

Riding the technology wave



A new study examines the use of and interest in technology among African Americans 50+

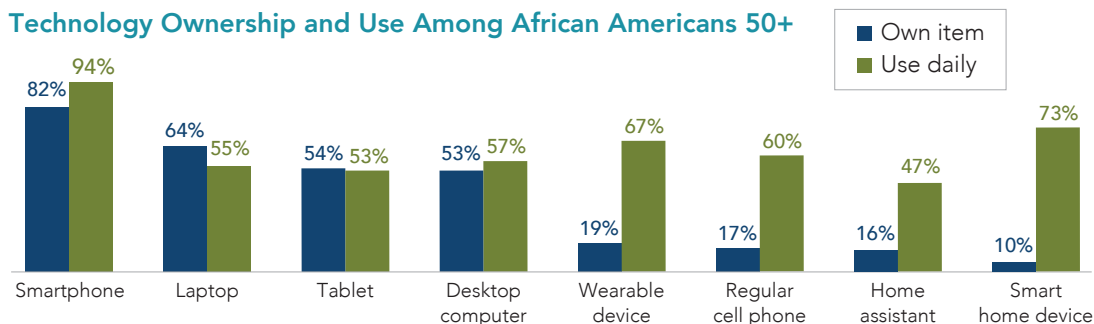
African Americans 50+ have embraced many aspects of modern technology, including smartphones, tablets, computers, smart TVs and, to a lesser extent, even doorbell cameras. Despite some reluctance to adopt new technology, once they adopt it, this group becomes avid users and likely welcomes new ways to incorporate technology into their lives.

Once adopted, African Americans 50+ quickly become reliant on the newer technology for their homes and lives

A majority of African Americans 50+ own a smartphone (82%), a laptop (64%), a tablet (54%), a desktop computer (53%), or a smart TV (51%); far fewer own a wearable device like a fitness tracker (19%), a home assistant (16%) like Amazon Echo or Google Home, or a smart home device (10%) like a smart thermostat, doorbell, or safety device.

Unsurprisingly, daily smartphone use is highest (94%), but using a smart home device (73%) or wearable device (67%) isn't too far behind. Three in four (73%) smart TV owners stream content at least monthly.

Technology Ownership and Use Among African Americans 50+



African Americans 50+

use technology in similar ways as their younger cohorts – from texting to social media to banking



Smartphones are integral to managing life, as they are used to keep in touch with friends and family, access social media, and even consult with doctors

African Americans 50+ with smartphones most often use text messages (83%) to stay connected with friends and family, followed by email (59%), social media (56%), and video chat (21%).



Social media is not just for the kids anymore – nearly one-half (47%) use their smartphones to access a social networking site, like Facebook or Instagram, and almost one-third (30%) use it to watch real-time social media videos, like Facebook Live.

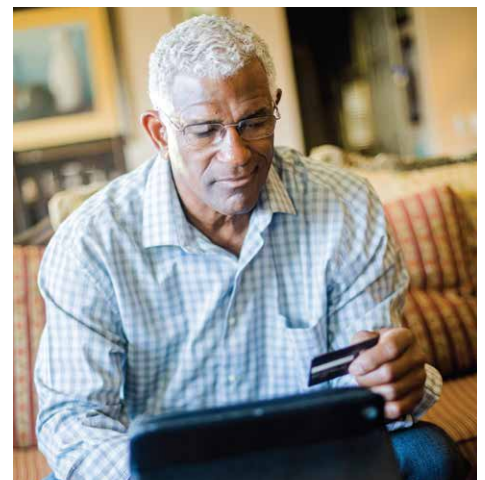
However, smartphone use is not all fun and games for this population, as more than one-quarter (29%) use it to talk to a doctor or other medical professional, make medical appointments, order prescriptions, or receive personal healthcare advice.



Many African Americans 50+ leverage the technology available to them to make their lives easier

A majority of African Americans 50+ use their computers (48%) or smartphones (34%) to shop online, to conduct banking or transfer money (42% and 38%, respectively), or to get directions or traffic information (53% smartphone).

However, there are many ways in which infrequently used or untapped technology could make their lives even easier, particularly for those with mobility challenges, like ordering a ride share car (18%) and ordering groceries (9%).



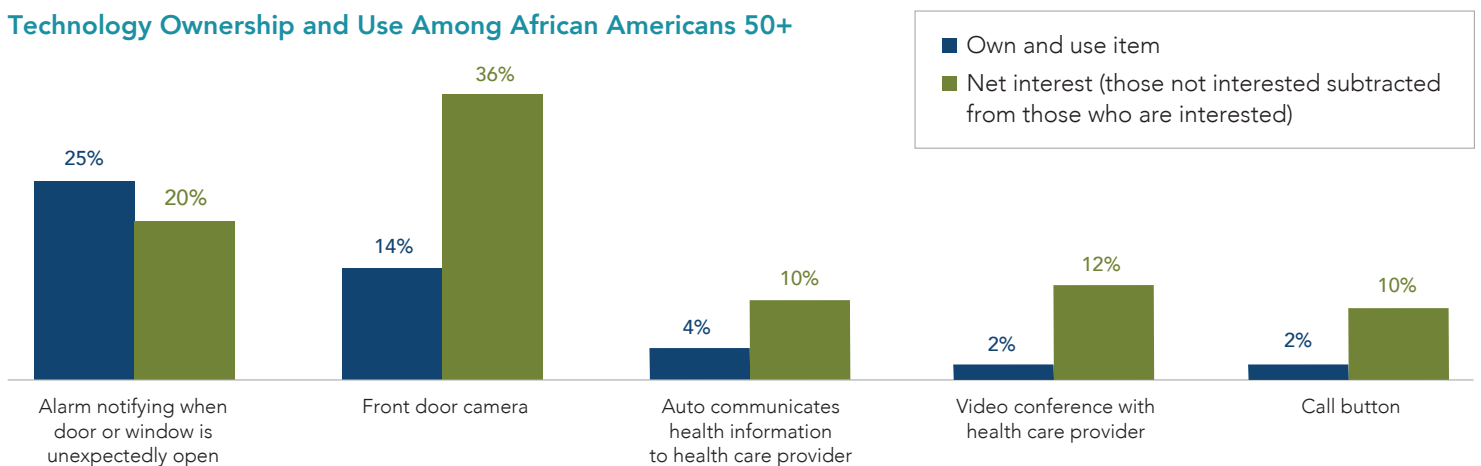


African Americans 50+ are interested in and already using newer home security technology which gives them peace of mind and supports their health and wellbeing

The homes of one-quarter (25%) of African Americans 50+ are already equipped with sensors to notify owners when a door or window is unexpectedly opened. One in seven (14%) already own a front door camera.

While interest is high among some, disinterest is just as high among others, making net calculations (subtracting the disinterested from the interested) the best way to understand current sentiment. Front door cameras lead the way in terms of interest in new technology. Older African Americans are also very interested in modern health and wellness technology, such as video conferencing with their health care providers (net 12%), having a device which automatically transmits vitals and other important information to health care providers (net 10%), and a call button which can help them get in touch with a family member or friend when needed (net 9%).

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Implications

African Americans 50+ years old have shown that they will use technology once they are introduced to it. Smartphones are a great example as it has now been over 10 years since the first models came out, and today, most African Americans 50+ own and use one.

While the adoption rate of newer technologies, like wearables, home assistants, and safety home devices, among this group does not reach the same levels as smartphones or laptops, this population has shown that if they own one of these devices, they will use it often. This is an opportunity to familiarize African Americans 50+ with such technologies, highlighting the advantages and increased conveniences which can be brought to their daily lives, in order to drive adoption.

In many ways, this cohort is already using available technology in new ways, from getting directions to banking to shopping. However, there are many who still do not know or do not take advantage of other services and support technology can provide, like grocery delivery, car services, or telemedicine. Webinars, workshops, and other informal learning opportunities carefully explaining exactly how app-based options work and the advantages they bring may increase knowledge and adoption rates.

Some African Americans 50+ have already embraced home protection technology and even more are interested in it. However, there is some reluctance when it comes to increased technology supporting their health. While all these devices can give peace of mind, personal health monitors and support devices may be a tougher sell. It is likely – as observed with other technologies – that adoption rates will increase with time and greater familiarity.



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