Survey of Older People and ICTs in Ireland (2008)

Report prepared by:

Work Research Centre (WRC) & Age Action Ireland

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Executive Summary

This report presents some of the main results from a representative survey of older people and ICTs in Ireland, addressing both the 50-64 and 65-plus age groups. The survey was conducted in 2008 by Work Research Centre and Age Action Ireland as part of a project funded under the ASC programme, which is operated under the eInclusion fund (then) administered by the Department of the Taoiseach. The project aimed to develop a better understanding of patterns of ICT usage and interest amongst older people in Ireland than has hitherto been available. It was expected that the results would be valuable for policy-makers and practitioners working to support older people to engage more with ICTs, as well as for the eInclusion community more generally.

Many are already gaining benefits...

The results of the survey show that many older people are now using ICTs as a regular part of their daily lives. Usage of mobile phones is especially common, and those that use them report benefits in terms of being able to easily keep in touch with family and others, as well as contributing to a sense of safety/security (especially important for the older old, women and those living alone). Usage of computers and the Internet is growing although as yet has only reached a minority of those aged 65-plus. Many older people are using computers to do household tasks (accounts, letters, etc.), for managing digital photos, for home study, to support the voluntary work that they do and for more general entertainment. Many also use the Internet to look for information, send e-mails, make travel arrangements and book tickets, shop and do their banking online, and access government services, as well as for general entertainment purposes.

In addition, many older people who do not use ICTs directly themselves are gaining benefits through other people using them on their behalf. For example, about one-third of those aged 50-plus who were surveyed did not use the Internet directly themselves but had someone else use it on their behalf. Such 'proxy' usage seems to be especially for buying or booking online, but in comparison to direct usage oneself seems less beneficial for other purposes, such as finding information or keeping in touch with people.

....but very many are still losing out

Although many older people are using ICTs and/or gaining benefits from ICTs, there remain very many who are not. From an eInclusion perspective, three main 'digital divides' can be observed:

- an 'age divide', whereby older people are less likely to use ICTs than younger people
- within the older population:
    - a 'first order' digital divide, whereby some segments of the older population are a lot more likely to be users than others
    - a 'second order' digital divide amongst those who are users, whereby some segments of the user population are making more usage and better usage, and gaining more benefits, than others

The age divide

Despite increases in recent years in the numbers of older people using computers and the Internet, the older age groups are still a lot less likely than younger age groups to use these ICTs. According to CSO data, computer and internet usage rates in 2007 for those in the 16 to 49 years age range were 61.8% and 57.5%, respectively, compared to 37.9% and 31.7% for those aged 50 to 64, and to 18.0% and 14.3% for those aged 65 to 74. There is clearly a need to continue and reinforce efforts to encourage and enable older people to use these technologies.

In this regard, the focus needs to be directed not only towards the 65-plus age group but also the 50-64 years age group. Both show relatively low levels of usage, with the drop-off especially high amongst the older old. Interventions targeting the 50-64 years age group can yield benefits both amongst this age-group now and also as 'preventative' inputs to increase the numbers that will already have ICT skills when they are 65 and older.

The 'first order' digital divide

eInclusion efforts also need to target the 'first order' digital divide within the older population itself, manifested in the much lower rates of usage amongst certain segments of the older population. In particular, older people with low levels of education are much less likely to use computers or the Internet and, overall, those with low levels of education make up the majority of non-users today. Another important pattern is to be found amongst those who are still in the working age range (50-64 years), where relatively low levels of usage are to be found especially amongst non-working women. Given the differential labour force participation rates for women and men in this age group, non-working women and working men make up the majority of non-users in this age group. Thus, special attention may need to be given to targeting and reaching less educated older people in general as well as, amongst the 50-64 years age group, non-users inside and outside the workplace.

The 'second order' digital divide

eInclusion efforts also need to target the 'second order' digital divide amongst older people who do use ICTs, manifested in the wider range of uses and greater level of benefits being achieved by some segments of the user population. One part of this is age-related, with those aged 65-plus being less likely than those aged 50-64 to use the Internet for practically useful purposes such as booking travel/tickets, eGovernment and eBanking, and being less likely to report practical benefits from usage. However, another part is linked to the socio-demographic factors, especially educational levels, which also underpin the first order divide. Amongst older users of the Internet, for example, those with higher levels of education make substantially wider usage of its potential. Thus, attention could also be usefully given to improving the ICT skills and confidence of older users, especially amongst the 65-plus age group and amongst less educated older users more generally. This applies not just to computer and Internet skills, but also to mobile phone skills as many older people seem to make limited use of the capabilities of their phones (such as texting, photo and other features).

Many are interested to learn (more) about ICTs...

The survey results show that many older people are interested in learning more about ICTs and that many would be prepared to attend a course for this purpose. Particularly large numbers would be interested to learn more about computers and the Internet, but relatively large numbers would also be interested to learn more about mobile phones and how to use them.

Considerable numbers of both non-users and users are interested to learn (more) about ICTs, although users are relatively more likely to be interested. Levels of interest are quite strong amongst both the 50-64 and 65-plus age groups, although somewhat higher amongst the younger age group. Also, levels of interest are relatively strong in all regions, so that large numbers of interested users and non-users are to be found in all parts of the country.

...but many are not interested and need to be reached

Although many older people are interested to learn about ICTs, an even larger proportion seems not yet to be. Lack of interest is linked to negative attitudes, such as feeling too old to learn or that computers are too hard to learn, but seems also to be often a more generalised feeling amongst older people that computers and the Internet are not of any real use for them in their lives. Perceived or actual affordability barriers also seem to be an issue for a sizeable minority of older people and these also need to be addressed.

Importantly, lower levels of interest are found amongst the groups that most need to be reached, including the older old and those with lower levels of education. This is reflected in lower levels of actual participation in computer/Internet courses by these groups. The lower tendency of men to participate in computer/Internet courses is also an important issue, and efforts are needed to attract and target men more effectively.

eInclusion initiatives thus also need to address attitudes and motivation, for example, through promotional campaigns to show the practical benefits of ICTs and how many older people are already gaining these benefits.

1 About the survey and this report

This report presents some of the main results from a representative survey of older people and ICTs in Ireland, conducted in 2008 by Work Research Centre and Age Action Ireland. The survey was part of a project funded by the ASC programme, which is operated under the eInclusion fund (then) administered by the Department of the Taoiseach. The project aimed to develop a better understanding of patterns of ICT usage and interest amongst older people in Ireland than has hitherto been available. It was expected that the results would be valuable for policy-makers and practitioners working to support older people to engage more with ICTs, as well as for the eInclusion research community more generally. In addition to the main population survey of older people reported here, the project also conducted a survey of more than 200 participants and ex-participants of the Age Action 'Getting Started' ICT courses for older people. The results of that part of the work are presented in a separate report.

1.1 Survey methods and sample

The population survey of older people was designed by the research team in consultation with the Department of the Taoiseach, with the actual field work contracted to a market research company. Field work was conducted in April / May 2008 and involved telephone interviews with 1,000 people in the 50-plus age ranges. The survey addressed a broad range of issues relating to ICT usage and training interests, covering mobile telephony, computers and the Internet.

The scope of the survey included two main age groups, those in the 50-64 age range and those aged 65 and older. The group aged 65-plus are of interest because they have been shown in other surveys to have much lower levels of usage of ICTs than younger age groups and thus they have been the age-group mainly targeted in eInclusion efforts in Ireland and internationally. However, those aged 50-64 are also of interest for purposes of effectively addressing age-related issues in ICT usage. Surveys have shown that this group also show an age-related decline in ICT usage, although not as large as for the older group. Thus, the 50-64 years age group could be targeted both to increase usage levels now amongst that age band but also for 'preventative' interventions to help ensure that they will already have ICT skills/experience when they reach the retirement (65-plus) age.

1.2 Representativeness

The aim of the survey was to achieve a representative sample of 1,000 people aged 50 years and older in Ireland. With this in mind, the survey organisation used a quota sampling

method to ensure a balanced final sample as regards age bands (50-64 and 65-plus), gender, region (the four main regions: Dublin, rest of Leinster, Munster and Connacht/Ulster) and social class. The finally achieved sample was also weighted to ensure it was directly representative with reference to the age, gender and regional structure of the population as a whole, based on the situation as defined by the Census of 2006. In addition, the final dataset was weighted to ensure representativeness by educational level (again in line with the 2006 Census data for these age groups), as this has been shown to be an important factor in usage of (and interest in) ICTs.

In considering representativeness, one further issue to bear in mind is that, in both Ireland and other countries, sample telephone surveys of this nature have been found to have a tendency to yield somewhat higher percentages of ICT users than do larger-scale household surveys like the CSO's Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS). This aspect is addressed in the relevant places in the presentation and discussion of results.

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2 Levels of usage of ICTs

Amongst the general population of people aged 50 years and over in this sample, a large majority (86.1%) were mobile phone users at the time of the survey, nearly one-half (48.1%) were computer users, and two-in-five (40.3%) were Internet users[1].

2.1 Comparison with the QNHS

As noted in the Introduction, it is useful to compare these figures with available data from the CSO. The latest relevant data comes from the QNHS of 2007, which covers computer usage and internet usage, but not mobile telephone usage. That larger, face-to-face survey found a computer usage rate of 32.2% and an Internet usage rate of 26.7% amongst the 50-plus age group at that time (Table 1).

Table 1. Usage levels of mobile phones, computers and the internet

	Mobile phones (ASC survey 2008)	Computers		Internet	
		ASC survey (2008)	CSO (2007)	ASC survey (2008)	CSO (2007)
	%	%	%	%	%
Users	86.1	48.1	32.2	40.3	26.7
Non-users	13.9	51.9	67.8	59.7	73.3
(Past/lapsed users)	(5.5)	(9.4)	(6.8)	(4.5)	(4.0)
(Never used)	(8.4)	(42.6)	(61.0)	(55.2)	(69.3)
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

As shown in Table 1, the rates of computer and internet usage found in the project survey in 2008 are somewhat higher than the rates from the QNHS for 2007. Although comparable data on mobile phone usage rates are not available, data from other sources (e.g. from ComReg surveys) suggests that the mobile phone usage rates found in the current survey may also be somewhat on the high side for this age group.

Growth in usage rates in the intervening period may explain some of these differences but, overall, this can be considered unlikely to account for more than a relatively small part of the differences. In addition to any such growth that may have occurred, it is likely that the propensity of telephone-based sample surveys of this nature to yield somewhat higher ICT usage rates is also a factor. This phenomenon has appeared in other Irish and European surveys and the underlying factors are not entirely clear. However, it seems likely that

[1] For computers and the Internet, users were defined as those who had used the relevant technology within the past 3 months; for mobile phones, users were defined as those who owned or had the use of a mobile

factors linked to propensity to agree to participate in such surveys may be an important component, such that the characteristics of those who are more likely to agree to take part are also those that are linked to greater likelihood of being ICT users.

For much of the results presented in the rest of this report these differences are not of any great significance. However, for some aspects of the analysis, such as when extrapolating to estimated overall numbers of users and non-users interested in training in the population as a whole, they are taken into account.

2.2 Digital divides

This survey focused on the 50+ age groups and so does not provide information allowing direct comparison with the younger (less than 50) age groups. On the basis of the CSO data from 2007, however, a clear age-divide is apparent. According to the CSO data, computer and internet usage rates in 2007 for those in the 16 to 49 years age range were 61.8% and 57.5%, respectively, compared to 37.9% and 31.7% for those aged 50 to 64, and to 18.0% and 14.3% for those aged 65 to 74.

This survey - funded under the ASC programme - provides some useful additional insight into 'digital divides' (i.e. differences in ICT usage rates across socio-demographic groups) arising within the older age group. In this regard, as will be shown in the following section, educational level was found to be a key factor associated with very strong digital divides for all three ICTs - mobile phones, computers and the Internet.

2.2.1 Who are most likely to be non-users

Computers & Internet

Overall, just over one-half (51.9%) of the older people surveyed did not currently use a computer at the time of the survey, and three-in-five (59.7%) did not use the Internet. The following analysis looks first at relative 'risk' or likelihood of being a non-user across different segments of the older population and then at which groups make up the largest proportion of non-users overall.

Likelihood of being a non-user

Likelihood of non-usage was considerably higher amongst the 'older' old, where more than two-thirds (69.9%) were computer non-users and more than three-quarters (78.2%) were Internet non-users (Figures 1 and 2). There was also a strong association with education, with likelihood of non-usage being considerably higher amongst those with lower levels of educational attainment.

Figure 1. Users and non-users of computers

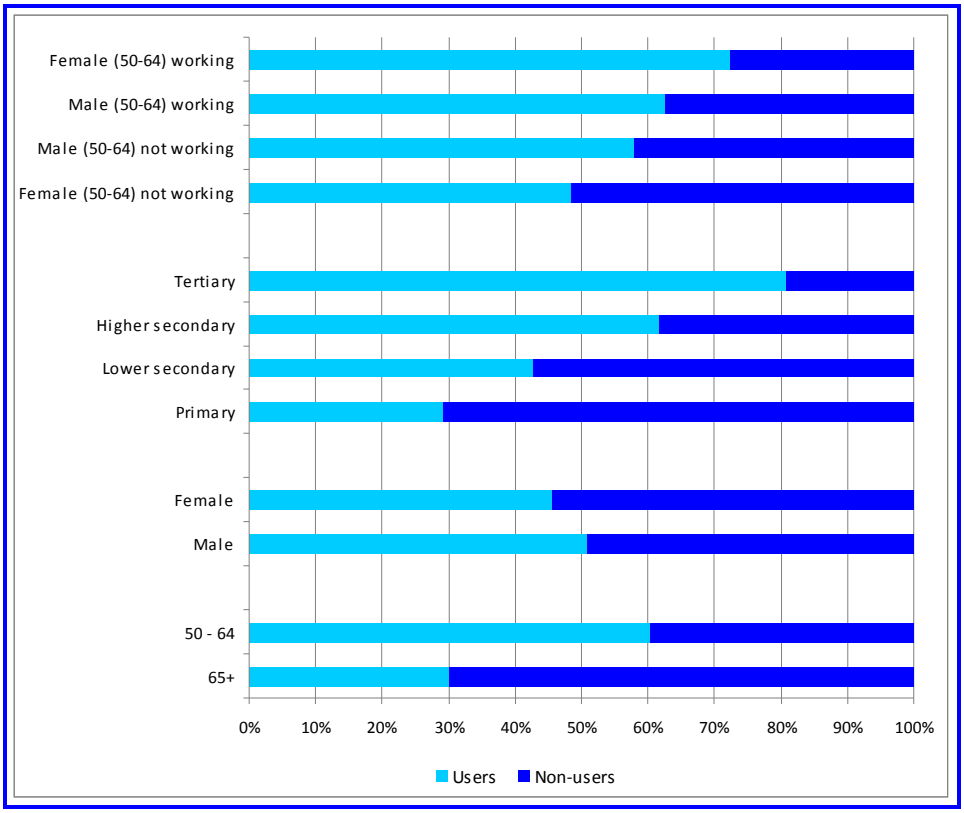
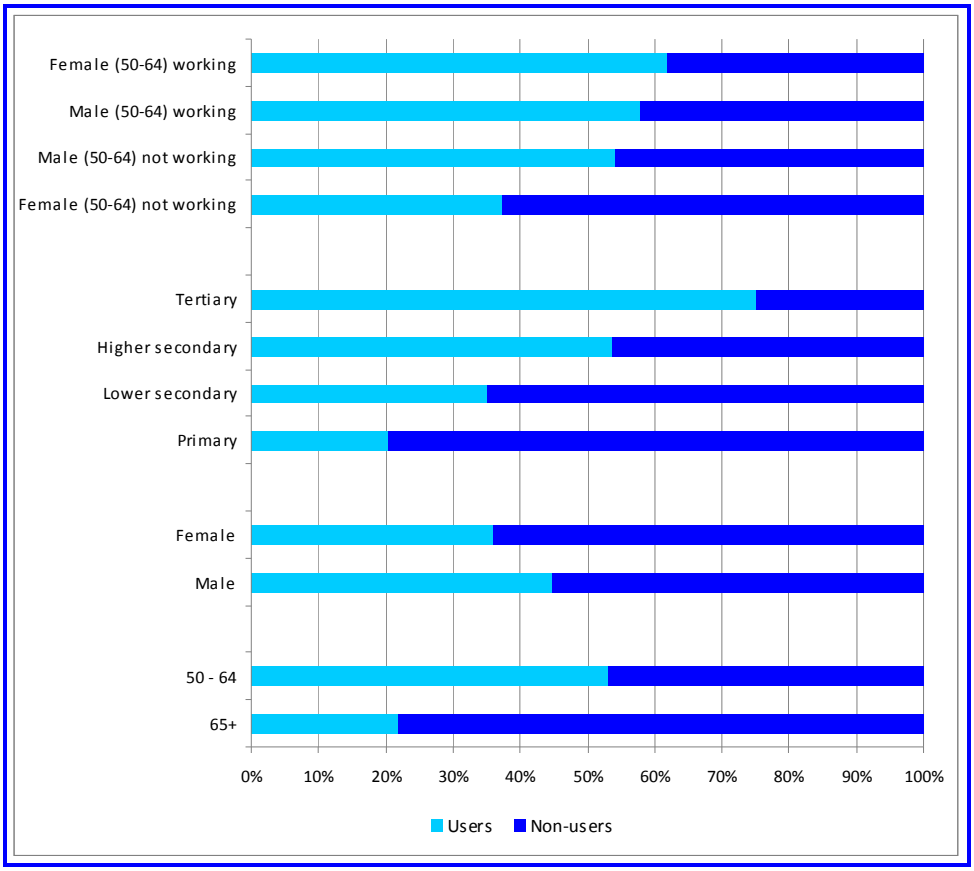
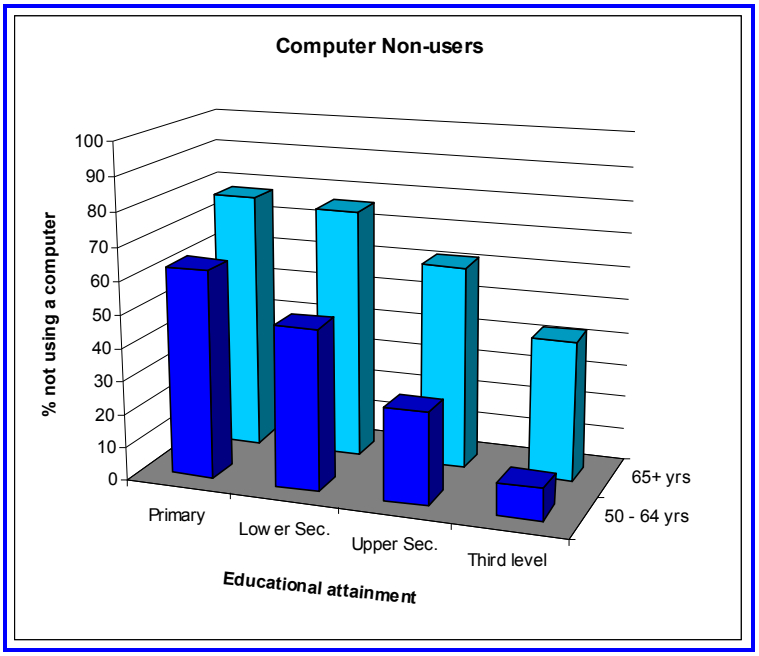


Figure 2. Users and non-users of the Internet



The combined effects of age and education are visually indicated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Combined effects of age and education on likelihood of computer non-usage



Amongst the 50-64 years age group, there was also a strong association with whether respondents were working or not. For both men and women, but especially for women, those not at work were more likely to be non-users. Finally, there were some patterns across household situations although not especially strong, whereby those living in family situations (i.e. with young or adult children) were somewhat more likely to be computer users.

Multivariate analysis

The various patterns described above are based on simple descriptive statistics which do not control for any correlations that may exist between the socio-demographic variables themselves (e.g. between age and education). Linear logistic regression was therefore used to uncover the unique effects of each of the individual socio-demographic variables on computer usage and Internet usage. The socio-demographic variables used for the analysis were: age, education, gender, employment status, household situation and province. Analyses were conducted both for the whole sample (aged 50 years and older) and for the younger old (50-64) and older old (65-plus) separately. The main results of the multivariate analysis are listed in Table 2 below.

As a second step in the multivariate analysis, the association of computer and Internet usage/non-usage with lifestyle was examined. The survey addressed lifestyle by asking respondents to rate the importance of a variety of activities as part of their lives. Factor

analysis produced two main types of lifestyle orientation - 'active/outward' and 'home/family'. Activities linked to active/outward orientation included learning new things, doing voluntary/unpaid work and going out for meals, cinema, travel; activities linked to home/family orientation included keeping in touch with, having in or meeting up with family/friends, hobbies/pastimes at home and listening to music/radio/TV.

Table 2. Factors linked to likelihood of being a non-user of computers and/or the Internet

	All 50+	50-64	65-plus
Socio-demographic	Low education Older age Not working	Low education Female, not-working Not living in family Connacht/Ulster	Low education
Lifestyle	Low active/outward	Low active/outward	Low active/outward

For all groups, education showed the strongest independent association with likelihood of non-usage. For the whole sample, having only primary education was associated with an up to ten-fold greater risk of non-usage and having only lower secondary education with an up to five-fold greater risk. The impact of education was greatest amongst the 50-64 years age group and was lower but still strong amongst the 65-plus age group.

Amongst the younger age group, being a non-working woman was associated with a significantly higher risk of non-usage. Province also was found to be important to a certain extent, with being from Connacht/Ulster associated with a greater likelihood of non-usage of computers. In addition, not being in a family with young/adult children, and especially living alone, was associated with greater likelihood of Internet non-usage, as was scoring low on the active/outward lifestyle dimension. For the older age group, apart from education, the lifestyle dimension was the only other factor associated with greater likelihood of non-usage, with those scoring low on the active/outward dimension being more likely to be non-users of computers and of the Internet.

Overall, the analysis shows that some groups are more at risk of being non-users than others, and that certain socio-demographic and lifestyle factors are associated with an elevated risk. Patterns are clearer amongst the 50-64 years age group than the 65-plus age group, although in both cases the socio-demographic and lifestyle factors together only account for a limited amount of the observed patterns of usage/non-usage. For both groups, but especially for the older group, it seems that a more general lack of interest, shared by a considerable number of older people whatever their socio-demographic background or lifestyle, is likely to be the biggest factor. This is examined further in section 2.2.2.

Composition of the non-users

The analysis above tells us about relative risk of being a computer and/or Internet non-user and is thus useful for guiding policy efforts aiming to increase equality across different groups in the population.

From a pragmatic point of view, it is also useful to examine the composition of the overall non-user group to see which are the largest in numerical terms; a high risk amongst a small group may have a smaller aggregate importance than a low-risk amongst a large group. Examination of the composition of the overall computer non-user group shows that just over one-half are aged 65 or over and just under one-half are aged 50-64, and more than three-quarters have only primary or lower secondary education (Figure 4). A similar picture can be seen as regards composition of Internet non-users (Figure 5).

Figure 4. Composition of computer non-user population

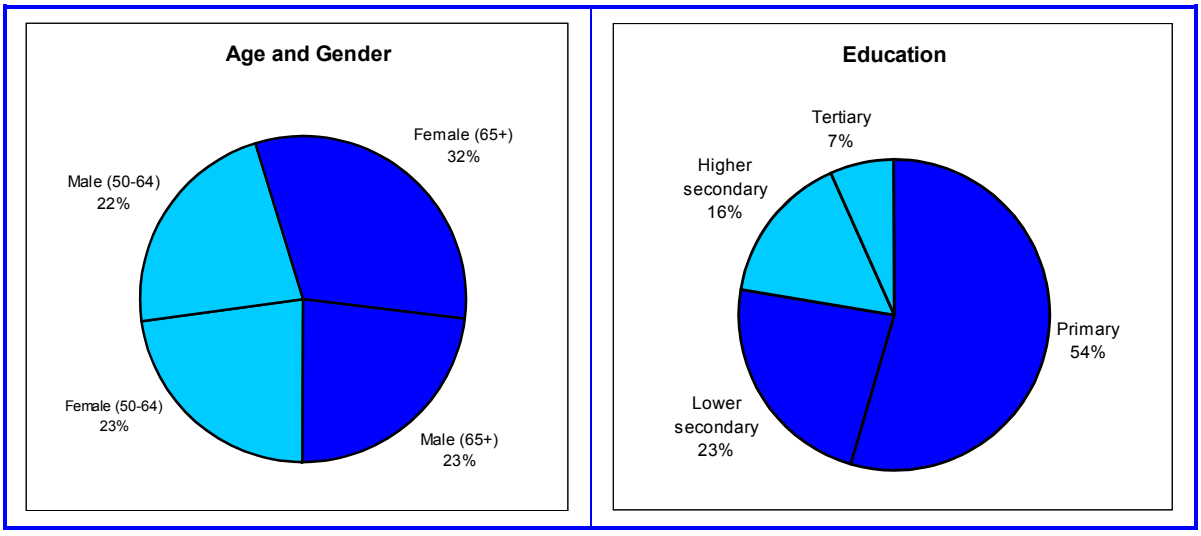
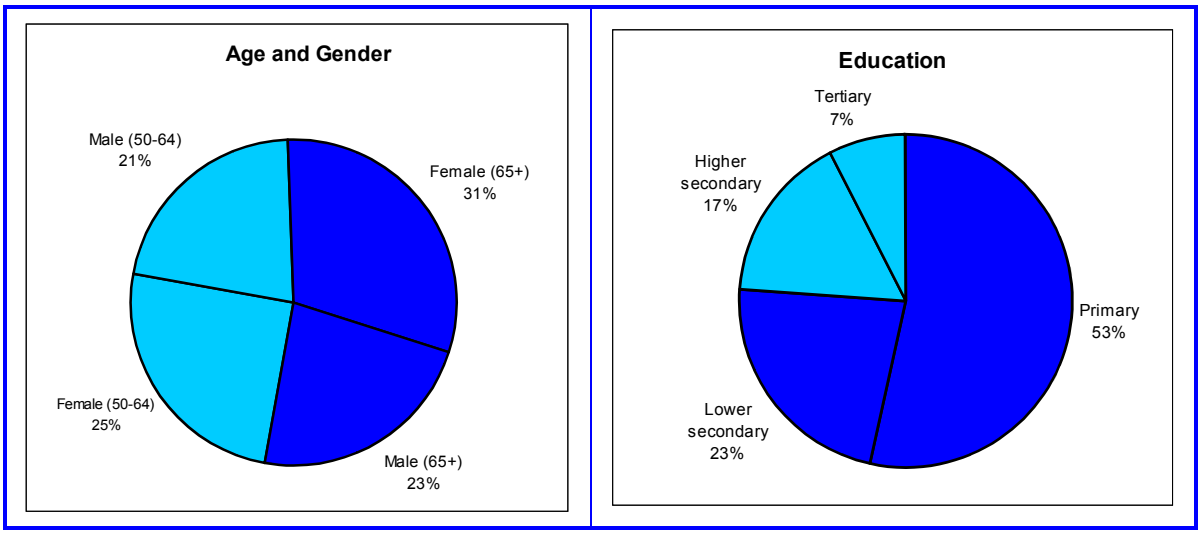


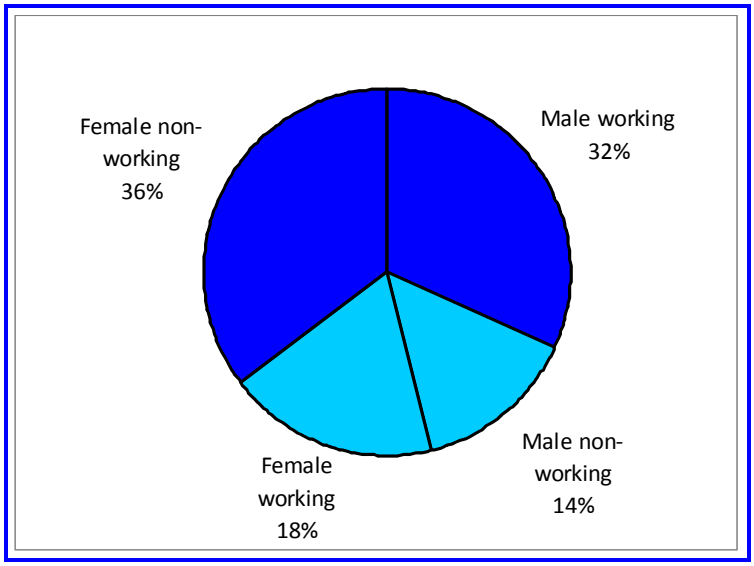
Figure 5. Composition of Internet non-user population



The role of employment

As shown in Figures 1 and 2, amongst the 50-64 years age group, those who were in employment were more likely to be computer and Internet users, although the difference for men disappears when educational level and other socio-demographic factors are controlled for. Overall, however, the largest groups of non-users in the 50-64 years age group were found to be non-working women and working men, as illustrated for the Internet in Figure 6. This is primarily a reflection of the different labour force participation rates of women and men in this age group (men are a lot more likely to be at work than women). Thus, eInclusion efforts targeting this age group need to give special attention both to the many women who are outside the workforce and to the many men within the workforce who are not exposed to ICTs in their work.

Figure 6. Composition of Internet non-users in 50-64 years age group

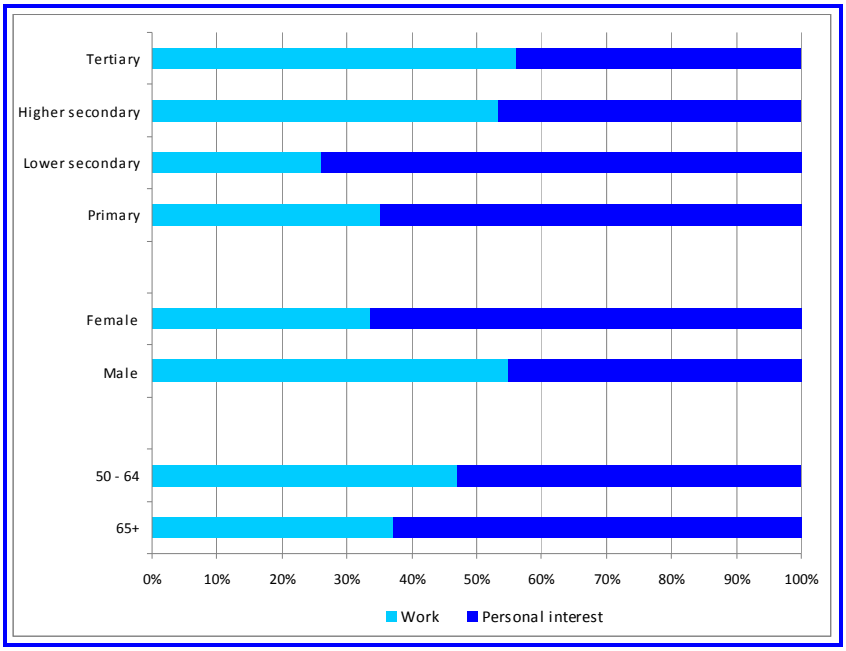


The relative importance of the workplace can also be examined on the basis of data on how current users first came to use computers (Figure 7).

Amongst the sample overall, a little fewer than one-half (44.2%) began using computers in a work context and a little more than one-half (55.8%) began through personal interest. Those with higher levels of education, men and those in the younger age group were more likely to report having first come to use computers in the context of their work.

Nevertheless, although the workplace is clearly important, even more users in the older age range have taken up computers outside the workplace context, with this being especially the case for women. This issue of where and how older people come to learn about computers and the Internet is looked at in more detail in Chapter 4.

Figure 7. How users first came to use computers



Policy implications:

- **both the 50-64 and 65-plus age groups need to be targeted in eInclusion efforts**
- **those with lower education especially need to be reached**
- **for many, the workplace is an important context for learning about computers but, overall, more older people have first come to use computers in a context outside the workplace**
- **most non-users in the 65-plus age range are outside the workforce; for the 50-64 years age range, the larger share of male non-users are in the workforce and the larger share of female non-users are outside the workforce**
- **amongst the 50-64 years age group, efforts to reach current non-users need to target those both inside and outside the workforce**

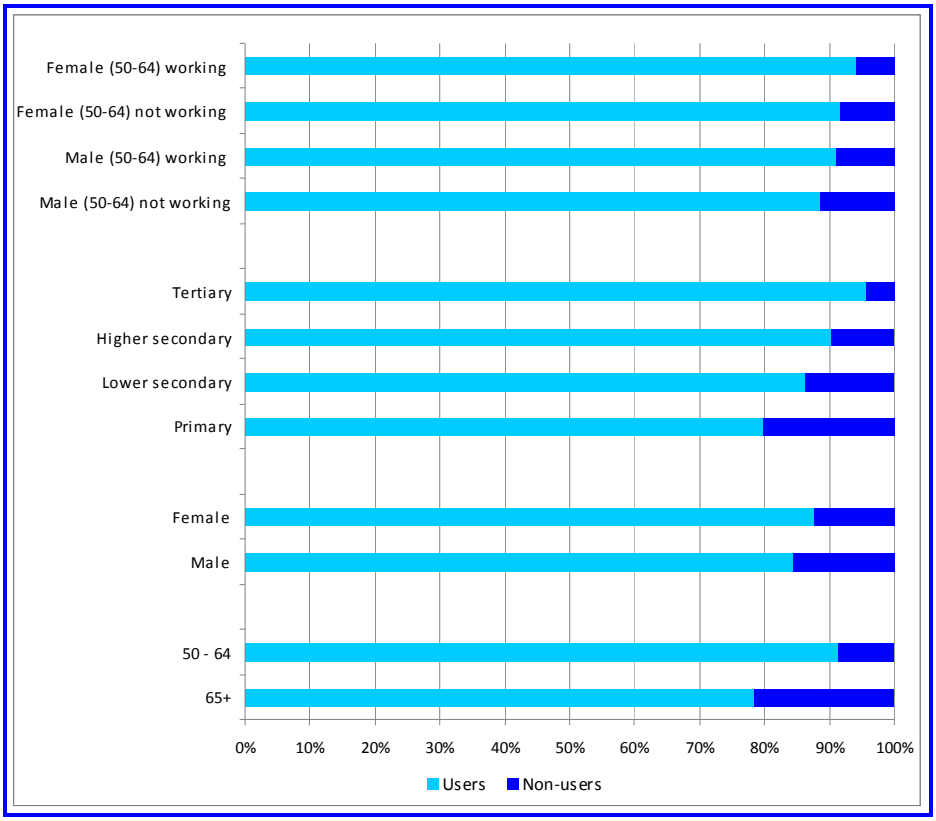
Mobile phones

Overall, only 13.9% of the older people surveyed were not currently mobile phone users.

Likelihood of being a non-user

Likelihood of non-usage was considerably higher amongst the 'older' old, where more than one-in-in five (21.6%) were non-users (Figure 8). There was also a strong association with educational attainment, with likelihood of non-usage being higher as level of education decreases.

Figure 8. Users and non-users of mobile phones



Similar to the analysis presented above for computers and the Internet, multivariate analyses were conducted to examine the independent effects of the different socio-demographic variables and also of lifestyle on mobile phone usage/non-usage. Patterns were not as strong in this case, although there was again a clear tendency for likelihood of non-usage to be strongly linked with lower education. Again, as is examined in more detail in section 2.2.2, lack of interest seems to be the key factor influencing non-usage and is shared to a large extent across the spectrum of non-users whatever their socio-demographic situation and lifestyle.

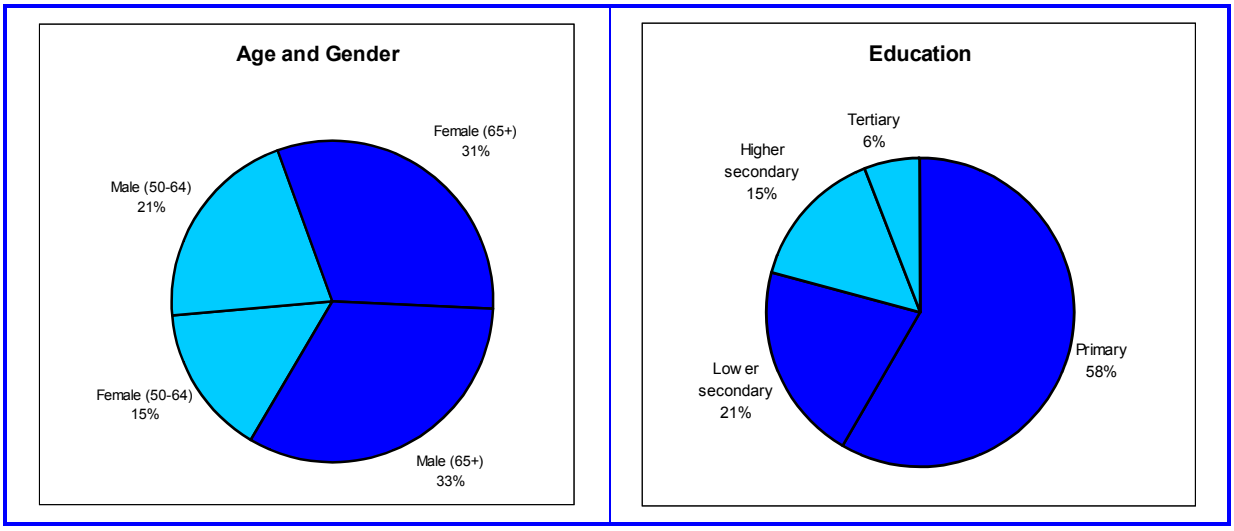
Composition of the non-users

The analysis of composition of the mobile non-users shows that about two-thirds are aged 65 or over and four-in-five have only primary or lower secondary education (Figure 9).

Policy implications

- **the results suggest that the 65-plus age group, in particular, could be targeted in efforts to encourage/enable usage of mobile phones**
- **those with lower education are most 'at risk' of non-usage and comprise the large majority of non-users and therefore are the most important to reach in any effort to facilitate/encourage usage**

Figure 9. Composition of mobile phone non-user population



2.2.2 Attitudes and interest amongst non-users

Mobile phone non-users

When respondents who were not mobile phone users were asked why not, the main reason given was lack of need / interest, with this being reported by more than two-thirds of non-users in both the younger and older age groups. Smaller numbers reported other barriers, including not knowing how to get started, costs, lack of skills, and usability problems (e.g. not being able to see the small numbers on the phone).

Only a minority of non-users expressed an interest in learning more about mobile phones and how to use them, although the total numbers concerned are quite substantial nevertheless. Overall, just under one-in-five (19.4%) said that they would be interested, with the younger age group (25.0%) being somewhat more likely to be interested than the older age group (16.1%).

Table 3. Interest in learning more about mobile phones

	50-64	65-plus	All 50+
	%	%	%
Yes	25.0	16.1	19.4
It depends / not sure	1.9	0.0	0.7
No	73.1	83.9	79.9
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Base: Non-users of mobile phones

When multivariate analyses were carried out to see whether certain socio-demographic or lifestyle factors were associated with interest/lack-of interest, few strong patterns were found. This suggests that there is a generalised lack of interest across the majority of non-users.

Policy implications

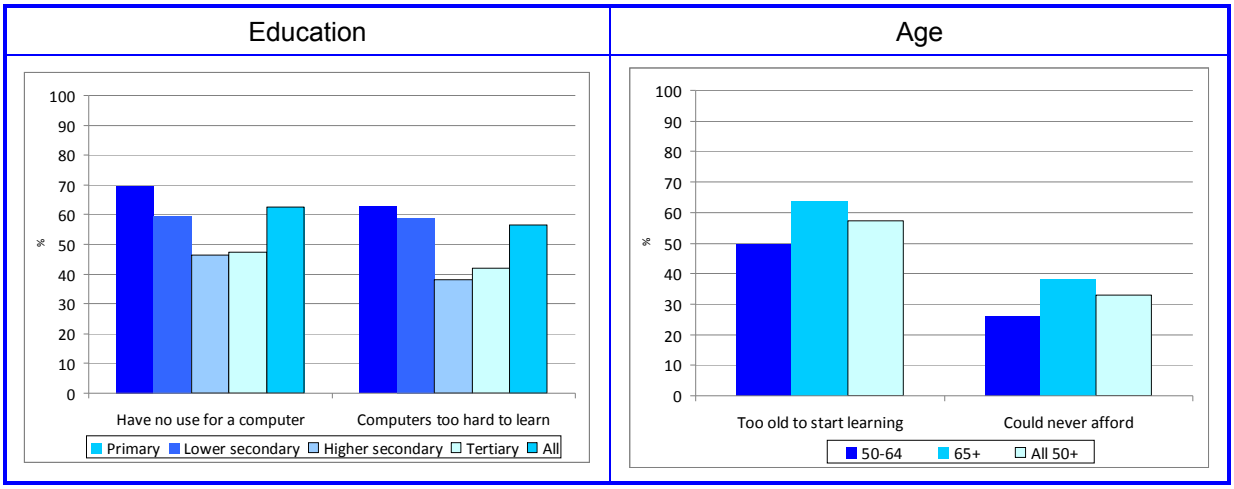
- **the majority of mobile phone non-users are not interested in learning more about them; thus, policy efforts to demonstrate the benefits of mobile phones may be warranted in order to reach those who are currently not interested**

Computer non-users

Almost one-half of the computer non-users (44.4%) in the survey lived in households that have a computer, so it is clear that lack of access opportunity is not the main barrier for many. Non-users in the younger age group (60.3%) were more likely to be in this situation than those in the older age group (31.6%), mainly reflecting their greater likelihood to live in households with children of any age.

Examination of attitudes to computers shows that lack of interest and, more generally, negative attitudes to computers are key factors amongst non-users. Overall, almost two-thirds (62.4%) of non-users felt that they had no use for a computer and more than one-half (56.4%) felt that they were too difficult to learn to use (Figure 10). Such attitudes were found across all educational levels, although were more common amongst those with lower levels of education. In addition, more than one-half (57.2%) felt that they were too old to learn about computers and one-third (32.8%) that they could never afford to get one; with, in both cases, the older old being more likely to have such views (Figure 10).

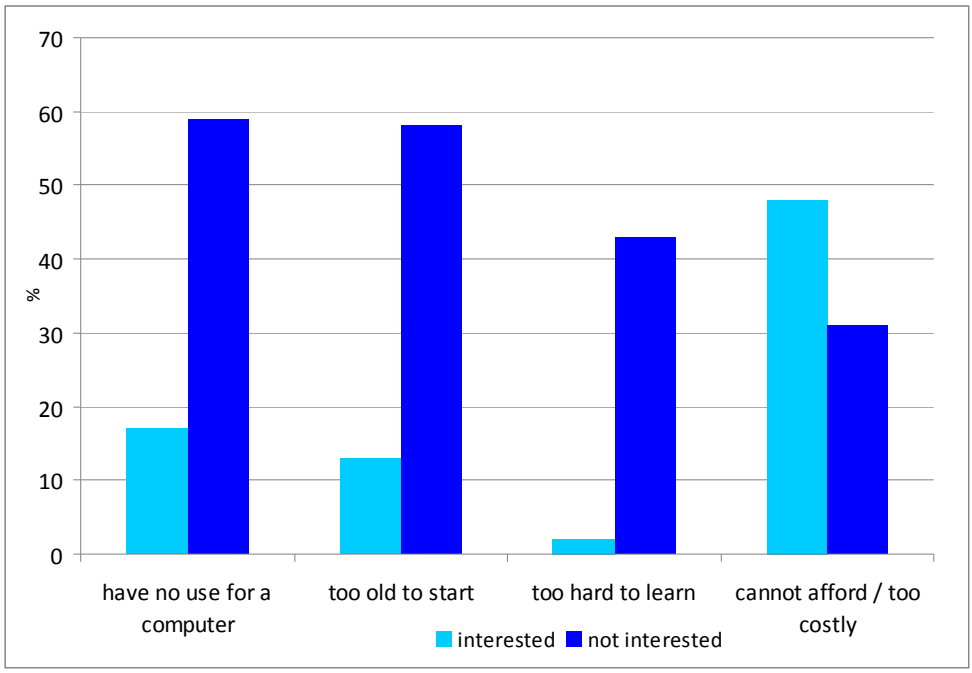
Figure 10. Attitudes to computers amongst non-users - by education and age



The influence of lack of interest and negative attitudes more generally is also reflected in the finding that, amongst those living in households without a computer, only about one-in-ten computer non-users (10.8%) said they would be interested in getting a home computer, and a further 5.6% said that they might but that 'it depends' or they were not sure. Amongst those who said they might or would be interested, the most frequent reasons for not getting a computer (so far) were costs and feeling that one would not have the skills to use it.

There was also a strong association between interest in getting a home computer and some of the attitudes to computers (Figure 11). Those who were not interested were much more likely to strongly agreed with attitudes such as 'I have no use at all for computers', 'I am too old to start learning', 'Computers are to hard to learn'. In contrast, cost/affordability issues were more common amongst those who were interested in principle.

Figure 11. Attitudes and interest in getting a home computer



Base: those living in household without a computer

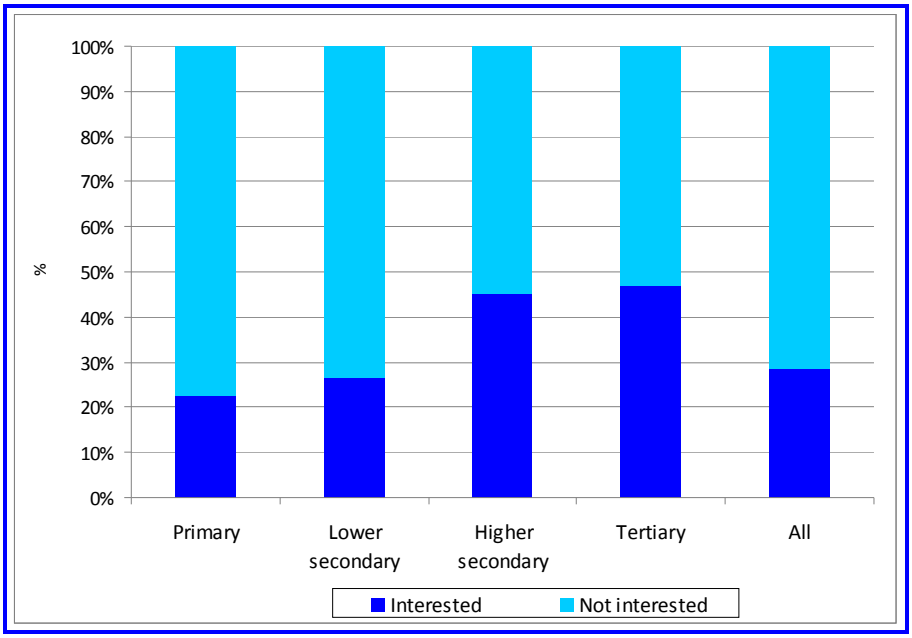
Finally, only a minority directly stated an interest in learning more about computers and how to use them, although the numbers concerned are quite substantial nevertheless (Table 4). Overall, a little more than one-in-four (27.9%) said that they would be interested, with the younger age group (32.5%) being somewhat more likely to be interested than the older age group (24.2%). More generally, likelihood of being interested was linked with educational level, with the better educated being considerably more likely to be interested than the lower educated (Figure 12), a result also confirmed by multivariate analysis.

Table 4. Interest in learning more about computers and how to use them

	50-64	65-plus	All 50+
	%	%	%
Yes	32.5	24.2	27.9
It depends / not sure	4.3	2.1	3.1
No	63.2	73.7	69.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Base: Non-users of computers

Figure 12. Interest in learning about computers amongst non-users



This suggests that, without careful targeting, gaps between the better and less educated might increase rather than decrease as a result of take-up of computer training, even if the overall numbers of non-users were reduced.

Policy implications

- **attitudinal barriers, especially, need to be tackled to increase interest in home computing amongst the older age group**
- **in addition, perceived or actual cost/affordability issues need to be addressed for a considerable number of those who are interested in principle**
- **the relatively low levels of interest amongst lower educated older people (who make up the majority of non-users) needs special attention**

Internet non-users

Almost one-half of Internet non-users (43.0%) live in households that have an Internet connection. Non-users in the younger age group (51.8%) were more likely to be in this situation than those in the older age group (35.4%), again probably mainly reflecting their greater likelihood to live in households with children of any age. Thus, as in the case of computers, lack of interest and/or skills seems likely to be a big factor underlying non-usage of the Internet.

This is reflected also in the finding that, amongst those living in households without an Internet connection, only about one-in eight non-users (12.4%) said they would be interested in getting a home connection and an additional 6.5% said that they might be but 'it depends' or they were not sure. Amongst those who said they might or would be interested, the most frequent reasons for not getting an Internet connection (so far) were costs, not knowing how to go about getting it and feeling that one would not have the skills to use it.

Finally, only a minority of non-users directly expressed an interest in learning more about the Internet and how to use it, although the numbers concerned are quite substantial nevertheless (Table 5). Overall, somewhat more than one-in-four (29.3%) said that they would be interested, with the younger age group (36.0%) being more likely to be interested than the older age group (23.5%).

Table 5. Interest in learning more about the Internet and how to use it

	50-64	65-plus	All 50+
	%	%	%
Yes	36.0	23.5	29.3
It depends / not sure	2.9	1.6	2.2
No	61.2	74.9	68.5
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Base: Non-users of the Internet

In addition, as in the case of computers, a tendency for lower levels of interest to be found amongst the lower educated was also found for the Internet.

Policy implications

- **as in the case of computing, both attitudinal barriers and perceived/actual cost barriers to Internet take-up need to be addressed**
- **the lower levels of interest amongst those with lower levels of education need special attention**

2.3 Alternative modes of access

This section looks at some alternative modes of access to computers and the Internet other than having a home computer and/or Internet connection oneself, or using the ICTs directly oneself. One possibility is access through so-called 'proxy' usage (having someone else use the Internet on one's behalf), which may help to compensate non-users for lack of direct usage themselves. Another possibility is usage of the Internet at Public Internet Access Points (PIAPs), which may help compensate users who lack access at home or at other places such as work or education.

2.3.1 Proxy users

Although direct usage of the Internet oneself can be expected to yield the greatest benefits it is also useful to examine whether older people are gaining at least some of the benefits through 'proxy' usage whereby they have others use the Internet on their behalf. In fact, amongst the older people surveyed, almost as many (35.2%) used the Internet by proxy as used it themselves (Table 6) and when these are taken into account, overall, only one-quarter (24.5%) of those surveyed did not gain access to the Internet at all, either directly or by proxy.

Table 6. Direct and proxy access to the Internet

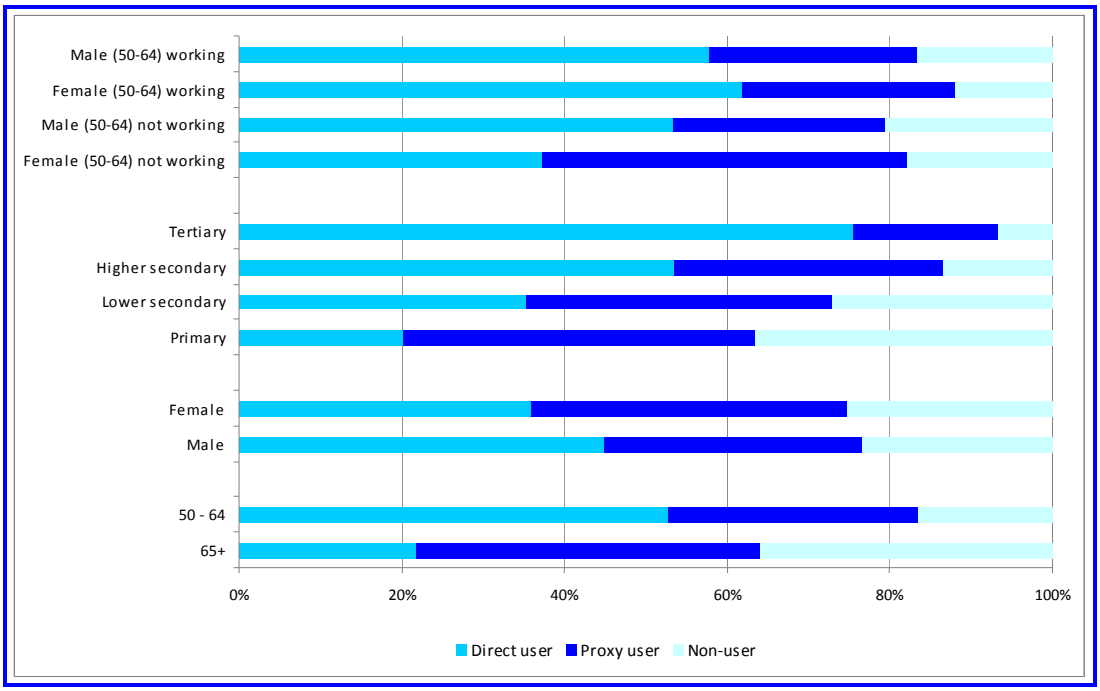
	50-64	65-plus	All 50+
	%	%	%
Direct use oneself	52.8	21.8	40.3
Use by proxy only	30.7	42.2	35.2
Don't use in either way	16.5	36.0	24.5
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Base: All respondents (Adults aged 50+)

It can be seen that those aged 65-plus were considerably more likely to use the Internet solely by proxy and also were a lot more likely to not use the Internet in any way. More

generally (Figure 13), likelihood of using by proxy was relatively more important amongst those with lower educational levels and amongst women (and non-working women in particular). However, as discussed in more detail later, direct users seem to gain more benefits from the Internet than proxy users, even if the latter form of usage does seem to be useful for many people for at least some purposes.

Figure 13. Proxy and direct usage by socio-demographic groups



Finally, many older Internet users have themselves used the Internet on behalf of someone else. Overall, almost two-in-five (39.3%) of the older Internet users in the survey reported having done this at least once or twice and typically more frequently, with the younger age group (43.5%) considerably more likely than the older age group (24.7%) to report having acted in this manner. Men (44.9%) were more likely than women (33.7%) to report this, and were especially more likely to report doing this more often than once or twice.

Policy implications

- **proxy usage is common and needs to be considered in the delivery of eGovernment and other services; such services may need to be designed to facilitate usage on behalf of others whilst at the same time addressing possible privacy/security issues that might arise in this context**
- **more generally, however, those who use the Internet directly themselves are more likely to report various benefits so eInclusion efforts should probably encourage this type of usage as the best option**

2.3.2 Public Internet Access points

Also of interest is whether older people are making use of Public Internet Access Points (PIAPs) as a substitute or alternative to home access to the Internet, as well as attitudes towards and experiences of PIAPs amongst this age group more generally.

Overall, four-fifths of those surveyed (82.0%) reported knowing of places near to where they live where they could use the Internet but only about one-in-eight (13.0%) had actually used the Internet in a PIAP. A large majority of PIAP users already had home access to the Internet, so it seems that PIAPs are not being widely used by the older age group as an alternative place of access for those who do not have home (or work) access. More generally, the 'younger' old were more likely to report using PIAPs as were those with higher levels of education.

Nearly one-half (47.8%) of those who had used a PIAP said they were a very good place to use the Internet and a similar number (46.0%) said they were o.k. but not ideal, but a small minority (6.2%) did not find them a good place for this purpose. Thus, lack of interest in computers and the Internet again seems likely to be the main factor in the low levels of usage rather than any inherent dislike of PIAPs, per se.

Amongst those that did use PIAPs, the main types used were Internet cafés, public facilities such as libraries, and community organisations. Those aged 50-64 were more likely to use Internet cafés and those aged 65-plus were more likely to use community or voluntary organisations.

3 How ICTs are used and the benefits gained from using them

3.1 Mobile phones

Uses

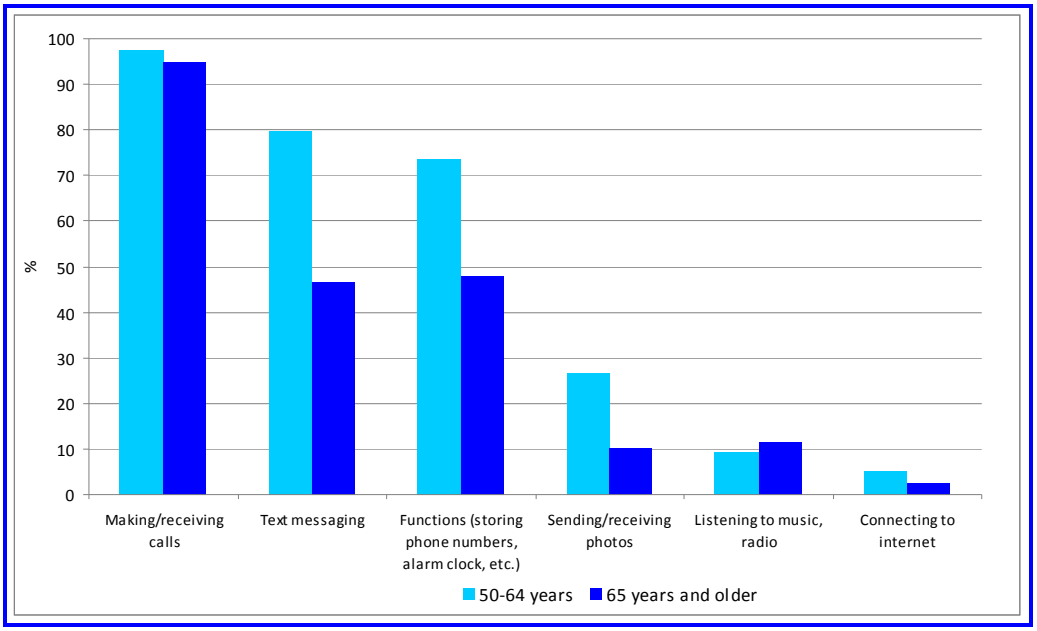
The uses that are made of mobile phones are presented in Table 7 and Figure 14. It can be seen that the great majority of the older people surveyed use their mobile phones for making and receiving calls, about two-in-three use them to send text messages and almost two-in-three report using some of the other (non communication) functions of their mobiles. However, only one-in-five use them for sending/receiving photos and a very small minority (4.1%) use their mobiles for connecting to the Internet.

Table 7. What mobile phones are used for

	50-64	65-plus	All 50+
	%	%	%
Making/receiving calls	97.5	94.9	96.5
Text messaging	79.6	46.7	67.4
Functions (storing phone numbers, alarm clock, etc.)	73.6	47.8	64.0
Sending/receiving photos	26.8	10.2	20.6
Listening to music, radio	9.2	11.5	10.1
Connecting to internet	5.0	2.5	4.1

Base: current computer users

Figure 14. Uses of mobile phones by age group



Those in the older age band were considerably less likely to report using texting, and also were a lot less likely to use the various functions of their phones or to use them for photos. More generally, women were more likely to report using their mobiles for texting and for photos, and those with higher levels of education were more likely to use more of the capabilities of their mobile phones.

Policy implications

- **many older people make only limited use of their mobile phone's capabilities, especially the 'older' old; efforts to increase awareness and skills to make greater use would be useful**

Benefits

Of those currently using a mobile phone, only 2.5% reported that their mobile phone has not been of any real benefit to them. The most frequently reported benefit by users (by 82.8% overall) was being able to easily keep in touch with family and friends (Table 8 and Figure 15). This was followed by safety and security benefits (34.4% overall). The older group were somewhat more likely to report safety/security benefits, as were women and those living alone.

Table 8. Benefits from mobile phone usage

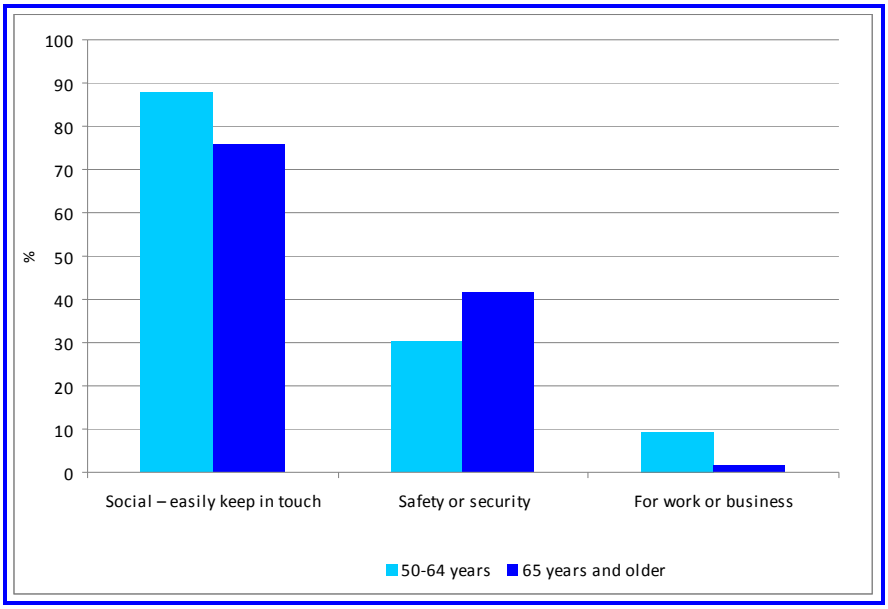
	50-64	65-plus	All 50+
	%	%	%
Social – easily keep in touch	87.6	75.7	82.8
Safety or security	30.2	41.5	34.4
For work or business	9.5	1.6	6.6

Base: mobile phone users

Policy implications

- **having a mobile phone is of benefit for older people, mainly for social purposes but also for safety/security for a substantial proportion, especially amongst the older age groups, women and those living alone**
- **efforts to encourage/enable usage amongst non-users who could benefit would therefore seem useful**

Figure 15. Benefits from mobile phone usage by age group



3.2 Computers

The vast majority (95.2%) of computer users had a computer in their household, although a small proportion did not (4.8%). For the latter, the most common places of usage were at work, at another person's home or at a place of education. In addition to home usage by the majority, one third (33.8%) had used a computer at work in the past three months and just over one-in-six (17.4%) had used one at a place of education.

More than four-in-five users (83.7%) reported using a computer every day or almost every day (55.1%) or at least once a week (28.6%), with those in the older age group a little more likely to report less frequent usage (Table 9).

Table 9. Frequency of computer usage

	50-64 years	65 years and older	All 50+
	%	%	%
Every day or almost every day	57.8	47.1	55.1
At least once a week (but not every day)	27.7	31.4	28.6
At least once a month (but not every week)	9.5	11.6	10.0
Less than once a month	5.0	9.9	6.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Base: current computer users

The uses made of home computers are presented in Table 10. Users in the older age band were considerably less likely to use the computer for household tasks and work-related

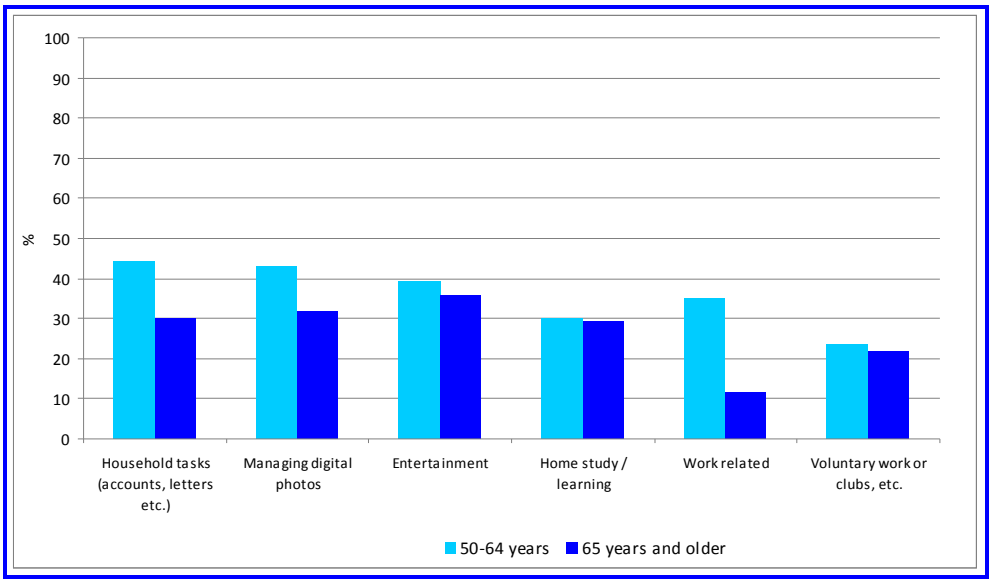
tasks, and were also somewhat less likely to use it for managing digital photos (Figure 16). More generally, those with higher levels of education were significantly more likely to report each type of usage.

Table 10. What home computers are used for

	50-64 years	65 years and older	All 50+
	%	%	%
Household tasks (accounts, letters etc.)	44.4	29.9	40.8
Managing digital photos	42.9	31.9	40.2
Entertainment	39.1	35.8	38.3
Home study / learning	30.1	29.5	30.0
Work related	35.1	11.6	29.2
Voluntary work or clubs, etc.	23.4	21.8	23.0

Base: current computer users

Figure 16. Uses of computers by age group



Policy implications

- **efforts to provide older people with the skills to make more usage of their computers may be warranted, especially amongst the 'older' old and those with lower levels of education**

3.3 Internet

Usage

The vast majority (96.0%) of Internet users had an Internet connection in their household, although a small proportion did not (4.0%). For the latter, the most common places of usage were at work or at another person's home, followed by at a place of education.

Overall, a large majority (91.5%) of Internet users had used the Internet at home in the last 3 months although a minority (8.5%) had not. In addition to home usage by the majority, one-third (33.3%) had used the Internet at work and just over one-in-six (17.2%) had used it at a place of education.

Type of home connection

Almost three-quarters (73.1%) of those who had used the Internet at home had a broadband connection, with the younger age group (76.6%) somewhat more likely than the older age group (60.2%) to report this (Table 11).

Table 11. Type of home Internet connection

	50-64	65-plus	All 50+
	%	%	%
Broadband	76.6	60.2	73.1
Regular telephone line	21.8	34.9	24.6
Other (e.g. mobile)	1.0	2.4	1.3
Don't know	0.7	2.4	1.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Base: current home Internet users

Intensity of usage

Overall, more than four-in-five (82.5%) reported using the Internet every day or almost every day (50.1%) or at least once a week (32.4%), with those in the older age group a little more likely to report less frequent usage (Table 12). As shown in Table 13, amongst those who had used the Internet at home in the past three months and who used it at least once a week or more, a majority used it between 1 and 6 hours per week.

Table 12. Frequency of Internet usage

	50-64	65-plus	All 50+
	%	%	%
Every day or almost every day	51.9	43.8	50.1
At least once a week (but not every day)	31.7	34.8	32.4
At least once a month (but not every week)	12.5	13.5	12.7
Less than once a month	3.8	7.9	4.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Base: current Internet users

Table 13. Hours of Internet use per week

	50-64 years	65 years and older	All 50+
	%	%	%
1-2	43.5	45.7	45.0
3-6	31.4	25.5	30.2
7-10	12.6	20.3	14.1
11-20	9.6	3.4	8.4
21+	2.9	5.1	3.4
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Base: those who use the Internet at least once per week

Uses made of the Internet

The uses made of the Internet are presented in Table 14 and Figure 17, from which it can be seen that older people are using the Internet for a wide range of purposes.

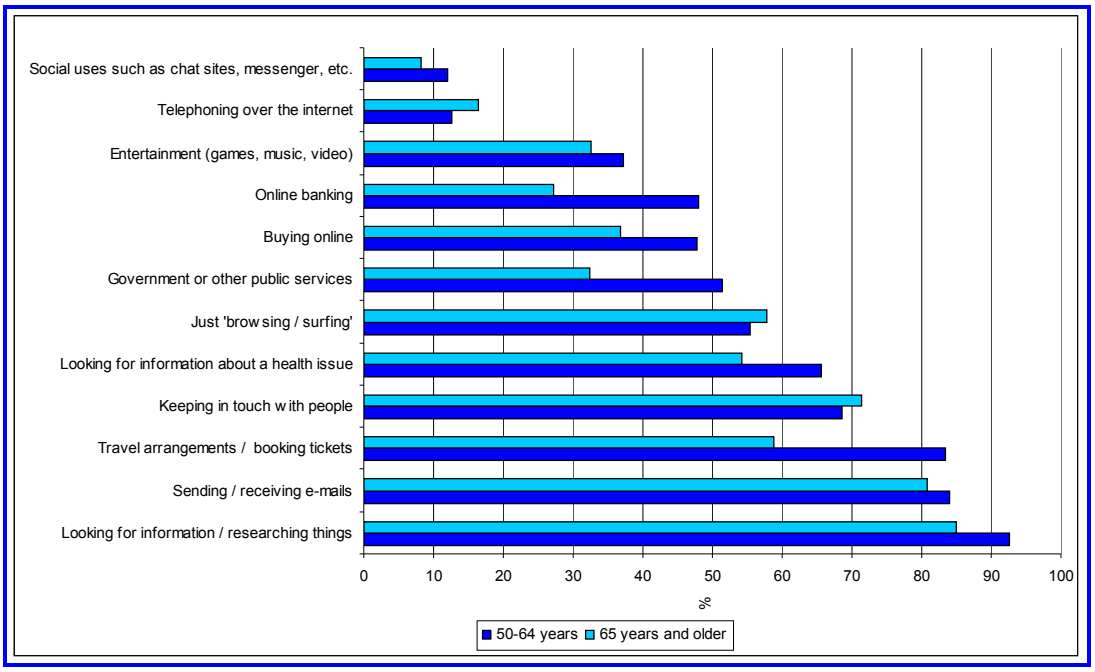
Although both age groups show a broad range of uses, those in the younger age band were considerably more likely to use the Internet for a number of specific purposes, including making travel arrangements, accessing Government services and online banking. More generally, those with higher levels of education were significantly more likely to use the Internet for each of the listed purposes except in the case of 'browsing/surfing' where those with only primary level education reported more usage, as did those who were not working.

Table 14. What the Internet is used for

	50-64	65-plus	All 50+
Looking for information / researching things	92.5	84.9	90.8
Sending / receiving e-mails	84.0	80.7	83.3
Travel arrangements / booking tickets	83.3	58.8	77.8
Keeping in touch with people	68.6	71.4	69.2
Looking for information about a health issue	65.6	54.2	63.1
Just 'browsing / surfing'	55.4	57.8	55.9
Government or other public services	51.3	32.4	47.1
Buying online	47.7	36.8	45.3
Online banking	47.9	27.1	43.3
Entertainment (games, music, video)	37.1	32.6	36.1
Telephoning over the internet	12.6	16.4	13.4
Social uses such as chat sites, messenger, etc.	11.9	8.2	11.1
Senior sites	6.1	7.8	6.4

Base: current Internet users

Figure 17. Uses of Internet by age group



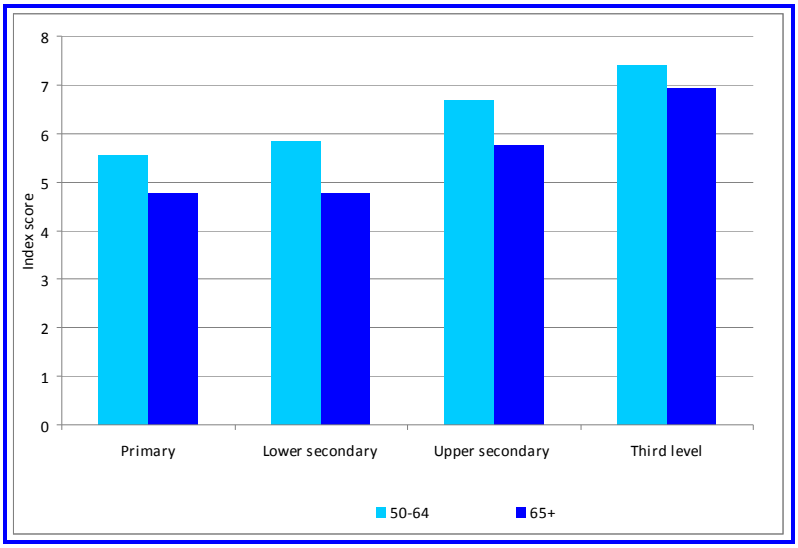
Policy implications

- **efforts to encourage and enable the 'older' old to use the Internet for specific, practically useful things like booking travel/tickets, eGovernment and eBanking may be warranted**

Overall range of uses

Figure 18 gives a picture of the overall scope of Internet usage by the different groups according to educational level, based on the average number of things (from the items listed in Table 14) that they do online. It can be seen that the range of uses increases as educational level increases, reflecting the phenomenon known as the 'second order' digital divide where, amongst those who are online, the better educated and otherwise more socioeconomically advantaged tend to make the most use of the Internet and its capabilities. Different skill levels are an important factor in this, although cultural and attitudinal factors also play a role.

Figure 18. Internet usage index by educational level



Policy implications

- **the 'second order' digital divide linked to educational level also needs to be addressed, through efforts to reach the less-educated online older population and encourage/enable their usage of the Internet for a wider range of useful purposes**

Patterns or styles of usage

Patterns of usage were further examined by performing a factor analysis and this suggested three main types of Internet usage amongst the older users:

Functional usage	Using the internet for specific tasks such as on-line banking, accessing Government services, making travel arrangements and buying on-line
Social usage	Using the internet for keeping in touch with people, and sending / receiving emails
General usage	Using the internet to look for information, just 'browsing' and 'surfing', or for entertainment purposes (games, music, videos)

The profiles by age group and overall are presented in Table 15. The main patterns that appear are the younger age group (55.7%) being more likely to have high functional usage than the older age group (35.5%), as well as to be high on all three styles (24.0% versus 14.6%), whereas the older age group (20.3%) were more likely than the younger age group (9.3%) to be only high on social usage.

Table 15. Styles of Internet usage

	50-64	65-plus	All 50+
	%	%	%
High functional	55.7	35.6	51.1
High social	67.4	69.7	67.6
High general	58.9	53.9	57.7
High on all three	24.0	14.6	21.7
High functional and social, low general	19.2	14.6	18.2
High social and general, low functional	14.7	21.3	16.0
High general, low functional and social	11.8	14.6	12.5
High social, low functional and general	9.3	20.2	11.7
Low on all three	8.3	9.0	8.7
High functional and general, low social	8.6	3.4	7.5
High functional, low social and general	4.2	2.2	3.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Base: current Internet users

As regards other socio-demographic patterns in usage styles, multivariate analysis showed that being better educated and male were both associated with a greater likelihood to be a high functional user, although being better educated was also associated with high social

use. The link with educational level again suggests the operation of a 'second-order' digital divide amongst older Internet users.

Benefits

Amongst direct and proxy Internet users as a whole, just a small minority (11.8%) reported that the Internet had not been of any real benefit to them. The most common (spontaneously) reported benefit (by 46.4% overall) was easy access to information (Table 16 and Figure 19). This was followed by online shopping and/or travel arrangements (by 43.5% overall). Ease of keeping in touch with family and friends was also a commonly reported benefit (by 19.5% overall).

Table 16. Reported benefits gained from the Internet

	50-64	65-plus	All 50+
Accessing information	52.0	34.7	46.4
Buying or booking online	46.9	36.4	43.5
Easily keeping in touch	19.5	19.3	19.5
Entertainment	9.9	8.5	9.4
Government services	5.0	4.0	4.7
Online banking	4.9	2.4	4.1

Base: direct and proxy Internet users

Those in the older age group were less likely to report benefits of accessing information and being able to buy/book online, although they were equally likely to report benefits of easily keeping in touch.

Figure 19. Benefits gained from the Internet by age group

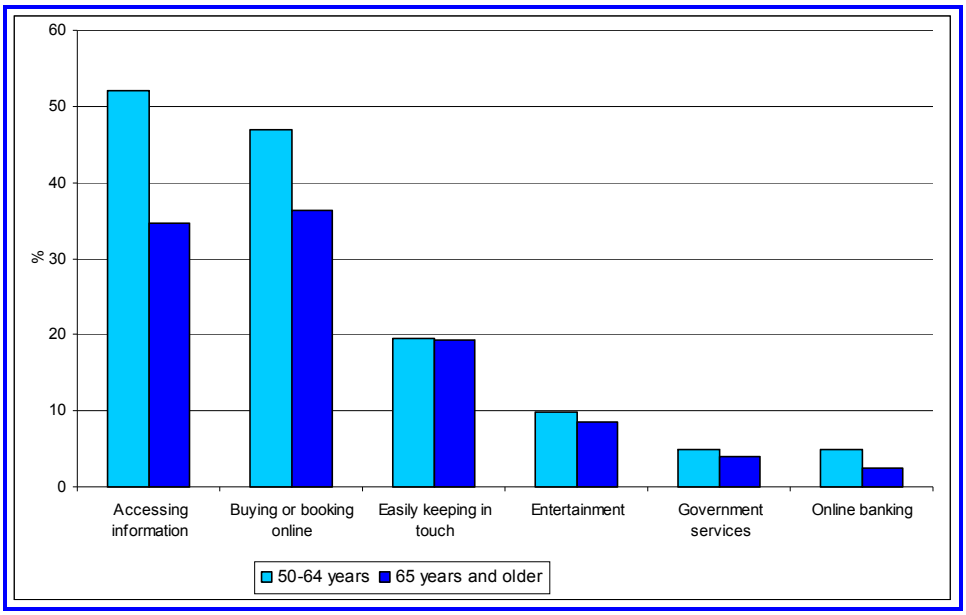


Table 17 presents the reporting of benefits separately for direct users and proxy users. Overall, one-quarter of proxy users (25.6%) said they gained no real benefits from the Internet compared with just 3.3% of those using it directly themselves. Proxy users were a lot less likely to report benefits such as accessing information and easily keeping in touch. Interestingly, however, they were just as likely to report the benefit of buying/booking online, suggesting that this is the main form of usage that is being done by others on behalf of older people.

Table 17. Reported benefits gained from the Internet - direct and proxy users

	Direct users	Proxy users	All (direct and proxy)
Accessing information	62.2	20.6	46.4
Buying or booking online	42.4	45.3	43.5
Easily keeping in touch	26.1	8.6	19.5
Entertainment	12.9	3.7	9.4
Government services	4.9	4.3	4.7
Online banking	6.6	0.0	4.1
No real benefits	3.3	25.6	11.8

Bases: Direct and proxy Internet users

Policy implications

- **the majority of direct users report benefits from access to the Internet, especially the increased access to information and being able to buy or book online; those who do not use the Internet are therefore losing out in practical ways**
- **amongst users, the older old (65-plus) are less likely to report these benefits; efforts to encourage/enable usage of the relevant services amongst this age group would seem useful**
- **a lot more benefits are gained by direct users, so this type of usage is to be encouraged where possible**

Barriers

Those who used the Internet directly themselves at home were asked whether any of a range of factors significantly restricted their usage. As shown in Table 18, lack of skills was most frequently mentioned and, overall, was reported to be a barrier by two-in-five (39.8%) direct current users of the Internet. Worries about privacy / security issues and poor quality

Internet connections were reported to be barriers by about one-in-four users in each case. Concerns about cost were reported by a little more than one-in-eight overall.

Table 18. Factors restricting use of the Internet

	50-64 years	65 years and older	All 50+
Lack of skills	38.2	45.8	39.8
Worries about privacy / security issues	24.8	22.9	24.4
Poor quality Internet connection	24.1	20.5	23.3
Concern about cost	12.8	16.9	13.7

Bases: direct current users of the Internet

More generally, there was a greater likelihood of reporting lack of skills and cost barriers amongst the less educated and amongst women, whereas those living in Connaught/Ulster were more likely to report poor quality Internet connection as a barrier. In addition, as might be expected, those with only a narrowband connection were a lot more likely (51.6%) than those with a broadband connection (14.2%) to report poor connection quality as a barrier.

Policy implications

- **limited skills are reported as the most common factor restricting the ways the Internet is used by older people; opportunities for users to improve their skills would therefore seem useful**
- **poor quality connections (especially for narrowband users) and worries about privacy are also quite important factors; efforts to support wider access to broadband as well as to facilitate older users to address security concerns would therefore be helpful**

3.4 ICTs and lifestyles

The more general role of ICTs in older people's lifestyles was also examined as part of the survey.

Importance of ICTs in one's life

Users of computers / the Internet were asked about the importance of these ICTs as a part of their lives. Respondents fell into three roughly equal sized groups in this regard - about one-third said the ICTs were a big part of their lives, one-third said that were a part of their lives but not so important, and one-third said that they were a minor or no part of their lives (Table 19).

Table 19. Importance of computers/Internet as part of life

	50-64	65-plus	All 50+
A big part of my life	35.8	30.1	34.3
A part of my life, but not so important	33.2	37.4	34.3
A minor or no part at all of my life	31.0	32.5	31.4
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Bases: current users of computers and/or the Internet

Importance was strongly linked to frequency of usage. For example, almost four-in-five (79.0%) of those who said computers / the Internet were a big part of their life used them every day or almost every day, compared with just over one-in-five (43.2%) of those who said they were a part of their lives but not so important, and just one-in-six (16.2%) of the lowest importance group. A similar pattern emerged for average hours of usage per week.

ICTs and wider lifestyle patterns

As already mentioned in section 2.2, the survey also looked at the wider lifestyles of older people, based on their ratings of the importance of a variety of activities as part of their lives. Table 20 shows the overall lifestyle profile of the older people in the sample as well as how ICTs are related to the different lifestyles.

Table 20. Wider lifestyles and ICTs

	All	ICT users	ICT users for whom ICTs are a large part of life	
	%	%	%	Relative likelihood
High active/outward; high home/family	28.5	34.5	43.8	1.5
High active/outward; low home/family	18.1	19.9	22.6	1.2
Low active/outward; high home/family	32.9	27.1	22.6	0.7
Low active/outward; low home/family	20.5	18.5	11.0	0.5
	100.0	100.0	100.0	-

It can be seen that those with a high active/outward lifestyle are especially likely to say that ICTs are an important part of their lives.

4 Interest in training / other forms of ICT skill development

This Chapter examines in more detail the levels of interest in training or other forms of ICT skills development that were found in the survey. Section 4.1 looks at actual levels of participation to date in computer / Internet training amongst the older people surveyed, as well as other sources of ICT skill acquisition. Section 4.2 looks at levels of interest in learning (more) about the various ICTs amongst both users and non-user. Section 4.3 looks at preferred ways of learning about the different ICTs, including self-learning, having someone come and show you, and attending a course.

4.1 Participation in training and other sources of computer / Internet skills

4.1.1 The different contexts and ways skills are acquired

The different contexts and ways that older computer users reported having acquired their computer skills are presented in Table 21. It can be seen that the workplace was the most commonly reported place to acquire ICT skills (43.8%), followed by being self-taught or shown by family / friend (31.4%) and then by attending a class or course outside of the work context (21.2%).

Table 21. How computer users acquired the skills that they have

	50-64	65-plus	All 50+
	%	%	%
Work	44.5	42.4	43.8
Class / course (outside work context)	19.3	26.1	21.1
Self-taught / family or friend showed	33.0	27.3	31.4
Other	3.2	4.2	3.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Base: current computer users

4.1.2 Levels of participation in courses (to date)

Respondents were also specifically asked if they had taken any classes or courses (other than in work-related contexts) over the past few years and, if they had, whether any of these were about computers / the Internet or at least covered these topics in some manner. Overall, almost one-in-three (32.8%) reported taking some class or course (Table 22). Those in the younger age group were more likely than the older age group to have taken a class or course.

Table 22. Participation in classes / courses in last few years (other than work-related)

	50-64	65-plus	All 50+
	%	%	%
Took any classes or courses (not work-related) in last few years	37.1	26.5	32.8
Took course about or covering computers / Internet	20.4	13.0	17.4
Course specifically about computers / Internet	14.0	10.5	12.6
Course about wider topic, computers / Internet was an aspect	6.4	2.5	4.8

Base: All respondents (Adults aged 50+)

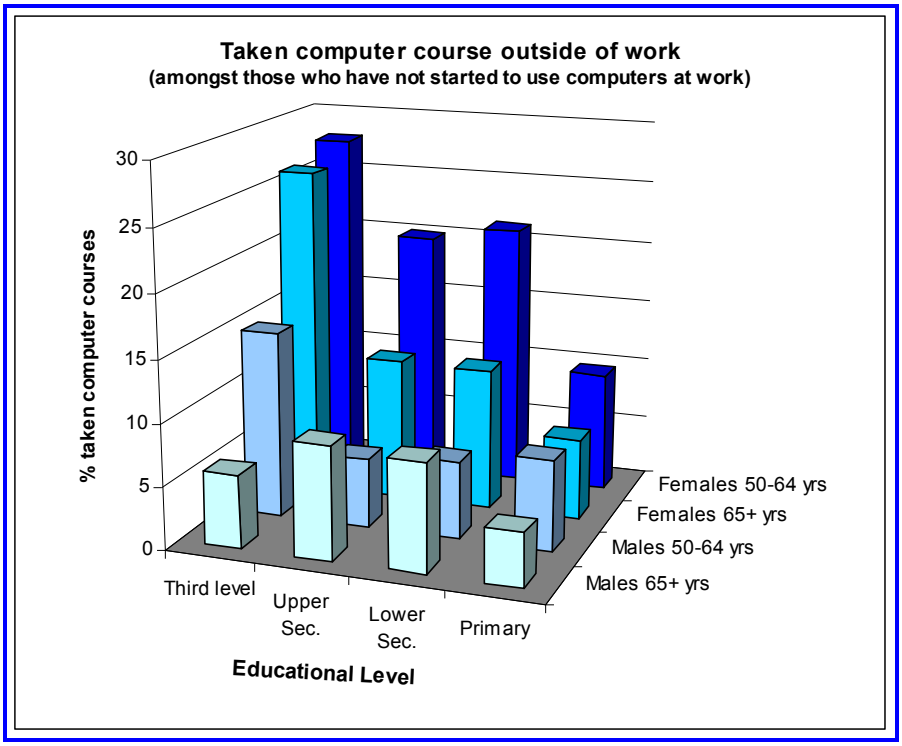
Just over one-in-six (17.4%) reported having taken a class or course about or covering computers / the Internet in some manner, with the younger age group again more likely to report this. About one-in-eight (12.6%) had taken a course specifically about computers / the Internet and a further 4.8% had taken a course on a wider topic that included some training on computers / the Internet. For both types of course, the younger age group were more likely to have taken one.

Overall, the results show that computers and the Internet figure strongly in the life-long learning interests of older people, at least amongst those who have taken courses at all. More than one-half of the older people who had taken a course took one that addressed computers / the Internet in some way, and more than one-third took one that was specifically about computers / the Internet.

Multivariate analyses were also conducted to examine socio-demographic patterns in relation to participation in computer/Internet courses. Results showed that those who were better educated, in particular, and also females and the younger age group were considerably more likely to have taken such a class or course in the last few years.

Figure 20 shows the combined effects of the three socio-demographic factors - education, gender and age - on likelihood of having taken such a course. It can be seen that likelihood of having taken a course is especially high amongst the highest educated females in either age group, as well as amongst females in the younger age group with at least lower secondary education. On the basis of this data, it seems that currently available courses are, proportionately at least, mainly reaching women and better educated women in particular.

Figure 20. Likelihood of having taken a computer course by education, age and gender



However, as shown in section 2.2, because the lower educated have been and continue to be late adopters of ICTs they have comprised and continue to comprise a large bulk of the non-user population for whom beginner courses in ICTs might be expected to be required. Because of this, the full spectrum of people who have taken courses includes a mix across all levels of education, both men and women, even if (better educated) women are over-represented proportionately.

Policy implications

- **women in general, and better educated women in particular, seem to be most likely to have taken ICT courses; efforts to reach and motivate more men and more people in the lower educated categories seem warranted**
- **nevertheless, both men and women, and those with higher and lower education are taking courses, so content and orientation needs to take the mixed background and characteristics of participants into account**

4.2 Interest in learning / training amongst users and non-users

This section turns to a more detailed examination of levels of interest in start-up or additional learning / training on ICTs amongst users and non-users of ICTs. Given the results presented in Chapters 2 and 3, both groups are important as targets for policy intervention. Non-users need to be targeted in order to help them get started; users need to be targeted because many appear to have limited skills at present and this is restricting what they do with ICTs and the benefits that they are gaining.

4.2.1 Mobile phones

Levels of interest in learning more and in training

Overall, 22.6% of the sample expressed an interest in learning more about mobile phones which, if extrapolated to the population aged 50-plus as a whole, would equate to about 253,000 people (Table 23). Both users and non-users of mobile phones are interested, with those who currently use phones slightly more likely to be interested than those who do not. Because the majority are in fact current users, they comprise the majority of those who would be interested in learning (more).

Table 23. Numbers interested in learning more about mobile phones / how to use them

	Interested in learning more		Interest in attending a course (amongst other options)	
	%	Extrapolated approx. total no. in population	%	Extrapolated approx. total no. in population
All older people (50-64 and 65+)	22.6	253,000	8.3	93,000
Mobile phone users	23.1	223,000	7.9	76,000
Non-users	19.4	30,000	10.8	17,000
50-64	23.8	158,000	7.9	53,000
65+	20.8	95,000	8.8	40,000
Dublin	25.7	74,000	7.4	22,000
Rest of Leinster	17.9	50,000	7.5	22,000
Munster	19.4	63,000	9.0	29,000
Connaught / Ulster	28.9	66,000	8.8	40,000

Base: All respondents (Adults aged 50+)

As regards how they might learn more, those who expressed any interest were asked which of a number of possible ways of learning about mobiles and how to use them (attend a course, have someone come and show you / teach you, learn yourself from good instructional material) they would be mainly interested in. About one-third of those who were interested at all, representing about one-in-twelve (8.3%) of all older people, expressed an

interest in attending a course for this purpose. If this level of interest is extrapolated to the population aged 50-plus as a whole it would equate to about 93,000 people. Non-users are more likely than users to express an interest in attending a course, which may reflect a recognition that they have more to learn and thus would especially benefit from a course as opposed to other ways of learning. However, users (because they are a much larger group numerically) would again be likely to comprise the large bulk of course participants.

Looking at other patterns in the data, it can be seen that levels of interest are slightly higher amongst the 'younger' old and that, overall, these would make up the largest group interested, although a sizeable number of those in the older age category would also be interested. Levels of interest were somewhat higher in Dublin and Connacht/Ulster, although all regions did show quite strong levels of interest. Extrapolation to the population aged 50-plus as a whole suggests that large numbers could be expected to be interested in each region.

More generally, there were no major patterns across socio-demographic groups in terms of levels of interest in learning more about mobile phones.

Attend a local evening course

As discussed above, in the case of mobile phones (and in contrast to the situation for computers and for the Internet) having someone come and show you or learning oneself from good instructional material were more likely to be preferred than attending a course. This aspect is discussed further in section 4.3.

Because the possibility of introducing some form of publicly-supported courses on mobile phones was on the policy agenda at the time of the survey, a more direct follow-up question was also asked concerning interest in attending an evening course about mobile phones and how to use or better use them, run over several weeks and available locally. Interestingly, somewhat more respondents expressed an interest in such a course than had initially expressed a more general interest in courses on mobile phones as a way of learning about them. In this case, about one-in-eight (13.1%) expressed a definite interest and 2.3% expressed a possible interest in attending a local evening course on mobile phones (Table 24).

If this level of actual and potential interest is extrapolated to the population aged 50-plus as a whole it would equate to about 173,000 people. More generally, the patterns across sub-groups and regions were fairly similar to the more general levels of interest in courses on mobile phones as reported above. For the most part there were proportionately higher levels

of interest expressed in a specific evening course in each case, although relative interest in an evening course was higher in Connaught/Ulster and lower in the rest of Leinster.

Table 24. Numbers interested in local evening course about mobile phones

	Yes	Maybe	Extrapolated approx. total no. in population
	%	%	
All older people (50-64 and 65+)	13.1	2.3	173,000
Mobile phone users	12.9	2.3	148,000
Non-users	14.4	1.4	25,000
50-64	14.0	2.0	107,000
65+	11.9	2.5	66,000
Dublin	13.0	2.0	43,000
Rest of Leinster	8.7	2.8	33,000
Munster	13.2	2.4	51,000
Connaught / Ulster	18.1	2.0	46,000

Base: All respondents (Adults aged 50+)

Policy implications

- **potentially large numbers of older people in each of the four regions are interested in learning more about mobile phones and how to use them**
- **both current users and non-users should be targeted in policy measures to increase mobile phone usage/skills**
- **many older people say they would be interested in attending a course on mobile phones, but there is also strong interest in other modes of acquisition of these skills; therefore a skills programme could also consider other measures as well**
- **there appears to be a quite strong interest in locally run evening courses, in particular**

Topics interested in learning about

The main topics users would be interested in learning (more) about are texting, accessing the Internet through their mobile, and photo functions (Table 25). The main topics non-users would be interested in learning about are how to get started, how to make voice calls and texting.

Table 25. Mobile phone topics interested in learning about

Mobile phone users	*%*	*Mobile phone non-users*	*%*
Texting	35.1	Getting a mobile phone / getting started	52.0
Accessing internet from mobile	30.2	Making voice calls	37.0
Photos	24.6	Texting	21.4
Getting / changing a mobile phone	18.9	Accessing internet from mobile	15.5

Policy implications

- **as might be expected, non-users are mainly interested in the basics of getting started whereas users are interested in developing more skills**
- **there may be a need to consider separate courses targeting beginners and existing users (or optional introductory sessions first for beginners)**

4.2.2 Computers

Levels of interest in learning more and in training

Overall, almost two-in-five (39.2%) of the sample expressed an interest in learning more about computers which, if extrapolated to the population aged 50-plus as a whole, would equate to somewhere between 398,000 and 439,000 people depending on whether the computer usage rates from this survey or from the QNHS of 2007 are used (Table 26). Large numbers of users and non-users of computers are interested, although those who currently use computers are almost twice as likely to be interested to learn (more) about them.

As regards how they might learn more, overall more than one-quarter (28.9%) of the total sample expressed an interest in attending a course for this purpose which, if extrapolated to the population aged 50+ as a whole, would equate to between 298,000 and 324,00 people. Again, users would comprise the largest share of these, although large numbers of non-users would also appear to be interested.

Looking at other patterns in the data, it can be seen that levels of interest are somewhat higher amongst the 'younger' old and that, overall, these would make up the largest group interested although a sizeable number of those in the older age category would also be interested. Levels of interest were somewhat higher in Connacht/Ulster, although all regions did show quite strong levels of interest. Extrapolation to the population aged 50-plus as a whole suggests that large numbers could be expected to be interested in each region.

Table 26. Numbers interested in learning more about computers / how to use them[2]

	Interested in learning more		Interest in attending a course (amongst other options)	
	%	Extrapolated approx. total no. in population	%	Extrapolated approx. total no. in population
All older people (50-64 and 65+)	39.2	398,000 - 439,000	28.9	298,000 - 324,000
Computer users	51.4	186,000 - 277,000	36.6	132,000 - 197,000
Non-users	27.9	162,000 - 212,000	21.8	127,000 - 166,000
50-64 years	44.2	266,000 - 293,000	31.1	190,000 - 207,000
65+ years	31.9	132,000 - 146,000	25.5	108,000 - 117,000
Dublin	37.6	98,000 - 108,000	29.3	78,000 - 84,000
Rest of Leinster	35.3	90,000 - 100,000	23.4	61,000 - 66,000
Munster	38.1	112,000 - 123,000	27.4	81,000 - 90,000
Connaught / Ulster	47.5	98,000 - 108,000	36.9	78,000 - 84,000

Base: All respondents (Adults aged 50+)

As regards more general socio-demographic patterns, the main finding was that levels of interest in learning more about computers decreased as educational level decreased.

Policy implications

- **both current users and non-users should be targeted in policy measures to increase computer skills**
- **only a minority of non-users expressed an interest, and the attitudinal data presented in Chapter 2 suggests that this group may need to be targeted by other awareness-raising and promotional efforts as well**
- **efforts to reach lower educated older people, in particular, seem warranted**

Topics interested in learning about

Amongst computer users, the most frequently mentioned topics of interest were the Internet/e-mail and general computer skills (Table 27). A significant number also mentioned managing photos, as well as particular packages such as spreadsheets and word-processing. For non-users, the most frequently mentioned topics were computer basics and Internet/e-mail.

[2] as noted in Chapter 2, the current survey generated somewhat higher computer usage rates than did the QNHS of 2007; because computer users in the current survey were a lot more likely to express an interest in learning (more) about computers, estimates of the overall numbers interested are given in Table 11 based both on the computer usage rates in this survey and on those from the QNHS; the former can be taken as an upper bound and the latter as a lower bound for the overall numbers, although in both cases the message is clear that potentially very large numbers are interested.

Table 27. Computer topics interested in learning about

Computer users	*%*	*Computer non-users*	*%*
Internet / email	49.8	Basics of using computers	46.8
General computer skills	34.0	Internet / email	41.2
Photos	20.7	Getting a computer	4.8
Spreadsheets	13.0	Spread-sheets	3.3
Word-processing	12.6	Word-processing	2.4
Getting a computer	6.0		

Policy implications

- **both users and non-users showed strong interest in general computer skills and Internet/e-mail skills**
- **however, it may be that courses tailored to the different levels of skills/ experience would be most appropriate, with basic beginner courses for non-users and top-up/more advanced courses for those with some skills/experience already**

4.2.3 Internet

Levels of interest in learning more and in training

In general, levels of interest in learning more about the Internet and patterns across groups (Table 28) were similar to those for interest in learning more about computers.

Policy implications

- **as for computer skills, both current users and non-users should be targeted in policy measures to increase Internet skills**
- **the 'second-order' digital divides that are shown in Chapter 3 suggest the importance of policy efforts to reduce the educational and other divides in skills and usage amongst those who are online, in addition to the effort to reduce 'first-order' divides between those who are and are not online in the first place**

Table 28. Numbers interested in learning more about the Internet / how to use it[3]

	Interested in learning more		Interest in attending a course (amongst other options)	
	%	Extrapolated approx. total no. in population	%	Extrapolated approx. total no. in population
All older people (50-64 and 65+)	38.9	399,000 - 436,000	24.7	262,000 - 277,000
Internet users	52.9	158,000 - 239,000	33.5	121,000 - 152,000
Non-users	29.3	197,000 - 241,000	18.6	125,000 - 141,000
50-64 years	44.4	270,000 - 295,000	27.8	175,000 - 185,000
65+ years	30.8	129,000 - 141,000	20.0	87,000 - 92,000
Dublin	35.0	92,000 - 101,000	23.3	64,000 - 67,000
Rest of Leinster	39.4	102,000 - 111,000	23.0	61,000 - 65,000
Munster	34.0	100,000 - 110,000	23.6	72,000 - 76,000
Connaught / Ulster	49.8	105,000 - 114,000	29.8	65,000 - 68,000

Base: All respondents (Adults aged 50+)

Topics interested in learning about

The main topics that both users and non-users would be interested in learning (more) about were the same - general information about the Internet and basic skills for using it, searching for information, shopping/buying tickets, and e-mail (Table 29).

Table 29. Internet topics interested in learning about

Internet users	*%*	*Internet non-users*	*%*
Introduction to / basics of Internet	32.7	Introduction to / basics of Internet	40.3
Searching for information	32.3	Searching for information	38.7
Shopping/buying tickets	17.2	Shopping/buying tickets	17.4
e-mail	14.0	e-mail	15.0
Entertainment (music, games etc)	8.9	Entertainment (music, games etc)	9.7
Getting connected	6.5	Socializing, chatting	8.9
Banking / paying bills	5.9	Banking / paying bills	5.5
Socializing, chatting	4.5	Getting connected	5.7
Managing costs	2.6	Using Government services	3.1
Security / privacy	2.2	Managing costs	2.2

[3] as for extrapolation to numbers potentially interested in computer training, the extrapolations here are made on the basis both of Internet usage rates found in the current survey and of those found in the QNHS of 2007

Policy implications

- **both users and non-users show a similar profile in terms of Internet topics they are interested to learn more about**
- **it may be that a substantial part of the content of courses on the Internet would therefore be of relevance and interest for both groups (once the non-users have been given the necessary basic introduction and experience)**

4.3 Preferred modes of learning about the different ICTs

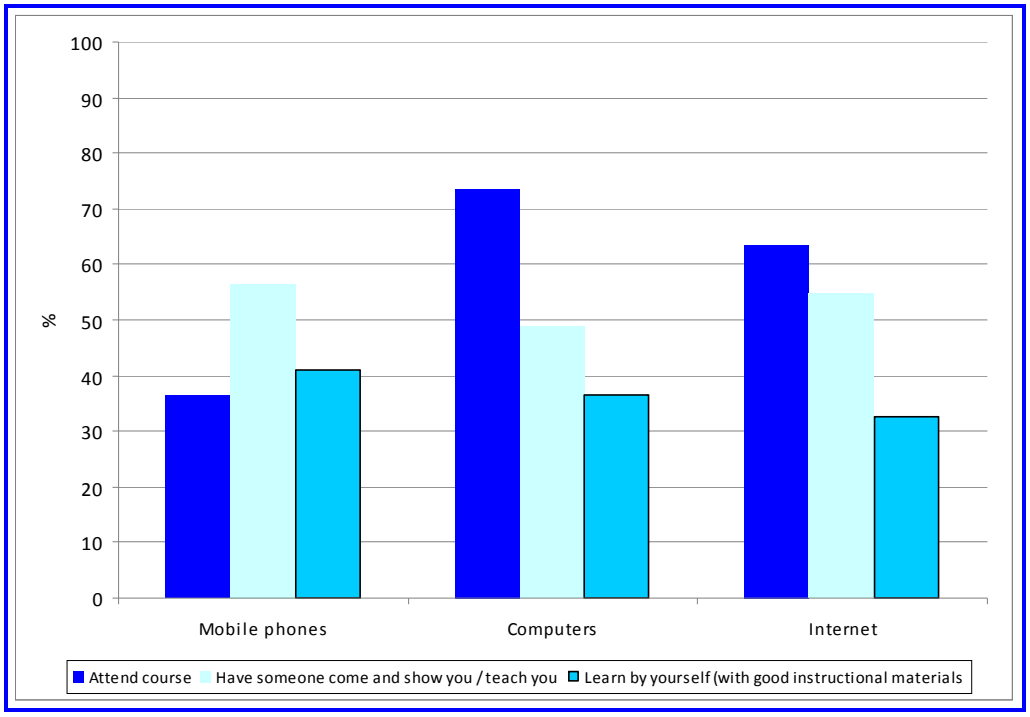
Finally, as shown in Table 30 and Figure 21, levels of interest in particular ways of learning about the different technologies varied somewhat.

Table 30. Preferred modes of learning about the different technologies

	Attend course	Have someone come and show you / teach you (one-to-one)	Learn by yourself (with good instructional materials)
	%	%	%
Mobile phones	36.6	56.4	41.0
Computers	73.7	48.8	36.5
Internet	63.5	54.8	32.7

Base: those interested in learning more about the respective technologies

Figure 21. Preferred modes of learning about the different technologies



As mentioned earlier, for mobile phones, especially, there was a stronger interest in learning in ways other than through attending a course, although nevertheless even in this case more than one-third of those who were interested in learning more expressed an interest in doing so through attending a course. In addition, as noted in section 4.2.1, higher levels of interest in courses (58% of those interested to learn more in some way) were found when respondents were asked a specific follow-up question about interest in attending a locally offered evening course on mobile phones.

Policy implications

- **a multi-modal approach to skills development might be considered, with a mix involving courses and tailored instructional materials for self-learning amongst these age groups**
- **in some countries, home visits to help people get started with ICTs have also been employed and might be considered, although cultural and security issues would need to be addressed**

5 Summary and conclusions

5.1 Many are already gaining benefits...

The results of the survey show that many older people are now using ICTs as a regular part of their daily lives. Usage of mobile phones is especially common, and those that use them report benefits in terms of being able to easily keep in touch with family and others, as well as contributing to a sense of safety/security (especially important for the older old, women and those living alone). Usage of computers and the Internet is growing although as yet has only reached a minority of those aged 65-plus. Many older people are using computers to do household tasks (accounts, letters, etc.), for managing digital photos, for home study, to support the voluntary work that they do and for more general entertainment. Many also use the Internet to look for information, send e-mails, make travel arrangements and book tickets, shop and do their banking online, and access government services, as well as for general entertainment purposes.

In addition, many older people who do not use ICTs directly themselves are gaining benefits through other people using them on their behalf. For example, about one-third of those aged 50-plus who were surveyed did not use the Internet directly themselves but had someone else use it on their behalf. Such 'proxy' usage seems to be especially for buying or booking online, but in comparison to direct usage oneself seems less beneficial for other purposes, such as finding information or keeping in touch with people.

5.2 ....but very many are still losing out

Although many older people are using ICTs and/or gaining benefits from ICTs, there remain very many who are not. From an eInclusion perspective, three main 'digital divides' can be observed:

- an 'age divide', whereby older people are less likely to use ICTs than younger people
- within the older population:
    - a 'first order' digital divide, whereby some segments of the older population are a lot more likely to be users than others
    - a 'second order' digital divide amongst those who are users, whereby some segments of the user population are making more usage and better usage, and gaining more benefits, than others

The age divide

Despite increases in recent years in the numbers of older people using computers and the Internet, the older age groups are still a lot less likely than younger age groups to use these ICTs. According to CSO data, computer and internet usage rates in 2007 for those in the 16 to 49 years age range were 61.8% and 57.5%, respectively, compared to 37.9% and 31.7% for those aged 50 to 64, and to 18.0% and 14.3% for those aged 65 to 74. There is clearly a need to continue and reinforce efforts to encourage and enable older people to use these technologies.

In this regard, the focus needs to be directed not only towards the 65-plus age group but also the 50-64 years age group. Both show relatively low levels of usage, with the drop off especially high amongst the older old. Interventions targeting the 50-64 years age group can yield benefits both amongst this age-group now and also as 'preventative' inputs to increase the numbers that will already have ICT skills when they are 65 and older.

The 'first order' digital divide

eInclusion efforts also need to target the 'first order' digital divide within the older population itself, manifested in the much lower rates of usage amongst certain segments of the older population. In particular, older people with low levels of education are much less likely to use computers or the Internet and, overall, those with low levels of education make up the majority of non-users today. Another important pattern is to be found amongst those who are still in the working age range (50-64 years), where relatively low levels of usage are to be found especially amongst non-working women. Given the differential labour force participation rates for women and men in this age group, non-working women and working men make up the majority of non-users in this age group. Thus, special attention may need to be given to targeting and reaching less educated older people in general as well as, amongst the 50-64 years age group, non-users inside and outside the workplace.

The 'second order' digital divide

eInclusion efforts also need to target the 'second order' digital divide amongst older people who do use ICTs, manifested in the wider range of uses and greater level of benefits being achieved by some segments of the user population. One part of this is age-related, with those aged 65-plus being less likely than those aged 50-64 to use the Internet for practically useful purposes such as booking travel/tickets, eGovernment and eBanking, and being less likely to report practical benefits from usage. However, another part is linked to the socio-demographic factors, especially educational levels, which also underpin the first order divide. Amongst older users of the Internet, for example, those with higher levels of education make

substantially wider usage of its potential. Thus, attention could also be usefully given to improving the ICT skills and confidence of older users, especially amongst the 65-plus age group and amongst less educated older users more generally. This applies not just to computer and Internet skills, but also to mobile phone skills as many older people seem to make limited use of the capabilities of their phones (such as texting, photo and other features).

5.3 Many are interested to learn (more) about ICTs...

The survey results show that many older people are interested in learning more about ICTs and that many would be prepared to attend a course for this purpose. Particularly large numbers would be interested to learn more about computers and the Internet, but relatively large numbers would also be interested to learn more about mobile phones and how to use them.

Considerable numbers of both non-users and users are interested to learn (more) about ICTs, although users are relatively more likely to be interested. Levels of interest are quite strong amongst both the 50-64 and 65-plus age groups, although somewhat higher amongst the younger age group. Also, levels of interest are relatively strong in all regions, so that large numbers of interested users and non-users are to be found in all parts of the country.

5.4 ...but many are not interested and need to be reached

Although many older people are interested to learn about ICTs, an even larger proportion seems not yet to be. Lack of interest is linked to negative attitudes, such as feeling too old to learn or that computers are too hard to learn, but seems also to be often a more generalised feeling amongst older people that computers and the Internet are not of any real use for them in their lives. Perceived or actual affordability barriers also seem to be an issue for a sizeable minority of older people and these also need to be addressed.

Importantly, lower levels of interest are found amongst the groups that most need to be reached, including the older old and those with lower levels of education. This is reflected in lower levels of actual participation in computer/Internet courses by these groups. The lower tendency of men to participate in computer/Internet courses is also an important issue, and efforts are needed to attract and target men more effectively.

eInclusion initiatives thus also need to address attitudes and motivation, for example, through promotional campaigns to show the practical benefits of ICTs and how many older people are already gaining these benefits.