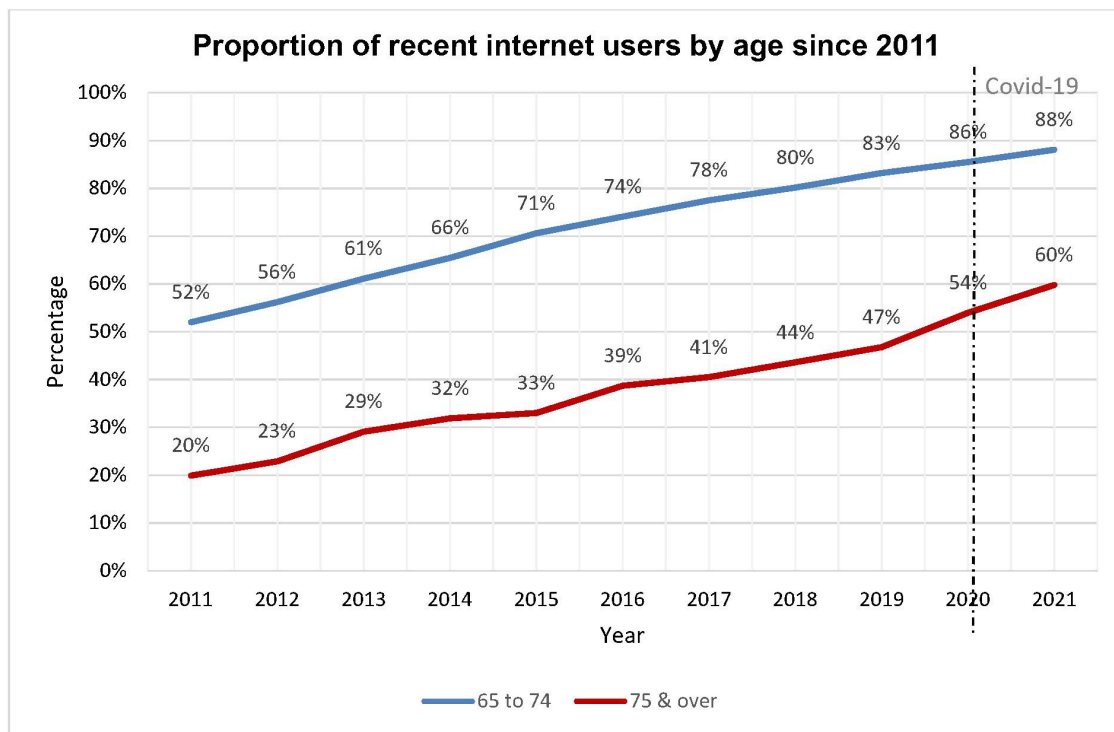


It is essential that those who cannot, or do not want to, use the internet, or do not have a smartphone are not excluded or put at a disadvantage. People must be able to access information, keep in touch, shop, manage their finances, and access public services in ways that suit them.

Consumers who are not online must also be able to manage their accounts and switch (where possible) with essential services provided by the private sector, such as banking, energy, water and communications.

Internet use before and since the pandemic

National surveys show that virtually all younger people use the internet, but this reduces with age and those aged 75+ are least likely to be online. And while internet use, including among those aged 75+, has increased over recent years, a substantial minority of older people are still not online as can be seen in the chart below.



Source: Age UK chart based on ONS Internet Users statistics (2011-2020) and Age UK analysis of Labour Force Survey Q1 2021.

Between early 2020 and early 2021 internet use among those aged 75+ increased from 54% to 60%, broadly in line with trends over recent years. So, while the pandemic may have prompted some people to get online for the first time, it does not appear to have made a substantial difference to the proportion of older people using the internet.

This reinforces previous Age UK analysis looking at internet use in England a few months after the start of the pandemic.ⁱ Two fifths (39%) of people aged 52 plus in England said they were using the internet more since the onset of coronavirus. However, usage had increased most among groups already using the internet regularly. Among those aged 75+, more than two out of five (42%) did not use the internet. Only around a quarter of this age groups (24%) said they were using the internet more since the pandemic while nearly one in ten (9%) were using it less.

Even if people use the internet they may only do so for a limited range of activities and may not have the latest technology. For example, in early 2020 just 53% of people aged 65+ in Great Britain used a smartphone for private use compared to between 95% and 98% for those in age groups 16-24 up to 45-54.ⁱⁱ

Finding out more about the people behind the figures

While the national statistics provide a good overview, we wanted to find out more about older people's experiences through follow up interviews with members of Age UK's Your Voice Engagement Panel which is a self-selected panel of over 750 people aged 50+. (See the appendix for more information about the panel).

To get a general picture of their internet use we asked panel members if this had changed since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 - their responses can be seen in the following chart.