

The digital home has arrived



A 2022 Tech Study reports on the status of the digital home among the 50+

In 2002, AOL presented the idea of the 'Home of the Future,'¹ with many skeptics in the crowd. Could you truly have your home so connected that you could control lights, music, appliances, and more all from a digital interface? Two decades later, the opportunity to create a digitally connected home has never been so obtainable. On the market today is everything from home assistants to smart home cleaning devices to sensors that can detect if someone falls, making homes in America more connected than ever.

With most Americans spending unconventional amounts of time at home the past two years, it is no surprise the 50-plus are among the many who have begun to embrace this new technology. And why wouldn't they, these devices are not only aimed at home entertainment, they have also been designed to make daily home life easier and potentially safer.

Smart home devices are no longer just in sci-fi movies, they are here and available for any who wants them.



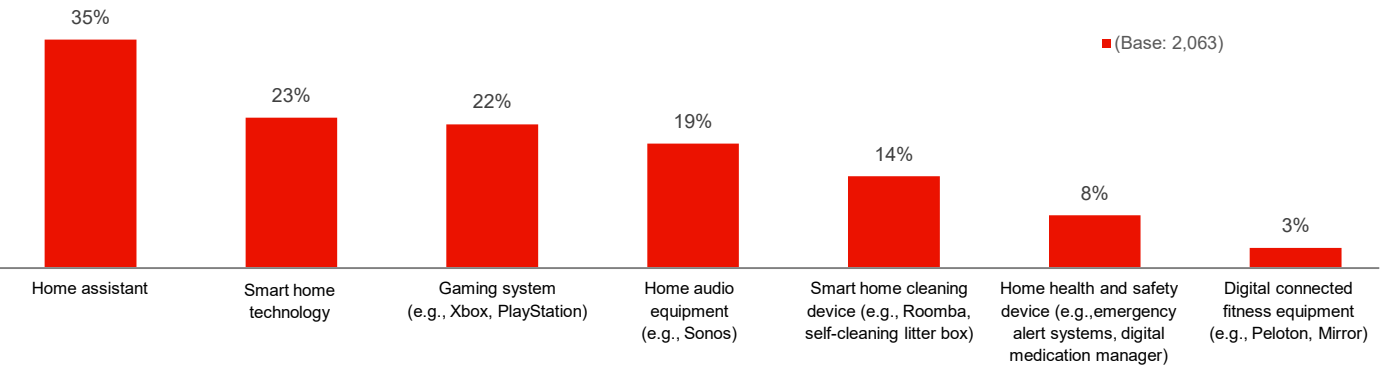
**64% of
Americans 50+
own one or
more connected
devices for
the home**

¹ <https://www.cnet.com/tech/services-and-software/pittman-pins-aols-future-on-broadband-1/>

The digital home, a staple or a luxury?

A digitally connected, or smart home, is one that uses internet-connected devices to remote monitor and/or manage appliances and other types of systems within the home. The most common of these among the 50-plus are the home assistant and smart home security technology, both reporting year over year growth in ownership, up from 29% and 19% in 2020, respectively.

Digital Home Devices Owned Among 50+



While the incidence of ownership of the remaining devices may seem conservative, ownership significantly increases as one's income increases. This would suggest tech items related to a digital home are seen more as a luxury than a staple. Comparatively, when looking at ownership of smartphones, practically all those 50-plus, regardless of their household income, own a smartphone.

But is income or household composition the differentiator? It could be one in the same, as larger households skew toward higher incomes. What is clear are those with children in the household, though not a significant portion of those 50-plus (9%), over-index on ownership for all of the connected devices evaluated except home health and safety. So at a minimum, it is safe to say that families (those with two or more people in the household, making up 75% of the 50-plus audience) are currently leveraging these devices more so than those who live alone. This may be because larger households have a heightened need for convenience or a greater need to leverage technology to help them keep the family entertained.

Currently, the home assistant is the best example of a connected home device that is doing both. The most common uses of the home assistant are for listening to music (84%), asking a question (72%), setting an alarm (62%), and checking the weather/traffic (54%). And some even go beyond that and leverage the home assistant to control their smart home devices such as lights (23%), the TV (16%), the thermostat (10%), and/or locks (4%).

Ownership of Connected Devices	Kids in Home	
	Yes	No
	A	B
Weighted Base – Total Respondents	185	1876
Home assistant (e.g., Amazon Echo/Alexa, Google Home)	43% B	34%
Smart home technology/security (e.g., a smart thermostat, Nest, Ring, SimpliSafe)	32% B	22%
Gaming system (e.g., Xbox, PlayStation)	56% B	19%
Home audio equipment (e.g., Sonos)	27% B	19%
Smart home cleaning device (e.g., Roomba, self-cleaning litter box)	19% B	13%
Home health and safety device (e.g., emergency alert systems, digital medication manager)	4%	8%
Digitally connected fitness equipment (e.g., Peloton, Mirror)	7% B	2%

Letters A/B indicate a significant difference between segments at a 95% confidence level

Those who live alone are almost twice as likely to use their home assistant as a virtual companion compared to households of two or more (15% vs. 8%, respectively).

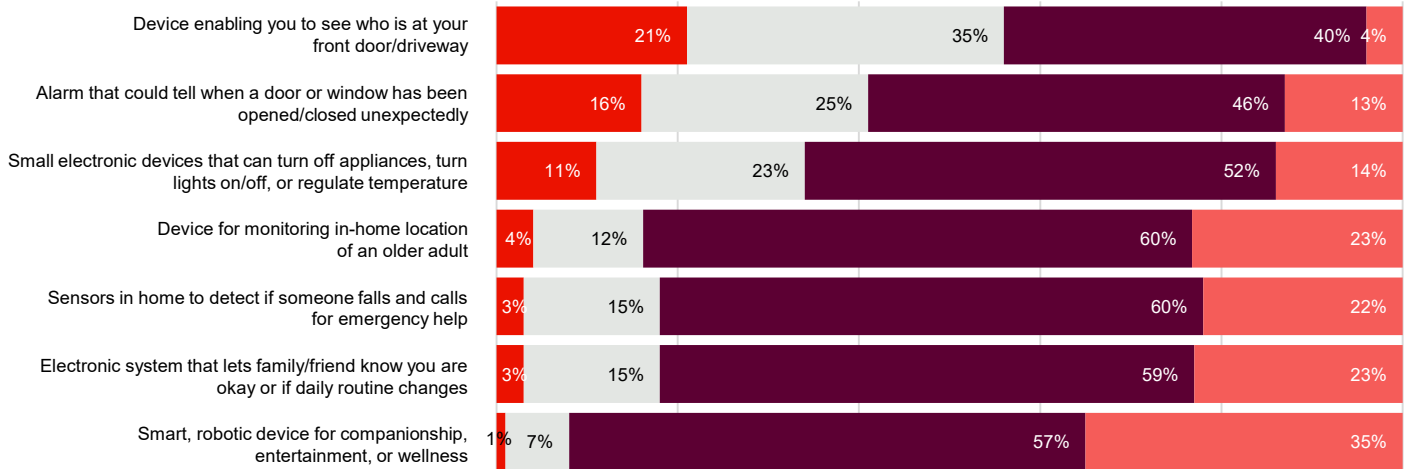
An illustration of a woman with short grey hair, wearing a red tank top, standing next to a small wooden table. On the table is a black smart speaker with a red light ring. She is reaching out towards the speaker. The background is a light grey gradient.

A digital home goes beyond entertainment devices

When you think of connected devices, smart speakers and home assistants might quickly come to mind, but there are a host of home health and safety devices that go beyond entertaining us or making our home life easier. The most recognizable ones are door or driveway cameras, security alarm systems, and smart home devices. These also happen to be the ones of greatest interest to the 50-plus currently. However, interest begins to wane for more nuanced types of connected home devices. More specifically, among those devices designed to help older adults age in place and live more independently, while approximately 80% of this audience are aware of such technology, less than one in four reports an interest in owning any of these devices just yet.

Familiarity and Use of Home Safety Tech

■ Currently use ■ Aware, interested ■ Aware, not interested ■ Not aware



But what is interesting, those who say they wish they had a better grasp of technology appear to be the ones most interested in home health and safety devices. Meaning, a desire to have a better grasp may not be about feeling insecure with today's technology but rather an expression of the hunger to know more so they can do more.

This is evident in the significantly higher interest rates for all the home health and safety devices evaluated among those with a desire for a better grasp when compared to those who did not share that sentiment



The 48% of the 50+ who wish they had a better grasp of technology are interested in home health and safety devices.

Among the 50+ Aware and Interested in Using

Weighted Base – Total Respondents	Wish Had Better Grasp	
	Yes	No
	D	E
A device that enables you to see who is at your front door/driveway	905	1147
	43%	29%
An alarm that could tell you when a door or window (in your home) has been opened or closed when not expected	E	
	33%	17%
Small electronic devices that can turn off appliances (such as stove) when not in use, turn lights on and off. As needed, regulate the temperature	E	
	30%	17%
Sensors placed throughout your home to detect if someone falls and, if so, calls for emergency help	E	
	23%	9%
An electronic system that lets a family member or friend know if you are okay	E	
	20%	11%
A device for monitoring in-home location of an older adult when you are not present	E	
	18%	8%
A smart, robotic device for companionship, entertainment, or wellness (e.g., robotic cat)	E	
	9%	5%

Letters D/E indicate a significant difference between segments at a 95% confidence level

Future tech and the digital home

There are several new and exciting developments in technology on the horizon like driverless cars and clothing that responds to temperature changes, as well as some developed specifically for the home. Knowing that this audience usually waits for tech to become mainstream before jumping on the bandwagon, it is not surprising the 50-plus appear to be cautiously interested in these newer innovations related to a digital home. Perhaps privacy concerns stand in the way of interest in future tech, or simply diagnostic toilets and daily objects like toothbrushes that automatically track health measures feels a little bit too futuristic right now for them to be taken seriously. But with 64% indicating an interest in one or more of the future technologies evaluated, they are clearly intrigued.



And as seen with home health and safety devices, those who wish they had a better grasp of technology also indicate higher levels of interest in all the future digital home technologies shown below, compared to those who do not share that sentiment, with the exception of the companion robot for which they are at parity.

Interest in Future Digital Home Technology

	Total 50+ Gen Pop
Weighted Base – Total Respondents	2063
Automated yard maintenance or house cleaning (robotic vacuums or robotic lawn mowers)	23%
In-home devices, such as smart toilets, that provide diagnostic testing for health conditions, such as cancer or diabetes	20%
Automated tracking of health measures from daily objects like toothbrushes, socks, etc.	11%
Companion robots	4%

Implications

While some smart home devices will continue to grow in ownership as they become more mainstream, others, such as those in the home health and safety category may need to be repositioned before they get the audience they are after. Many are aware of the devices designed to provide them with the ability to live independently longer, however, the 50-plus show limited interest in such devices just yet.

On a positive note, there are two sub-segments of the 50-plus who exhibit the greatest appetite for a digital home—families (higher-income households with two more people, and specifically those with children) and those who wish they had a better grasp on technology.

As the opportunity for the digital home continues to grow—due to new products being introduced and larger portions of the population making it the new way of life—product developers and advertisers would benefit from leveraging those sub-groups within the 50-plus who currently exhibit the greatest interest in such products. In-home testing, storyboard research, and message testing are just a few ways in which these audiences can be used to ensure a sound go-to-market approach for new digital home technologies.



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