2021 n = 392. Self-employed: 2019 n = 239, 2020 n = 270, 2021 n = 346.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Calls to action

Make the most of this moment in time

With civil society healing, UK Government considering post-pandemic recovery and organisations refreshing workforce strategies, it is imperative that we take the opportunity to embed digitisation and capability building as a golden thread.

Organisations often reflect on digital skills as separate to leadership skills, communication skills and technical training. In fact, using digital tools and services is intrinsic to everyone's life and work in the UK today. Broader sustainability goals around regional regeneration, environmental sustainability and supporting poverty, can only be achieved if people in the UK have the confidence and capability to harness digital. Given the volumes of UK citizens lacking essential digital skills for life and work, there is still a necessity for dedicated focus. A sign of true progress will be when digital skills and inclusion are truly, systemically embedded.

10 million reasons to act now

The data shows that an estimated 10 million adults in the UK today are at risk of digital exclusion and therefore exclusion from wider society as we know it. If they do try and go online, their lack of skills could put them at risk of online harms.

These people are vulnerable today. It is an absolute priority that these vulnerable groups are identified, engaged with and ultimately given the capability and confidence to safely interact and thrive in an online world.

Build it and they will (not) come

Across industry and digital skills providers, there are numerous resources and opportunities for people to upskill. However, our Consumer Digital Index survey data reinforces that despite the limitations of lockdown, it was still only for core reasons and clear outcomes that people were upskilling digitally. For example, 28% of the UK population were motivated through needing to work from home and 18% upskilled to keep in touch with friends and family.

As such support should anchor onto outcomes, end goals and 'hook' UK citizens with what they will be able to do instead of promoting digital skills as an end result. We all need to spend more time on the 'route to market' and working together to incentivise and implement real change.

Thank you to our Partners

Lloyds Bank Essential Digital Skills Report 2021

Join the conversation:

- The report and other content can be found online: **lloydsbank.com/consumerdigitalindex**
- Please refer to our website for appendices, national and regional data and helpful links and resources
- Please get in touch at: **DigitalSkillsInclusion@lloydsbanking.com**
- For more information on the Lloyds Bank Academy please visit: **lloydsbankacademy.co.uk**
- Join the conversation: **#EssentialDigitalSkills #ConsumerDigitalIndex @LloydsBankNews**

Please contact us if you would like this information in an alternative format such as Braille, large print or audio CD.

Great care has been taken to ensure that the information used here cannot be in any way traced to a specific individual. This report has used aggregated data across social and demographic groups to highlight the trends and insights that will help consumers, charities and UK Government to understand more about our nation's digital and financial inclusion landscape.

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Essential Digital Skills Report 2021 Appendix

Essential Digital Skills methodology

Sample

Ipsos MORI interviewed 4,129 participants aged 18+ years in the UK (Great Britain and Northern Ireland) via their telephone Omnibus. Data are weighted to represent the UK population in terms of age, social grade, region and working status within the gender variable and additional profiles on tenure and ethnicity using PAMCo data. Data are further weighted on device ownership using data derived from a robust national survey.

Fieldwork dates

12th March – 25th April 2021.

Fieldwork methodology

The Ipsos MORI telephone Omnibus (also known as CATIBUS), was used for the first time as the methodology for the Essential Digital Skills study. CATIBUS interviews a nationally representative sample of those aged 18+ in Great Britain. An additional sample of interviews in Northern Ireland was then conducted to ensure UK representivity (n=150). CATIBUS uses telephone interviewing to ensure no online bias, with responses entered directly into an electronic questionnaire by the interviewer conducting the interview.

The sample design incorporates a range of variables to ensure a robust, representative and consistent sample is achieved each week of fieldwork. CATIBUS uses a rigorous sampling method – robust samples of telephone leads are purchased from specialist business sample providers as well as Random Digit Dialling, and consumer sample lists of over ten million people in the UK which can be targeted locally and nationally. Approximately 60% of interviews are conducted on a mobile and 40% via landline.

Only a limited amount of corrective weighting is needed to adjust the results on the Omnibus survey so that they are in line with the national demographic profile.

Caveats to changing fieldwork methodology

In previous years, Ipsos MORI conducted the EDS survey through the face-to-face Omnibus (CAPIBUS) which was able to reach those aged 15+ in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic compromising the safety of respondents and interviewers and prompting local lockdowns throughout the UK, the survey was carried out by telephone, rather than face-to-face interviewing. This means some caution should be taken when making exact comparisons with previous years given mode effects may be in place. Having said that, the questions were asked in the same way.

As it was not possible to survey those aged 15-17 using a CATIBUS approach, any 2021 data collected through CATIBUS is not directly comparable to the EDS results reported in the 2019 or 2020 Consumer Index Report, as that data is based on a sample aged 15+. In order to make a direct comparison, the 2019 and 2020 data in this report have been recalculated based on a sample of adults 18+ with data re-weighted to represent the UK population 18+. Thus, all data in this 2021 Essential Digital Skills report is directly comparable to previous years but these data points may differ to those reported in the 2019 and 2020 Consumer Index Reports given the data have been re-calculated.

Both the CAPIBUS and CATIBUS approaches use quotas to ensure a broad spread of people are interviewed across the country. Typically, the sample agreeing to take part in a face-to-face interview comprises more people who don't have Internet access than those interviewed on the telephone. In a range of research studies conducted prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the difference has been around 3 to 4 percentage points. Ipsos MORI sourced an industry-leading UK representative national survey that had a metric covering ownership of Internet-enabled devices in the household (i.e. smartphones, laptops/PCs and tablets). The survey had a sample of c.4,000 respondents aged 18+ and utilised face-to-face interviewing during the short window that this methodology was possible in Q3 2020 (post the initial UK Covid-19 lockdown in H1 2020) as well as interviews in January 2020 (pre Covid-19 pandemic in the UK). This data was used to create an extra weighting scheme that balanced the EDS 2021 telephone sample to the level of Internet-enabled device ownership that was reported in the study's face-to-face sample in Q3 2020. This helped to avoid any possible online bias as a result of the methodology change.

Essential Digital Skills calculation

The Essential Digital Skills report is based on data collected to help understand if people would be able to do a range of tasks in either a work setting or in their personal lives. These are grouped into six questions: Foundation, Communicating, Handling Information and Content, Transacting, Problem Solving and Being Safe and Legal Online.

To achieve the Foundation Level, you must be able to complete all of the seven 'tasks' included in this question.

To achieve any of the skills in a 'Life' context you only need to be able to complete one task from that skill question in your personal life, but you also must have the Foundation Level. If you have all five Life Skills (as well as Foundation), you are classed as having 'Life EDS'. Across all five Skills there are a total of 29 Life tasks.

If you are employed, for each of the Life Skills you have achieved, you are then able to achieve the equivalent work skill question, by being able to complete one task from that skill question in your working environment. As with Life EDS, if you can complete all five Work Skills then you have achieved Work EDS. Across all five Skills there are a total of 17 Work tasks.

In 2021, all questions and tasks concerning Essential Digital Skills remain unchanged.

UK representivity and population estimates

This report includes the numbers of adults 18+ that have been inferred to be in a particular group by extrapolating from our research data (for example, the number of those 18+ in the UK with all seven Foundation tasks is 81% which has been extrapolated to represent an estimated 42.9 million people). Total population figures are taken from the most recently published estimates provided by the Office for National Statistics (2020 mid-year stats for the UK). For the Essential Digital Skills data, percentages are applied to a population base aged 18+ (52,890,000). Total working population figures are taken from the most recently published estimates provided by the Office for National Statistics (2020 mid-year stats for the UK), weighted to the Labour Force Survey stats (Labour Force Study Aug-Oct 2020). For the Essential Digital Skills data, percentages are applied to a working population base aged 18+ (32,693,000). Sources can be found below:
ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2020

ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/mgrz/lms

The technical appendices can be found here:
lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/banking_with_us/whats-happening/210922-lloyds-ipsos-mori-essential-digital-skills-technical-note.pdf

Whilst every care has been taken to ensure the robustness of our data, our data accuracy is limited by its sample size, and therefore there is a margin of error that exists around any figures reported. All significance testing is calculated at the 95% confidence level, with the 95% confidence interval to be used for all population extrapolations. This means that the population size of any group lies in a range which has been calculated and included in this set of appendices. For example, it is reported on *page 10* that 81% of UK adults (estimated 42.9 million people) have all seven Foundation tasks; however, the true population value will be ±1.2 with a 95% confidence interval. Thus, there is 95% confidence that the correct figure is between 42.0 million and 43.3 million.

Impairment classification

The following question was put to the respondents in the survey to establish impairment status:

'Do any of these condition(s) or illness(es) affect your ability to carry out day-to-day activities? Select all that apply'

1. Addiction, e.g. drugs, alcohol, gambling
2. Vision, e.g. blindness or partial sight
3. Hearing, e.g. deafness or partial hearing
4. Mobility, e.g. walking short distances or climbing stairs
5. Dexterity, e.g. lifting and carrying objects, or using a keyboard
6. Learning, understanding or concentrating
7. Memory, e.g. forgetting conversations or appointments
8. Mental health e.g. depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
9. Stamina, breathing or fatigue
10. Socially or behaviourally (associated with a mental health condition, or with a developmental disorder like autism or ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder))
11. None of these conditions severely affect my ability to carry out day-to-day activities

99. Don't know
97. Prefer not to say

In the report, nets were created such that "Has any impairment" is a combination of any impairments (codes 1-10); "Sensory (sight or sound)" is a combination of vision and hearing (codes 2 or 3), "Physical" is a combination of mobility, dexterity and stamina, breathing or fatigue (codes 4, 5 or 9) and "Learning or memory" is a combination of learning and memory (codes 6 or 7).

Ethnicity classification

The following question was asked to the respondents in the survey to establish a respondent's ethnicity group:

Which group do you consider yourself to belong to?

1. White – English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
2. White – Irish
3. White – Gypsy or Irish Traveller
4. White – Any other White background
5. Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
6. Mixed – White and Black African
7. Mixed – White and Asian
8. Mixed – Any other Mixed / multiple ethnic background
9. Asian/Asian British – Indian
10. Asian/Asian British – Pakistani
11. Asian/Asian British – Bangladeshi
12. Asian/Asian British – Chinese
13. Asian/Asian British – Any other Asian background
14. Black/Black British – African
15. Black/Black British – Caribbean
16. Black/Black British – Any other Black / African / Caribbean background
17. Arab
18. Any other ethnic group

Don't know

Refused

In the report, nets were created such that "White" is a combination of White ethnic groups (codes 1-4) and "Ethnic minorities" refers to Black, Asian and minority Ethnic groups (codes 5-18). Note that the ethnic minorities group does not include White minorities such as Irish Travellers.

Employment classification

The following question was put to the working respondents in the survey to understand their workplace:

Which of the following best describes the industry your company operates in?

1. Telecommunications
2. Technology
3. CPG / FMCG
4. Retail
5. Financial services
6. Not-for-profit
7. Manufacturing & Automotive
8. Travel
9. Media & Advertising
10. Government
11. Education
12. Medical
13. Public service
14. Engineering
15. Service industry
16. Something else (specify) [FIXED]

Internet access

The following question was asked to the respondents in the survey to understand how they access the Internet:

Which of these best describes your use of the Internet? Please include all use of the Internet, including sending and receiving emails

1. Several times a day
2. Around once a day
3. 4 or 5 times a week
4. 2 or 3 times a week
5. Around once a week
6. 2 or 3 times a month
7. Around once a month
8. Less than around once a month
9. Never but you have access
10. Never but you do not have access

In the report, a net was created such that "Has Internet access" is a combination of codes 1-9.

Claimed improvement in digital ability

The following questions were asked to the respondents in the survey to understand how they perceive that they have improved their use of the Internet and other online activities:

Thinking about accessing information on the Internet or through computers/laptops or other devices (e.g. tablet, smartphone) ... In the last 12 months, do you think your ability has improved?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

And still thinking about the last 12 months, which of the following apply to you?

1. You have used the Internet to access online promotions and deals to save money
2. You are able to help others to do more online
3. You are better able to manage your money online
4. You have been able to keep in touch with family and friends more
5. You feel more secure in your job and future career prospects
6. You have thought more about growing and progressing your career through digital training
7. None of these

Essential Digital Skills survey unweighted sample sizes

Pages 12 & 21

2021 Sample Sizes

East Midlands **260**
East England **362**
London **507**
North East **156**
North West **418**
South East **524**
South West **344**
West Midlands **335**
Yorkshire and the Humber **315**
Scotland **467**
Northern Ireland **183**
Wales **258**
England **3,221**
UK **4,129**

2020 Sample Sizes

East Midlands **287**
East England **380**
London **601**
North East **197**
North West **431**
South East **554**
South West **288**
West Midlands **327**
Yorkshire and the Humber **393**
Scotland **371**
Northern Ireland **147**
Wales **213**
England **3,458**
UK **4,189**

Page 13

75+ **464**
18-24 **368**
No formal qualifications **672**
University degree **1,519**
Retired **1,241**
Working full-time **1,499**
Sensory impairment **494**
No impairment **2,713**
No children in household **3,083**
Children in household **1,046**
Personal income <£13,499 **671**
Personal income £75,000+ **185**
Female **2,162**
Male **1,948**
White **3,717**
Ethnic minority **388**

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75+ **464**
18-24 **368**
No formal qualifications **672**
University degree **1,519**
Retired **1,241**
Working full-time **1,499**
Sensory impairment **494**
No impairment **2,713**
No children in household **3,083**
Children in household **1,046**
Personal income <£13,499 **671**
Personal income £75,000+ **185**
Female **2,162**
Male **1,948**
White **3,717**
Ethnic minority **388**
1 person in household **1,044**
3-5 people in household **1,500**

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2021 Sample Sizes

North East, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber **490**
East Midlands and West Midlands **357**
East England, London and South East **792**
South West and Wales **304**
Scotland and Northern Ireland **294**

2020 Sample Sizes

North East, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber **493**
East Midlands and West Midlands **276**
East England, London and South East **894**
South West and Wales **212**
Scotland and Northern Ireland **237**

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65+ **127**
25-34 **442**
No formal qualifications **144**
University degree **1,108**
Working part-time **392**
Working full-time **1,499**
Sensory impairment **162**
No impairment **1,728**
Personal income <£13,499 **189**
Personal income £40,000 - £74,999 **464**
Female **1099**
Male **1,128**
White **1,971**
Ethnic minority **251**
Retail **153**
Technology **109**
Lower SMB (1-249) **1,227**
Upper SMB (250-999) **180**

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2020 Sample Sizes

Technology **104**
Education **228**
Engineering **151**
Medical **208**
Public service **200**
Manufacturing & Automotive **118**
Service industry **301**
Retail **232**

2021 Sample Sizes

Technology **109**
Education **302**
Engineering **108**
Medical **206**
Public service **200**
Manufacturing & Automotive **127**
Service industry **218**
Retail **153**

The Foundation Level

Appendix A. **Profile of adults 18+ who are digitally excluded (Zero Foundation tasks), 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 10)*

Those with no Foundation tasks: 2020 n = 414, 2021 n = 203.

	2020	2021
Male	41%	32%
Female	59%	67%
18-54	10%	5%
55-64	16%	7%
65+	75%	87%
Not working	85%	95%
Working	15%	5%

Appendix 1. **Proportion of adults 18+ that have the Foundation Level (can do all 7 tasks), split by nation and region, 2019, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 12)*

(pp) Percentage point (pp) difference (coloured numbers represent a significant change)

Lowest sample size: Northern Ireland n = 147. Highest sample size: England n = 3,458.

	2019	2020	2021	pp change 2021 vs. 2019	pp change 2021 vs. 2020
UK	81%	83%	81%	0pp	-2pp
England	81%	84%	81%	0pp	-3pp
Scotland	83%	76%	81%	-2pp	+5pp
Wales	74%	74%	73%	-1pp	-1pp
Northern Ireland	82%	84%	79%	-3pp	-5pp
East Midlands	80%	74%	82%	+2pp	+8pp
East England	78%	87%	81%	+3pp	-6pp
London	82%	89%	84%	+2pp	-5pp
North East	80%	84%	82%	+2pp	-2pp
North West	79%	83%	81%	+2pp	-2pp
South East	83%	83%	83%	0pp	0pp
South West	82%	84%	78%	-4pp	-6pp
West Midlands	79%	86%	81%	+2pp	-5pp
Yorkshire and the Humber	83%	84%	77%	-6pp	-7pp

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Appendix 2. **Proportion of adults 18+ that have No Foundation (can do 0 tasks), split by nation and region, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 12)*

(pp) Percentage point (pp) difference (coloured numbers represent a significant change)

Lowest sample size: Northern Ireland n = 147. Highest sample size: England n = 3,458.

	2020	2021	pp change 2021 vs. 2020
UK	9%	6%	-3pp
England	9%	5%	-4pp
Scotland	14%	6%	-8pp
Wales	9%	9%	0pp
Northern Ireland	7%	11%	+4pp
East Midlands	15%	2%	-13pp
East England	8%	5%	-3pp
London	5%	5%	0pp
North East	11%	6%	-5pp
North West	9%	5%	-4pp
South East	11%	6%	-5pp
South West	9%	5%	-4pp
West Midlands	6%	5%	-1pp
Yorkshire and the Humber	9%	7%	-2pp

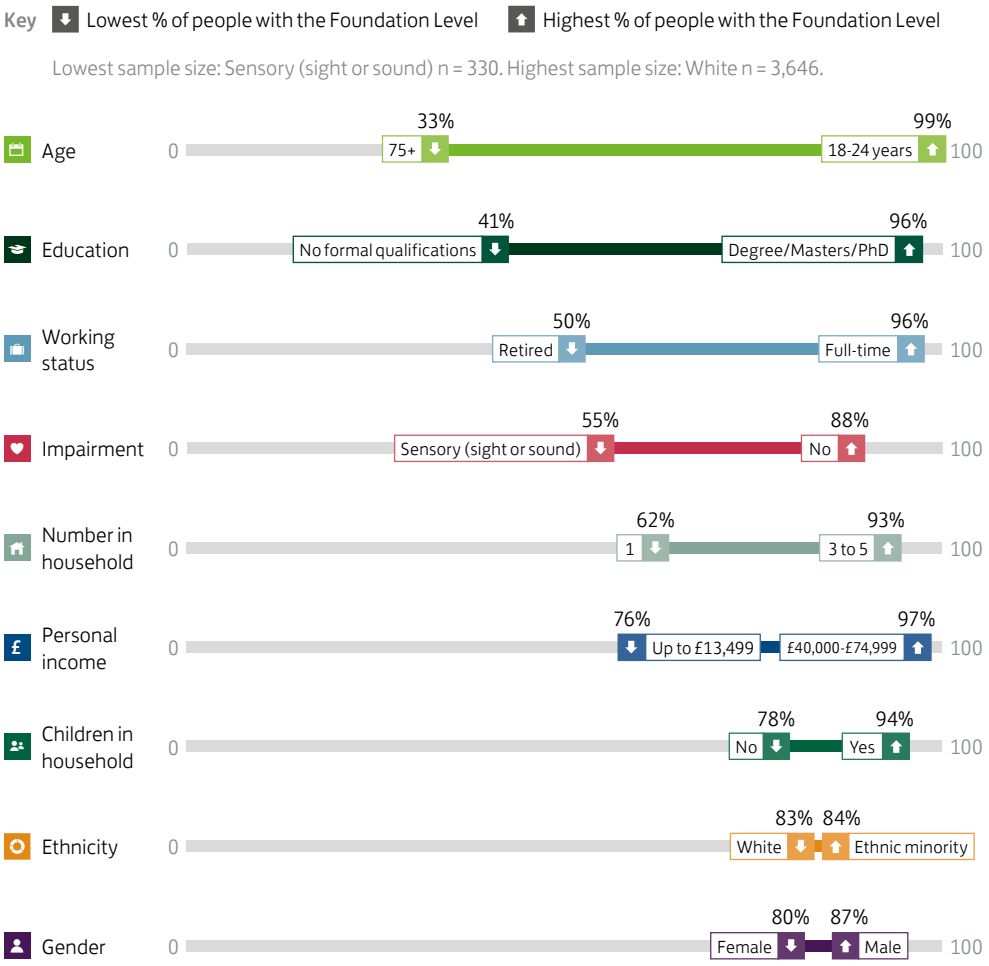
Appendix 3. **Proportion of adults 18+ that have Partial Foundation Level (can do 1-6 tasks), split by nation and region, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 12)*

(pp) Percentage point (pp) difference (coloured numbers represent a significant change)

Lowest sample size: Northern Ireland n = 147. Highest sample size: England n = 3,458.

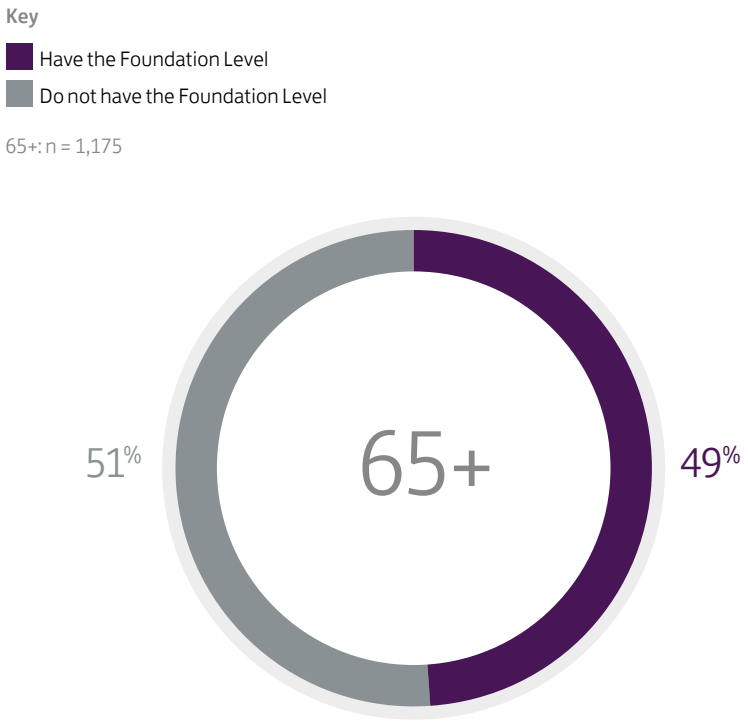
	2020	2021	pp change 2021 vs. 2020
UK	8%	14%	+6pp
England	7%	14%	+7pp
Scotland	10%	13%	+3pp
Wales	17%	17%	0pp
Northern Ireland	9%	9%	0pp
East Midlands	11%	16%	+5pp
East England	5%	14%	+9pp
London	7%	11%	+4pp
North East	5%	12%	+7pp
North West	7%	14%	+7pp
South East	6%	11%	+5pp
South West	8%	17%	+9pp
West Midlands	8%	15%	+7pp
Yorkshire and the Humber	7%	16%	+9pp

Appendix 4. **Proportion of adults 18+ across different demographics that have the Foundation Level, 2020**
(click to return to page 13)



Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2020

Appendix 5. **Proportion of adults 65+ that have the Foundation Level, 2021**
(click to return to page 13)

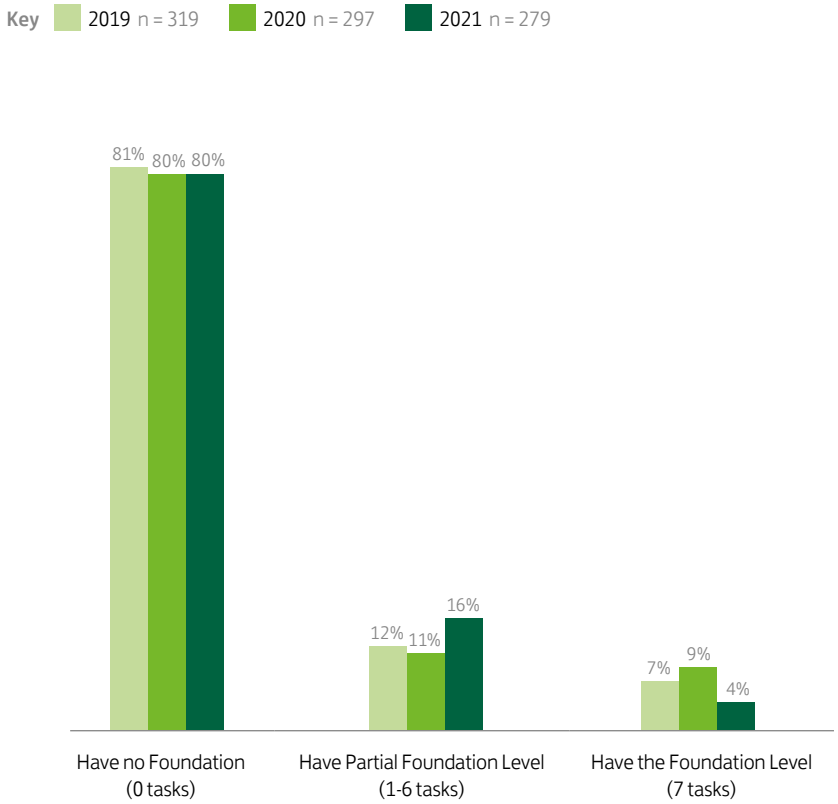


Appendix 6. **Proportion of adults 18+ that have the Foundation Level, split by age groups that do or do not have a university degree, 2021** *(click to return to page 13)*

Have degree/masters/PhD: 18-34 n = 410, 35-54 n = 672, 55-64 n = 218, 65+ n = 217.
Do not have degree/masters/PhD: 18-34 n = 432, 35-54 n = 534, 55-64 n = 461, 65+ n = 825.

	Have the Foundation Level
Aged 18-34 and have degree/masters/PhD	**97%**
Aged 18-34 and do not have degree/masters/PhD	**93%**
Aged 35-54 and have degree/masters/PhD	**97%**
Aged 35-54 and do not have degree/masters/PhD	**88%**
Aged 55-64 and have degree/masters/PhD	**89%**
Aged 55-64 and do not have degree/masters/PhD	**73%**
Aged 65+ and have degree/masters/PhD	**75%**
Aged 65+ and do not have degree/masters/PhD	**42%**

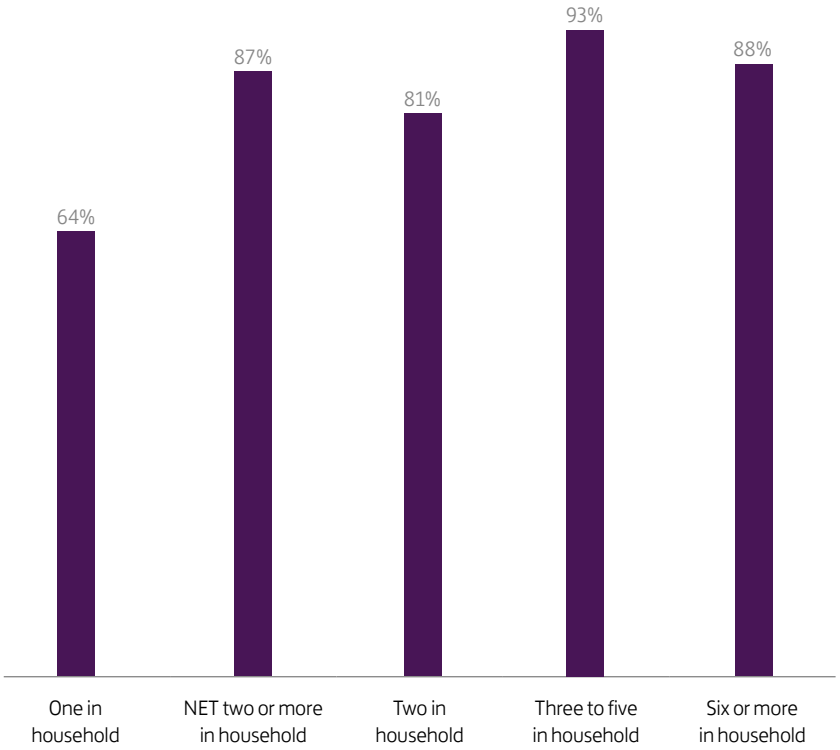
Appendix 7. **Proportion of adults 18+ with vocational qualifications and that can do the listed number of Foundation tasks (prerequisite to EDS for Life and Work), 2019, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 13)*



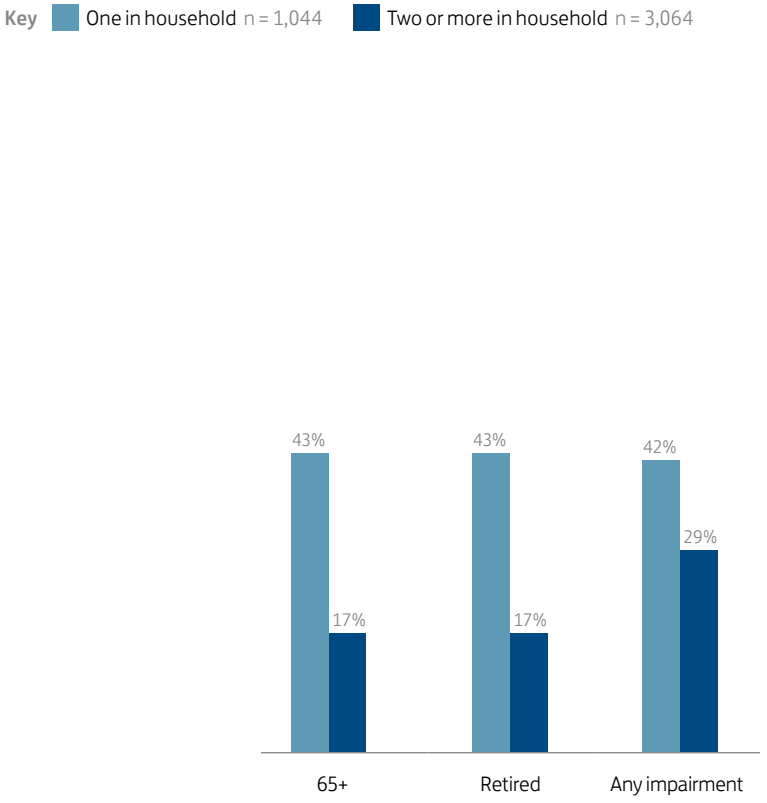
Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Appendix 8. **Proportion of adults 18+ living in households of different sizes that have the Foundation Level, 2021** *(click to return to page 14)*

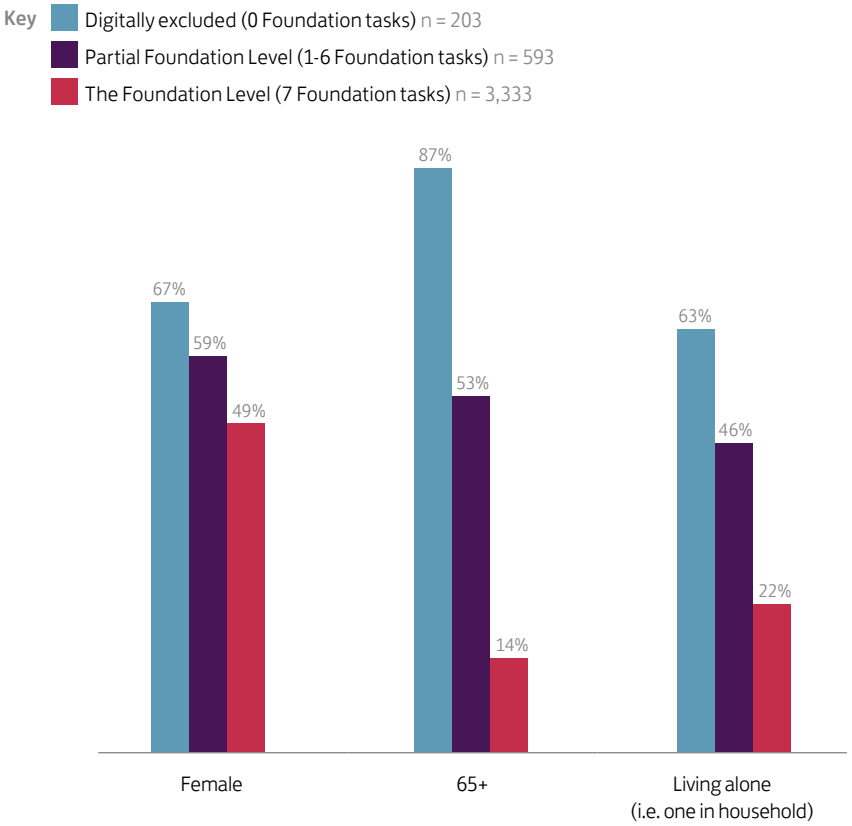
One in household: n = 1,044. Two or more in household: n = 3,064. Two in household: n = 1,437. Three to five in household: n = 1,500. Six or more in household: n = 127.



Appendix 9. **Profile of adults 18+ living in households of different sizes – key demographics, 2021** *(click to return to page 14)*



Appendix 10. **Profile of adults 18+ that can do none, some or all of the Foundation tasks – key demographics, 2021** *(click to return to page 14)*



Appendix 11. **Profile of adults 18+ that can do some or none of the Foundation tasks – key demographics, 2021** *(click to return to page 14)*

Can do 1-6 Foundation tasks: n = 593. 0 Foundation tasks: n = 203.

	Partial Foundation Level (1-6 tasks)	Digitally excluded (0 Foundation tasks)
Has Internet access	**91%**	**28%**
Has any of smartphone, tablet or laptop/PC	**86%**	**22%**

Life EDS

Appendix 12. **Proportion of adults 18+ who cannot do the listed number of 29 tasks within the five Life skills plus those that do not have the Foundation Level, 2019, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 17)*

Communicating
(those who cannot) **20%** c.**10.1** million

I cannot set up an email account **or I do not have Foundation level**
21%
19%
22% (+3pp) c.11.4 million

I cannot communicate with others digitally using email or other messaging applications (e.g. WhatsApp or Messenger) **or I do not have Foundation level**
21%
19%
20% (+1pp) c.10.2 million

I cannot use word processing applications to create documents (e.g. a CV or a letter) **or I do not have Foundation level**
23%
20%
23% (+3pp) c.12.1 million

I cannot share documents with others by attaching them to an email **or I do not have Foundation level**
22%
19%
21% (+2pp) c.10.9 million

I cannot communicate with others using video tools (e.g. Facetime or Skype) **or I do not have Foundation level**
25%
22%
23% (+1pp) c.11.7 million

I cannot post content on social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat) for example messages, photographs, video etc. **or I do not have Foundation level**
26%
23%
26% (+3pp) c.13.3 million

£ Transacting
(those who cannot) **20%** c.**10.4** million

I cannot set up an account online that enables me to buy goods or services (e.g. Amazon account, eBay, John Lewis etc.) **or I do not have Foundation level**
23%
20%
21% (+1pp) c.10.9 million

I cannot access and use public services online, including filling in forms (e.g. vehicle tax, voting registration, ordering repeat prescriptions, booking doctor appointments) **or I do not have Foundation level**
24%
21%
21% (0pp) c.11.1 million

I cannot use credit/debit cards or other forms of online payment to buy goods/ services online (e.g. PayPal, WorldPay) **or I do not have Foundation level**
22%
19%
21% (+2pp) c.11.1 million

I cannot upload documents and photographs when this is required to complete an online transaction **or I do not have Foundation level**
24%
21%
24% (+3pp) c.12.2 million

I cannot manage my money and transactions online securely, via websites or apps (e.g. bank account) **or I do not have Foundation level**
25%
21%
23% (+2pp) c.12.2 million

? Problem solving
(those who cannot) **21%** c.**10.6** million

I cannot use online tutorials, web chat, FAQs and forums to solve problems **or I do not have Foundation level**
27%
24%
27% (+3pp) c.14.2 million

I cannot use online tutorials, web chat, FAQs and forums to improve my skills in using the Internet and digital apps/products/services **or I do not have Foundation level**
28%
24%
30% (+6pp) c.15.6 million

I cannot use the Internet to find information that helps me solve problems **or I do not have Foundation level**
21%
19%
21% (+2pp) c.10.6 million

Please *see page 17* for those who **can** do the Life tasks

Top bar: 2019 n = 4,130
Centre bar: 2020 n = 4,189
Bottom bar: 2021 n = 4,129

2021 estimated population based on ONS 2020 mid-year estimates for those 18+ in the UK.

(pp) Percentage point (pp) difference, 2021 vs. 2020 (coloured numbers represent a significant change).

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Appendix 12. **Proportion of adults 18+ who cannot do the listed number of 29 tasks within the five Life skills plus those that do not have the Foundation Level, 2019, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 18)*

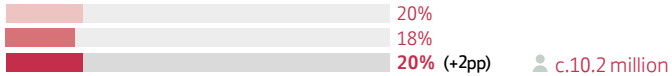
Handling information and content
(those who cannot)

20% **c.10.3** million

I cannot recognise what information or content may, or may not, be trustworthy on websites/apps **or I do not have Foundation level**

c.12.2 million

I cannot use search engines to find the information I'm looking for (e.g. search for news using a browser such as Chrome, Internet Explorer or Safari) **or I do not have Foundation level**



c.10.2 million

I cannot use bookmarks to save and retrieve websites and information **or I do not have Foundation level**

c.14.0 million

I cannot store information online and access content from a different device (e.g. using the Cloud) **or I do not have Foundation level**

c.15.5 million

I cannot organise my information and content using files and folders (either on my device, across multiple devices, or on the Cloud) **or I do not have Foundation level**

c.12.7 million

I cannot use the Internet to stream or download entertainment content (e.g. films, music, games or books) **or I do not have Foundation level**

c.12.8 million

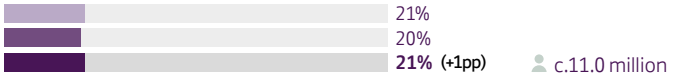
Being safe and legal online
(those who cannot)

20% **c.10.1** million

I cannot assess the risks and threats involved in carrying out activities online and act accordingly (e.g. use security software) **or I do not have Foundation level**

c.12.6 million

I cannot be careful with what I share online as I do not know that online activity produces a permanent record that can be accessed by others **or I do not have Foundation level**



c.11.0 million

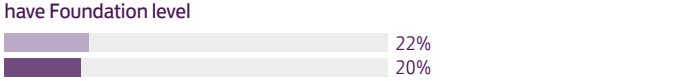
I cannot make sure not to share or use other people's data or intellectual property without their consent **or I do not have Foundation level**

c.11.5 million

I cannot respond to requests for authentication (e.g. reactivate an account when I've forgotten my password) **or I do not have Foundation level**

c.11.0 million

I cannot keep the information I use to access my online accounts secure, by using different and secure passwords for websites and accounts **or I do not have Foundation level**

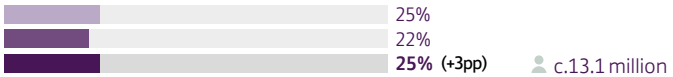


c.11.2 million

I cannot set privacy settings on my social media and other accounts **or I do not have Foundation level**

c.13.6 million

I cannot identify secure websites by looking for the padlock and 'https' in the address bar **or I do not have Foundation level**



c.13.1 million

I cannot recognise and avoid suspicious links in email, websites, social media messages and pop-ups and know that clicking on these links is a risk **or I do not have Foundation level**

c.11.0 million

I cannot update my computer security systems when necessary to prevent viruses and other risks **or I do not have Foundation level**

c.13.6 million

Please *see page 18* for those who **can** do the Life tasks

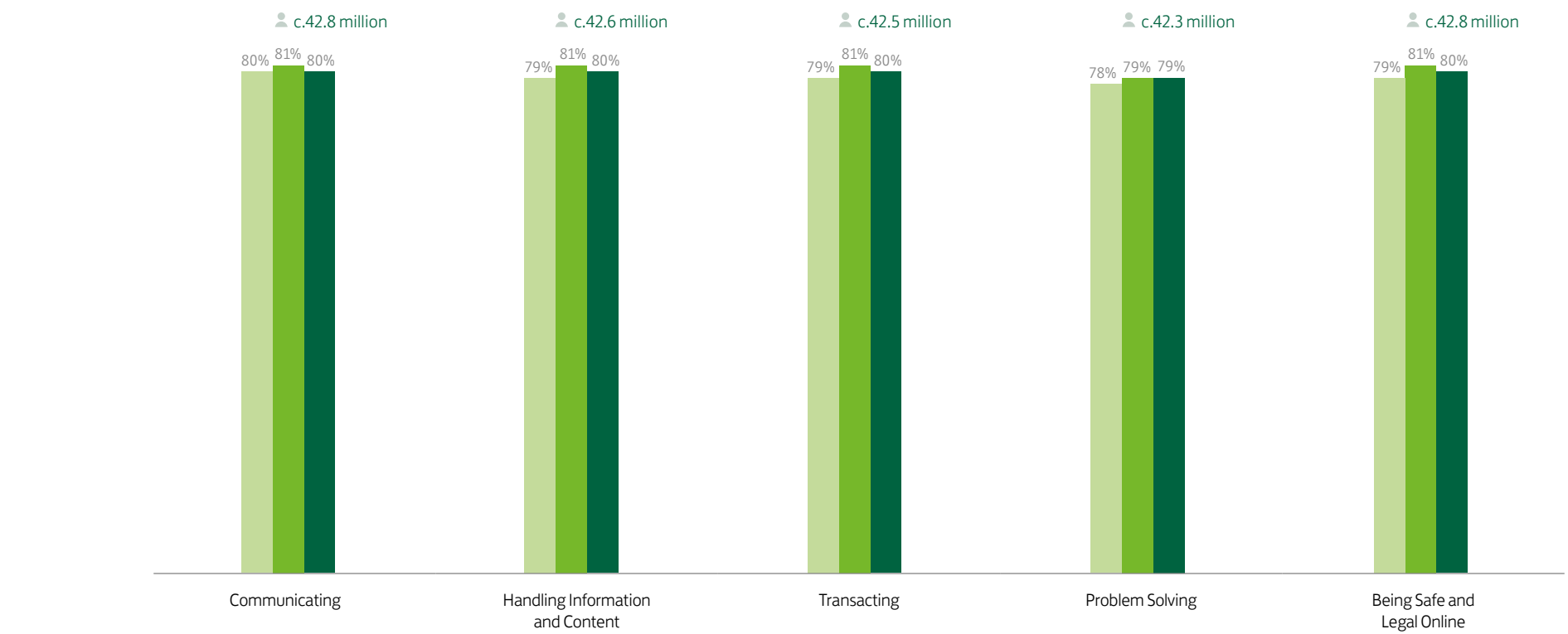
Top bar: 2019 n = 4,130
Centre bar: 2020 n = 4,189
Bottom bar: 2021 n = 4,129

2021 estimated population based on ONS 2020 mid-year estimates for those 18+ in the UK.

(pp) Percentage point (pp) difference, 2021 vs. 2020 (coloured numbers represent a significant change).

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Appendix 13. **Proportion of adults 18+ who can do each of the 5 Life skills, 2019, 2020 and 2021**
(click to return to page 18)



Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Appendix 14. **Profile of adults 18+ that can do 20-28 Life tasks or all 29 Life tasks – key demographics, 2021**
(click to return to page 19)

Can do 20-28 Life tasks: n = 1,439. Can do 29 Life tasks: n = 1,729.

	Can do 20-28 Life tasks	Can do 29 Life tasks
Male	**46%**	**54%**
Aged 18-34	**23%**	**43%**
Working	**67%**	**73%**
Have degree/Masters/PhD	**38%**	**48%**

Appendix 15. **Proportion of adults 18+ with ability to do 1-19 Life tasks, and the proportion who can do each Life task, 2021**
(click to return to page 20)

2021: n = 160

I can set up an email account	**58%**
I can communicate with others digitally using email or other messaging applications (e.g. WhatsApp or Messenger)	**82%**
I can use word processing applications to create documents (e.g. a CV or a letter)	**50%**
I can share documents with others by attaching them to an email	**62%**
I can communicate with others using video tools (e.g. Facetime or Skype)	**56%**
I can post content on social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat) for example messages, photographs, video etc.	**47%**
I can recognise what information or content may, or may not, be trustworthy on websites/apps	**46%**
I can use search engines to find the information I'm looking for (e.g. search for news using a browser such as Chrome, Internet Explorer or Safari)	**81%**
I can use bookmarks to save and retrieve websites and information	**26%**
I can store information online and access content from a different device (e.g. using the Cloud)	**16%**
I can organise my information and content using files and folders (either on my device, across multiple devices, or on the Cloud)	**31%**
I can use the Internet to stream or download entertainment content (e.g. films, music, games or books)	**42%**
I can set up an account online that enables me to buy goods or services (e.g. Amazon account, eBay, John Lewis etc.)	**67%**
I can access and use public services online, including filling in forms (e.g. vehicle tax, voting registration, ordering repeat prescriptions, booking doctor appointments)	**65%**
I can use credit/debit cards or other forms of online payment to buy goods/services online (e.g. PayPal, WorldPay)	**68%**
I can upload documents and photographs when this is required to complete an online transaction	**36%**
I can manage my money and transactions online securely, via websites or apps (e.g. bank account)	**57%**
I can use online tutorials, web chat, FAQs and forums to solve problems	**22%**
I can use online tutorials, web chat, FAQs and forums to improve my skills in using the Internet and digital apps/products/services	**15%**
I can use the Internet to find information that helps me solve problems	**79%**
I can assess the risks and threats involved in carrying out activities online and act accordingly (e.g. use security software)	**42%**
I am careful with what I share online as I know that online activity produces a permanent record that can be accessed by others	**75%**
I make sure not to share or use other people's data or intellectual property without their consent	**65%**
I can respond to requests for authentication (e.g. reactivate an account when I've forgotten my password)	**73%**
I can keep the information I use to access my online accounts secure, by using different and secure passwords for websites and accounts	**73%**
I can set privacy settings on my social media and other accounts	**38%**
I can identify secure websites by looking for the padlock and 'https' in the address bar	**51%**
I can recognise and avoid suspicious links in email, websites, social media messages and pop-ups and know that clicking on these links is a risk	**75%**
I can update my computer security systems when necessary to prevent viruses and other risks	**45%**

Appendix 16. **Percentage change in the proportion of adults 18+ in East Midlands who can do the listed tasks, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 21)*

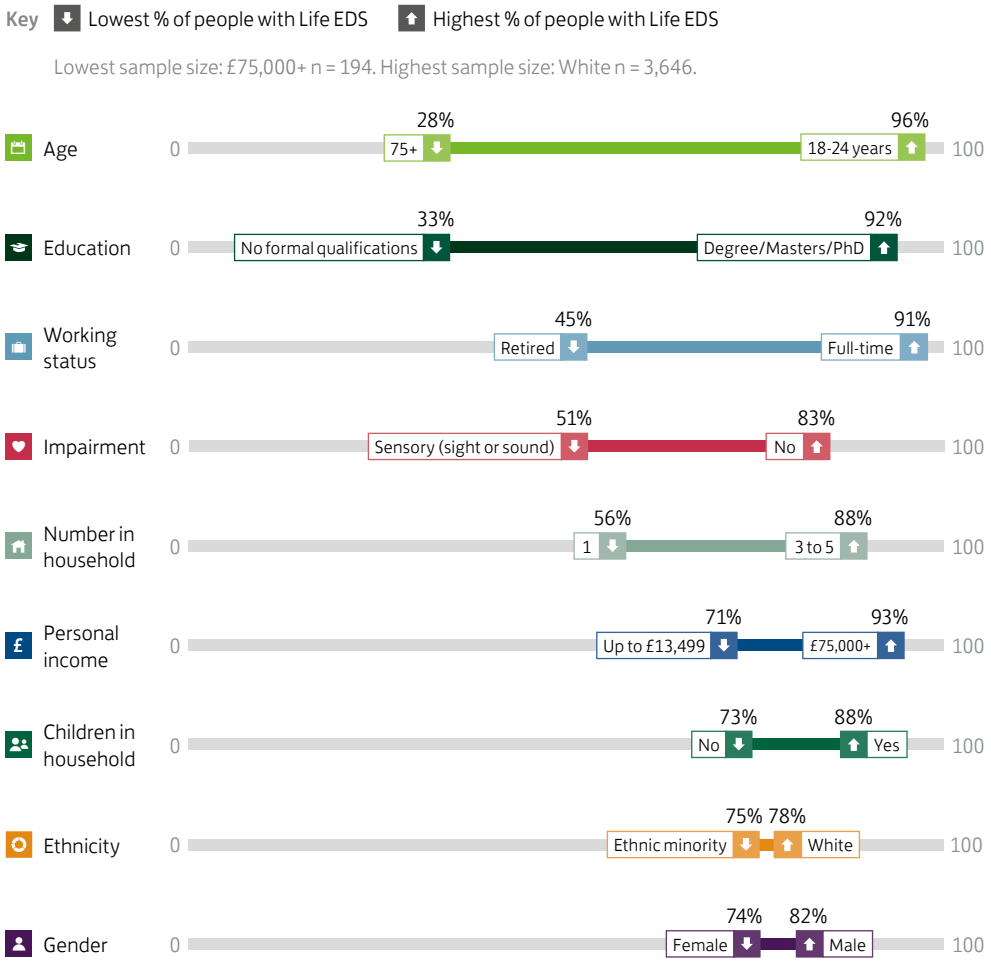
East Midlands: 2020 n = 287, 2021 n = 260.

	2020	2021	pp change 2021 vs. 2020
I can set up an email account	69%	77%	+8pp
I can communicate with others digitally using email or other messaging applications (e.g. WhatsApp or Messenger)	69%	81%	+12pp
I can use word processing applications to create documents (e.g. a CV or a letter)	68%	75%	+7pp
I can share documents with others by attaching them to an email	69%	80%	+11pp
I can communicate with others using video tools (e.g. Facetime or Skype)	61%	76%	+15pp
I can post content on social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat) for example messages, photographs, video etc.	60%	72%	+12pp
I can recognise what information or content may, or may not, be trustworthy on websites/apps	69%	74%	+5pp
I can use search engines to find the information I'm looking for (e.g. search for news using a browser such as Chrome, Internet Explorer or Safari)	70%	80%	+10pp
I can use bookmarks to save and retrieve websites and information	62%	71%	+9pp
I can store information online and access content from a different device (e.g. using the Cloud)	59%	70%	+11pp
I can organise my information and content using files and folders (either on my device, across multiple devices, or on the Cloud)	65%	74%	+9pp
I can use the Internet to stream or download entertainment content (e.g. films, music, games or books)	64%	75%	+11pp
I can set up an account online that enables me to buy goods or services (e.g. Amazon account, eBay, John Lewis etc.)	69%	77%	+8pp
I can access and use public services online, including filling in forms (e.g. vehicle tax, voting registration, ordering repeat prescriptions, booking doctor appointments)	68%	77%	+9pp
I can use credit/debit cards or other forms of online payment to buy goods/services online (e.g. PayPal, WorldPay)	70%	79%	+9pp
I can upload documents and photographs when this is required to complete an online transaction	68%	76%	+8pp
I can manage my money and transactions online securely, via websites or apps (e.g. bank account)	66%	78%	+12pp
I can use online tutorials, web chat, FAQs and forums to solve problems	63%	69%	+6pp
I can use online tutorials, web chat, FAQs and forums to improve my skills in using the Internet and digital apps/products/services	60%	65%	+5pp
I can use the Internet to find information that helps me solve problems	71%	80%	+9pp
I can assess the risks and threats involved in carrying out activities online and act accordingly (e.g. use security software)	69%	74%	+5pp
I am careful with what I share online as I know that online activity produces a permanent record that can be accessed by others	69%	78%	+9pp
I make sure not to share or use other people's data or intellectual property without their consent	69%	73%	+4pp
I can respond to requests for authentication (e.g. reactivate an account when I've forgotten my password)	69%	77%	+8pp
I can keep the information I use to access my online accounts secure, by using different and secure passwords for websites and accounts	70%	77%	+7pp
I can set privacy settings on my social media and other accounts	65%	74%	+9pp
I can identify secure websites by looking for the padlock and 'https' in the address bar	69%	73%	+4pp
I can recognise and avoid suspicious links in email, websites, social media messages and pop-ups and know that clicking on these links is a risk	70%	78%	+8pp
I can update my computer security systems when necessary to prevent viruses and other risks	69%	71%	+2pp

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2020

Work EDS

Appendix 17. **Proportion of adults 18+ across different demographics that have Life EDS, 2020** *(click to return to page 22)*



Appendix 17a. **Profile of working adults 18+ who do not have any workplace digital skills, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 24)*

Those with Zero Work skills (but have the Foundation Level): 2020 n = 543, 2021 n = 145.

	2020	2021
Male	**60%**	**51%**
Female	**40%**	**48%**
18-24	**13%**	**14%**
25-34	**27%**	**13%**
34-45	**20%**	**17%**
45-54	**19%**	**28%**
55+	**21%**	**27%**
Full-time	**67%**	**62%**
Part-time	**23%**	**26%**
Self-employed	**10%**	**13%**
Children in household	**37%**	**28%**
No children in household	**63%**	**72%**

Appendix 18. **Proportion of working adults 18+ who cannot do the listed number of 17 tasks within the five Work skills, plus those that do not have the Foundation Level, 2019, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 25)*

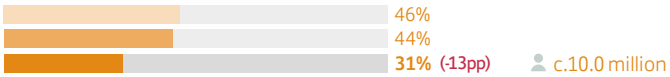
Communicating
(those who cannot) **23%** c.7.5million

I cannot use digital collaboration tools to meet with, share and collaborate with people (e.g. Skype/Google docs/Dropbox etc.) or I do not have Foundation level

I cannot set up and manage an account on a professional online network/ community, (e.g. LinkedIn, Total Jobs, Indeed) or I do not have Foundation level

£ Transacting
(those who cannot) **24%** c.7.9 million

I cannot access salary and expenses information digitally, including password protected payslips or I do not have Foundation level



I cannot manage digital records and financial accounts (e.g. expenses, budgets) through digital systems or I do not have Foundation level

? Problem solving
(those who cannot) **19%** c.6.3 million

I cannot use the Internet to find information that helps me solve problems or I do not have Foundation level

I cannot use different digital tools to improve my own productivity i.e. saving time or working more efficiently or I do not have Foundation level

I cannot use appropriate software, including a spreadsheet, to manipulate and analyse data or I do not have Foundation level

ⓘ Handling information and content
(those who cannot) **28%** c.9.2 million

I cannot access, synchronise and share information across different devices (e.g. manage a calendar or appointment system via phone or desktop or I do not have Foundation level

Please *see page 25* for those who **can** do the Work tasks

Top bar: 2019 n = 2,029
Centre bar: 2020 n = 2,112
Bottom bar: 2021 n = 2,237

2021 estimated population based on ONS 2020 mid-year estimates for those 18+ in the UK.

(pp) Percentage point (pp) difference, 2021 vs. 2020 (coloured numbers represent a significant change).

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Appendix 18. **Proportion of working adults 18+ who cannot do the listed number of 17 tasks within the five Work skills, plus those that do not have the Foundation Level, 2019, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 26)*

Being safe and legal online
(those who cannot)

17% **c.5.4** million

I cannot assess the risks and threats involved in carrying out activities online and act accordingly (e.g. use security software) **or I do not have Foundation level**

42%
42%
27% (-15pp) c.8.8 million

I cannot be careful with what I share online as I do not know that online activity produces a permanent record that can be accessed by others **or I do not have Foundation level**

41%
40%
24% (-16pp) c.7.9 million

I cannot make sure not to share or use other people's data or intellectual property without their consent **or I do not have Foundation level**

39%
40%
22% (-18pp) c.7.0 million

I cannot respond to requests for authentication (e.g. reactivate an account when I've forgotten my password) **or I do not have Foundation level**

39%
40%
24% (-16pp) c.7.8 million

I cannot keep the information I use to access my online accounts secure, by using different and secure passwords for websites and accounts **or I do not have Foundation level**

40%
41%
24% (-18pp) c.7.7 million

I cannot set privacy settings on my social media and other accounts **or I do not have Foundation level**

50%
47%
40% (-7pp) c.13.0 million

I cannot identify secure websites by looking for the padlock and 'https' in the address bar **or I do not have Foundation level**

42%
43%
24% (-19pp) c.7.8 million

I cannot recognise and avoid suspicious links in email, websites, social media messages and pop-ups and know that clicking on these links is a risk **or I do not have Foundation level**

41%
41%
22% (-20pp) c.7.1 million

I cannot update my computer security systems when necessary to prevent viruses and other risks **or I do not have Foundation level**

48%
45%
38% (-7pp) c.12.4 million

Please *see page 26* for those who **can** do the Work tasks

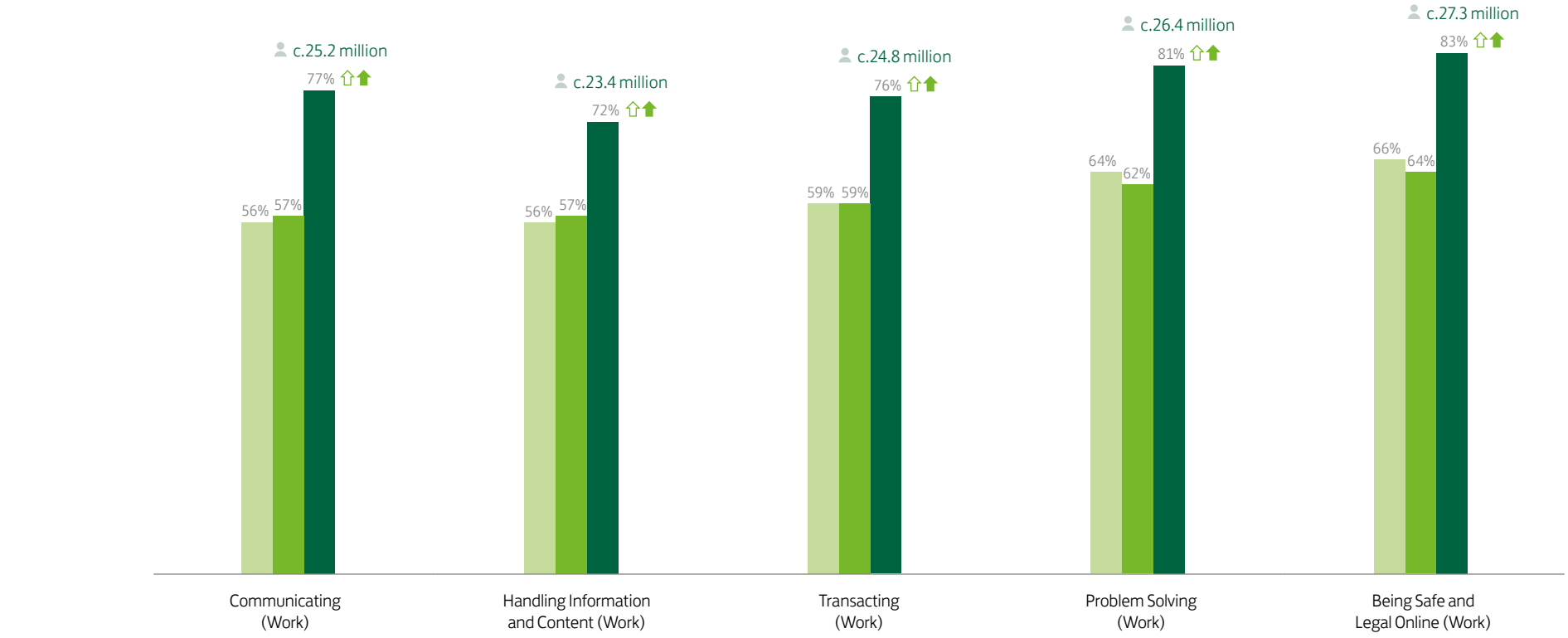
Top bar: 2019 n = 2,029
Centre bar: 2020 n = 2,112
Bottom bar: 2021 n = 2,237

2021 estimated population based on ONS 2020 mid-year estimates for those 18+ in the UK.

(pp) Percentage point (pp) difference, 2021 vs. 2020 (coloured numbers represent a significant change).

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Appendix 19. **Proportion of working adults aged 18+ who can do each of the 5 Work skills, 2019, 2020 and 2021**
(click to return to page 26)



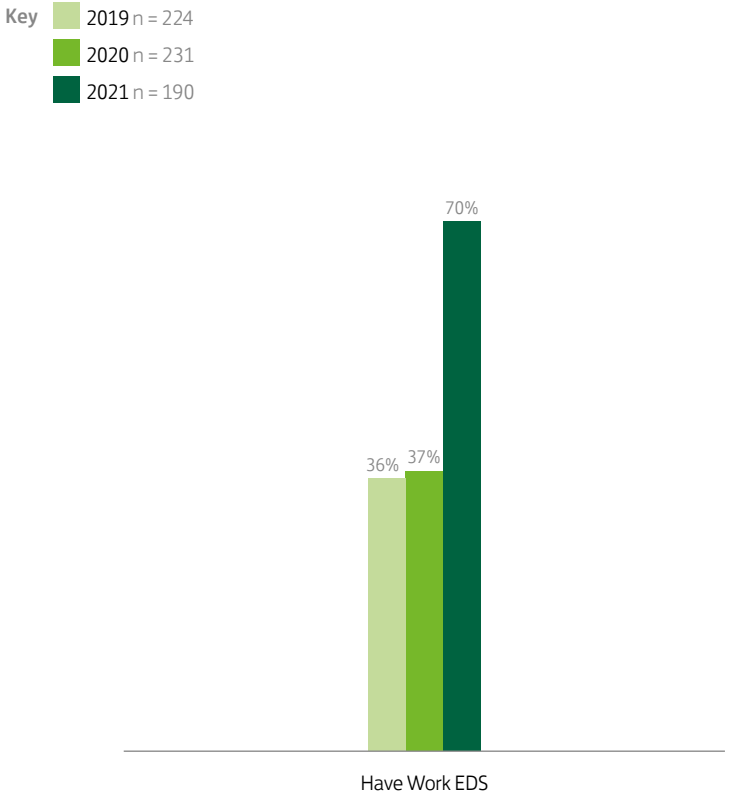
Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Appendix 20. **Profile of working adults 18+ that have 0 or 5 Work skills – key demographics, 2021**
(click to return to page 27)

Have 5 Work skills (Work EDS): n = 1,500. Have 0 Work skills: n = 145.

	Have 5 Work skills (Work EDS)	Have 0 Work skills
Aged 55-64	**11%**	**24%**
Work part-time	**14%**	**26%**
Work in the service industry	**9%**	**17%**
Have no formal qualifications	**3%**	**14%**
Have GCSE/O-Level/CSE as highest level of educational attainment	**9%**	**18%**
Vocational qualifications	**6%**	**8%**

Appendix 21. **Proportion of working adults 18-24 that have Work EDS, 2019, 2020 and 2021**
(click to return to page 30)



Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2020

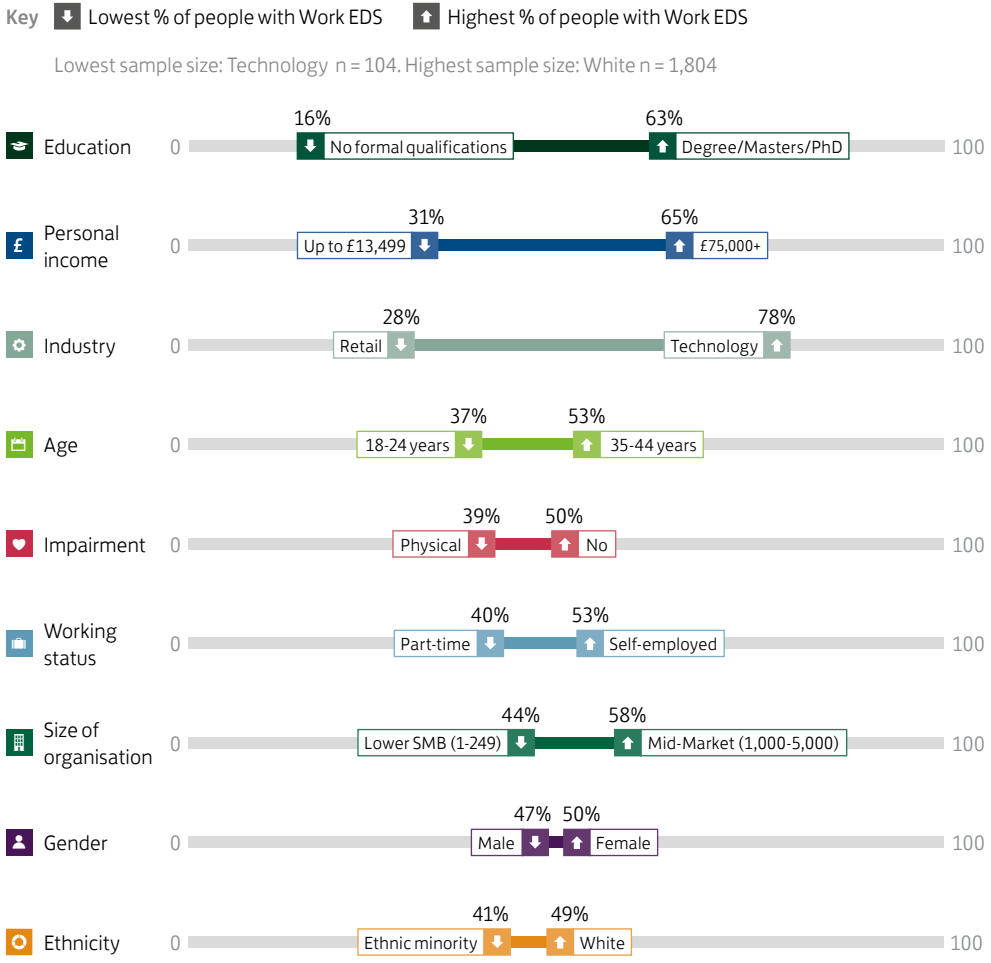
Appendix 22. **Proportion of working adults 18+ that have Work EDS, split by those aged 25-34 and 55-64, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 30)*

Aged 25-34: 2020 n = 463, 2021 n = 442.
Aged 55-64:2020 n = 391, 2021 n = 408.

	Aged 25-34	Aged 55-64	Gap (pp)
2020	50%	42%	8pp
2021	74%	45%	29pp

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2020

Appendix 23. **Proportion of working adults 18+ across different demographics that have Work EDS, 2020** *(click to return to page 30)*



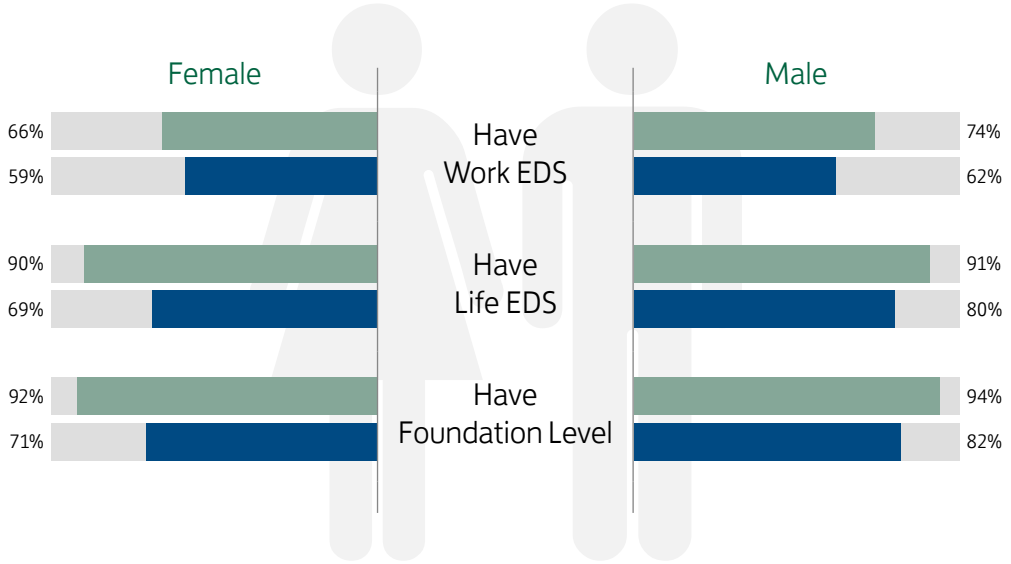
Appendix 23a. **Proportion of adults 18+ that have the Foundation Level, Life EDS and Work EDS split by gender, 2021** *(click to return to page 30)*

Key

Amongst those living with children in the household

Amongst those living without children in the household

Working men (with children in household: n = 381, without children in household: n = 747)
Working women (with children in household: n = 435, without children in household: n = 664)
Men (with children in household: n = 446, without children in household: n = 1,502)
Women (with children in household: n = 597, without children in household: n = 1,565)



Appendix 24. **Proportion of working adults 18+ who claim to have had an improvement in digital ability in the last 12 months, split by industry, 2021** *(click to return to page 33)*

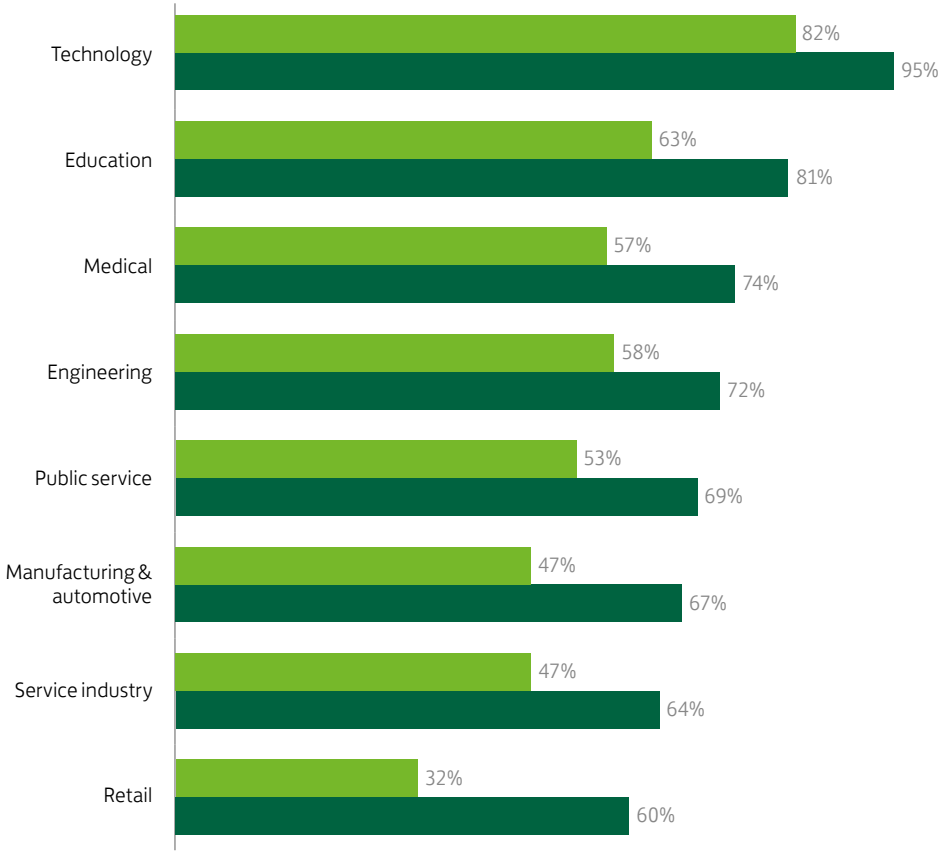
Technology: n = 109. Retail: n = 153. Manufacturing & automotive: n = 127. Education: n = 302. Medical: n = 206. Public service: n = 200. Engineering: n = 108. Service industry: n = 218.

	Yes	No	Don't know
Technology	**57%**	**41%**	**1%**
Retail	**62%**	**34%**	**4%**
Manufacturing & automotive	**49%**	**49%**	**2%**
Education	**71%**	**27%**	**2%**
Medical	**58%**	**40%**	**2%**
Public service	**64%**	**33%**	**3%**
Engineering	**54%**	**44%**	**2%**
Service industry	**50%**	**47%**	**3%**

Appendix 25. **Proportion of working adults 18+ who can use digital collaboration tools to meet with, share and collaborate with people (e.g. Skype/Google docs/Dropbox etc.), split by industry, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 33)*

Key 2020 2021

Lowest sample size: Engineering n = 108. Highest sample size: Education n = 302.

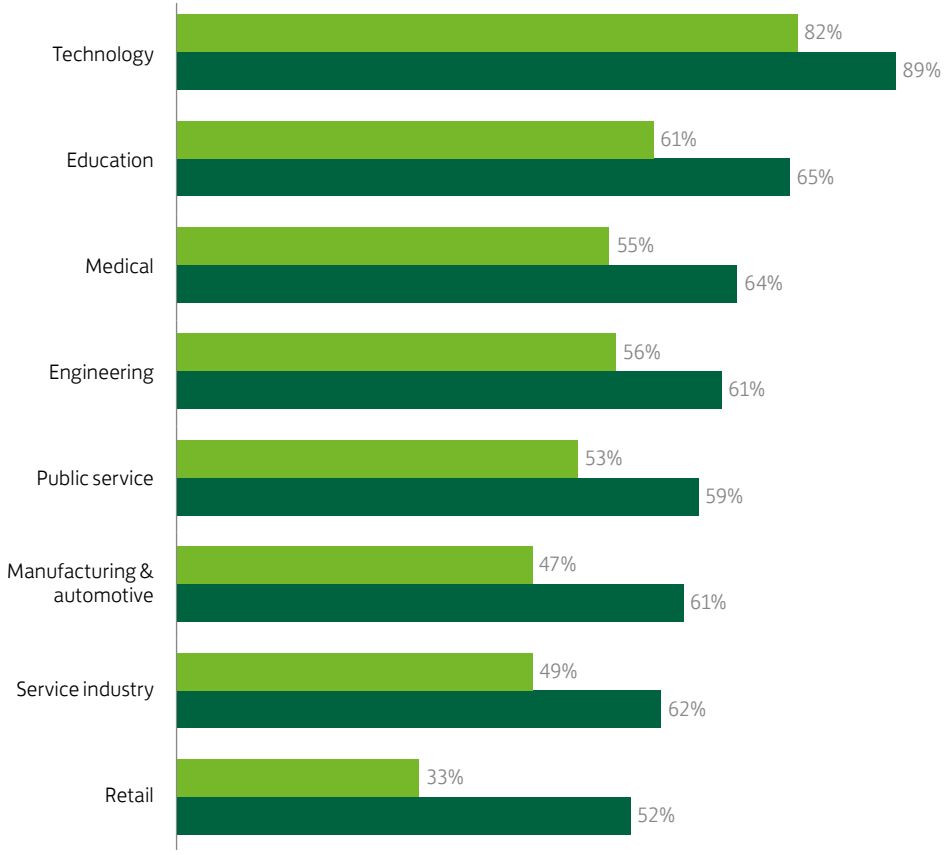


Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Appendix 26. **Proportion of working adults 18+ who can set up and manage an account on a professional online network/community, (e.g. LinkedIn, Total Jobs, Indeed), split by industry, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 33)*

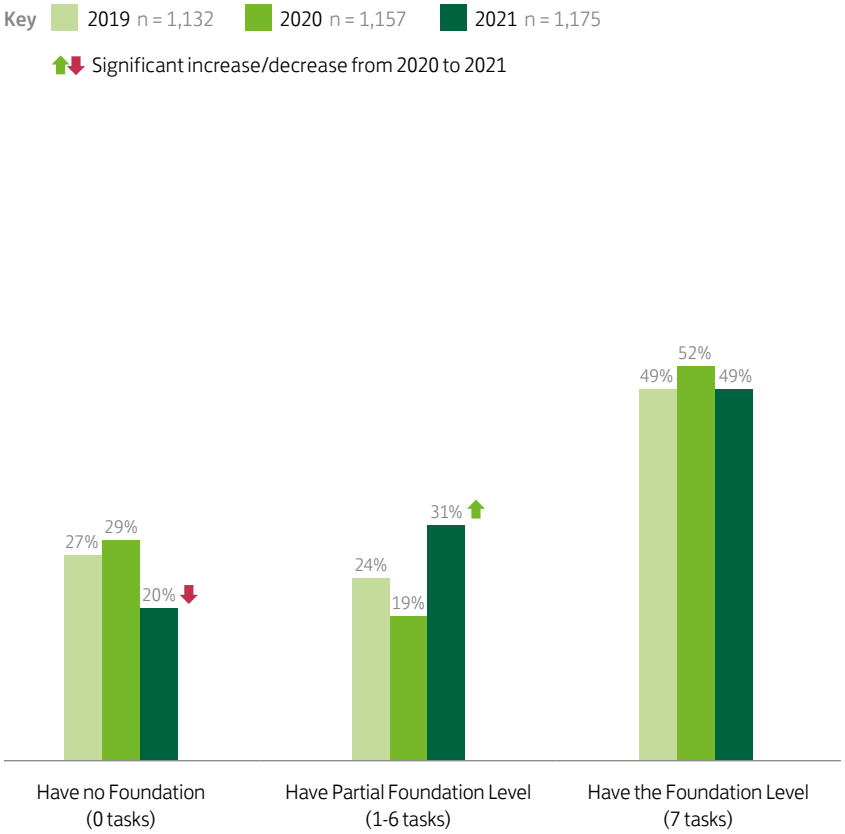
Key 2020 2021

Lowest sample size: Engineering n = 108. Highest sample size: Education n = 302.



Spotlights

Appendix 27. **Proportion of adults 65+ that can do the listed number of Foundation tasks (prerequisite to EDS for Life and Work), 2019, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 38)*



Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Appendix 28. **Proportion of adults 18+ with various types of sensory impairment that can do the listed number of Foundation level tasks (prerequisite to EDS for Life and Work), 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 41)*

Key: Significant increase/decrease from 2020 to 2021

	Any impairment 2020	Any impairment 2021	Sensory 2020	Sensory 2021	Sensory: vision 2020	Sensory: vision 2021	Sensory: hearing 2020	Sensory: hearing 2021
No Foundation (0 tasks)	19%	10%	26%	15%	27%	18%	26%	17%
Partial Foundation (1-6 tasks)	14%	22%	19%	26%	21%	22%	20%	32%
Foundation Level (7 tasks)	67%	68%	55%	58%	52%	60%	54%	51%
FOUNDATION TASKS: I can use the available controls on a device (e.g. mouse, keyboard, touchscreen etc.)	79%	87%	72%	81%	70%	79%	73%	77%
I can open an Internet browser to find and use websites	78%	84%	68%	75%	65%	75%	67%	69%
I can turn on a device and log in to any accounts/profiles I have	77%	83%	68%	75%	67%	75%	68%	69%
I can update and change my password when prompted to do so	73%	81%	62%	74%	62%	75%	59%	68%
I can find and open different applications/programmes on a device	75%	80%	66%	72%	62%	74%	66%	64%
I can connect a device to a Wi-Fi network	73%	78%	61%	69%	59%	69%	61%	63%
I can use the different menu settings on a device to make it easier to use (e.g. change the font size to make it easier to read)	72%	77%	64%	68%	62%	67%	63%	63%

Those with any impairment: 2020 n = 1,092, 2021 n = 1,368. Those with any sensory impairment: 2020 n = 330, 2021 n = 494. Those with a vision impairment: 2020 n = 153, 2021 n = 277. Those with a hearing impairment: 2020 n = 213, 2021 n = 295.

Appendix 29. **Proportion of adults 18+ with one or multiple impairments who can do each Life skill or Work skill, 2021** *(click to return to page 41)*

Life skill: Those with one impairment n = 592. Those with multiple impairments n = 776.
Work skill: Those with one impairment n = 265. Those with multiple impairments n = 220.

Appendix 30. **Proportion of the UK aged 18+ who can do the listed Work tasks, split by those with or without an impairment, 2021** *(click to return to page 42)*

	Those with any impairment	Those without an impairment	Gap (pp)
I can use digital collaboration tools to meet with, share and collaborate with people (e.g. Skype/Google docs/Dropbox etc.)	68%	76%	8%
I can set up and manage an account on a professional online network/community, (e.g. LinkedIn, Total Jobs, Indeed)	58%	66%	8%
I can access, synchronise and share information across different devices (e.g. manage a calendar or appointment system via phone or desktop	66%	74%	8%
I can manage digital records and financial accounts (e.g. expenses, budgets) through digital systems	51%	62%	11%
I can access salary and expenses information digitally, including password protected payslips	65%	71%	6%
I can use the Internet to find information that helps me solve problems	73%	81%	8%
I can use appropriate software, including a spreadsheet, to manipulate and analyse data	61%	71%	10%
I can use different digital tools to improve my own productivity i.e. saving time or working more efficiently	58%	71%	13%
I can assess the risks and threats involved in carrying out activities online and act accordingly (e.g. use security software)	67%	75%	8%
I am careful with what I share online as I know that online activity produces a permanent record that can be accessed by others	70%	78%	8%
I make sure not to share or use other people's data or intellectual property without their consent	73%	80%	7%
I can respond to requests for authentication(e.g. reactivate an account when I've forgotten my password)	70%	78%	8%
I can keep the information I use to access my online accounts secure, by using different and secure passwords for websites and accounts	70%	78%	8%
I can set privacy settings on my social media and other accounts	52%	62%	10%
I can identify secure websites by looking for the padlock and 'https' in the address bar	70%	78%	8%
I can recognise and avoid suspicious links in email, websites, social media messages and pop-ups and know that clicking on these links is a risk	70%	81%	11%
I can update my computer security systems when necessary to prevent viruses and other risks	55%	64%	9%

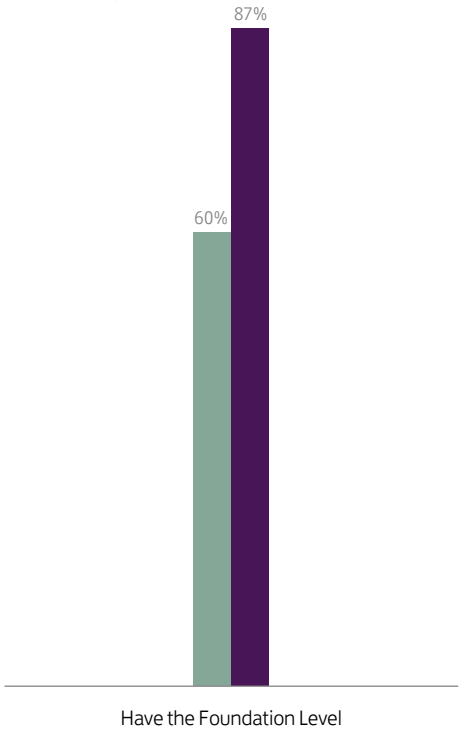
Appendix 31. **Proportion of adults 18+ with physical impairments who have EDS for Life, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 44)*

Key 2020 2021 Significant increase/decrease from 2020 to 2021

Those with any physical impairment: 2020 n = 600, 2021 n = 856.
Those with mobility impairment: 2020 n = 415, 2021 n = 543.
Those with dexterity impairment: 2020 n = 150, 2021 n = 319.
Those with stamina, breathing or fatigue impairment: 2020 n = 288, 2021 n = 521.

Appendix 32. **Proportion of the UK aged 18+ with the Foundation Level, split by those with a vision impairment or without an impairment, 2021** *(click to return to page 44)*

Key Those with a vision impairment n = 277
Those without an impairment n = 2,713



Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2020

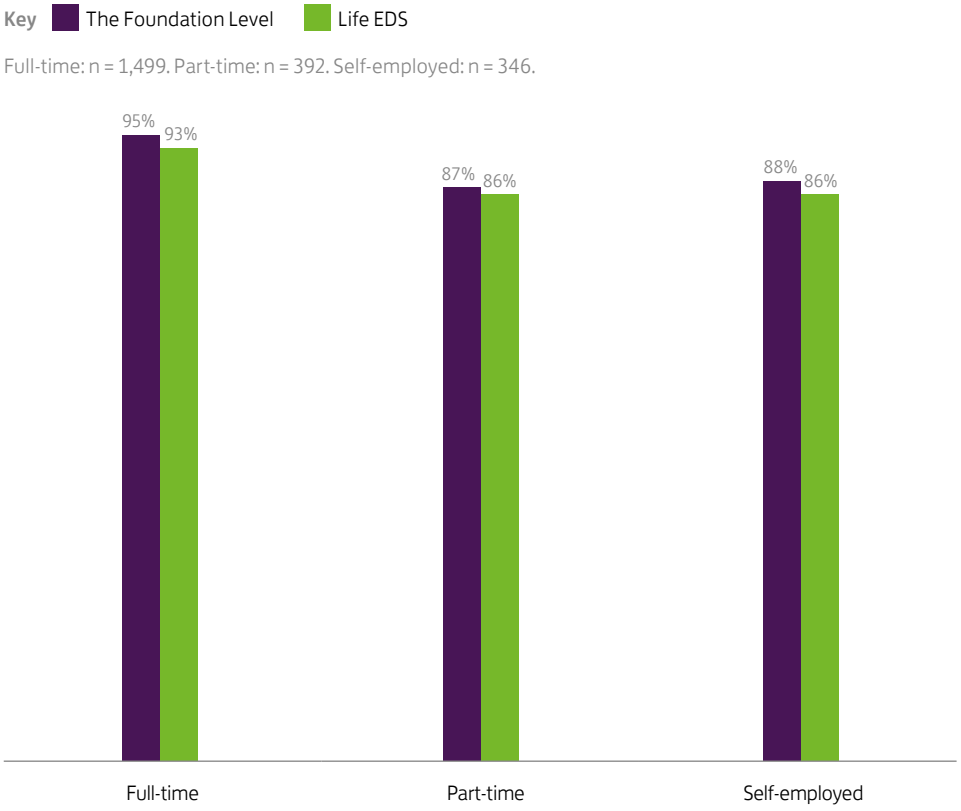
Appendix 33. **Proportion of working adults 18+ from an ethnic minority or White ethnic group background that have Work EDS 2019, 2020 and 2021** *(click to return to page 45)*

Ethnic minorities: 2019 n = 255, 2020 n = 304, 2021 n = 251.
White: 2019 n = 1,768, 2020 n = 1,804, n = 1,971.

	Ethnic minority 2019	Ethnic minority 2020	Ethnic minority 2021	White 2019	White 2020	White 2021	2021 Ethnic minority vs. White gap (2021)
Work EDS [5]	48%	41%	64%	46%	49%	64%	0pp
Partial Work Skills [1-4]	21%	24%	25%	24%	20%	20%	-5pp
Zero Work Skills [0] (but has the Foundation Level)	20%	27%	3%	22%	26%	8%	-5pp
Without the Foundation Level	11%	8%	7%	7%	5%	7%	0pp

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, telephone interviewing used for 2021 whereas face-to-face used for 2019 and 2020.

Appendix 34. **Proportion of working adults 18+ who have the Foundation Level or Life EDS, split by working status, 2021** *(click to return to page 46)*



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