

## TECH-SAVVY NEW ZEALAND SENIORS SHATTER STEREOTYPE

*Over 50s are more confident in and counting on digital technology in their daily lives, but the constant learning curve, cybersecurity concerns and cost are viewed as some of the greatest barriers they face*

**Auckland, November 2022** – Technology is quickly becoming critical to everyday life for over 50s in New Zealand, with the average senior who uses technology on a weekly basis spending a fifth of their day (5.3 hours) connected to their devices. Further, nearly 1 in 2 (48%) agree that it would be hard to manage without access to digital technology, and almost 2 in 3 (65%) claim it helps them go about their day-to-day.

Additionally, nearly 9 in 10 (91%) New Zealand seniors are using technology more today than a year ago, with over 4 in 10 (45%) claiming to be ‘tech savvy’, according to new research. The research, commissioned by New Zealand Seniors in partnership with consumer research group CoreData surveyed 1,129 New Zealanders over 50 to uncover their appetite and enthusiasm for digital technology.

### **Pandemic boosts digital confidence**

COVID-19 has increased seniors’ dependence on technology, with almost 2 in 5 (41%) saying they have embraced modern technologies more due to their experiences through the pandemic. Further, more than half (55%) agree that the pandemic has changed the way they use technology to communicate with people.

**Chief Executive of Age Concern, Karen Billings-Jensen, commented on this shift:** “During the series of lockdowns in New Zealand, Age Concern supported more Kiwi seniors with ordering groceries and prescriptions and paying their bills online. It was also an important time for us to help them stay connected with friends and family, their healthcare providers and support agencies like Age Concern. We didn’t want people feeling isolated or alone; we are all about helping our seniors feel connected, belonged and included. This is why getting the right level of digital support to the right people at the right time is key.”

Attitudes towards technology remain positive, with nearly 2 in 3 (65%) saying they feel confident they can keep up with future technological innovation. Over 50s are also open to embracing emerging technologies, with over 3 in 4 (77%) saying they will always consider adopting new technology.

### **Lives significantly enriched**

Apart from an increase in confidence, more than 7 in 10 (72%) admit that technology has made it possible for them to be more self-reliant. Similarly, over 7 in 10 (71%) agree that technology helps them to be more independent. Seniors who have embraced technology more identified digital technology as helpful in assisting them to stay across news/government updates about the pandemic (64%), making shopping convenient (51%), accessing medical services online (43%) and reducing their loneliness (31%).

Most seniors think that technology has assisted them with connecting with many types of people and essential services in their lives over the last two years, namely family (81%), friends (77%), particular interest or hobby groups (35%) and community groups (31%).

### **Social media and telehealth uptake**

Digital technology is helping to facilitate the social lives of those over 50. More than half (57%) say technology assists them in keeping socially connected in their daily life. Social media plays a pivotal role, with nearly 9 in 10 (89%) seniors engaging with social media platforms. On average, they have two social media accounts, and their average time spent on social media is 9.3 hours a week.

With so many aspects of their lives now taken care of by digital technology, those over 50s are increasingly receptive to using telemedicine to satisfy their healthcare needs, with almost 4 in 5 (79%) thinking there will be a significant increase in the adoption of telemedicine in New Zealand. Seniors believe that some of the greatest advantages of telemedicine are the time they can save from travelling and waiting (59%), the convenience and safety of remaining at home (51%) and avoiding exposure to illnesses from other patients (49%).

### **Challenges seniors face using technology.**

In contrast, half of the respondents (50%) feel they are left behind by modern technology. Curiously, less than 1 in 5 (19%) over 50s surveyed regarded dealing with stereotypes about their capabilities as one of the greatest challenges that they face. Instead, they cited safety and security (69%), followed by understanding how it works (65%), the constant learning curve of keeping up with the change (61%) and the cost that goes into buying devices, programs and apps (56%) as the greatest challenges most commonly faced.

Technology now plays a fundamental role in the lives of most New Zealand seniors, who have been increasing their use of digital technology. While they are often humble about their abilities, they espouse keeping up with the times. And when challenges and frustrations with technology use arise, some over 50s feel that There is not enough easily accessible support.

**Karen Billings-Jensen commented on how the seniors community are overcoming stereotypes and other barriers by expanding their digital literacy:** “Older people, like people of any age, can learn new skills. Our seniors need the opportunity to acquire and expand their digital literacy as most of them, aged 65 and above, are digital immigrants, which means they did not grow up using the technology available today. Age Concern adapted our services quickly during the New Zealand lockdowns. One example was to make available our Steady As You Go exercise classes on YouTube. We also run digital literacy programmes across New Zealand for anyone wanting support to upskill. Some of these are one-to-one and intergenerational while others are conducted in group settings where seniors can come along with their buddies and learn face-to-face, which is great for bonding too.”

The above information has been sourced from The Digital Trends Report 2022.

Further insights from the research can be found on the New Zealand Seniors website [here](#).

**-ENDS-**

### **Additional Key Findings from The Digital Trends Report 2022:**

#### **General attitudes of seniors toward tech**

- Very few seniors (6%) resist using new technology as much as possible
- 14% see themselves as 'early adopters' of new technology
- Almost 1 in 3 are interested in technology but need to see the proof of its effectiveness (34%), and close to 1 in 2 prefer to wait until it's well-established and mainstream (46%).
- More than 1 in 2 over 50s do not want younger generations to make assumptions about their capabilities to help teach older generations about new emerging technologies (56%).

#### **Communication and self-reliance are critical drivers of seniors' tech adoption**

- Seniors who's experience through the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a greater embrace of technology have noted the following influencing factors: helps to stay connected (82%), stay across news/government updates about the pandemic (64%) and shop more conveniently (51%).
- Over the last two years, 81% of Seniors have used modern technology to help them keep in touch with family, and 77% with friends.
- Seniors use the following technologies to take better care of their mental and physical health: stay connected with family/friends via messaging services (58%), staying connected with family/friends and community through social media (43%), staying connected with family/friends via video call/conferencing (34%) and self-improvement and building skills online (11%).
- More than 4 in 5 seniors agree that Banking, finances and paying bills (82%) are important functions for them to access with tech, with 84% preferring to bank and pay bills via an app or website.

#### **Seniors leverage tech to better health**

- Over 2 in 5 (41%) said they tend to check their symptoms online before consulting with a doctor because it can be done at any time (53%), is quite easy (37%), and provides a 'second opinion' (34%).
- Time saved travelling and waiting (59%), convenience and safety of remaining at home (51%) and avoiding exposure to illnesses from other patients (49%) are reasons New Zealand seniors cite as benefits of telemedicine.

#### **COVID-19 increased seniors' tech adoption and accelerated social media use**

- 2 in 5 (40%) feel they have embraced modern technologies more due to their experiences through the pandemic.
- Some seniors have are now using digital communication technologies more because of COVID-19, with videoconferencing services (28%) topping the list.
- Over 4 in 5 (81%) agree that modern technology has helped keep them in touch with family over the pandemic.
- More than 1 in 2 (55%) agree that the pandemic has changed how they use technology to communicate.
- Desktop/laptop computers (85%) are the most common device used among seniors on a weekly basis, followed closely by smartphones (84%)

#### **Seniors concerned about their safety and security online**

- 4 in 5 (80%) are at least reasonably concerned about the safety of their private information online.
- 3 in 4 (77%) are at least reasonably confident in their ability to keep their digital information confidential and secure.
- 1 in 2 (50%) are at least very concerned about online/phone scams.
- Nearly 4 in 5 (79%) know someone or have been personally targeted by online, email or phone scams. Most of these scams are phone calls (67%) and emails (55%).
- Over 2 in 5 (44%) of those who had been scammed did not report it to the authorities.

#### **Tech is a double-edged sword for seniors**

- The greatest challenges seniors feel they face when using technology:
  - Safety and security concerns: 69%
  - Understanding how technology works: 65%

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#### **About New Zealand Seniors**

New Zealand Seniors offers cost-effective financial products that help people protect what's most important to them. We place our customers at the heart of everything we do by providing trusted products that are simple to use and understand. We are committed to identifying and developing services and products we believe protect and improve the well-being of all senior New Zealanders.

#### **About the New Zealand Seniors Digital Trends Report**

In partnership with the consumer research group CoreData, New Zealand Seniors has recently commissioned research (a survey of 1,129 New Zealanders over 50 years old). The study looks at how the over-fifties community in New Zealand engages with digital resources, focusing on the challenges, concerns and the type of technology used. It also explores the impact that COVID-19 had on our seniors' usage and enthusiasm for embracing modern technology.

The quantitative survey was conducted online by CoreData between 11 July and 15 August 2022. The sample is representative of the general over-50 population of New Zealand in terms of technology usage, concerns and difficulties, and willingness to embrace modern technologies across gender, wealth, and metro/regional.