

Technology Use and Attitudes among Mid-Life and Older Americans

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AARP Research



Research

Methodology

- This study was fielded from November 16-27, 2017 using GfK's KnowledgePanel, a probability based web panel designed to be representative of the adult US population.
- Respondents needed to be age 50 or older to complete the survey.
- Completion rate was 59.9% and resulted in a total sample of 1,520.
- The data are weighted by age within gender, education, race/ethnicity, household income, language preferences, and Census division to reflect US adults age 50 or older.

Margin of error at the 95% confidence level

± 2.71%
for Total Adults 50+
N=1520

Executive Summary

- **Mobile and traditional computing devices are the primary tech for Americans 50+.**
 - Over nine in ten own a computer or laptop, seven in ten adults 50+ own a smartphone, and over four in ten own a tablet.
 - Adults 70+ are more likely to have older technology such as desktops and feature phones than those age 50-69.
- **Technology such as wearables and home assistants have been adopted by only a very small percentage of the 50+ market.**
 - Younger adults are more likely to own a wearable than those over 70.
- **Traditional activities dominate computer use for adults over 50, but a sizeable minority are using their device to manage medical care or learn online.**
 - Among those who own such devices, top activities include surfing the internet, making purchases, getting news, and banking.
 - Adults 70+ do fewer activities on their computers than those under 70, with a couple exceptions such as gaming (over half play games on their computer) and email.
- **Surfing the web is the top activity for tablet users and older adults who have both are more likely to use their tablet for playing games and watching video than on a computer.**

Executive Summary

- **Top smartphone activities for adults 50+ focus on staying connected and being on the go.**
 - Nearly nine in ten smartphone owners say they use their device to send IMs/texts or emails, and over three quarters say they use it to get directions or traffic information. Other top activities include purchasing apps, surfing the internet, getting news, and accessing social media.
 - Among those who own all three devices, each device has different uses: computers are used for more practical tasks, tablets for entertainment, and smartphones for social and on the go activities.
- **Across all devices, over seven in ten adults 50+ are on social media.**
 - Adults 50+ are equally likely to use social on their computers and mobile devices.
 - Over half of smartphone owners use a social app weekly.
- **Privacy and security is still an issue for most older adults, but many don't take proactive steps to protect themselves online.**
 - Just 18% of those 50+ are extremely/very confident that their data are kept private online.
 - With the exception of financial institutions, most adults 50+ do not completely trust companies to keep their data secure. They are most likely to trust banks and healthcare organizations and least likely to trust the media, social media sites, and membership organizations.
 - Nonetheless, many adults 50+ fail to take proactive steps to secure their data. A little over half use a passcode on their phones or tablets, and only a third use two-factor authentication.

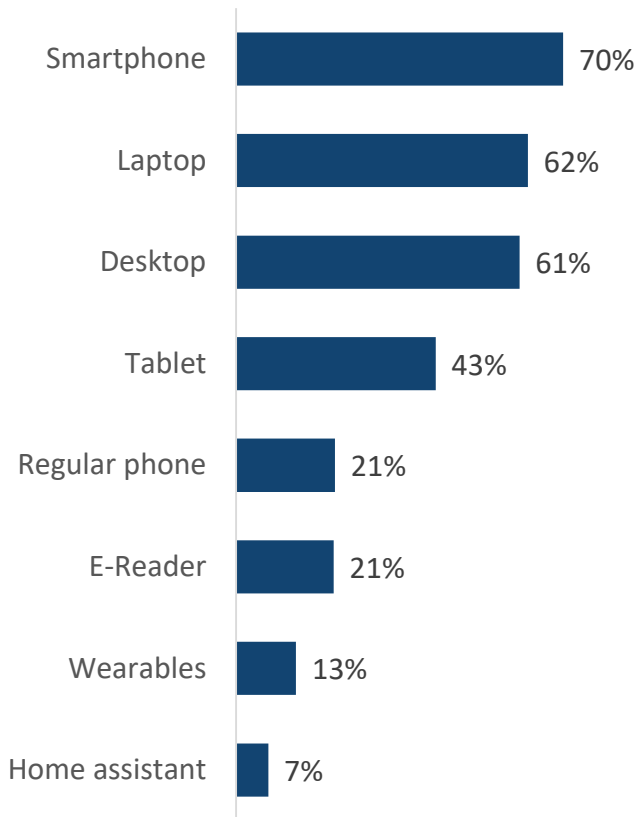
Executive Summary

- **Nine in ten (91%) of those with devices say they use technology to stay in touch with friends and family.**
 - Among those under 70, text messaging has overtaken email as the tool most used to stay connected, though most use three channels (email, texts, and social media).
- **Few older adults have used virtual reality and many are unfamiliar with augmented reality.**
 - Most older adults have heard of virtual reality devices but few have tried them. Adults age 50-59 are the most likely to have tried or own a device, but adoption is still small.
 - Over six in ten adults have never heard of augmented reality and very few have tried it. Adults in their 50s are more likely to have heard of AR than those over 60.

Main Findings

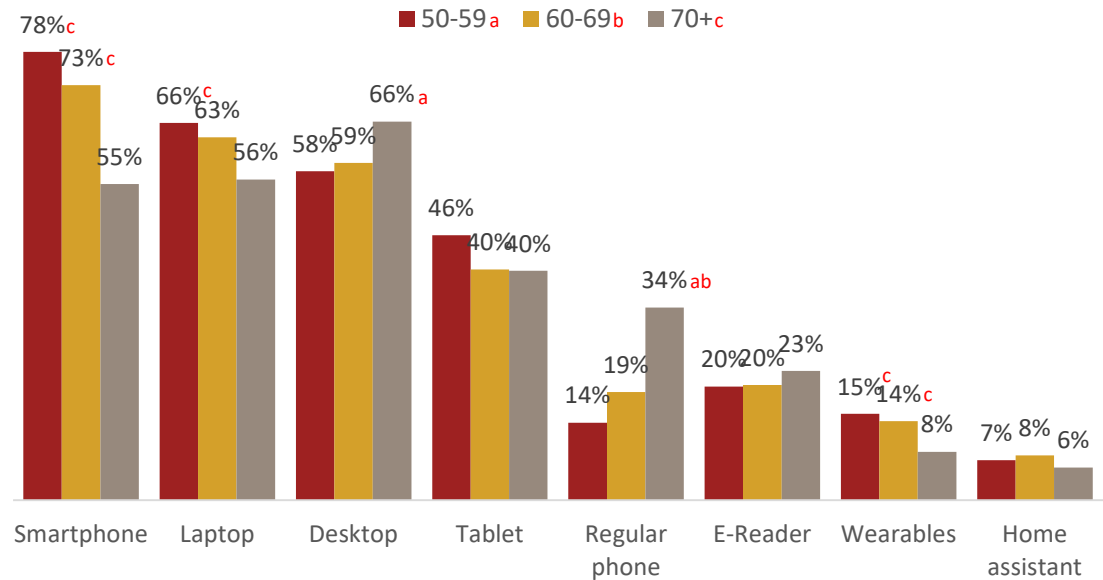
Mobile and traditional computers are primary tech devices for Americans 50+

Device Adoption among 50+



Younger adults are significantly more likely to own smartphones, laptops and wearable devices (e.g., smart watches, fitness trackers, etc.) than those 70+. Adults over 70 are more likely to own desktops and feature phones than their younger counterparts.

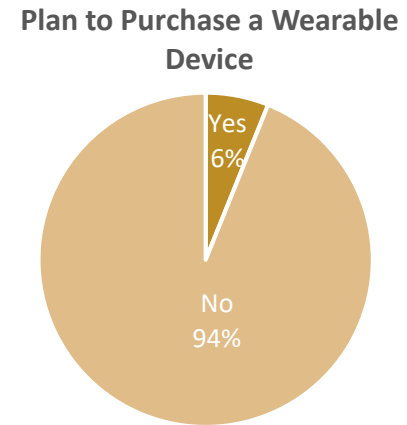
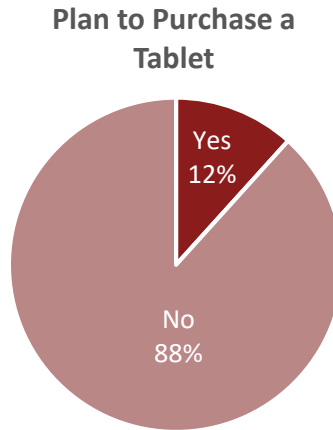
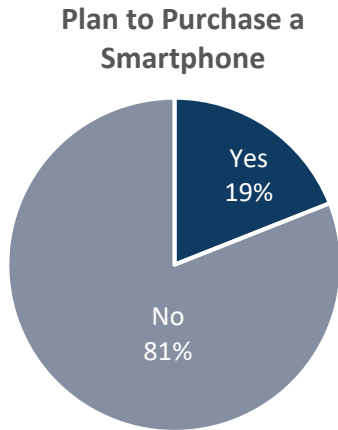
Device Adoption by Age



Letters represent a statistically significant difference between indicated age groups at the 95% confidence level.

Q.Tech1 (Base: All respondents. N=1520). Which of the following items do you have?

Those already invested in the technology are more likely to purchase it again in the future



Percentage Who Plan to Purchase in the Next Year

	Owns device	Does not own device	50-59 a	60-69 b	70+ c
Smartphone	23%*	10%	24% ^c	20% ^c	11%
Tablet	14%*	10%	16% ^c	12% ^c	6%
Wearable	12%*	5%	8%	6%	5%

Those who have already purchased a device are more likely to say they will purchase another one in the next year, particularly for smartphones. Likewise, adults under 70 are more likely to plan to purchase a phone or tablet in the next year compared to their 70+ counterparts.

Q.Tech3A (Base: All respondents. N=1520).
Do you plan to purchase a [...] within the next year?

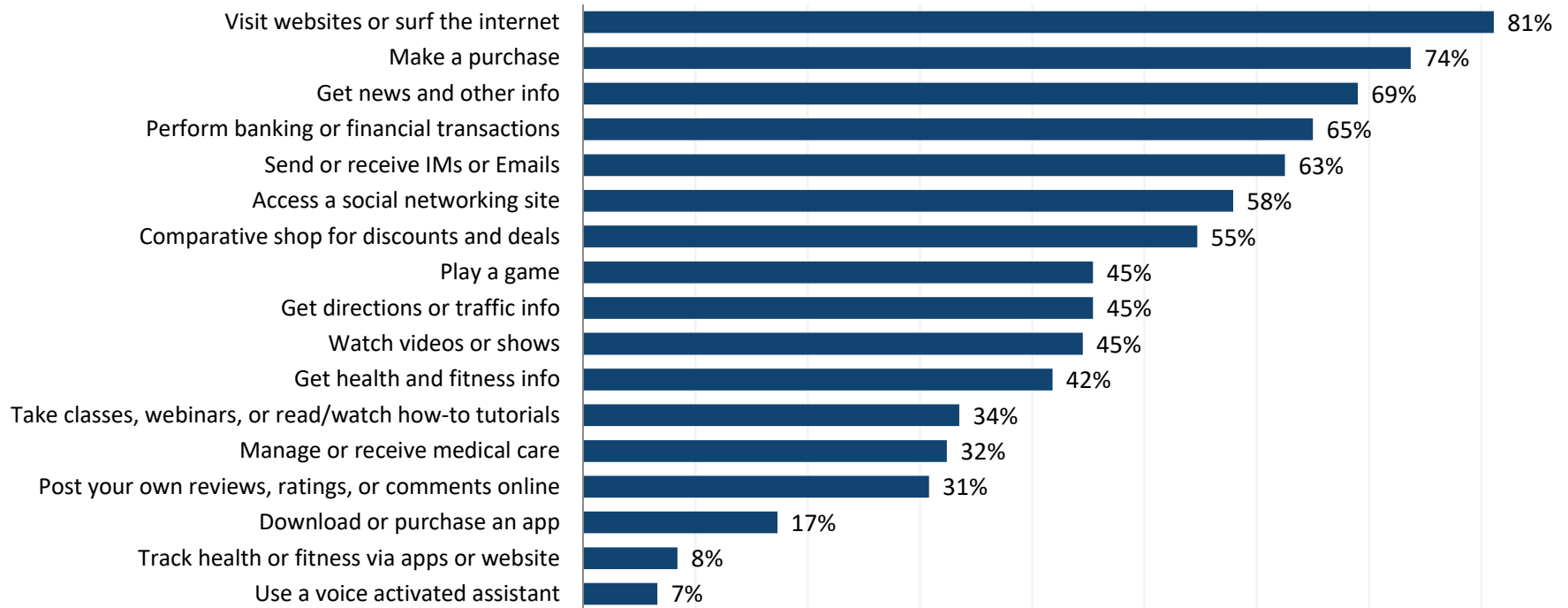
* or letter represent a statistically significant difference between indicated groups at the 95% confidence level.

Traditional activities dominate computer use for adults over 50, but a sizeable minority are using their device to manage medical care or learn online

Surfing the web, making purchases, getting news, and doing banking transactions dominate how older adults use their computers. A third say they do online learning on their computer (34%) and manage or receive medical care (32%).

Activities Performed on Desktop/Laptop

(among those who own device)



Q.Tech2 (Base: Those who own computer/laptop. N=1402). Please indicate whether you do each activity for each device you own.

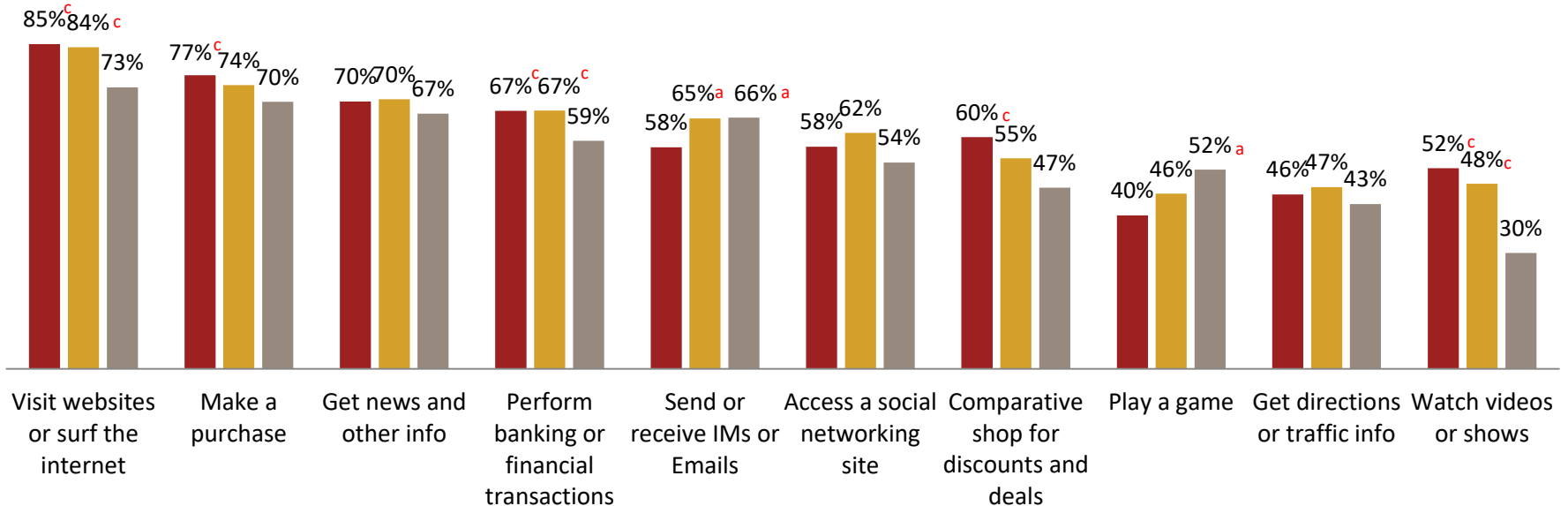
Computer users in their 50s and 60s are more likely to use their devices for a wider variety of activities, but adults 70+ are more likely to game.

Adults in their 50s and 60s are more likely to surf the internet, bank, comparison shop, and watch video on their computers than those over 70. However, computer users 70+ are equally likely to look for news and send emails as their younger counterparts, and are more likely to play games on the computer.

Activities Performed on Desktop/Laptop by Age (Top 10)

(Among those who own desktop/laptop computers)

■ 50-59 ^a ■ 60-69 ^b ■ 70+ ^c



Letters represent a statistically significant difference between indicated age groups at the 95% confidence level.

Q.Tech2 (Base: Those who own computer/laptop. N=1402). Please indicate whether you do each activity for each device you own.

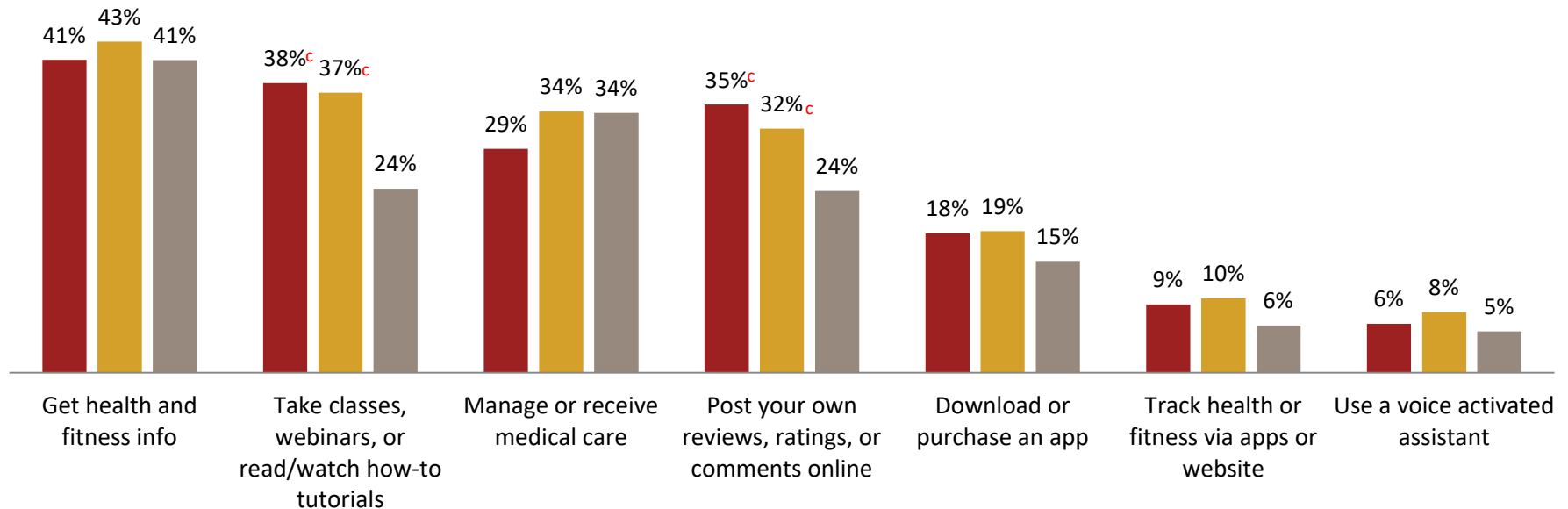
Adults in their 50s and 60s are more engaged in online learning activities on their computers than those 70+.

Adults in their 50s and 60s are more likely to use their computers to engage in online learning activities and posting ratings and reviews than those age 70+.

Activities Performed on Desktop/Laptop by Age (Bottom 7)

(Among those who own desktop/laptop computers)

■ 50-59 ^a ■ 60-69 ^b ■ 70+ ^c



Q.Tech2 (Base: Those who own computer/laptop. N=1402). Please indicate whether you do each activity for each device you own.

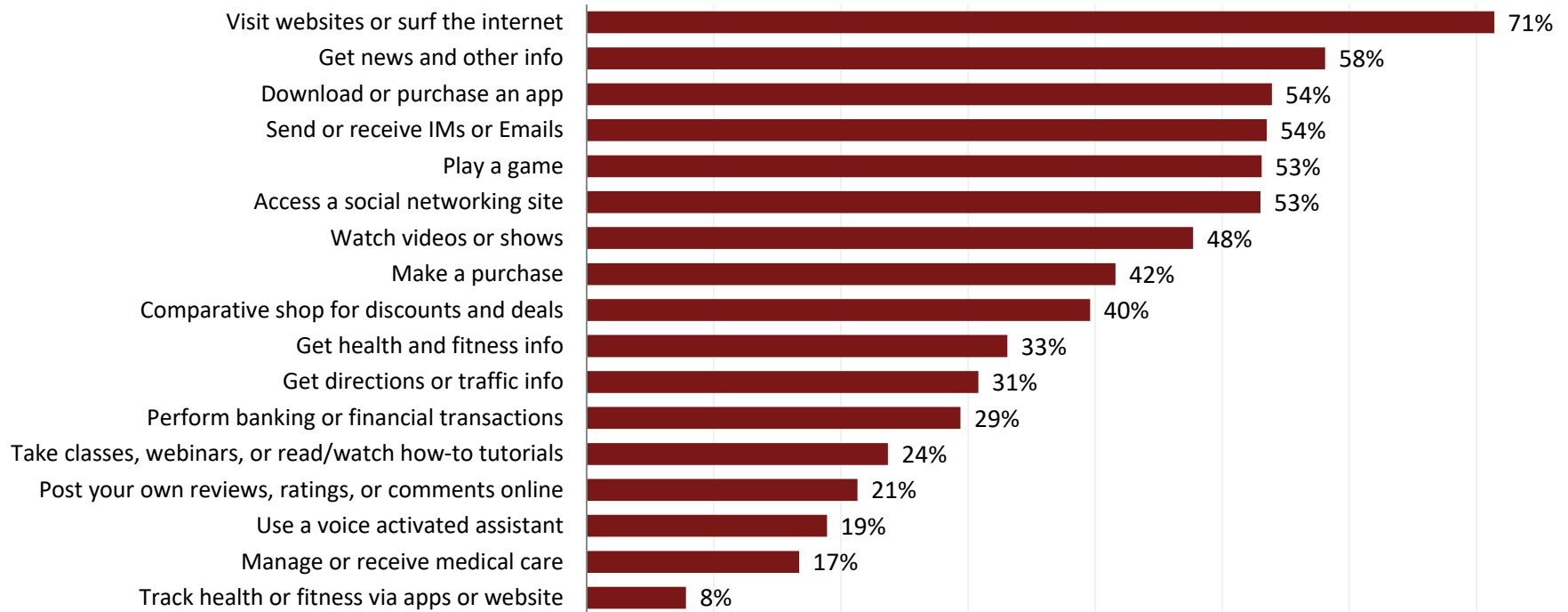
Letters represent a statistically significant difference between indicated age groups at the 95% confidence level.

Surfing the web is the top activity for tablet users and about half are likely to use their device for entertainment such as playing games and watching video.

Over half of tablet owners use their tablets for surfing the web, getting news, downloading apps, messaging and email, and playing games. Nearly half (48%) watch video on their tablets and another four in ten use it for shopping (42% make purchases; 40% comparative shop).

Activities Performed on Tablet

(among those who own device)



Q.Tech2 (Base: Those who own tablet; n=647). Please indicate whether you do each activity for each device you own.

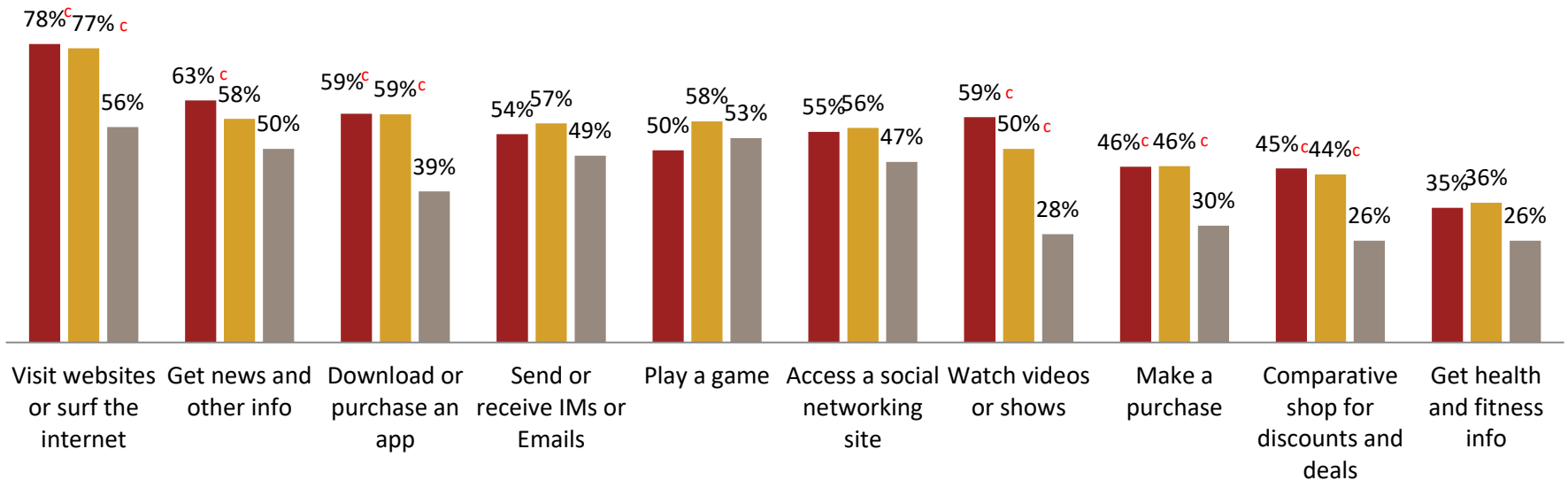
Adults under 70 do a larger variety of activities on their tablets than those 70+, but those over 70 are about equally likely to play games, use social media and send email on their devices.

Adults in their 50s and 60s are more likely to surf the internet, download apps, watch video, shop and make purchases on their tablets than those over 70. Those in their 50s are also more likely than those 70+ to use their tablets to get news and other info.

Activities Performed on Tablet by Age (Top 10)

(Among those who own a tablet)

■ 50-59 ^a ■ 60-69 ^b ■ 70+ ^c



Q.Tech2 (Base: Those who own tablets. n=647). Please indicate whether you do each activity for each device you own.

Letters represent a statistically significant difference between indicated age groups at the 95% confidence level.

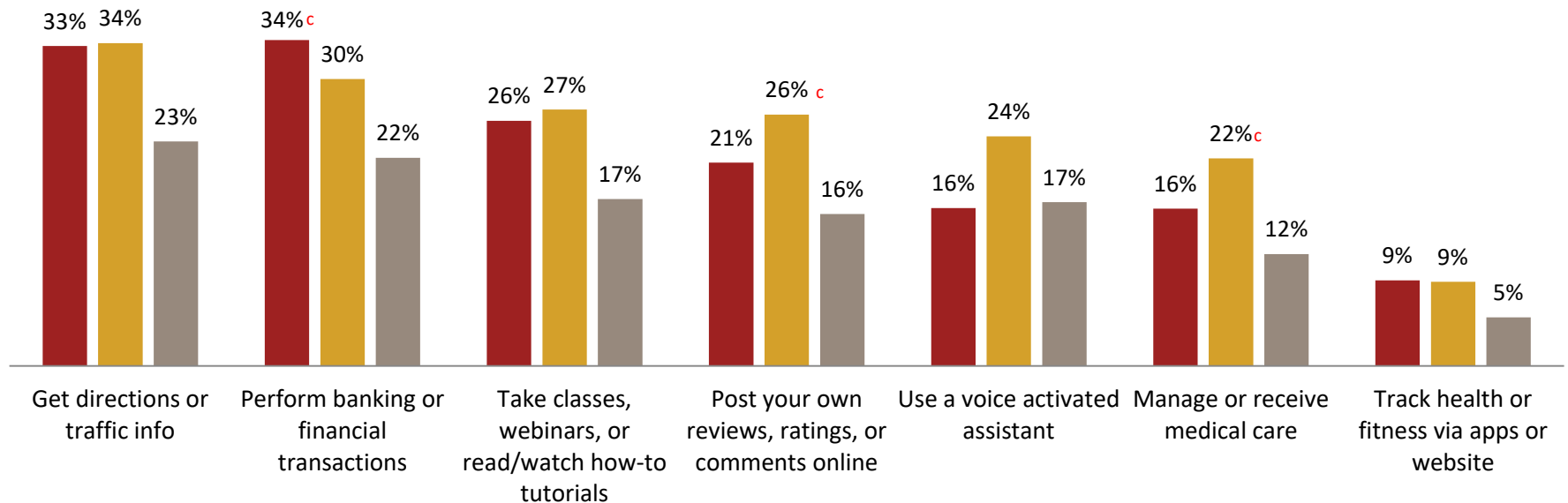
Among less common activities, adults in their sixties are more likely to use their tablets to manage medical care and post reviews than those in their 50s or 70s.

Tablet users age 60-69 are more likely than those 70+ to manage medical care and post reviews than those 70+. They are slightly (but not significantly) more likely to learn online and use voice assistants than those 70+ as well. Those in their 50s are more likely to use their tablets to perform online banking transactions than those 70+.

Activities Performed on Tablet by Age (Bottom 7)

(Among those who own a tablet)

■ 50-59 ^a ■ 60-69 ^b ■ 70+ ^c



Q.Tech2 (Base: Those who own tablets. n=647). Please indicate whether you do each activity for each device you own.

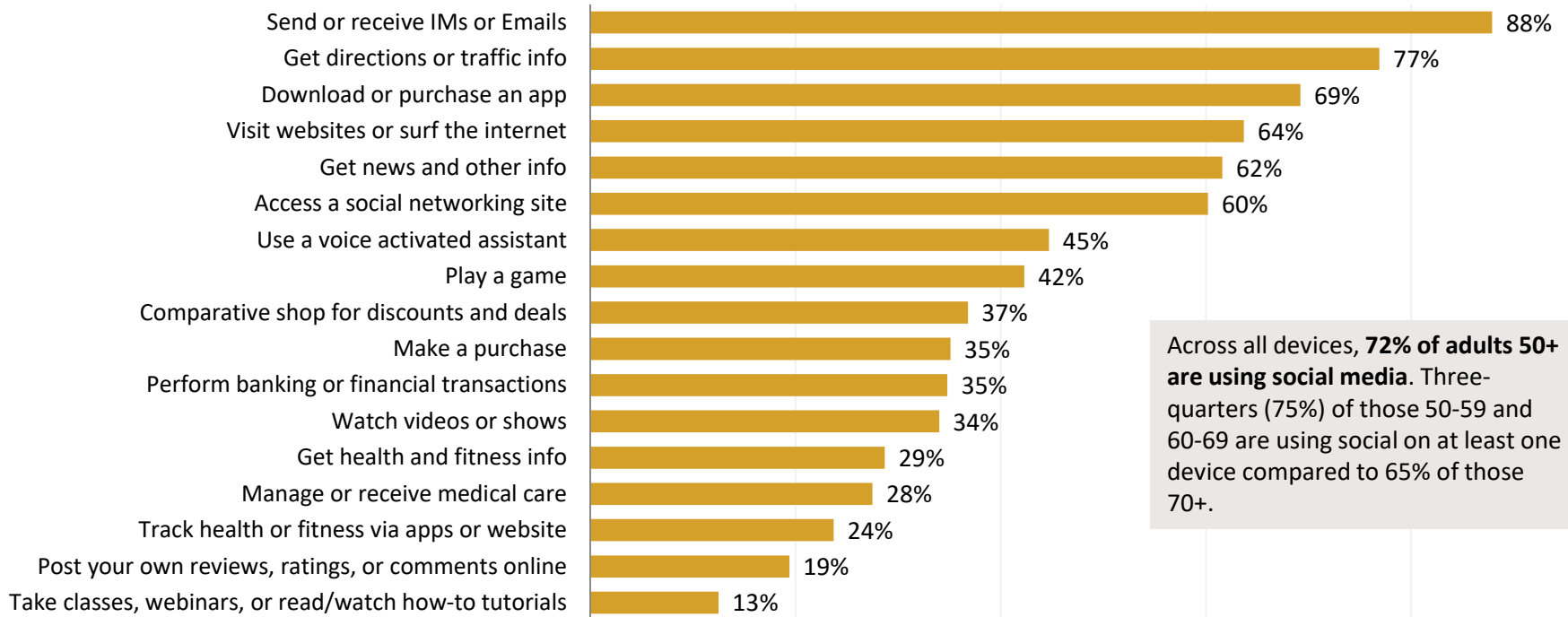
Letters represent a statistically significant difference between indicated age groups at the 95% confidence level.

Messaging, directions, and surfing the internet top list of activities people do on their smartphones.

Nearly 90% of smartphone owners say they use their device to send IMs or emails, and over three quarters (77%) say they use it to get directions or traffic information. Other top activities include purchasing apps, surfing the internet, getting news, and accessing social media. Adults 50+ are much more likely to use voice assistants on their smartphone than they are on any other device.

Activities Performed on Smartphone

(among those who own device)



Across all devices, **72% of adults 50+ are using social media**. Three-quarters (75%) of those 50-59 and 60-69 are using social on at least one device compared to 65% of those 70+.

Q.Tech2 (Base: Those who own a smartphone, n=1061). Please indicate whether you do each activity for each device you own.

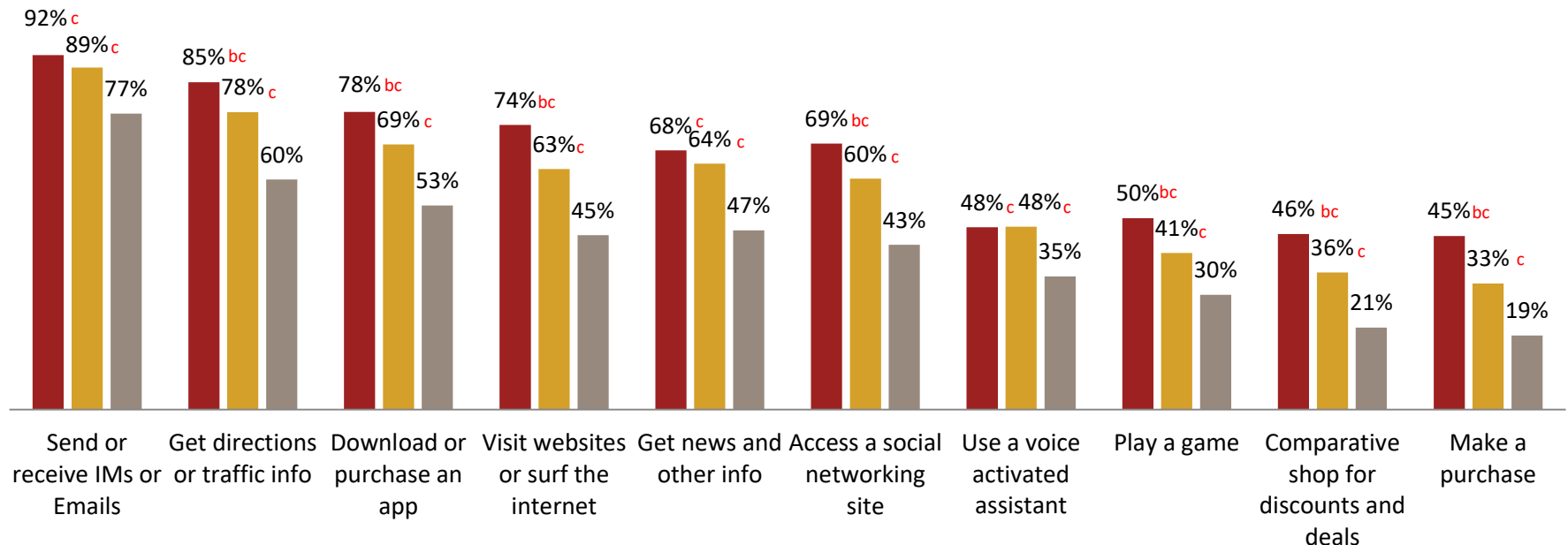
Adults age 50-59 are more likely to do most top activities on their smartphones than those over 60.

Adults age 50-59 are more likely to use their smartphones to do a variety of activities than those who are over 60. Smartphone users age 60-69 have caught up on a number of activities such as sending IMs/emails, reading the news, and using a voice assistant.

Activities Performed on Smartphone by Age (Top 10)

(Among those who own a smartphone)

■ 50-59 ^a ■ 60-69 ^b ■ 70+ ^c



Q.Tech2 (Base: Those who own smartphones. n=1061). Please indicate whether you do each activity for each device you own.

Letters represent a statistically significant difference between indicated age groups at the 95% confidence level.

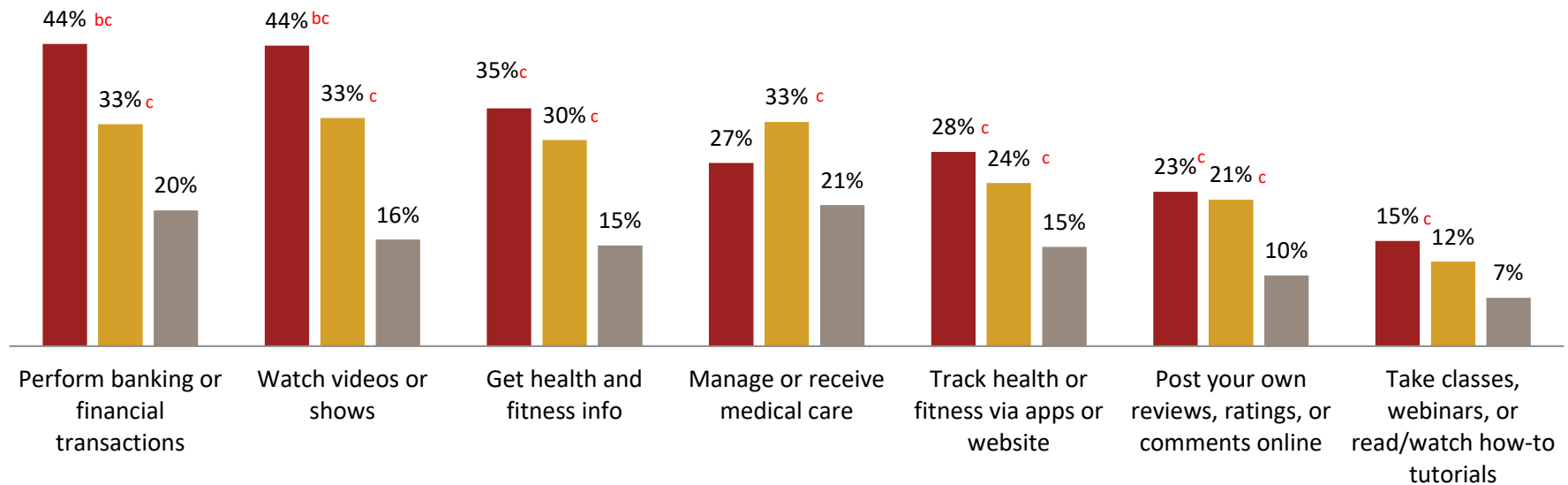
Adults in their 50s are the ones most likely to be using their phones for banking and watching video, while those 60-69 focus on health.

Adults age 50-59 are more likely to use their smartphones to do banking activities and watch video than those who are over 60. However, smartphone users age 60-69 have taken the lead on using their phone to manage medical care (they are significantly more likely to do so than those over 70: 33% vs. 21%). These users, as well as those 50-59, are also more likely than the 70+ to be using their phones to track health and fitness data.

Activities Performed on Smartphone by Age (Bottom 7)

(Among those who own a smartphone)

■ 50-59 ^a ■ 60-69 ^b ■ 70+ ^c



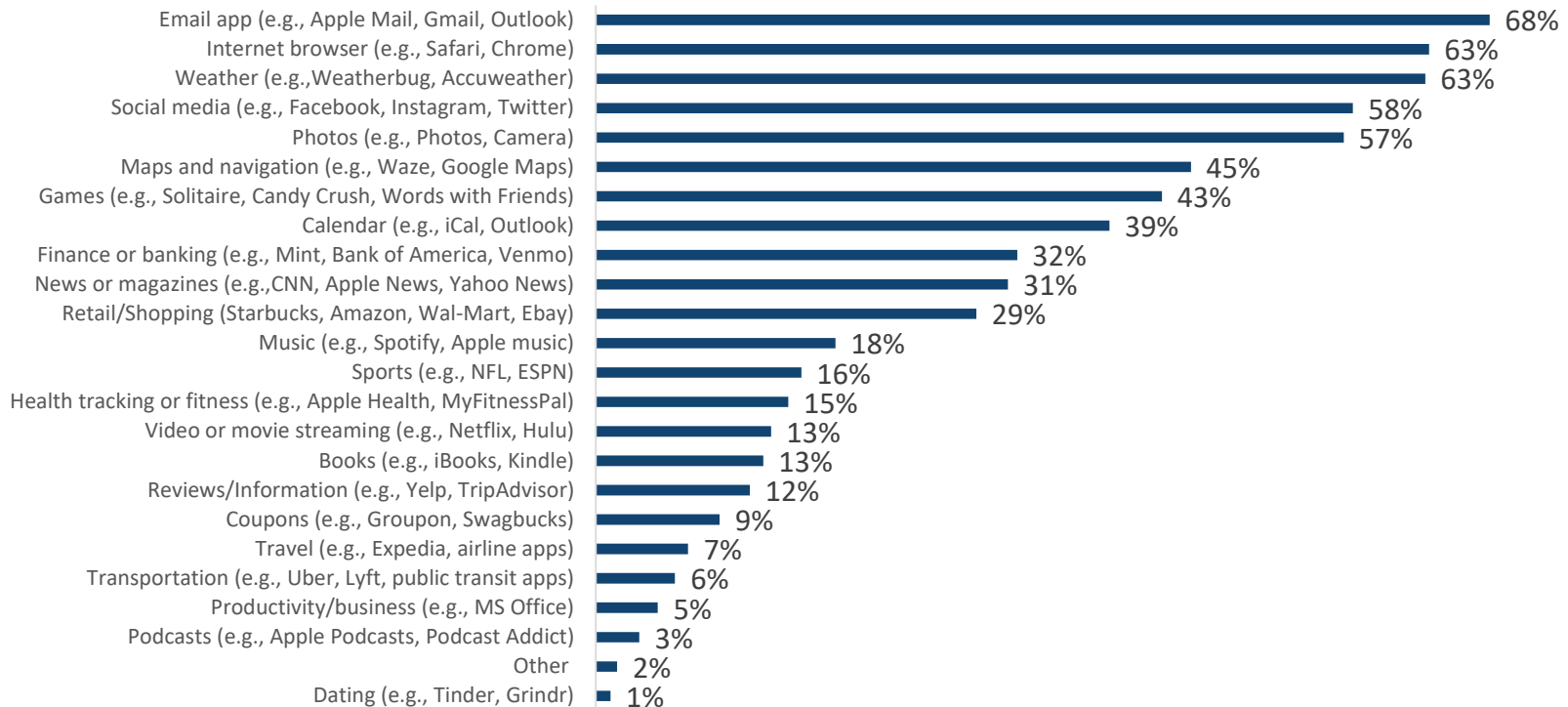
Q.Tech2 (Base: Those who own smartphones. n=1061). Please indicate whether you do each activity for each device you own.

Letters represent a statistically significant difference between indicated age groups at the 95% confidence level.

Frequently used apps mirror the overall activities that adults 50+ say they do on their phones and tablets.

Overall, the apps older adults use weekly mirror the general activities they say they do on their smartphones and tablets—checking email (68%), browsing the internet (63%), getting weather (63%), and checking social media (58%). However, there are some surprises—57% use their device to snap photos, and 29% are using retail apps like Starbucks and Amazon weekly.

Type of Apps Used at Least Weekly (Among those who own a smartphone or tablet)

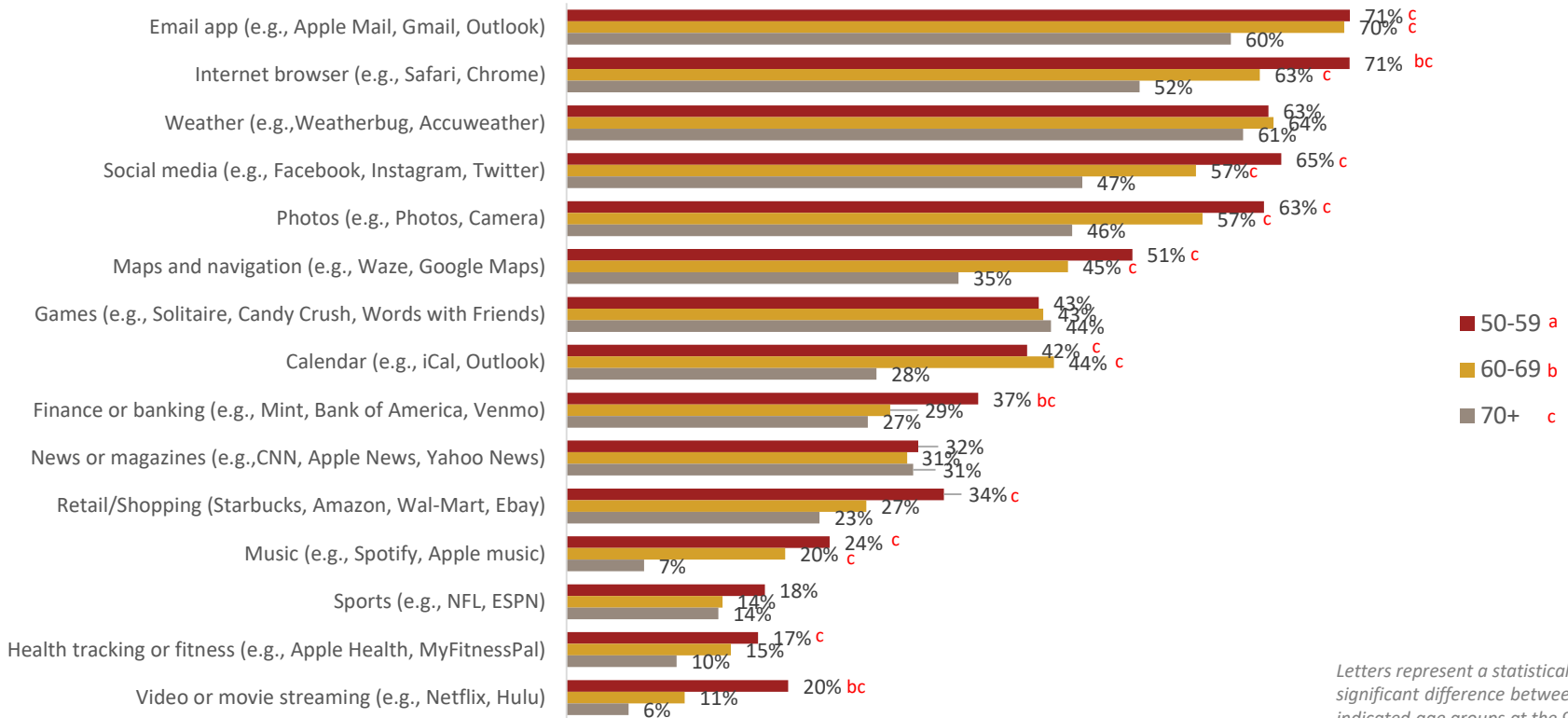


Q.Tech7 (Base: Those who own smartphones or tablets. n=1177). Which of the following apps do you use on your smartphone or tablet at least once a week?

Younger adults are more likely to use a variety of smartphone apps weekly than older adults.

Overall, younger smartphone and tablet users are more likely to use a variety of apps weekly than those who are older, particularly those under 60 versus those in their 70s. However, adults 70+ are equally likely to be using their phone weekly for weather, news, games, and books (15% of 70+ use book apps vs. 11% of 50-59 and 13% of 60-69).

Type of Apps Used at Least Weekly by Age (Top 15)
(Among those who own a smartphone or tablet)



Letters represent a statistically significant difference between indicated age groups at the 95% confidence level.

Q.Tech7 (Base: Those who own smartphones or tablets. n=1177). Which of the following apps do you use on your smartphone or tablet at least once a week?

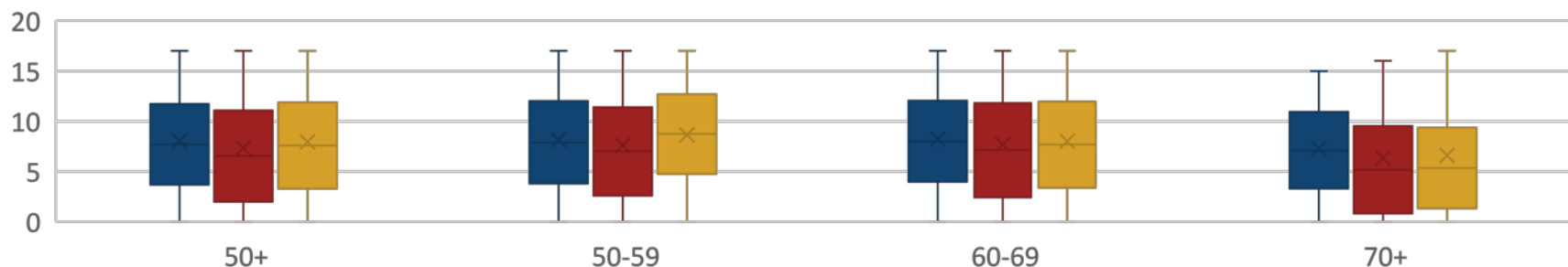
Younger users are more likely to do more with their devices than those 70+.

On average, adults 50+ use their computer and smartphone to do around 8 activities, while they use their tablets to do 7. Those under 70 are significantly more likely to do more activities on all devices than those 70+. Moreover, those 50-59 are more likely to do more on their smartphones than those 60-69 and 70+, both in terms of general activities as well as apps used weekly.

Average Number of Activities Performed on Device

(among device owners)

■ Computer ■ Tablet ■ Mobile

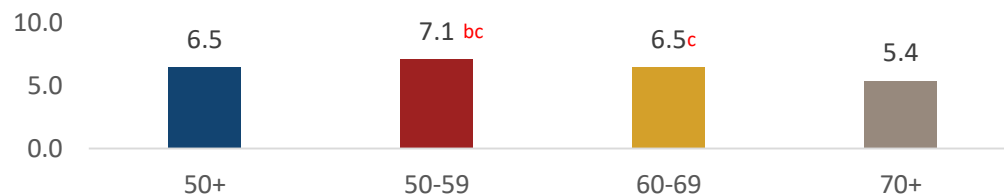


Average Number of Activities Done on Device

	50+	50-59 a	60-69 b	70+ c
Computer	7.7	8.0c	7.9c	7.1
Tablet	6.5	7.1c	7.0c	5.2
Smartphone	7.6	8.7bc	7.7c	5.3

Average Number of Apps Used Weekly on Smartphone

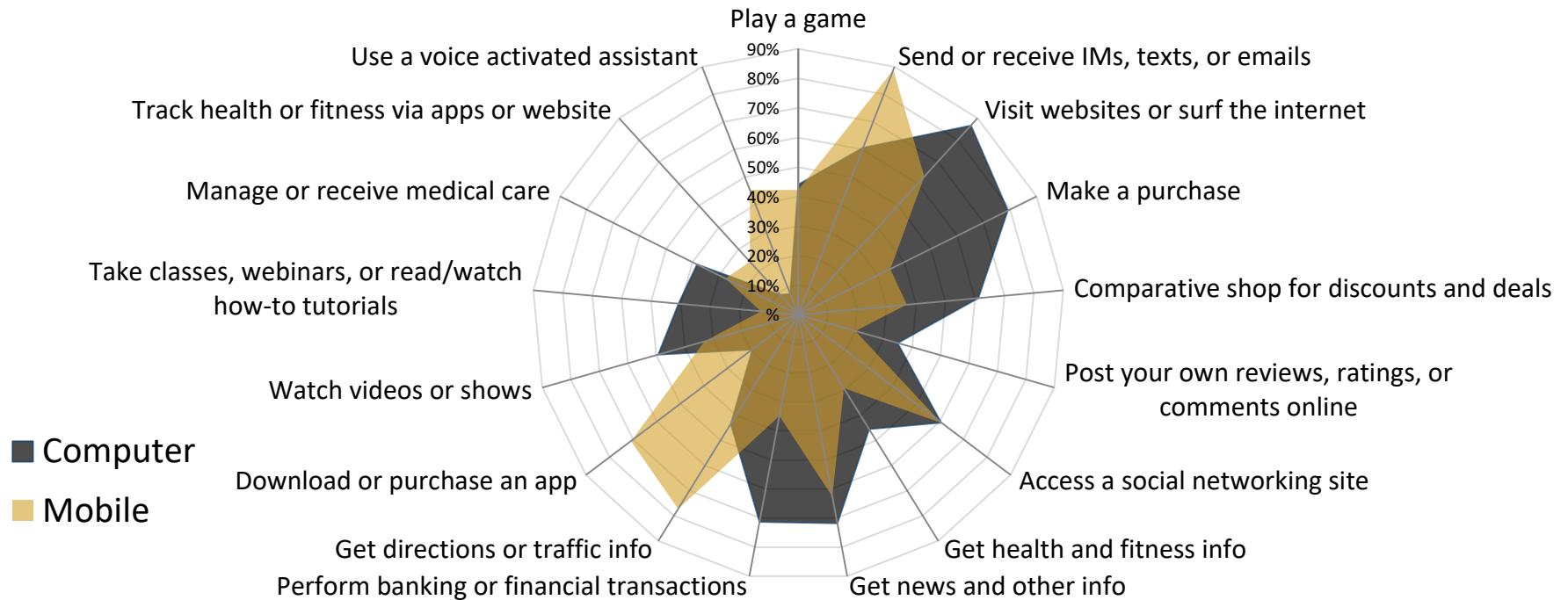
(among smartphone owners)



Q.Tech2 (Base: Those who own X device). Please indicate whether you do each activity for each device you own.

Q.Tech7 (Base: Those who own smartphones or tablets. n=1177). Which of the following apps do you use on your smartphone or tablet at least once a week?

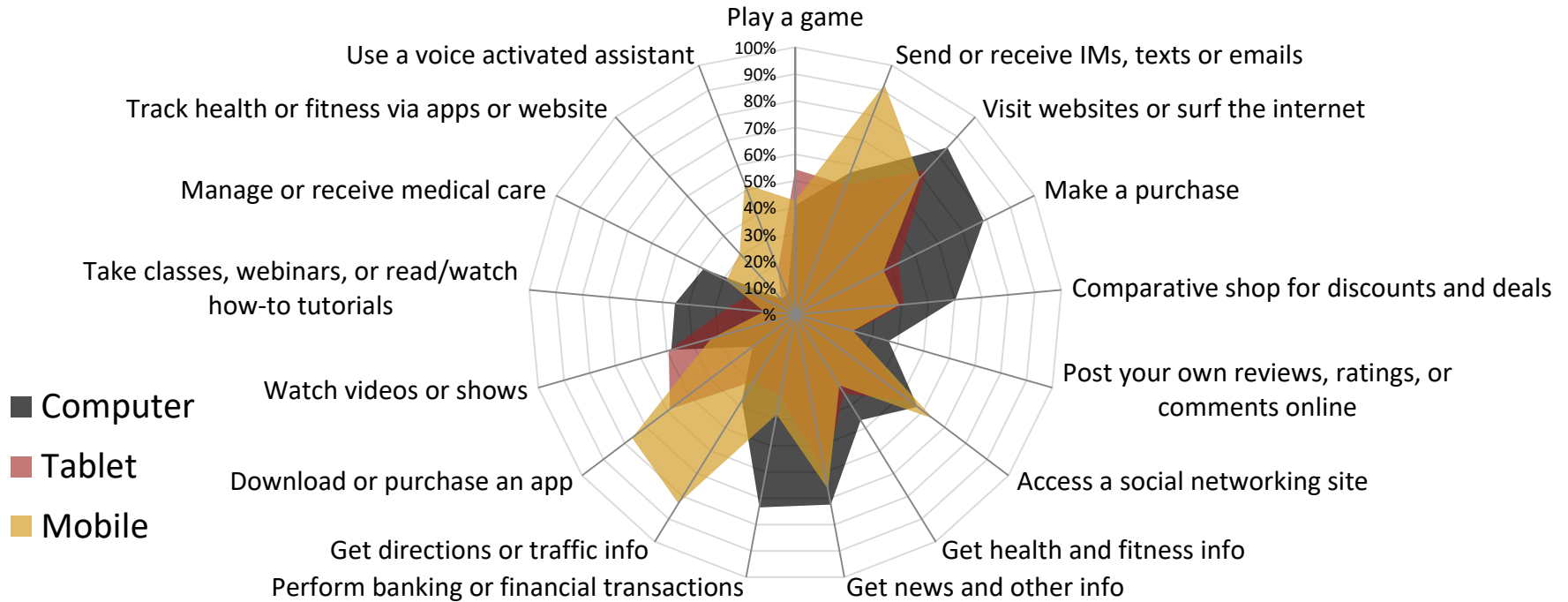
Although traditional computers still dominate many activities, older adults are more likely to do navigation, voice assist, app downloads, and messaging/email on their mobile devices.



Adults 50+ who are mobile enabled are more likely to do most activities on their computers than on their smartphones, but there are some things that are becoming mobile dominant: sending email/IMs (89% on mobile vs. 61% on computer), getting traffic and directions (77% on mobile vs. 43% on computer), downloading apps (71% on mobile vs. 20% on computer), and using voice assistants (45% on mobile vs. 8% on computer).

Q.Tech2a (Base: Those who own smartphones and computers. n=985)

Among the most tech savvy users, each device has different uses: computers for more practical tasks, tablets for entertainment, and smartphones for social and on the go activities.



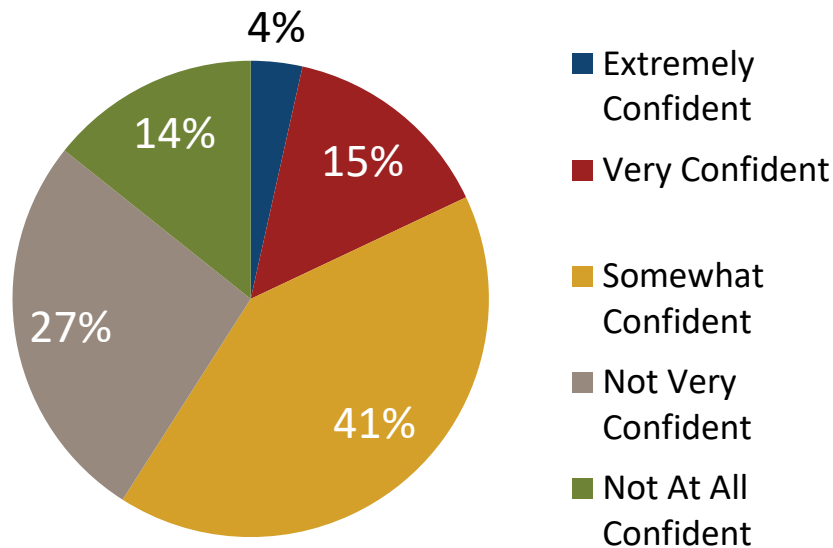
For adults who own all three devices, users favor different devices for different activities. Dominant computer activities include shopping and purchasing, online learning, and banking. Dominant tablet activities include playing games and watching video. Finally, dominant mobile activities include sending messages/emails, downloading apps, using voice assistant and getting directions. Note, however, that these represent the most tech savvy of the 50+ who are more likely to be younger, better educated, and have higher income than the general population.

Q.Tech2a (Base: Those who own smartphones, tablets and computers. n=498)

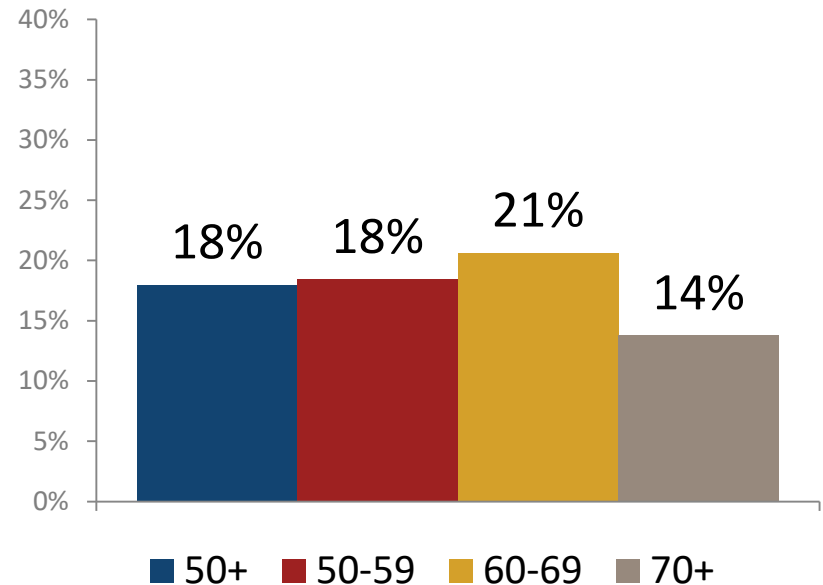
Under two in ten adults 50+ are confident in their privacy when using their devices.

Overall, just 18% of adults 50+ are extremely or very confident in their online privacy. Four in ten (41%) are not very or not at all confident in their privacy. Adults age 60-69 are significantly more likely to be extremely/very confident in their privacy than those 70 or older.

Confidence That Wireless Devices are Private & Will Not Be Seen by Others



Confidence in Privacy by Age (extremely/very confident)



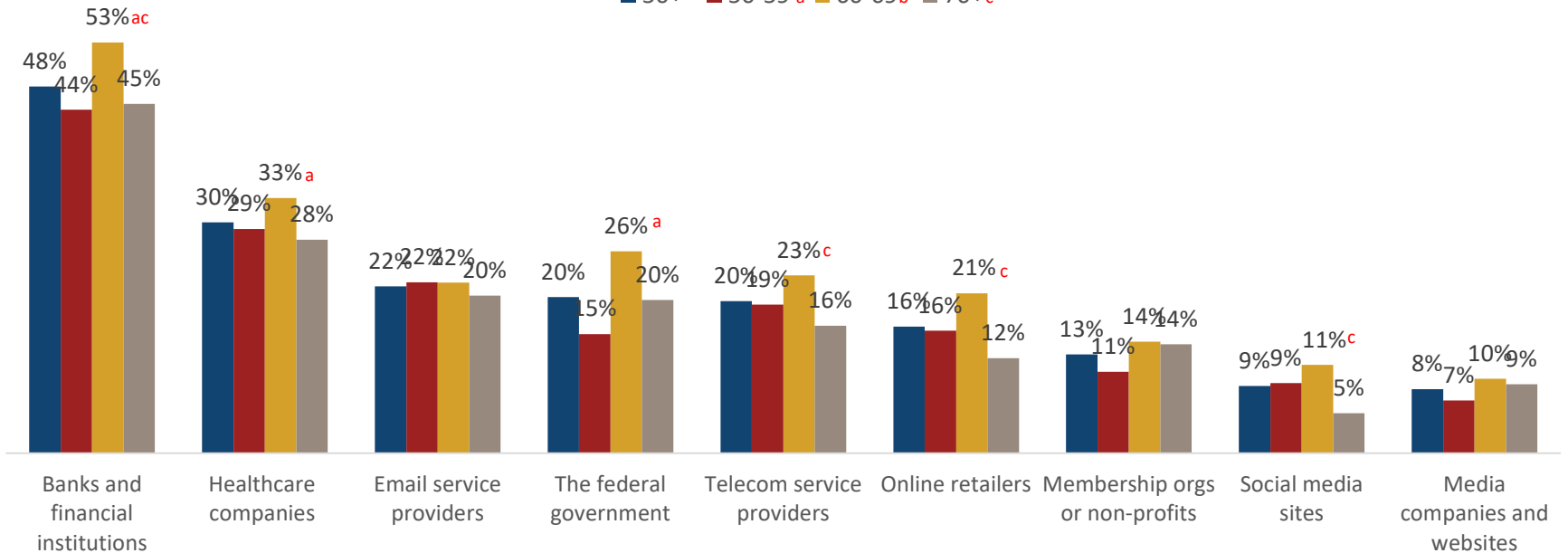
Q.Tech4 (Base: Those who own at least one device, n=1355). How confident are you that the things you do online when you are using a wireless device such as a laptop, Smartphone, or iPad, are private and will not be used or seen by others without your permission?

Trust in online institutions varies but few are completely trusted.

Older adults do not trust online institutions to keep their data secure. The most trusted type of business, financial institutions, still only had 48% who gave it a top 2 box rating. The next highest rated institution, healthcare, is only completely trusted by 30%. Those age 60-69 are significantly more trusting of many organizations than those younger or older than them. Media companies, social media, and membership organizations are among the least trusted institutions.

Trust in Businesses to Keep Personal Data Secure Online
Top 2 Box Rating (5 point scale)

■ 50+ ■ 50-59 ^a ■ 60-69 ^b ■ 70+ ^c



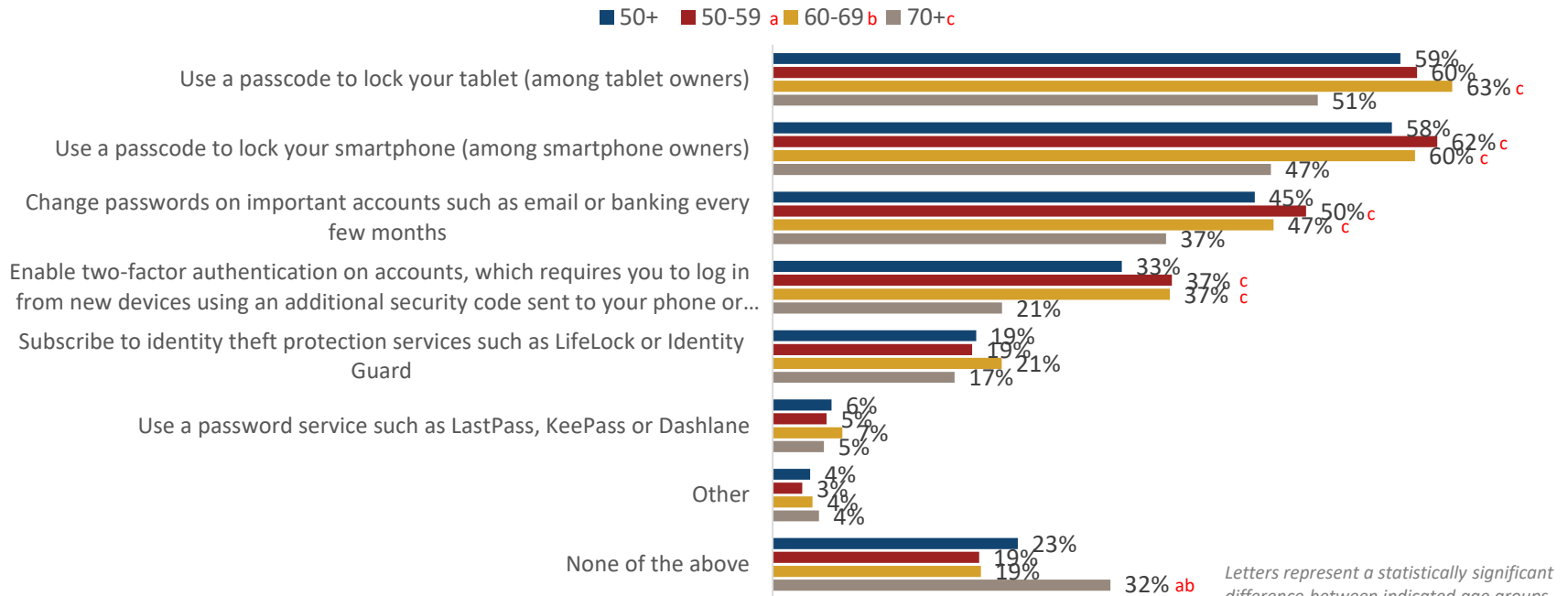
Q.Tech6 (Base all respondents; n=1520). How much do you trust the following businesses and institutions to keep your personal data secure online?

Letters represent a statistically significant difference between indicated age groups at the 95% confidence level.

Despite lack of trust in security, many adults 50+ fail to take proactive measures to secure their data, particularly those 70 or older.

Nearly a quarter of adults say they take none of the listed security measures to protect their data, a percentage that jumps to a third (32%) among those 70+. The most common security measures taken include setting passcodes on smartphones (58%) and tablets (59%) as well as changing passwords every few months (45%). Men are more likely than women to say they lock devices with passcodes (62% vs. 54% for smartphones; 64% vs. 54% for tablets), change their passwords frequently (48% vs. 43%), and have set up two-factor authentication (36% vs. 29%).

Percentage of Adults 50+ Who Have Taken Steps to Secure Their Data

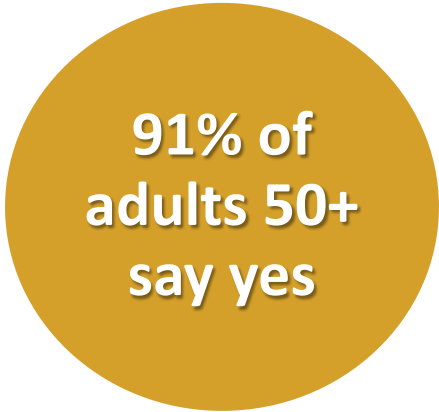


Q.Tech5 (Base all respondents; n=1520). Which of the following security measures have you taken to protect yourself online?

Nearly all adults 50+ use technology to stay connected to family and friends.

Nine in ten adults 50+ use technology to remain connected with their friends and family. There are no differences by age, but women are significantly more likely to say they use technology to stay connected than men are (94% vs. 87%).

Do you use technology to stay connected and in touch with friends and family?



Percentage Who Stay Connected Via Technology

Men	Women	50-59 a	60-69 b	70+ c
87%	94%*	91%	92%	88%

** or letter represent a statistically significant difference between indicated groups at the 95% confidence level.*

Q.NewQ1 (Base: Those who own at least one device . n=1519). Do you use technology like cell phones, computers, and the Internet to stay connected and in-touch with family and friends?

Texts and email are the most popular methods to stay in touch but many use social and video regularly as well.

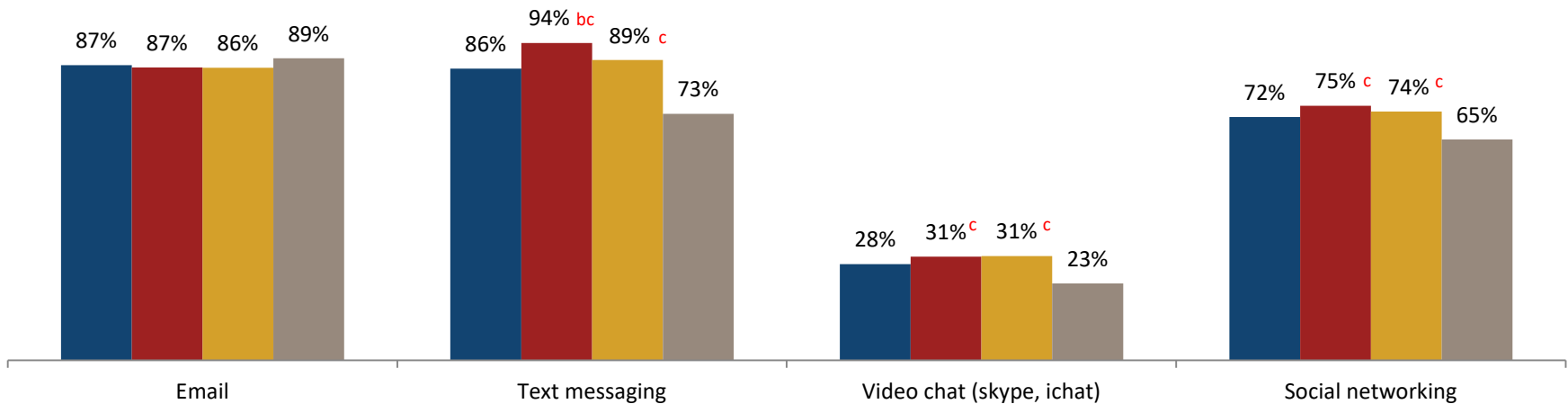
Among those under 70, text messaging has overtaken email in the tool most used to stay connected, though most use three channels (email, texts, and social media). Video chat is less popular, but over three in ten adults under 70 and nearly a quarter of those 70+ use this method at least once a month.

How often do you use the following to communicate with friends & family...

At least once a month or more

(among those who say they use tech to communicate)

■ 50+ ■ 50-59^a ■ 60-69^b ■ 70+^c



Women are more likely than men to say they use **texting (89% vs. 83%) and **social media** (76% vs. 67%) to stay connected.**

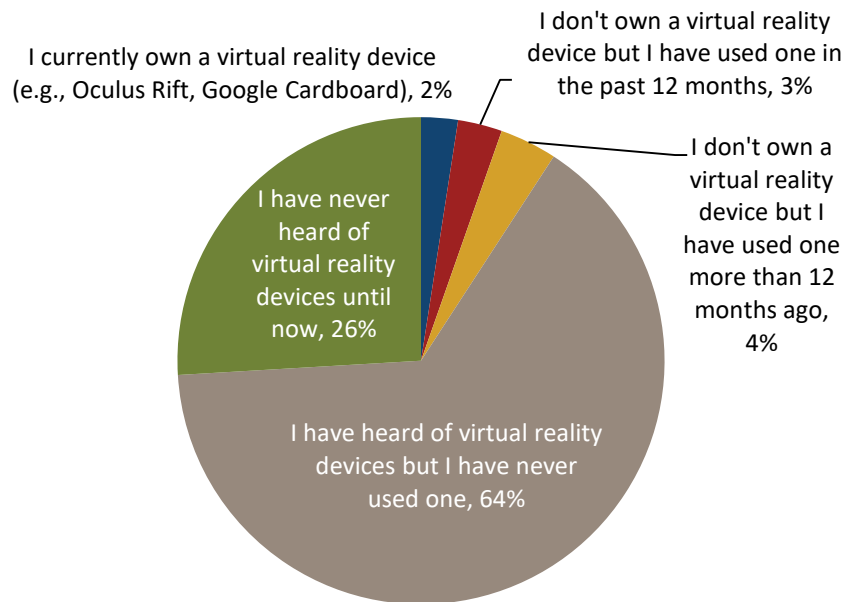
Q.NewQ2 (Base: Those who say they use tech to stay connected. n=1378). How often do you use each of the following to communicate with and stay connected with family and friends?

Letters represent a statistically significant difference between indicated age groups at the 95% confidence level.

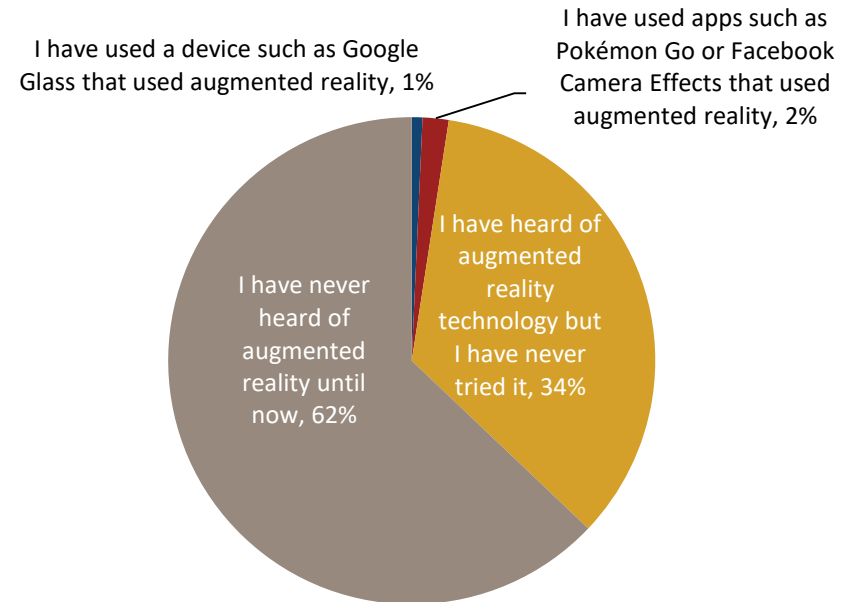
Few older adults have used virtual reality and many are unfamiliar with augmented reality.

Most older adults have heard of virtual reality devices but few have tried them (64% have heard of but never tried a VR device). Fewer adults 50+ are aware of augmented reality (62% say they are unaware) and very few have tried it (2% via apps and 1% via a device). Adults age 50-59 are the most likely to have recently tried (5%) or own (4%) a VR device, and are also more likely to have heard of AR than their older counterparts (43% vs. 31% among 60-69 and 26% among 70+).

Awareness and Use of Virtual Reality



Awareness and Use of Augmented Reality



Q.TECH8 (Base all respondents; n=1520). Which of the following best describes your experience with virtual reality technology?

Q.TECH9. Have you ever used a device or an app that used augmented reality (technology that overlays virtual 3D objects over the real world or real world displays)?

About AARP

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the nation's largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.

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