

Social Media and Technology Use Among Adults 50+

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Survey conducted by
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Background and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gather information on people's use of social media and technology. The information was gathered to help AARP better serve the 50+ population through its website, www.AARP.org.

This study was conducted via telephone by GfK Custom Research. Questions were included on GfK's OmniTel and Hispanic OmniTel surveys May 12 – May 17, 2010. OmniTel interviews were conducted from among a nationally representative sample of 1360 adults age 50 or older (margin of error +/- 3 percent) and among 503 Hispanic adults age 50 or older (margin of error +/- 6 percent).

Executive Summary

This study surveyed American adults 50+ to better understand their use of social media and technology. The telephone survey was conducted May 12 – May 17, 2010 by GfK among a nationally representative sample of 1360 adults age 50 or older and among 503 Hispanic adults age 50 or older.

- Two out of five (40%) adults age 50 and over consider themselves extremely (17%) or very (23%) comfortable using the Internet. One out of five (21%) Hispanic adults age 50 and over consider themselves extremely (6%) or very (15%) comfortable using the Internet.
- Most adults 50+ prefer to get their news from print newspapers and magazines (40%) or through a combination of print and online news sources (26%). One in ten prefers to get their news through newspaper and magazine websites only (10%). One-half of Hispanic adults say they either do not access the news or get their news from sources other than print or online (50%).
- Amongst adults 50+ who get their news online, one-third use cable news station websites (33%) and newspaper and magazine websites (33%).
- The majority of those 50+ who access the Internet do so from a desktop computer (57%). One-quarter use a laptop (26%), 4 percent use smartphones/blackberries, 4 percent use mobile phones, and one-quarter (27%) do not access the Internet. The majority of Hispanic adults 50+ say they do not access the Internet (55%).
- Approximately one-quarter of all those 50+ use social media websites (27%) with Facebook being by far the most popular (23%). Among those who say they access the Internet, almost two-fifths (37%) use social networking sites, with almost one-third (31%) using Facebook. Approximately one-fifth of all Hispanics 50+ use social media websites (21%) with Facebook being the most popular (13%).
- Among adults 50+ who use social media websites, three-quarters (73%) are connected to relatives other than children and grandchildren, three-fifths are connected to their children (62%), and one-third (36%) are connected to grandchildren. Among those introduced by a family member, three-fifths (63%) said it was their child.
- Most respondents had heard of the Apple iPad (83%) and a small percentage of these respondents already own one (2%). Another one-tenth of those aware plan on or want to purchase an iPad (11%). Fewer Hispanic respondents had heard of the Apple iPad (59%).

Detailed Findings

General Internet Use

Two out of five (40%) adults age 50 and over consider themselves extremely (17%) or very (23%) comfortable using the Internet. Those between the ages of 50 and 64 are almost twice as likely (49%) to say they are extremely or very comfortable using the Internet compared to those 65+ (26%). Just under one-fifth of adults age 50 and older say they do not use the Internet (17%).

One out of five (21%) Hispanic adults age 50 and over consider themselves extremely (6%) or very (15%) comfortable using the Internet. As with the general population, Hispanics between the ages of 50 and 64 are more likely (24%) to say they are extremely or very comfortable using the Internet compared to those 65+ (15%). The proportion of Hispanic adults extremely or very comfortable using the Internet is approximately half compared to comfortable Internet users in the overall population. One-half of Hispanics age 50 and older say they do not use the Internet (51%).

Table 1: How comfortable are you using the Internet?

	% Adults 50+ (n=1360)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=503)
Extremely comfortable	17	6
Very comfortable	23	15
Somewhat comfortable	21	12
Not very comfortable	9	6
Not at all comfortable	13	10
Do not use the Internet	17	51

Internet as News Source

Most adults 50+ prefer to get their news from print newspapers and magazines (40%) or through a combination of print and online news sources (26%). One in ten prefers to get their news through newspaper and magazine websites (10%). Just over one-third (36%) of Hispanic adults 50+ prefer to get their news from print newspapers and magazines with another one-tenth (10%) accessing a combination of print and online news sources. One-half of Hispanic adults say they get their news from sources other than print or online (50%).

Amongst those who get their news online, one-third most often use cable news station websites (33%) and one-third most often use newspaper and magazine websites (33%).

Table 2: Which of the following best describes how you usually get your news and information?

	% Adults 50+ (n=1360)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=503)
You prefer to get your news by reading newspapers and magazines in print	40	36
You prefer to get your news by reading newspapers and magazines websites online	10	5
You read newspaper and magazines in print but also use online websites to get news	26	10
Does not apply/get news from other sources	24	50

Table 3: Which online websites do you use most often to get news? (among those who get news online)

	% Adults 50+ (n=501)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=73)
Cable news station websites	33	24
Newspaper and magazines websites	33	31
Yahoo	7	2
Non-partisan fact-checking sites (i.e. Politifact, FactCheck.org)	6	1
Blogs	1	9
Other	16	22
None	1	6
Don't know	3	5

Technology

The majority of those 50+ access the Internet from a desktop computer (57%). One-quarter use a laptop (26%), 4 percent use mobile phones, 4 percent use smartphones/blackberries, and one-quarter (27%) say they do not access the Internet.

The majority of Hispanic adults 50+ say they do not access the Internet (55%). Those who access the Internet do so from a desktop computer (28%) or laptop (19%). Three percent use mobile phones and 1 percent use smartphones/blackberries. Female Hispanics 50+ are more likely to say they do not access the Internet (61%) compared to male Hispanics (48%).

Table 4: On which type of device do you access the Internet? (multiple answers accepted)

	% Adults 50+ (n=1360)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=503)
Desktop computer	57	28
Laptop	26	19
Mobile phone	4	3
Smartphone (Blackberry, iPhone)	4	1
iPad	1	1
Do not access the Internet	27	55

Social Media

Among adults 50+, approximately one-quarter (27%) use social media websites with Facebook being by far the most popular (23%). Among those who say they access the Internet, almost two-fifths (37%) use social networking sites, with almost one-third (31%) using Facebook. Of those using social media websites, three-quarters (73%) are connected to relatives other than children and grandchildren, three-fifths are connected to their children (62%), and one-third (36%) are connected to their grandchildren.

Approximately one-fifth of Hispanics 50+ use social media websites (21%) with Facebook being the most popular (13%). Of those using social media websites, almost 8 out of 10 (77%) are connected to relatives other than children and grandchildren, 7 out of 10 are connected to their children (68%) and 4 out of 10 (38%) are connected to grandchildren.

Table 5: Which of the following social media websites do you use or visit?
(multiple answers accepted)

	% Adults 50+ (n=1360)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=503)
Facebook	23	13
MySpace	4	3
Linked-In	4	2
Twitter	3	1
Other social media websites	3	4
So not use social media websites	73	80

Table 6: Internet Users: Which of the following social media websites do you use or visit?¹ (among those who access the Internet; multiple answers accepted)

	% Adults 50+ (n=637)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=198)
Facebook	31	30
MySpace	6	6
Linked-In	6	5
Twitter	4	2
Other social media websites	3	8
So not use social media websites	63	56

¹ Using responses to Q4, respondents who said they do not access the Internet were filtered out.

Table 7: Which of the following are you connected to, friends with, or follow on these sites? (among those who use/visit social media; multiple answers accepted)

	% Adults 50+ (n=359)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=82)
Your children	62	68
Your grandchildren	36	38
Your relatives other than children and grandchildren	73	77
None	12	7
No response	5	2

Adults age 50 and older who use social media were most often introduced to social media by a family members (47%) or friends (24%). Women were far more likely to have been introduced to social media through a family member (60%) compared to men (29%). Among those introduced by a friend or co-worker, the majority of respondents (58%) said the “introducer” was not younger (by ten or more years). Among those introduced by a family member, three-fifths (63%) said it was their child.

Table 8: Who introduced you to or told you about social media for the first time?

	% Adults 50+ (n=366)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=82)
A family member other than spouse	47	34
A friend	24	22
Co-worker	7	18
Spouse	3	1
Other	9	17
Do not recall/no one introduced me	8	5
Don't know	10	3

Table 9: Was this (friend/co-worker) significantly younger than you, for example 10+ years younger or not? (among those who heard through friend or co-worker)

	% Adults 50+ (n=110)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=28)
Yes, younger	40	47
No, not younger	58	51
Don't know	3	1

Table 10: Was it your child or grandchild? (among those who heard through a family member)

	% Adults 50+ (n=172)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=31)
Yes, child	63	63
Yes, grandchild	7	2
No, neither	22	30
Don't know	9	4

iPad

Most respondents had heard of the Apple iPad (83%) and a small percentage of these respondents already own one (2%). One-tenth of those aware of the iPad plan or want to purchase one (11%). Of those interested in owning an iPad, they would most like to use the iPad for general web browsing (77%), reading news, newspapers or magazines (74%), photo sharing (67%), and reading books (66%).

Most Hispanic respondents had heard of the Apple iPad (59%) and a small percentage of these respondents already own one (7%). One-fifth of those aware of the iPad plan or want to purchase one (19%).

Table 11: Have you heard of the Apple iPad?

	% Adults 50+	% Hispanic adults 50+
Yes	83	59
No	17	41

Table 12: Do you own an iPad? (Among those who have heard)

	% Adults 50+ (n=1144)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=268)
Own an ipad	2	7
Do not own an ipad, but plan to or want to purchase	11	19
Do not own an ipad and do not plan or want to purchase	88	74

Table 13: Which of the following would you be interested in using an iPad for? (Among those who own or want to purchase iPad)

	% Adults 50+ (n=126)	% Hispanic adults 50+ (n=61)
General web browsing	77	67
Reading news, newspapers or magazines	74	80
Photo sharing	67	76
Reading books	66	60
Watching movies or TV shows	42	60
None	4	8

Appendix A

Annotated Questionnaire

Please note, all data are given in percentages. Asterisks indicate that cell size is negligible. Not all percentages will add up to 100 due to rounding.

General Audience Base: 1360 unless otherwise specified

Hispanic Audience Base: 503 unless otherwise specified

1. How comfortable are you using the Internet? Would you say you are...

		Gen.	Hisp.
1	Extremely comfortable	17	6
2	Very comfortable	23	15
3	Somewhat comfortable	21	12
4	Not very comfortable	9	6
5	Not at all comfortable	13	10
6	Do not use the Internet – DO NOT READ	17	51

2. Which of the following best describes how you usually get your news and information?

		Gen.	Hisp.
1	You prefer to get your news by reading newspapers and magazines in print	40	36
2	You prefer to get your news by reading newspapers and magazines websites online	10	5
3	You read newspaper and magazines in print but also use online websites to get news	26	10
4	DO NOT READ- Does not apply/get news from other sources	24	50

3. Which online websites do you use most often to get news?

General Base: 501 (Get news online)

Hispanic Base: 73 (Get news online)

		Gen.	Hisp.
01	Newspaper and magazine websites	33	31
02	Cable news station websites	33	24
03	Blogs	1	9
04	Non-partisan fact-checking sites (i.e. Politifact, FactCheck.org)	6	1
05	Other	27	35

4. On which type of device do you access the Internet? (select all that apply).

		Gen.	Hisp.
1	Desktop computer	57	28
2	Laptop	26	19
3	Mobile phone	4	3
4	Smartphone (Blackberry, iPhone)	4	1
5	iPad	1	1
6	Do not access the Internet – DO NOT READ	27	55

5. Which of the following social media websites do you use or visit? (select all that apply).

		Gen.	Hisp.
01	Facebook	23	13
02	Twitter	3	1
03	MySpace	4	3
04	Linked-In	4	2
05	Or, other social media websites (Specify)	3	4
06	Do not use social media websites – DO NOT READ	73	80

6. Which of the following are you connected to, friends with, or follow on these sites?

General Base: 359 (Follow social media websites)

Hispanic Base: 82 (Follow social media websites)

	Gen.	Hisp.
your children?	62	68
your grandchildren?	36	38
your relatives other than children and grandchildren?	73	77
None	12	7
DK/No Response	5	2

7. Who introduced you to or told you about social media for the first time?

		Gen.	Hisp.
01	A friend	24	22
02	Spouse	3	1
03	A family member other than spouse	47	34
04	Co-worker	7	18
05	Other (specify)	9	17
06	Do not recall/no one introduced me – DO NOT READ	8	5

7a. Was this (friend/co-worker) significantly younger than you, for example 10+ years younger or not?

General Base: 110 (Friend/Co-worker told about social media)

Hispanic Base: 28 (Friend/Co-worker told about social media)

		Gen.	Hisp.
1	Yes	40	47
2	No	58	51

7b. Was it your child or grandchild?

General Base: 172 (Family member told about social media)

Hispanic Base: 31 (Family member told about social media)

		Gen.	Hisp.
1	Yes, Child	63	63
2	Yes, Grandchild	7	2
3	No, Neither	22	30

8. Have you heard of the Apple ipad?

		Gen.	Hisp.
1	Yes	83	59
2	No	17	41

9. Do you

General Base: 1144 (Heard of the iPad)

Hispanic Base: 268 (Heard of the iPad)

		Gen.	Hisp.
1	Own an ipad	2	7
2	Do not own an ipad, but plan to or want to purchase an ipad	11	19
3	Do not own an ipad and do not plan or want to purchase an ipad	88	74

10. Which of the following would you be interested in using an ipad for?

General Base: 126 (Own/want to buy iPad)

Hispanic Base: 61 (Own/want to buy iPad)

	Gen.	Hisp.
Watching movies or TV shows	42	60
Photo sharing	67	76
Reading news, newspapers or magazines	74	80
Reading books	66	60
General web browsing	77	67
None	4	8