

PRESS RELEASE

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Being online can improve the lives of the over 55s and make them feel 'with it', a new survey reveals

Four out of five internet users aged over 55 years (86%) have said that having access to computers and the web has improved their lives, in new research carried out by Digital Unite.

When asked how their lives have been improved, eight out of ten (82%) said that they save money by buying products and services online, 71% said they can do things quicker, like paying bills and well over half (57%) said they were now better in touch with friends and family. Two out of five (44%) said they had found new hobbies and interests and one in five (22%) said they can now keep up with their grandchildren.

Being online can also help to evoke positive feelings of wellbeing. Five out of ten people (54%) that it makes them feel connected and one in six (17%) said it makes them feel happy and 'with it'. One in eight (12%) felt younger by being online. 72% thought that being online can help reduce feelings of isolation and nearly two-thirds (63%) said it can help to reduce feelings of loneliness. 81% of people said being online makes them feel part of modern society.

In separate research conducted by Sky Broadband and YouGov, a snapshot of 'Silver Surfer Britain' illustrates how people in the UK aged over 55 use the internet. One in three British adults in this age group use social networking at least once a week (the West Midlands the most prolific at 46%), 61% read the news online (the South West highest at 74%) and 18% book tickets online at least once a month (with Londoners coming top with 25%).

The research coincides with Digital Unite's national Spring Online with Silver Surfers' Day campaign which takes place this week, 16-20 May. Around 2,000 free digital taster events are taking place across the UK, helping thousands of older people to learn about using computers and the internet. From Pontypridd to Belfast, Aberdeen to Truro, venues include schools, colleges, libraries, UK online centres, cafes, community centres, communal lounges, offices and even pubs. For more information visit www.springonline.org.

Emma Solomon, Managing Director for Digital Unite said: "This survey confirms what we have long suspected; that having access to digital technology and being equipped with the skills to use it, can bring about life transformation and enhance people's health and wellbeing. It is absolutely imperative therefore that everyone has the opportunity to take advantage of digital technology, and at Digital Unite we champion older people's access to and use of it.

"Our Spring Online with Silver Surfers' Day campaign is once again making this aspiration a reality between May 16 and 20th. Thousands of event holders across the UK have once again stepped up to the mark to open their doors and invite local people in to have a go at computers and the internet for free. Each event offers a gentle no-pressure environment with plenty of people on hand to guide each person through the basics. As in previous years, we hope that this year many thousands of people will seek out their local taster sessions and use the opportunity to 'spring online'."

Helen Milner, Managing Director of UK online centres, added: "For many people computers and the internet can be confusing and a little scary, but they can open up new opportunities and even whole new worlds. From keeping in touch with friends and family to saving money or pursuing interests and hobbies, technology can help you do whatever *you* want to do. At a Spring Online event, people can get a helping hand to give computers and the internet a go – for free."

Martha Lane Fox, UK Digital Champion, said: "If everyone in the UK took the time to show an offline family, friend or neighbour the benefits of being online, we'd be very close to enabling millions more people to enjoy life online. You are never too old to get started with the web and Spring Online and Silver Surfers' Day is a great chance for new users to find out more about how the internet can make their lives easier, cheaper and much more fun!"

To find a Spring Online event call free on 0800 77 1234. To find an event online visit www.ukonlinecentres.com and enter your town or postcode in the 'Find a Centre' search box. More details about the campaign are available at www.springonline.org.

Editors' notes

The Digital Unite online survey was conducted by OnePoll on behalf of Digital Unite in April 2011. 526 people aged over 55 years who had been using the internet for 5 years or less were questioned.

Sky Broadband poll conducted by YouGov poll in late 2010 of 1,068 broadband users aged over 55 years (see accompanying infographic):

- Social networking: 34% use social networking sites at least once a week
 - o Highest region: West Midlands 46%
- Buying tickets online: 18% book tickets online at least once a month
 - o Highest region: London 25%
- Reading news online: 61% read the news at least once a week
 - o Highest region: South West 74%
- Paying bills online: 15% pay bills each week
 - o Highest region: Wales 22%
- Shop online: 29% shop online each week
 - o Highest region: North West 35%
- Increased amount of video/TV content watched online over the past year: 22%
 - o Highest region: Scotland 33%

For more survey findings, see attached appendix.

About Spring Online

Despite computers and the internet being an essential part of life for many people, 1 in 5 people aged 55-64 have never got online, and this rises to 3 in 5 of those aged 65+ years* (*Ofcom/ONS). Spring Online with Silver Surfers' Day is designed to get older people learning and using digital technology by supporting local organisations to open their doors and hold free taster events across the UK. Since the campaign's inception in 2002 over 100,000 older people have been engaged with computers through activities such as Wii parties, Hawaiian days and Skype sessions.

Spring Online with Silver Surfers' Day is delivered by Digital Unite in partnership with UK online centres and Race Online 2012. The campaign is also kindly supported by a number of other organisations and Government departments including the Department of Work and Pensions, Department for Communities and Local Government, Cabinet Office, Central Office of Information, Department for Food, Environment and Rural

Affairs, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, NHS Choices, Job Centre Plus, the BBC and We Are What We Do.

About Digital Unite

Digital Unite is one of the UK's main providers of digital skills learning for older and other less confident users. An independent company, it has been established for 15 years and works with everyone from learners to trainers to public businesses and private enterprises. Visit www.digitalunite.com.

About UK online centres

UK online centres provide millions of people with access to technology and support in using it, at 3,500 local centres. They offer free or low cost access to the internet and email, deliver online courses and encourage people to progress onto further learning. Visit www.ukonlinecentres.com.

Contact notes:

For further information on Spring Online and Digital Unite's survey contact Katharine Teed, Communications Manager at Digital Unite on 0800 228 9272 / 07801 138383.

For further information on Sky Broadband, please contact Iago John, Harvard PR sky@harvard.co.uk, 020 7861 2844.

APPENDIX: Additional survey findings

- 9 out of 10 people (89%) said they are someone who is willing to try something new.
- Just over half of men (51%) found new hobbies and interests by being online compared with 41% of women.
- Keeping up with the grandchildren by being online was particularly important to those aged 71-75 years (31%), compared to 17% of those aged 55-60 years.
- Nearly 1 in 5 women (19%) said that being online made them feel 'with it' compared to 13% of men.
- 2 out of 5 people (40%) went online more than once a day. This rises to 3 out of 5 (60%) among those aged 66-70 years.
- Two-thirds (68%) of those aged 76 years and over were helped to get online by their children and were less likely to help themselves, with only 10% doing so compared to the national average of 22%.
- Nearly two thirds (61%) do not actively use social networking sites. Of the 29% who do, Facebook is the most popular site (47%). Those aged 55-60 years used social networking sites the most (46%).
- 7 out of 10 (73%) know someone who is aged over 55 years and is not using computers and the internet. The main reasons cited for this were fear of technology (62%), don't see the need (53%), no access to a computer (52%) and worried about their details being online (38%).