

Privacy fears are putting older people off using the internet

By Mike Wright, Social Media Correspondent

THE over-65s are staying offline because of rising privacy fears, an Oxford University study has found, as it emerged that more than half of people in that age bracket still do not use the internet.

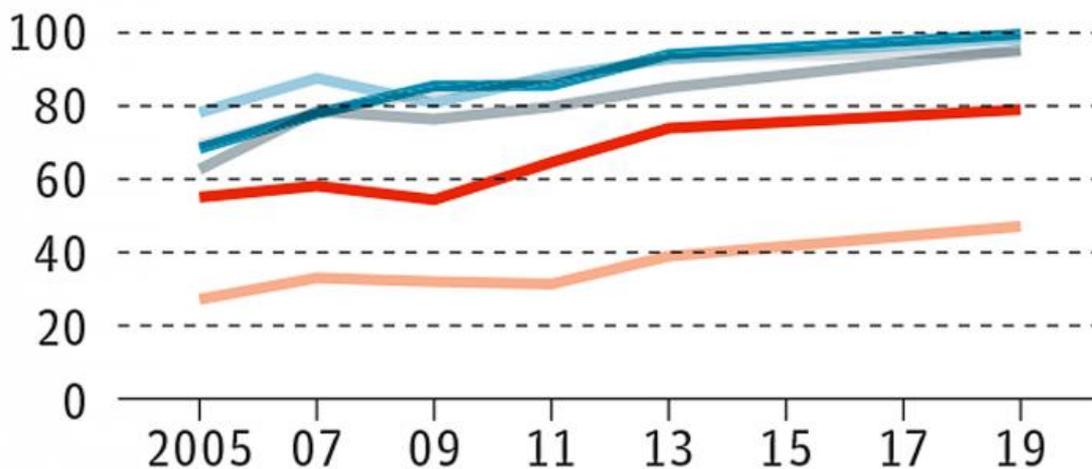
The university's first Internet Survey for six years found that while more than 90 per cent of people under 50 are online, that figure steadily decreased after people reached that age.

Researchers found that as well as over-50s seeing less need for the internet in their lives, they also found the increasing complexity of devices and online services off-putting.

Internet usage by age group

% who use the internet

Age — 18- 25- 35- 45- 55- 64+
24 34 44 54 64



SOURCE: OXFORD INTERNET INSTITUTE'S INTERNET SURVEY

The survey, which was funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, BT and Google, interviewed more than 2,000 people to gauge the nation's internet habits. Dr Grant Blank, survey research fellow for the Oxford Internet Institute, said that after the age of 50, the number of people online fell by around two per cent every year.

Of those not using the internet, nearly three quarters (69 per cent) said they were just not interested in it.

However, growing numbers also cited privacy concerns, 10 per cent – up from 1 per cent in 2013 – and lack of knowledge of how it worked, 18 per cent compared to 8 in 2013. Dr Blank said: “I don’t see everyone going online ever. I think there is something about that age [50], where people as they get older find the internet less useful to them. A number of things that younger people do on the internet become less valuable to them.”

The survey also showed an increasing number now perceive the internet to be a risk to privacy, with 52 per cent agreeing with that statement compared to 47 per cent in 2013. The main concern related to being tracked around the internet by advertisers, with 68 per cent of people saying they were not comfortable with the practice and only 3 per cent saying they didn’t mind it.

Dr Blank added: “Non-users [have] become much more aware of potential privacy problems on the internet. It [ad tracking] certainly can seem creepy.”

While the overall rate of growth in internet use has peaked, the survey revealed that usage was intensifying for those who are online.

Following the findings, Matt Warman, the digital minister, announced new government funding to help train older people in how to use the internet.

“[We have] launched our £400,000 Digital Inclusion Fund to help older and disabled people get online and acquire new digital skills.”