

EU-Project „Senior`s Learning in the Digital Society“ (SeLiD) „Seniorenlernen in der Digitalen Gesellschaft“

Strategische Partnerschaft Erasmus+
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Use of Digital Technologies by the Elderly

Results of the Survey at the TU Chemnitz

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Demographic variables

Participants: N= 82

Gender (In numbers)

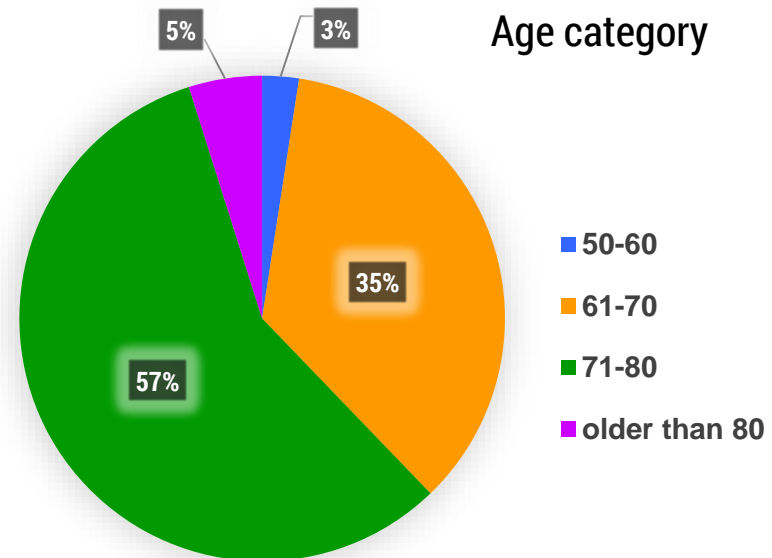
- male (39)
- female (43)

Age category (In numbers)

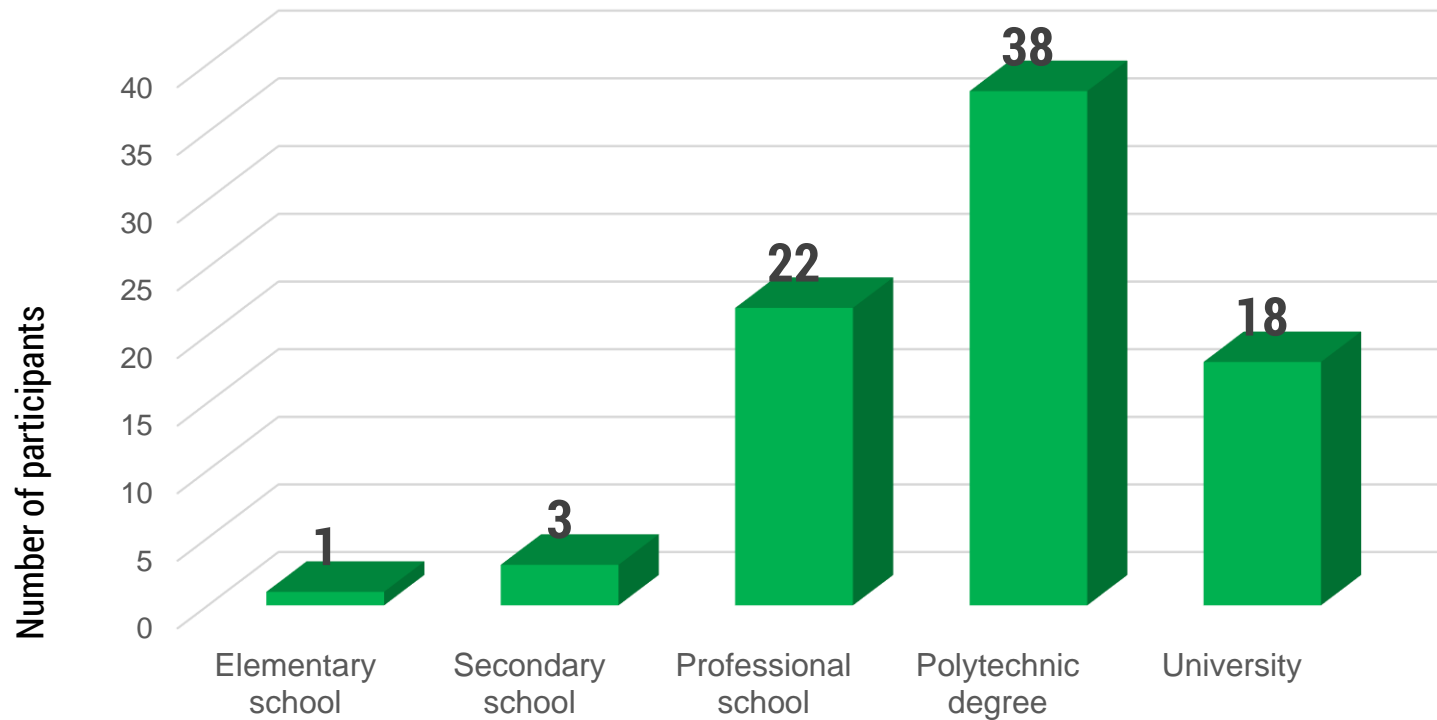
- 50-60 (2)
- 61-70 (29)
- 71-80 (47)
- Older than 80 (4)

Family situation (In numbers)

- married (53), living alone (25)
- with family (1), no information (3)

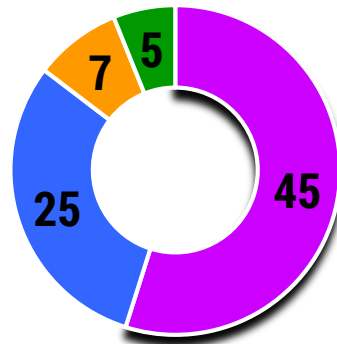


Level of education



- The level of education in the sample is high.

Place of residence

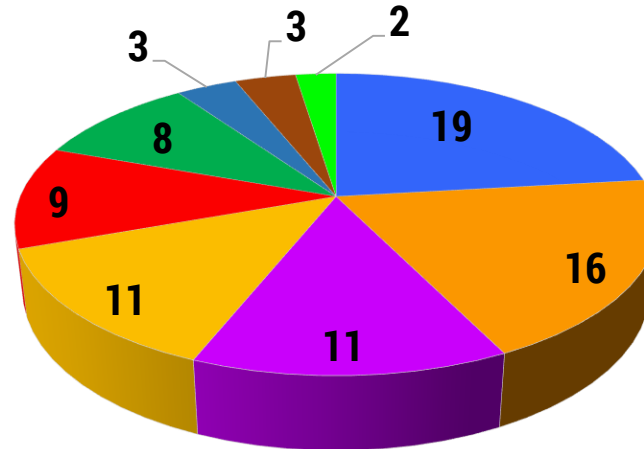


- Big city
- Rural community
- Small city
- Mid-sized city

The numbers represent the amount of participants for each category.

- The majority of participants (55%) live in big cities.

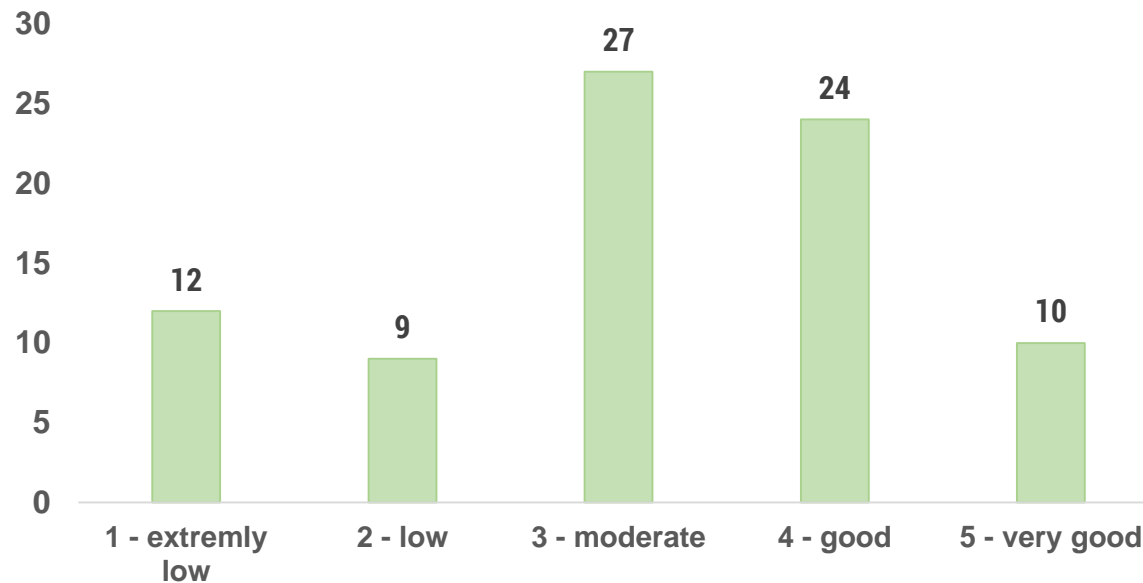
Field of work



- Employee / office activities
- Industry
- Education system
- No information
- Finance & insurance system
- Healthcare
- Data processing
- Retail & Gastronomy
- Farming sector

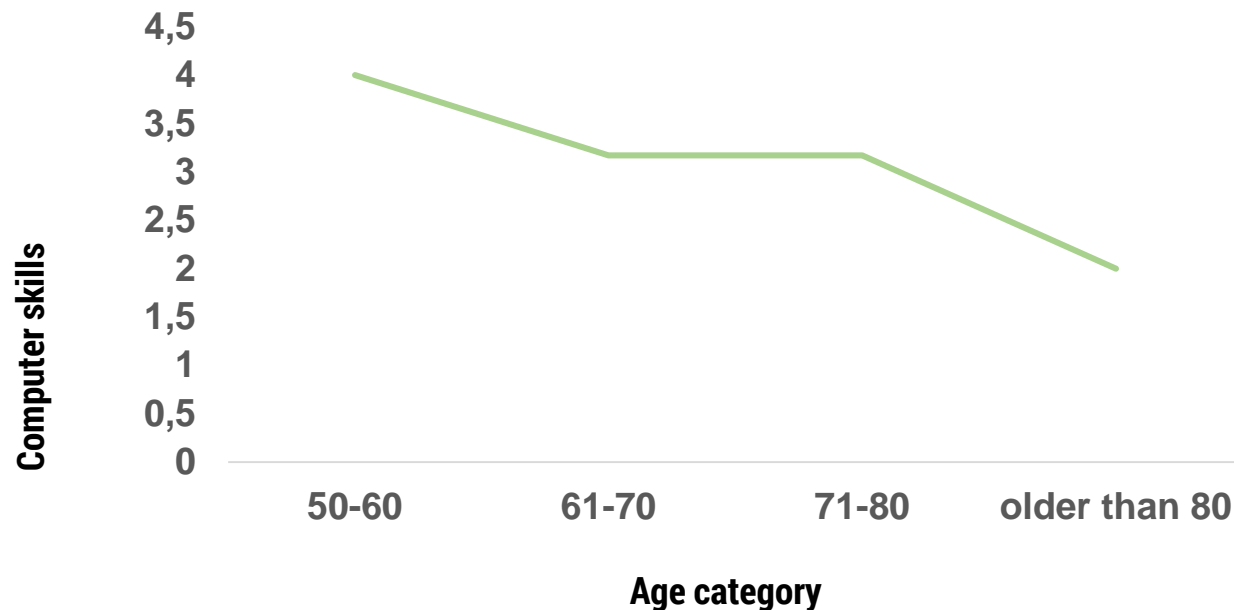
The numbers represent the amount of participants for each category.

How did the participants rate their own computer skills?



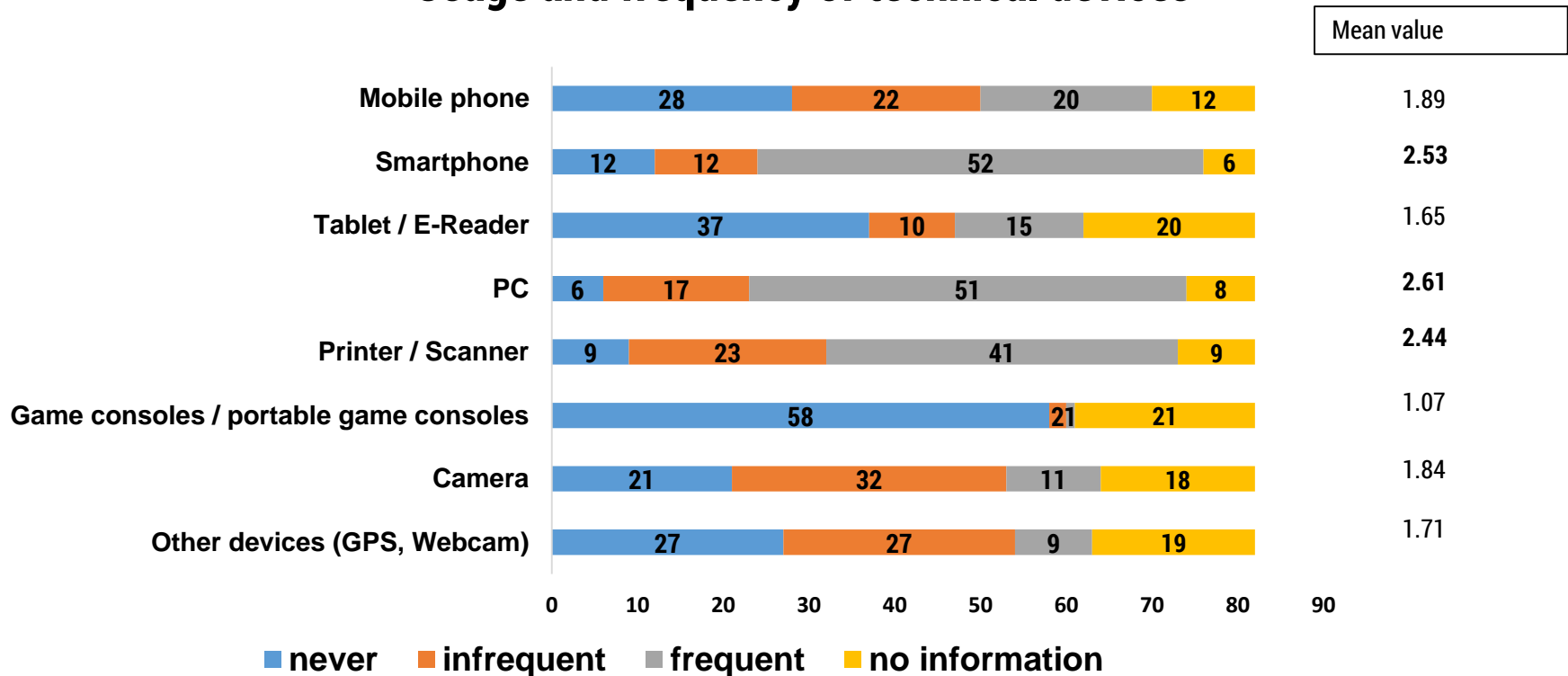
- On average the computer skills were rated as being moderate ($m = 3.3$, $sd = 1.2$).
- The rated computer skills are highly heterogeneous, with a slight tendency towards 'good'.

How did the participants rate their own computer skills?



- The older the participants, the lower they rated their own computer skill.
- Should be interpreted with caution. The lowest and highest age category are underrepresented.

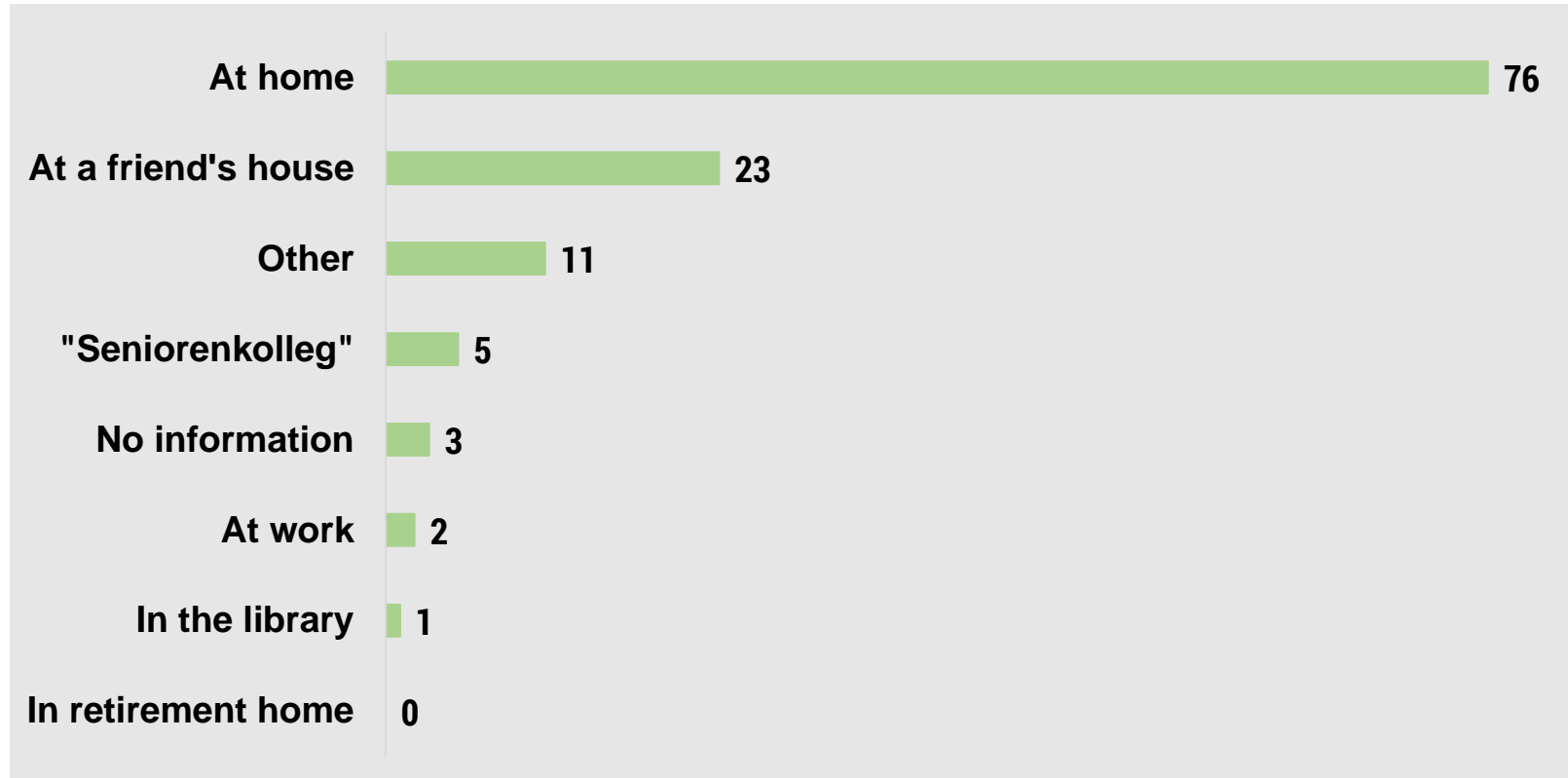
Usage and frequency of technical devices



The numbers reflect the amount of participants for each category.

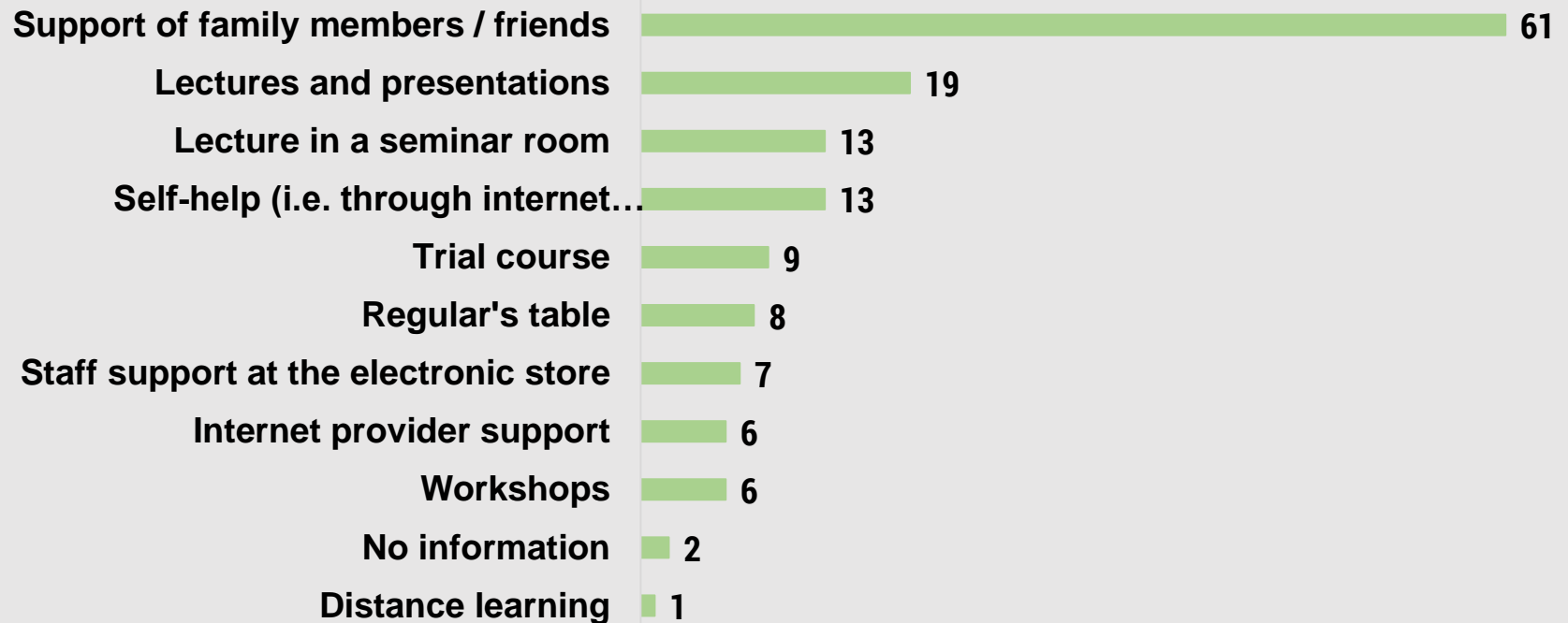
- The mean is calculated from the values: „never = 1, infrequent = 2 and frequent = 3“.
- The most frequently used technical devices were pc, smartphone and printer.

Where do the participants use internet?



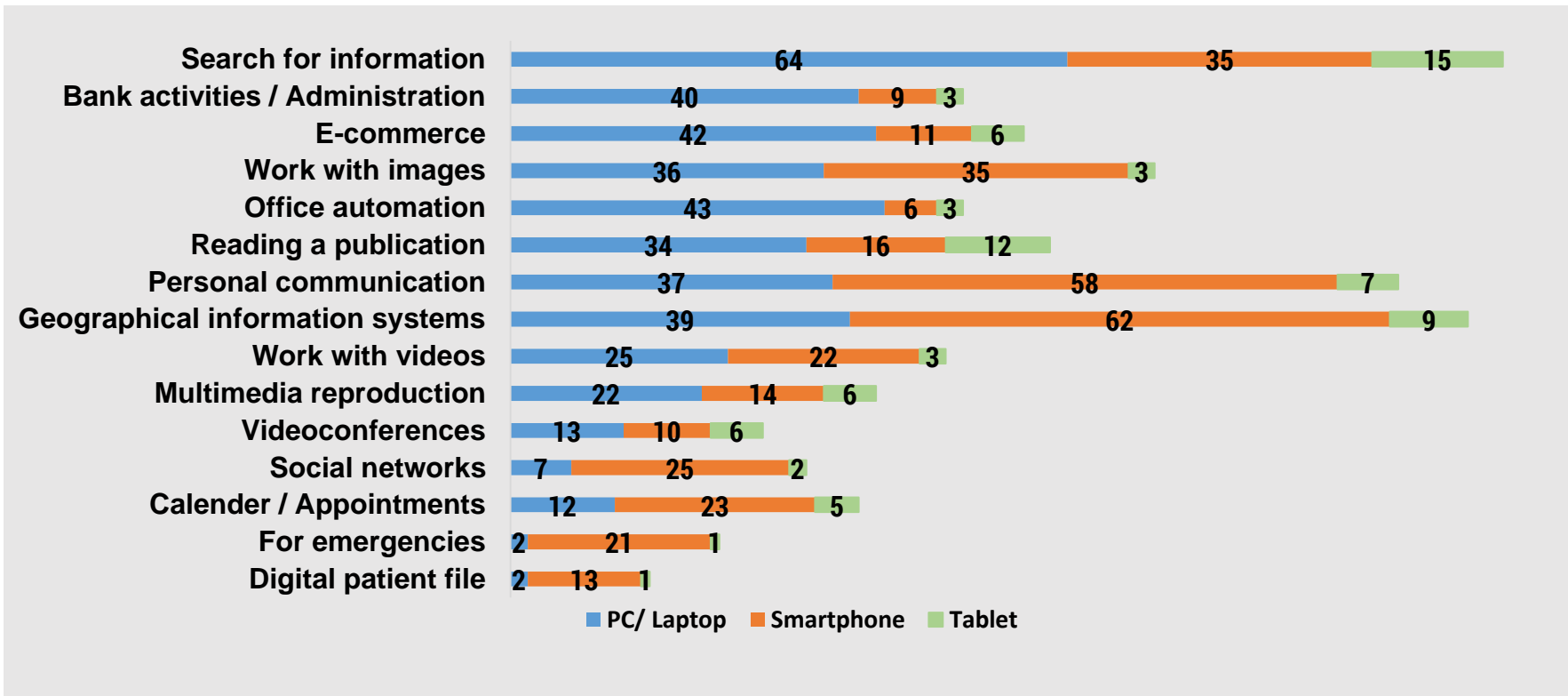
- The participants prefer to use internet at home or at a friend's house.

Which are the preferred methods of learning how to use technology?



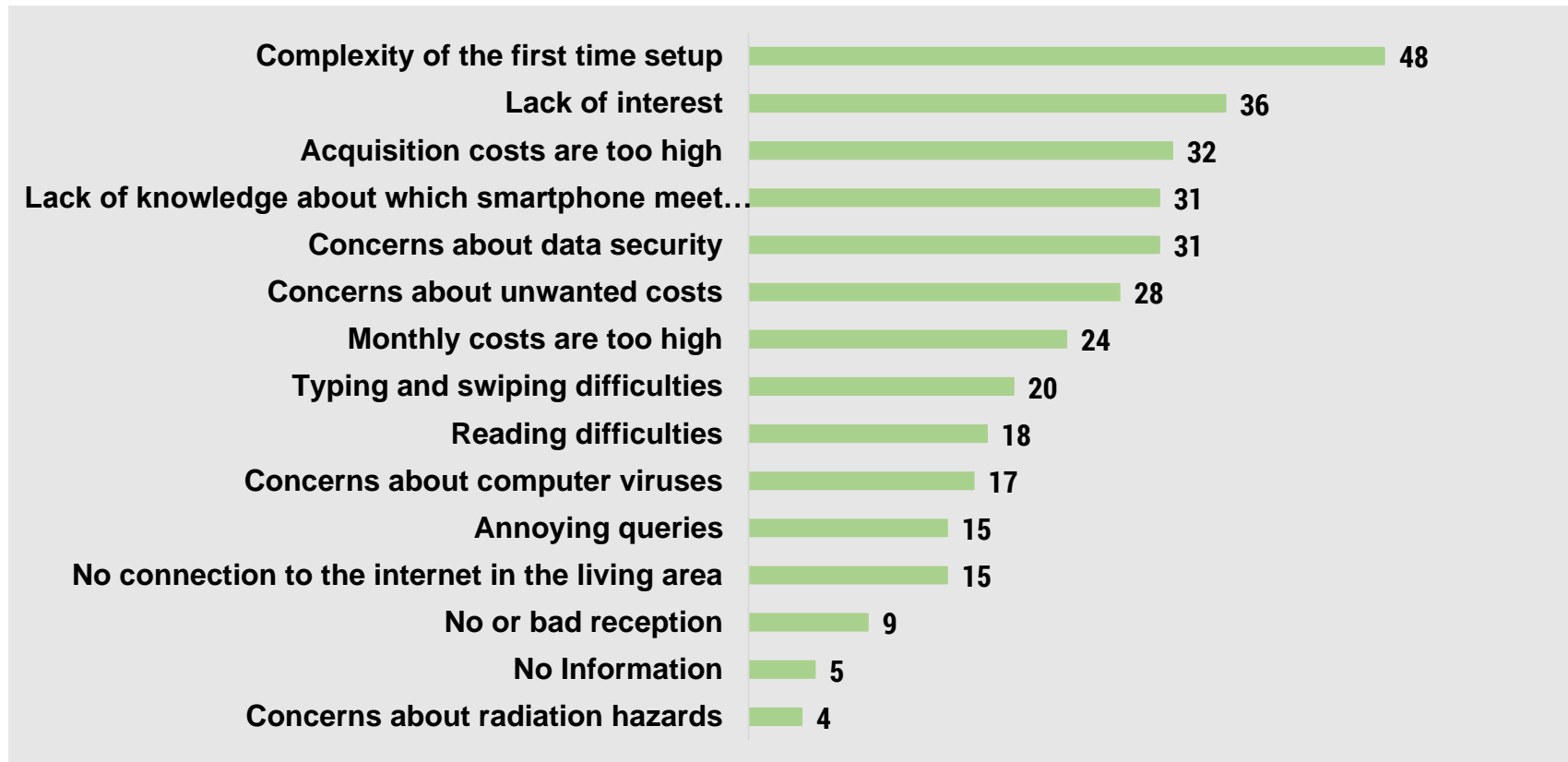
- The majority of the participants prefer the support of family members/ friends.

Which devices are used in which situation?



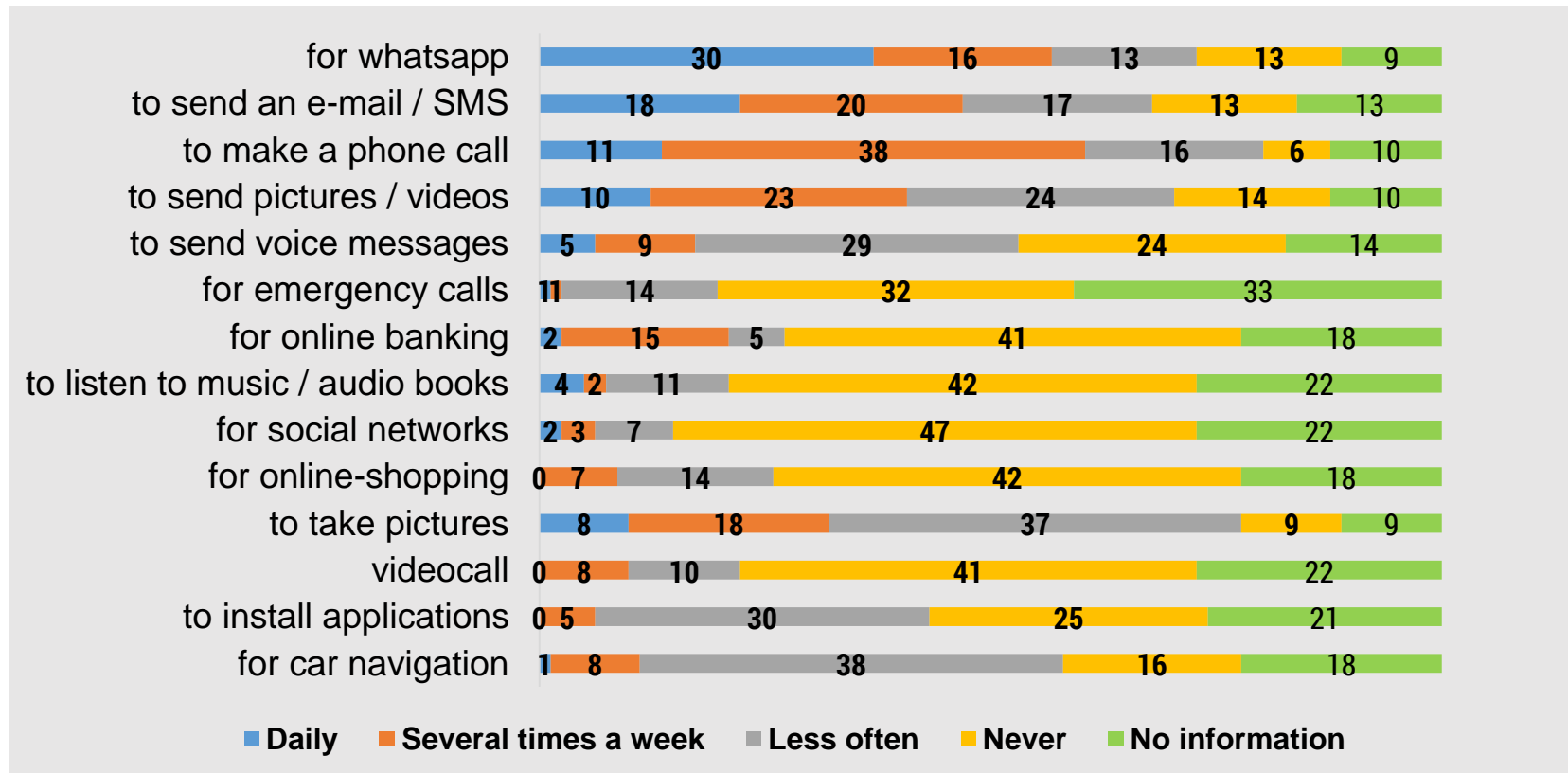
- PC and smartphone are the most preferred devices.
- 28 of the participants reported to use voice command with their technical devices.

Reasons elderly mentioned for the non-use of smartphone



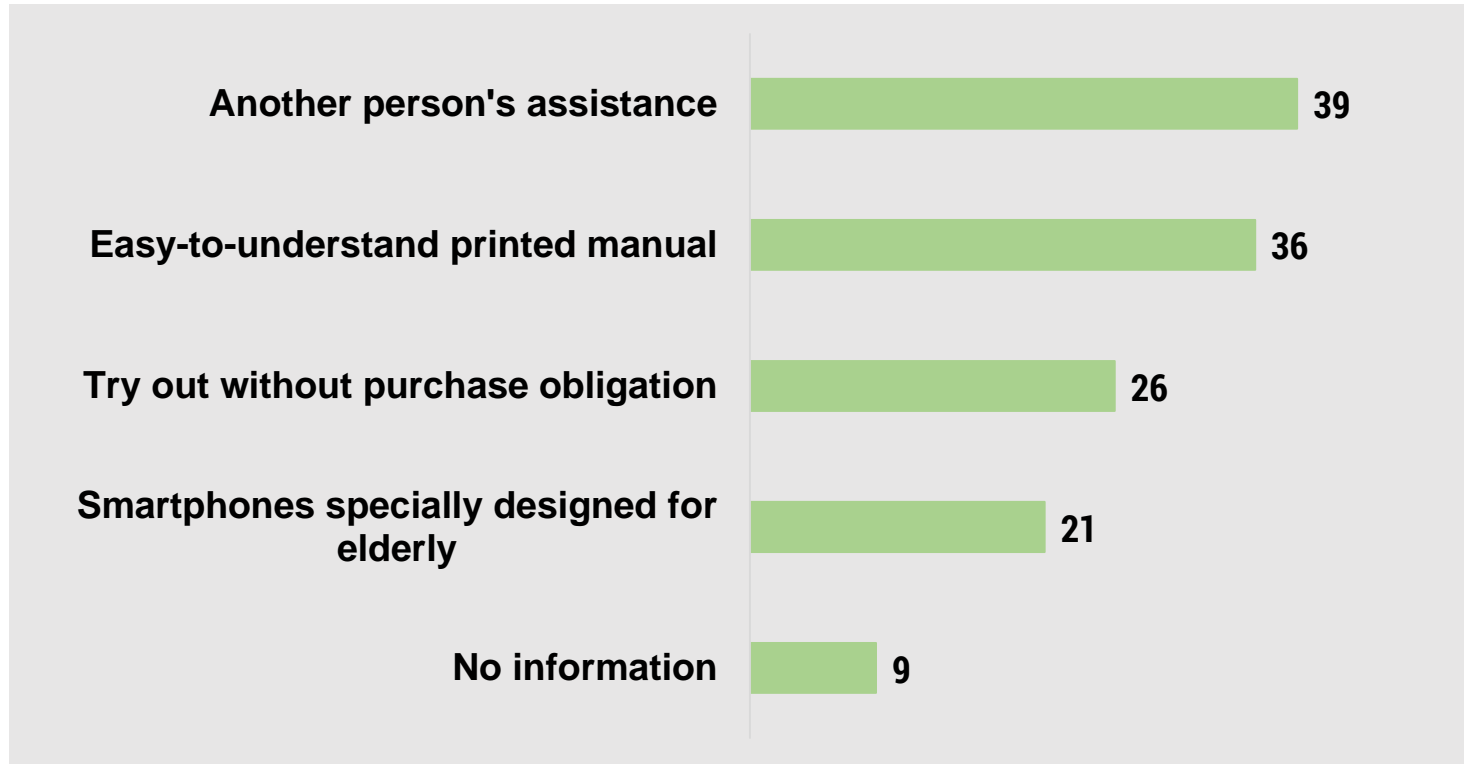
- The main reasons for not using a smartphone are beside complexity, lack of interest, high acquisition costs, lack of knowledge about which smartphone they should purchase and concerns about data privacy.

Purpose and frequency of the smartphone use



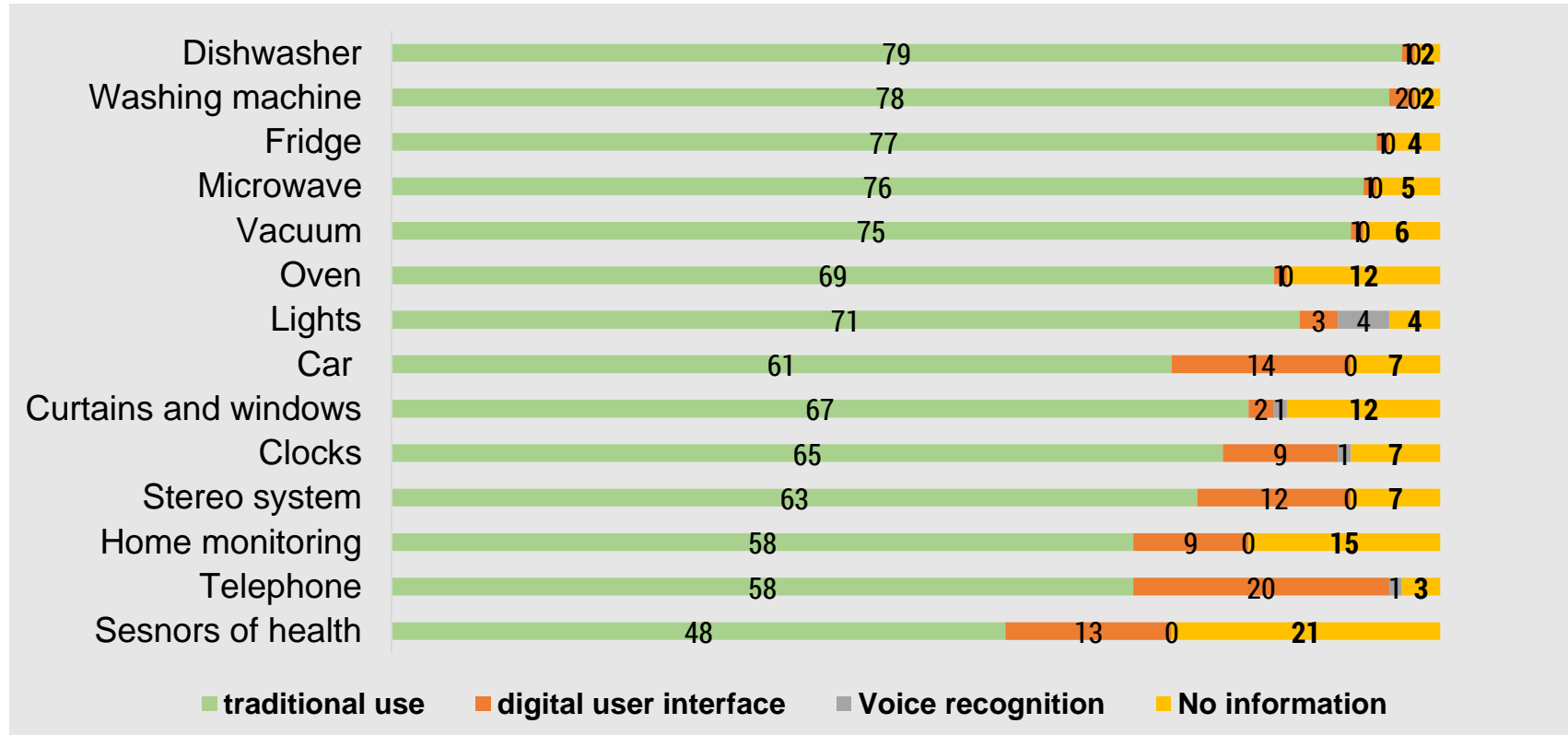
- The smartphone is used especially to contact other people (Whatsapp, E-Mail, make a call).
- The smartphone is less used for online activities (online banking, online shopping).

According to the participants, what could facilitate the use of smartphones?



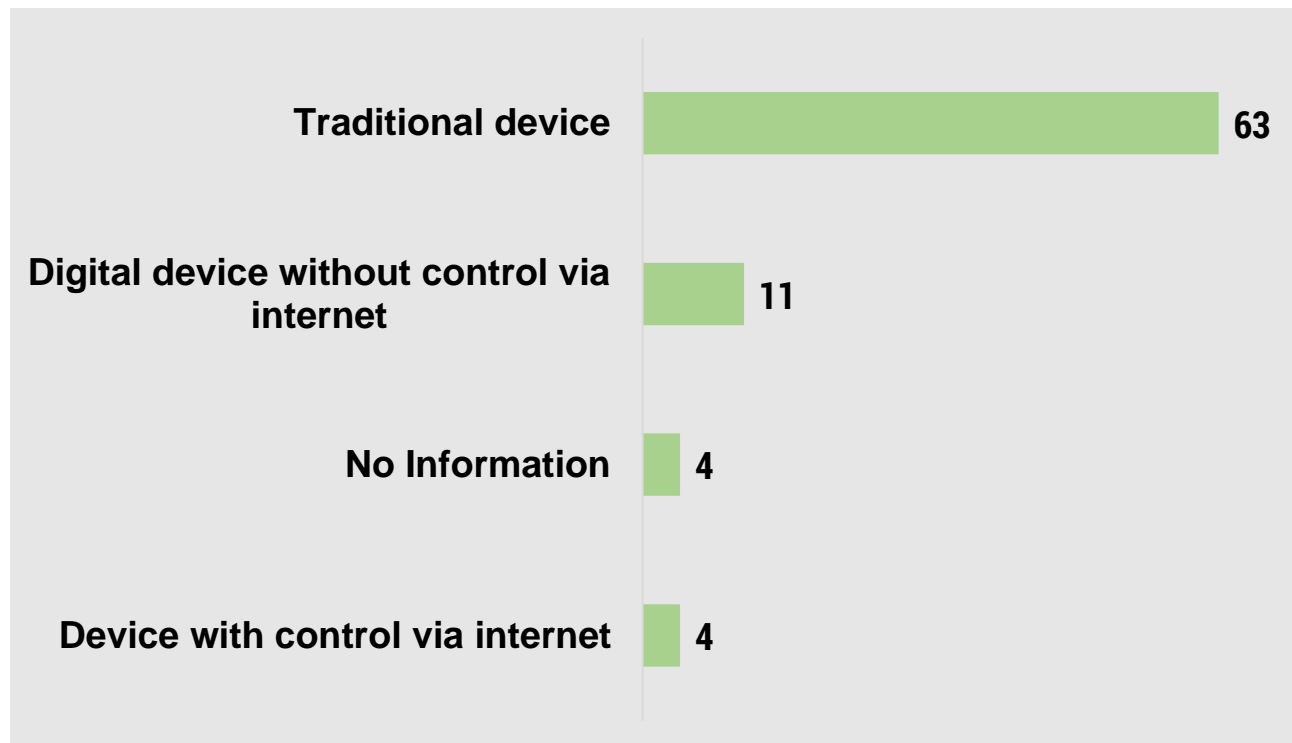
- According to the participants, all four suggestions mentioned would facilitate the use of smartphones.

Which kind of control element do the participants prefer at technical devices?



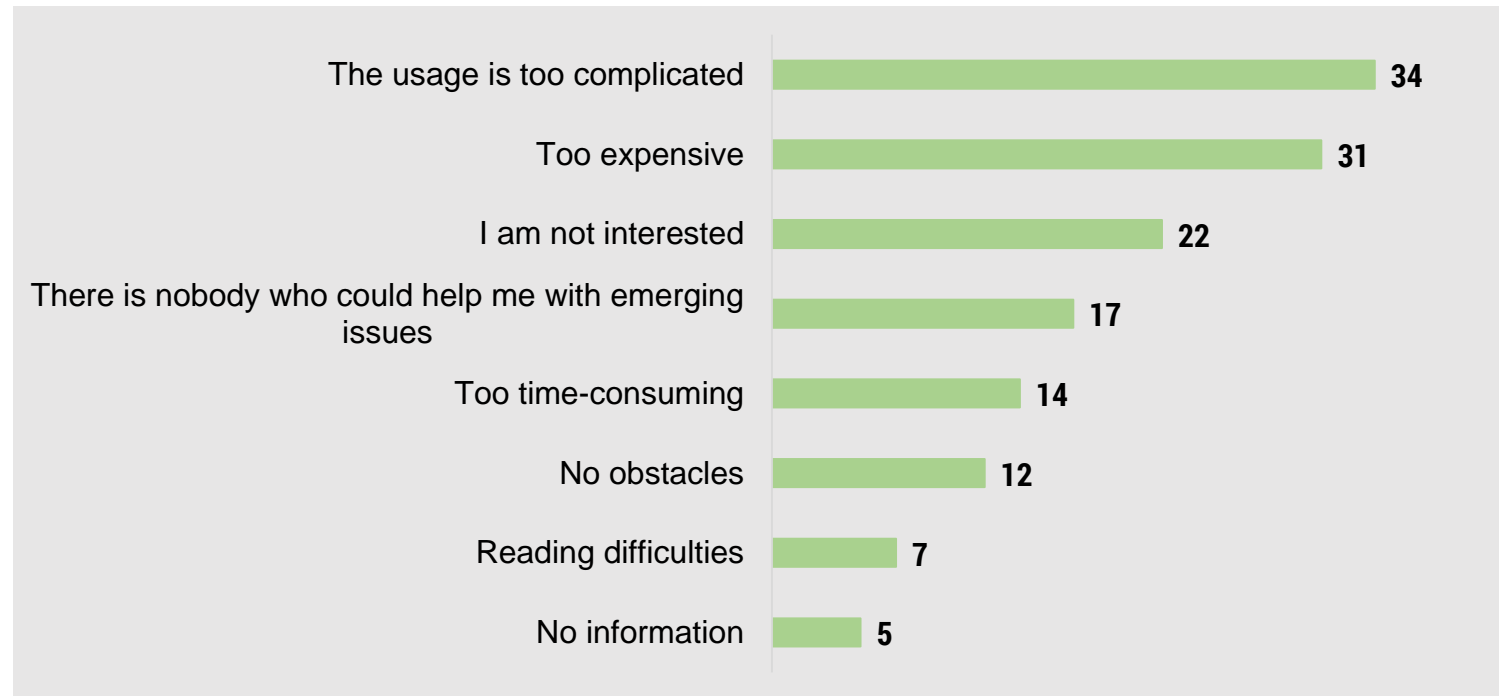
- The vast majority of the participants prefer the traditional control elements (i.e. switch, buttons and steering wheel).

Do the participants prefer a technical device which can be controlled via internet or do they prefer a traditional device?



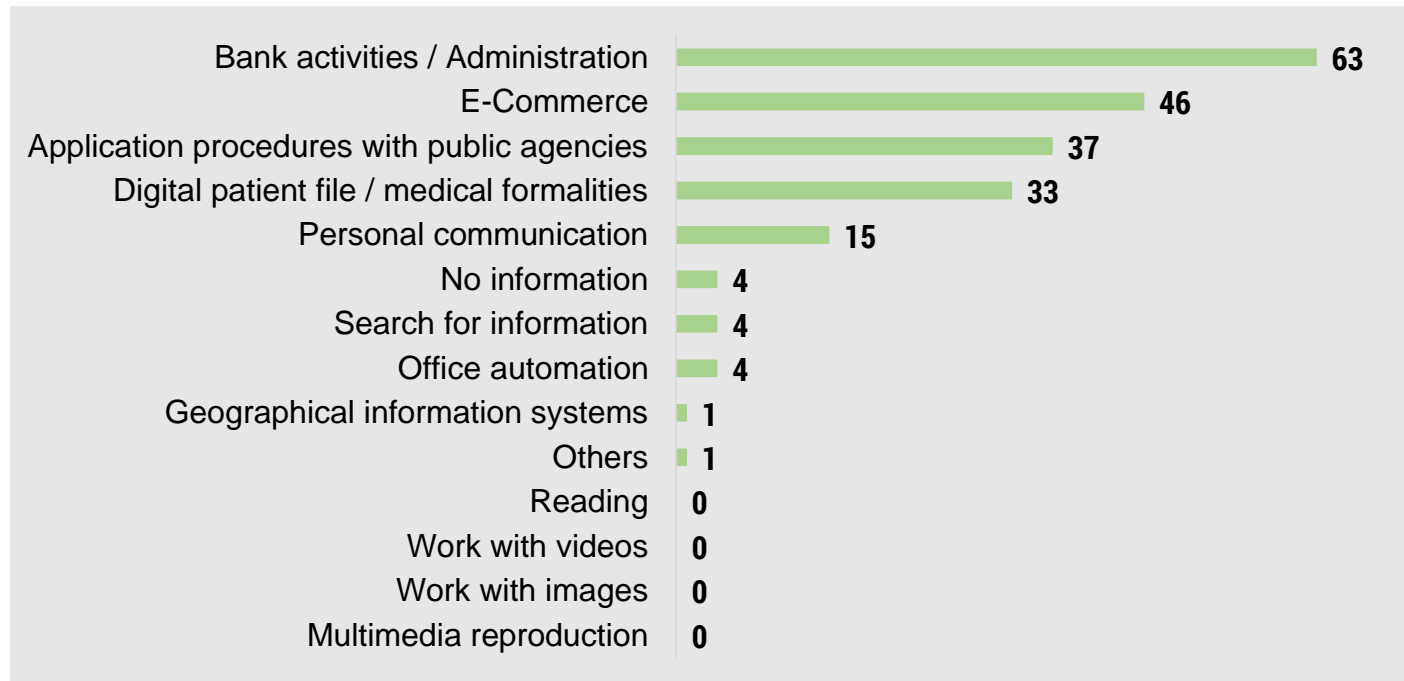
- As reported previously, the vast majority prefers a traditional device.

What are the barriers to digital devices?



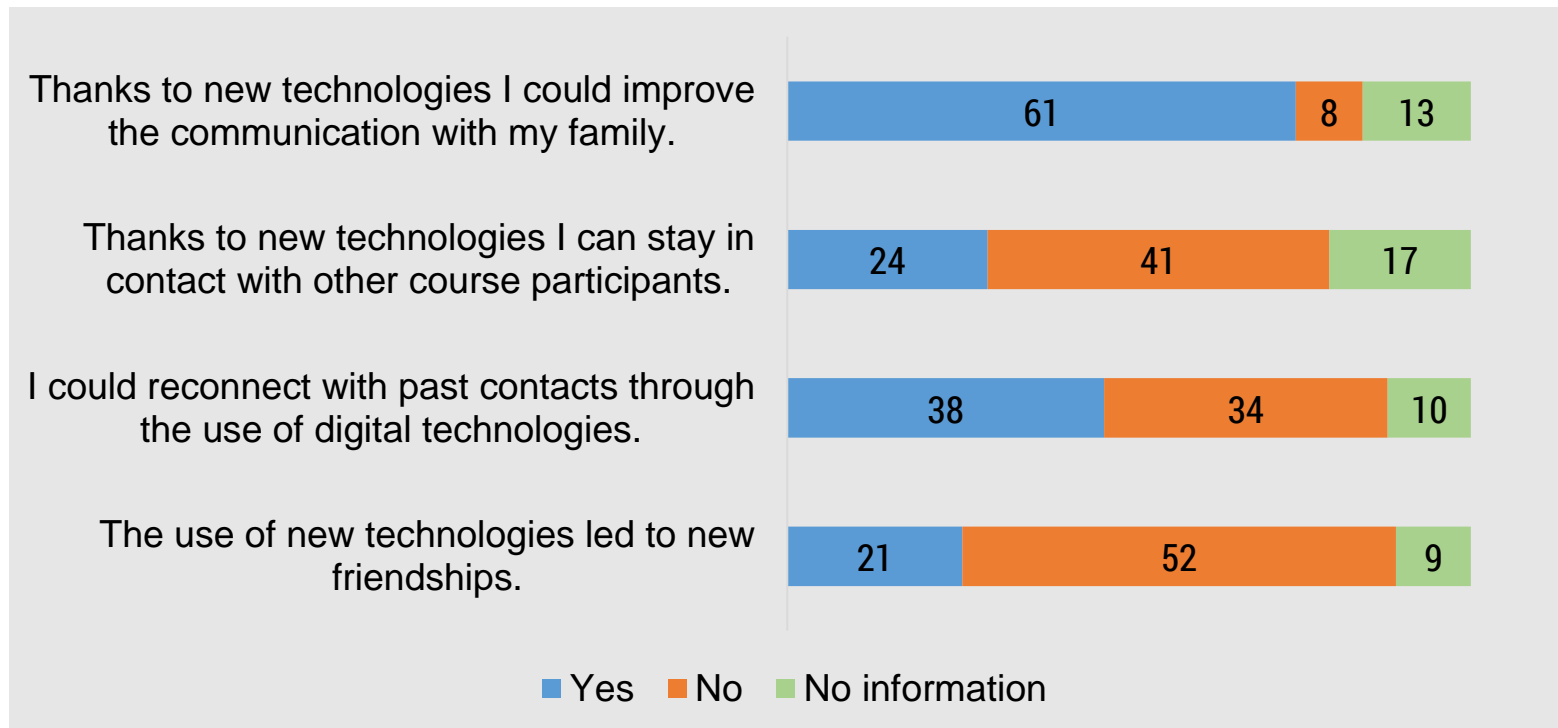
- The participants reported complexity of use and the high price of the technologies, as the two greatest barriers to digital devices.

Which kind of digital technology are they most suspicious of?



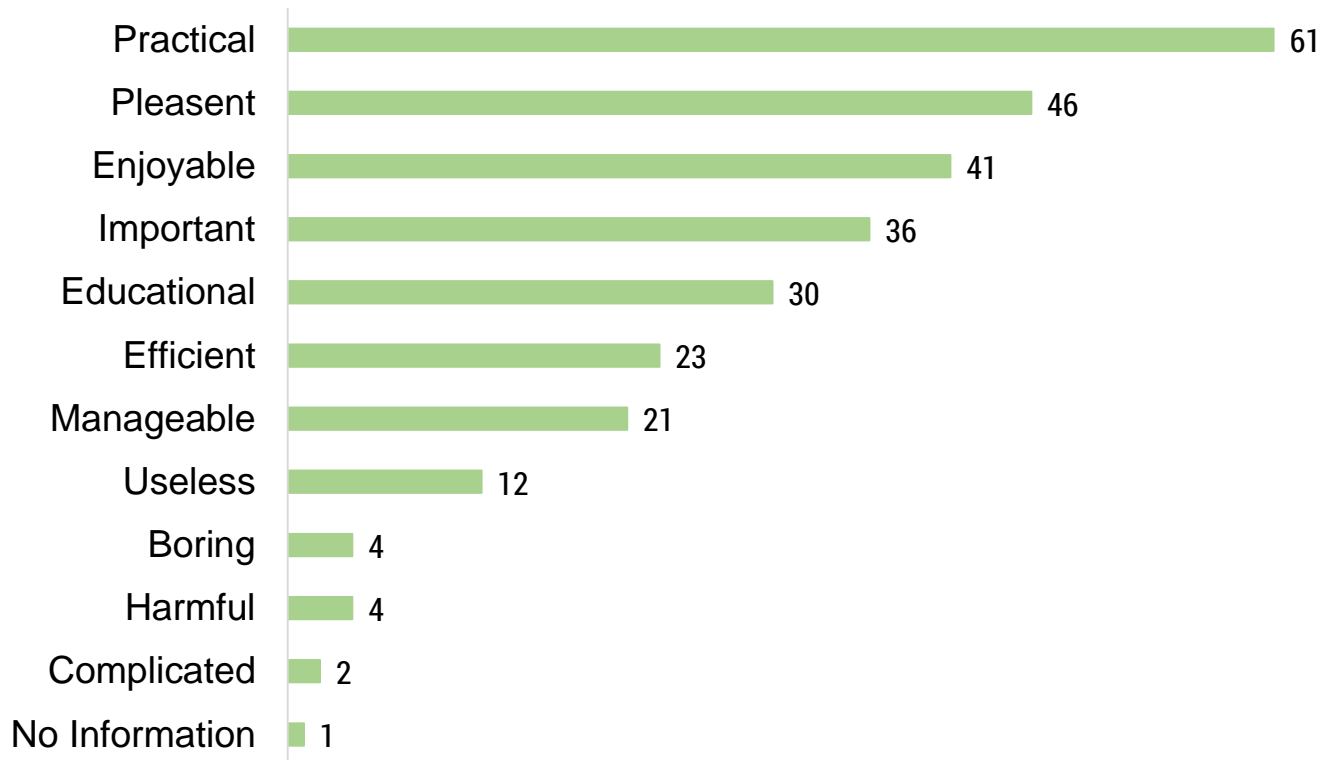
- The participants become most suspicious of online activities (bank activities, e-commerce, digital patient file) involving private data.

Attitudes towards digital technologies



- The participants reported that the digital technologies are helpful in communicating with others.

The participants perceive the use of technical devices as...



- The participants associate mostly positive attributes with the usage of digital technologies.
- All positive attributes were mentioned more often than the negative attributes.

Comments from survey participants on the use of digital technologies (1)

- “Digitization offers excellent opportunities to improve and make life easier, especially for us older people, but it is also associated with dangers. A lot of self-control is necessary to keep usage within normal limits. Too frequent and constant use of digital devices can also become a curse.”
- “Digitization makes things possible that we could only dream of in the past, e.g. in the areas of education, entertainment and making contacts. With intensive use of digital technologies, the non-digital should not be forgotten, e.g. personal relationships between people. Both areas in a balanced relationship to each other!”
- “Digital technologies enable livelier life through virtual togetherness. Previously contacts mainly via landline telephony, now WhatsApp with many options (video telephony; information and photo exchange, voice messages, etc.)”
- “Digitization also makes life easier for us older people. Anyone who has already started using digital devices, e.g. PCs, for professional reasons can deal with them more easily than other older people. Simple, easy-to-use digital devices with legible font size and short versions of operating instructions in simple, easy-to-understand language, technical terms explained, clear pages in legible font size are particularly important for them.”

Comments from survey participants on the use of digital technologies (2)

- “It is impossible to read operating instructions digitally in the device and at the same time perform actions on the device; Printed brief instructions required, use simple terms, technical terms or terms explained in English in an understandable way!”
- “For me, using digital devices means increasing the quality of life, which gives me a wide range of information, communication, entertainment and educational opportunities. Self-discipline is important in order to avoid exaggeration and negative consequences, including for health.”
- “The problem is e-commerce! E-mail addresses and personal data are traded. It's hard to keep up with. It is often not known who passed on data and when.”
- “Many elderly people often only have their mobile phones or smartphones for emergencies and no other use. I use my smartphone for a variety of other applications, e.g. for parcel tracking, games and weather forecasts. Smart TV for multimedia playback is also important to me.”
- “With the rise in branch closures, online banking is becoming an increasingly important way of doing business, although I have security concerns. Also only possible via the hotline. There is a lack of personal contact.”

Comments from survey participants on the use of digital technologies (3)

- “The use of digital devices could be made easier with short operating instructions for the most important functions. Older people are deterred by foreign terms and technical terms, mostly in English. Explanations are urgently required.”
- “Seniors are often unsure when to follow prompts to type (“Do this or that!”). Don't know whether you need it and whether it could have negative consequences for you (viruses, data theft, malware, wrong orders, etc.).”
- “Many older people interested in smartphones only have basic knowledge and can therefore only make limited use of the various offers.”
- “The use of digital technologies is essential for people with disabilities in particular. As a wheelchair user, I can actively participate in many areas of public life. My apartment is well equipped with a wide range of digital devices that are closely networked and enable me to have entertainment, information and contact with other people, e.g. also via video telephony and smart TV for multimedia playback. This is vital for me, especially now in the pandemic time.”