



Personal Tech and the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted many Americans aged 50 and over to break down the generational tech divide. With social distancing came new reasons to participate in video chats and to purchase smart devices, such as TVs, phones, watches, tablets, and home assistants. The ability of **Foresight 50+** to survey this important demographic provides clear evidence that while some Americans aged 50 and over still lack knowledge and confidence with personal tech, many others have made a great leap forward.

The Challenge

In this study, AARP sought information on how the pandemic changed personal tech habits for Americans aged 50 and over.

To gain an accurate picture of this demographic—and not just the tech-savvy ones who volunteer or “opt-in” to take online surveys—they used Foresight 50+, a balanced, standing panel that goes the extra mile to survey all segments of the diverse 50-and-over population.

CASE STUDY

The Findings

70% of 50+ Americans participated in a video chat in 2020, and a third did so weekly. Fewer than half used video chat in 2019.

50+ Americans spent on average \$1,144 on tech, up from \$394 in 2019. (Top three tech purchases: smartphones, smart TVs, and Bluetooth headsets/earbuds.)

More 50+ Americans are logging in to streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu, and Disney+. Just 38% of 50+ Americans say they primarily watched network and cable TV in 2020, a huge decrease from 60% in 2019.

More 50+ Americans are using smart TVs. In 2020, 64% owned a smart TV, compared to 49% in 2019. Even among those 70 and older, more than half now own a smart TV.

Tablets are particularly liked by Americans aged 70 and over, with 53% owning one, up from 40% in 2019.

Methodology

The online and phone survey of 2,807 adults aged 18 and older ($n = 2,271$ adults 50-plus) commissioned by AARP was conducted between September 25 and October 20, 2020, in English and Spanish.

The survey took about 26 minutes to complete and was weighted according to demographics for U.S. adults aged 18+, 50+ and by generation.

Foresight 50+ by NORC and AARP is the first panel of its kind to be developed with AARP, one of the most trusted names among Americans 50 and over.

44%

of Americans aged 50 and over view tech more positively as a way to connect than they did in 2019. Only 5% view it more negatively.

For More Information

A breakdown of the numbers is presented in [this report](#).

To learn more about Foresight 50+, please contact Martha Cowley at Foresight50-bd@norc.org.

Foresight  50+

BY AARP & NORC