

Are the 50+ Ready for Tech of the Future?



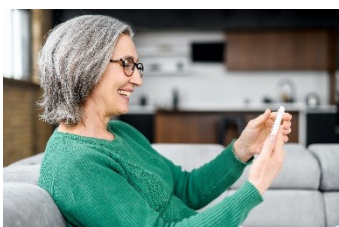
A 2022 Tech Study reports on future tech interest and engagement among the 50+

Most of the 50-plus audience uses tech daily. And while their use remains primarily with the basic functionality of the devices, tech continues to evolve—expanding what can be done with it today and in the future. Some of the 50-plus are embracing the expanding capabilities of technology while others are not.

Current tech has yet to be used to its full potential among the 50+

Although you may see many 50-plus adults with a cell phone in their hand as you pass by them while they are in their cars, jogging, or at a coffee shop, what is being done on those smartphones is, for the most part, pretty basic stuff. Among the 50-plus, smartphones are primarily used for Text/IM/Email, directions, and general internet searches. When asked about various activities performed on a smartphone, the top mentions only tap in the basic function of the device, whereas those less popular activities encompass a variety of activities that make life easier, but also require the user to educate themselves on how to use the associated apps and thus expanding the use of their smartphone so it truly functions as the hand-held computer that it is. For example, about one in three (34%) have used their smartphone to order food delivery from a restaurant, and even fewer (23%) have used their phone for grocery delivery.

97% of those
50+ use their
smartphones daily

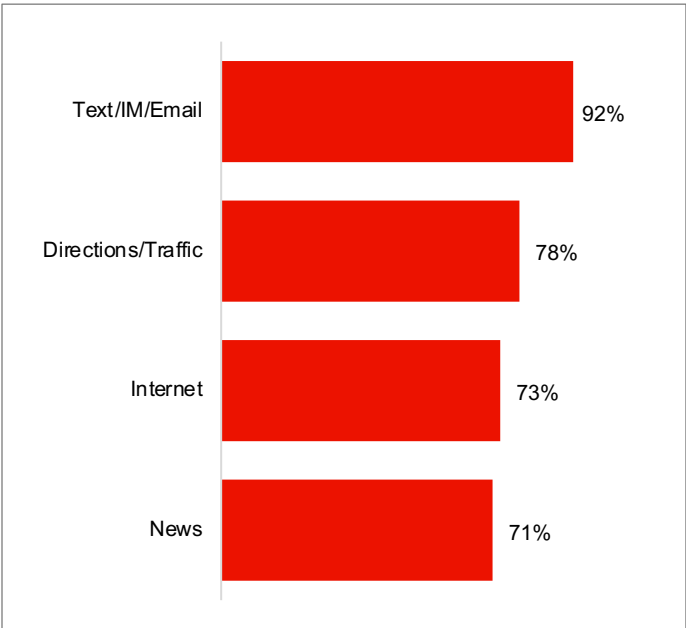


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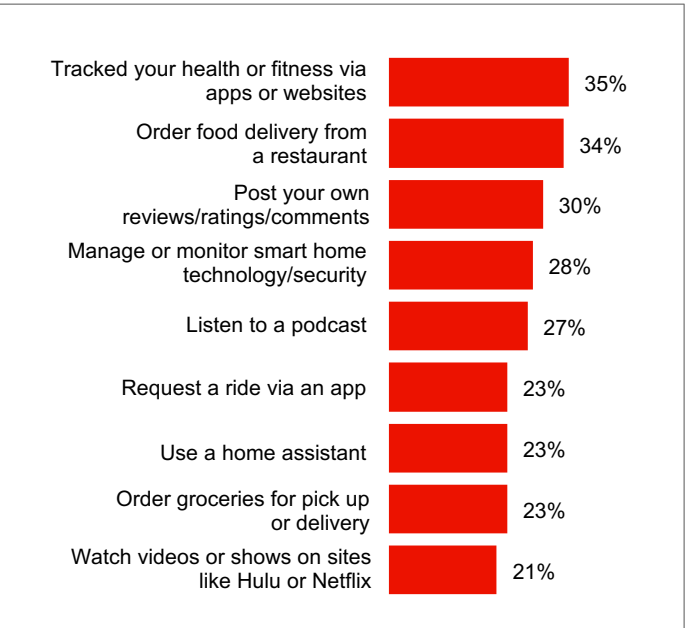
Activities Performed on a Smartphone in the Past 3 Months

Among 50+

Most Common



Least Common

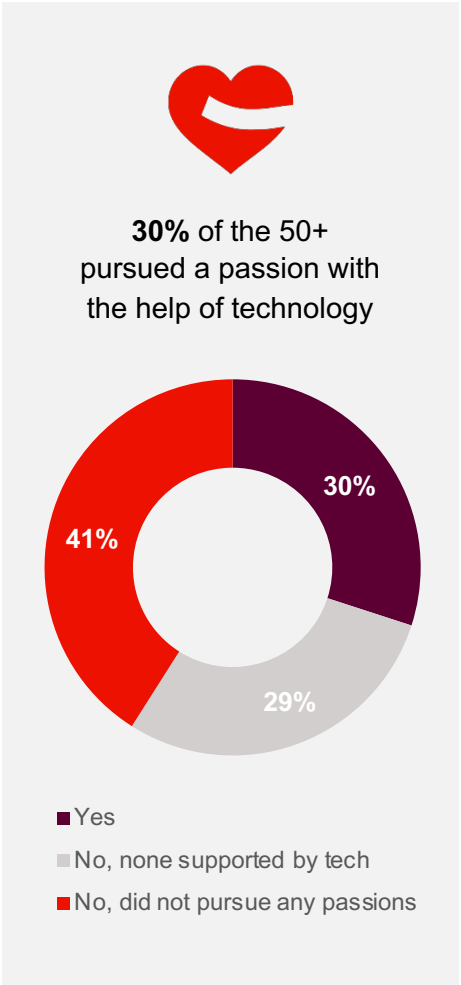
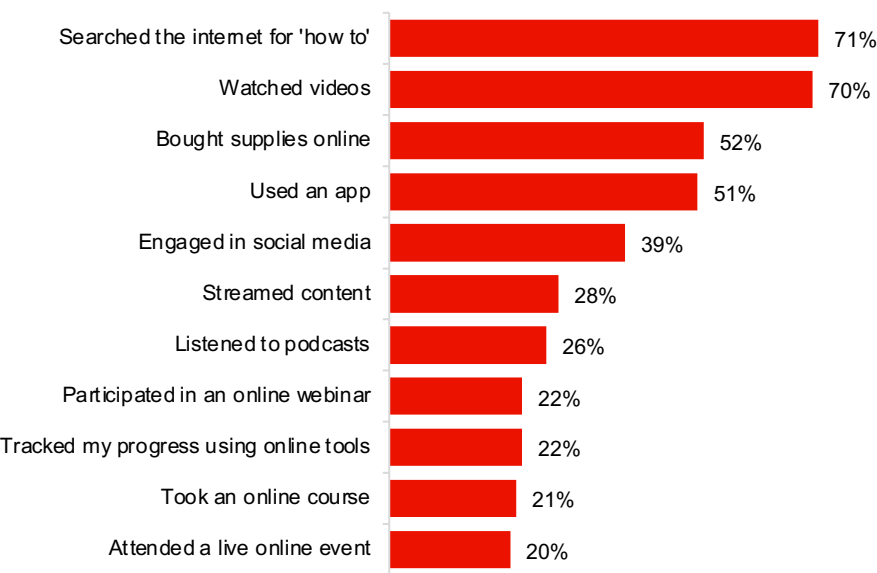


What could drive the 50-plus audience to more fully embrace all that technology has to offer? Well, their passions for one. A large portion of the 50-plus (60%) pursued a passion in the past year, of which, half said their passion was either supported or encouraged through the use of technology.

More specifically, technology was used to teach, inform, inspire, and provide a means for obtaining the materials they needed to pursue their passion. All of which expose the more mature audience to the true depth of opportunities that exist with today's technology.

How a Passion Was Supported by Technology

Among 50+

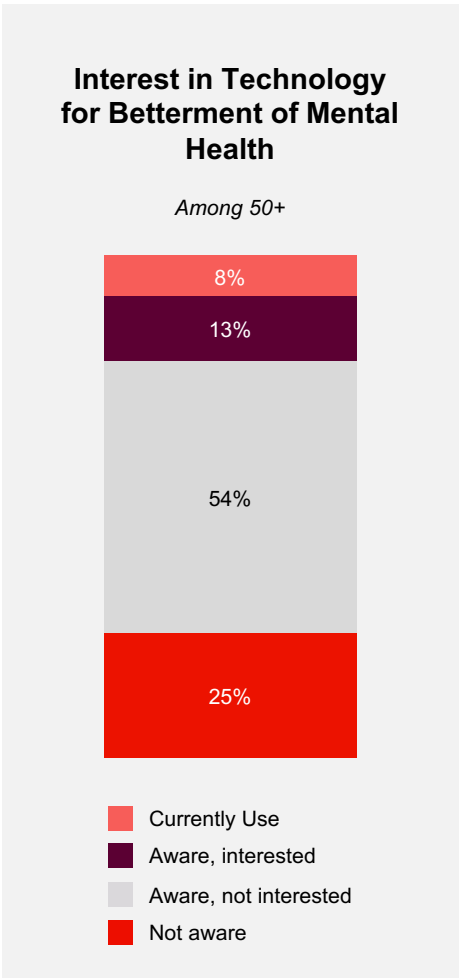


That said, the 50-plus are not yet fully comfortable with letting technology into areas of their life that have traditionally been dealt with in a much more personal way, like mental health. While mental wellness has been a growing focus in today's culture, the 50-plus do not appear extremely open to using technology for the betterment of their mental health. For example, when asked about their use or interest in apps for meditation guidance or a mental time out (e.g., The Calm App), assisting with depression (e.g., Mood Kit), or addressing bad habits (e.g., Quit That!), just one in five (21%) expressed interest in such support, even though most (75%) were aware of the apps.

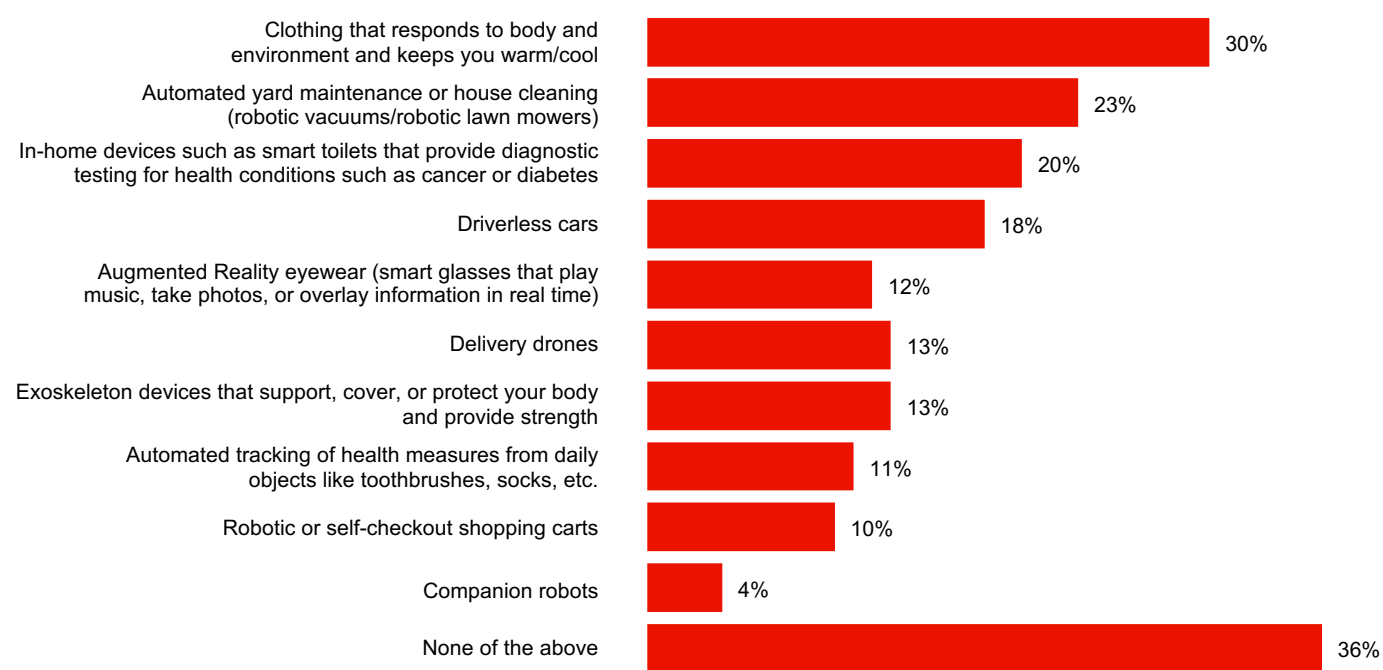
Future tech is likely to face similar hesitations in adoption among the 50+

There are so many new and exciting advancements happening in technology today that go well beyond a new app. Many of them aimed at making the lives of the older generation easier and safer. In addition to the more basic home tech, such as cameras and tools for a more connected home, there are now in-home sensors that can notify you when someone changes their daily habit or falls. Over 60% of the 50-plus claim to be aware of this newer technology, however, few indicate an interest in having it in their homes just yet.

In addition, when presented with a list of potential technology advancements, many of which have made their way into current conversations such as driverless cars, delivery drones, or companion robots, the 50-plus offered only moderate interest. While 64% are interested in at least one type of upcoming advancement, the future tech area that garnered the most interest revolved around health-related innovations such as diagnostic toilets and daily objects that automatically track health measures. Yet, with a focus on practicality, clothing that responds to your body or the environment to keep you warm or cool stirred the most attention with 30% interested in this technology.



Interest in New Tech Among 50+



Streaming is now mainstream among those in their 50s and 60s

But does interest manifest into a purchase? As mentioned, a significant portion of the 50-plus audience (64%) expressed an interest in one or more of the future tech opportunities. But that level of interest changes significantly when you consider interest by the speed at which they adopt new technology. For those who self-report being early adopters, 88% show interest in one or more of the future tech innovations. In comparison, interest drops to 46% among those who say they are one of the last to adopt new technology. And with the majority of those 50-plus being one who admittedly prefers to wait and see (63%), this new tech is more likely to be met with skepticism, or a degree of hesitation, rather than the enthusiasm the industry may be hoping for.

While the speed of innovation could be a problem for the older generations, so could the lack of inclusivity in the design of the newer technologies as many of the 50-plus do not think tech is designed with all ages in mind. The main complaints among this audience are that today's technology is difficult for older people, is too complex, or lacks the associated training necessary for full comprehension.



42% of the 50+ do not believe tech is designed with all ages in mind



“Some apps are not intuitive to use and difficult for old people. They don’t want to memorize a bunch of logins. They can’t see all the little buttons. They don’t know what a hamburger menu is. The text is too small!!!”



“Sometimes designers forget that not everyone is at the same comfort or proficiency level when dealing with new technology.”



“I feel that new technology is made available to the public without adequate instruction. I know lots of people who do not get the maximum use out of new devices because they don’t know how to use them and don’t know how to get the necessary training.”

Implications

Regarding technology advancements, while the 50-plus are traditionally more likely to wait and see than the younger generations, knowing that 43% of the 50-plus would use tech more if they knew how, showing people how future tech innovation can help them maintain their independence, social connections, and manage their responsibilities could be the path to encouraging the adoption of future tech.



For more information on the survey and methodology please contact:
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