

Views and experiences of informal carers of older adults on the use of technology in the home



*Research project led by Aston University and funded by the Ministry of
Housing, Communities, and Local Government in England*

[Link to online questionnaire: www.egrist.org/ldf-informal-carers](http://www.egrist.org/ldf-informal-carers)

1 Introduction

Aston University invites you to take part in a research project funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

All the information you provide is entirely anonymous and no stored information can be traced back to you.

Before you decide if you would like to participate, please read the information about the questionnaire carefully, which you are welcome to discuss with others.

If there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information before you make your decision, feel free to contact one of the researchers whose details are given in Section 1.6.

1.1 What is this research about?

This research is aimed at people aged 18 or over who are currently informal carers of one or more older adults. By 'informal carer' we mean any person, such as a family member, friend or neighbour who provides regular, ongoing unpaid help to a person without which the person they support could not manage. By older adult we mean anyone aged 55 or over.

We are interested in your views and experience of using technology at home. This is to help identify opportunities where technology might enhance the quality of life for informal carers and promote the independence of the people they care for.

'Technology' is a general term that covers a range of electronic devices and systems that help people perform tasks that they would otherwise be unable to do, or increases the ease and safety with which the task can be performed. Computers and the internet are examples of technology.

This research involves completing a questionnaire which includes questions about the care you provide; the type of technologies, if any, that you use; and your views on the use of technology to help older adults with care needs to be as independent as possible. The questionnaire should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire is completely anonymous. It does not include any questions that can identify you.

Your involvement in this research is voluntary. Whether or not you take part in the study will NOT affect any services or support that you or the person you care for may receive.

1.2 How the results will be used

We will use your views and those of other informal carers to write a report which will be available to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Local Digital Fund and interested councils. The results may also be used for further research and analysis and published in scientific journals or conference proceedings. If the results of the study are published, they will not be able to identify you because we do not store any personal data about you. This means we are unable to provide you with copies of reports but they will be made accessible from the questionnaire website.

The aim of the report is to help councils and other care providers to identify where technology might be able to enhance the quality of life and promote the independence of people living at home with care needs.

1.3 Who is leading the study?

Aston University is the lead organisation for this study and is responsible for looking after the data.

1.4 Who has reviewed the study?

The study was given a favourable ethical opinion by the Aston University Research Ethics Committee.

1.5 What if I have a concern about my participation in the study?

If you have any concerns, please speak to the research team identified below and they will do their best to answer your questions.

If the research team are unable to address your concerns or you wish to make a complaint about how the study is being conducted you should contact the Aston University Director of Governance, Mr. John Walter, j.g.walter@aston.ac.uk or telephone 0121 204 4869.

1.6 Research team contacts

If you would like to discuss this research with someone, please contact:

Dr Christopher Buckingham: Email, c.d.buckingham@aston.ac.uk; Tel, 0121 204 3450.

Dr Lilit Hakobyan: Email, l.hakobyan2@aston.ac.uk; Tel, 0121 204 3000.

Thank you for taking time to read this information and for completing the questionnaire if that is what you choose to do.

2 Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

2. What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 - 74
- 75 - 84
- 85+

3. What is your ethnic group?

- White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- White - Any other White background (write in) _____
- Mixed/multiple ethnic groups
- Asian/Asian British
- Black African/Caribbean/Black British
- Other ethnic group

Please state:

- Prefer not to say

4. Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer Not to Say

5. If yes, do any of these conditions or illnesses affect you in any of the following areas? (Select all that apply)

- Vision (e.g. blindness or partial sight)
- Hearing (e.g. deafness or partial hearing)
- Mobility (e.g. walking short distances or climbing stairs)
- Dexterity (e.g. lifting and carrying and carrying objects, using a keyboard)
- Learning or understanding or concentrating
- Memory
- Mental Health (e.g. depression, anxiety)
- Stamina or breathing or fatigue
- Socially or behaviourally (e.g. associated with autism, attention deficit disorder or Aspergers syndrome)
- Other

Please state:

6. What is the highest level of educational qualifications for which you received a certificate?

- No qualifications
- Certificates normally passed by the age of 16 (e.g. O level, CSE, GCSE)
- Certificates normally passed at the age of 18 (e.g. A level, BTEC, VCE)
- Higher education certificates (e.g. from a university, polytechnic, or other equivalent institution)

7. Which of the following applies to you? (Select all that apply)

- Retired
- Employed/Self-employed Full Time
- Employed/Self-employed Part Time (working 30 hours or less)
- Doing Voluntary Work
- Not in Paid Work

8. Where do you live?

- City/Suburb
- Town
- Village
- Rural or remote from other houses

9. Who do you live with (select all that apply)?

- Nobody (I live alone)
- Spouse/partner
- Other family members/relatives
- Friends/non-relatives
- Paid caregiver
- Someone under the age of 18

ABOUT THE OLDER ADULT(S) YOU CARE FOR

10. For how many older adults do you provide informal care?

- None
- One
- Two
- Three or more

11. Where does the older adult(s) you care for usually live? (Select all that apply)

- With me
- Somewhere else

12. As far as you are aware, do any of the older adults you care for use any of the following technology at home (select all that apply)?

- Desktop or laptop computer
- Tablet computer (wireless touch screen personal computer that is smaller than a notebook but larger than a smartphone).
- Smart television (one connected to the internet and allowing you to interact with services)
- Motion sensors (sensors that monitor activity e.g. door/bed sensors, Just Checking etc)
- Personal emergency alarm (e.g. Telecare, Careline pendant etc)
- Smart phone/iPhone (i.e. a mobile phone with a touch screen display)
- Voice-activated virtual assistant (e.g. Amazon Echo and Alexa)
- Wearable fitness trackers (i.e. devices you wear to track your health and fitness)
- They don't use any of the above

YOUR CARING ROLE

13. On average, how many hours of informal care do you provide in a week?

- 0-9 hours
- 10-19 hours
- 20-29 hours
- 30-39 hours

- 40 hours or more

14. What kinds of assistance do you provide to the older adult(s) you care for? (Select all that apply)

- Getting up/going to bed
- Washing/bathing
- Dressing/undressing
- Using the toilet
- Preparing meals/snacks/drinks
- Eating
- Drinking
- Taking medication
- Reminders/prompts to take medication, to eat or to drink
- Laundry
- Cleaning/tidying around the home
- Shopping
- Helping with the paperwork such as dealing with bills, filling in forms, writing letters etc
- Keeping the person company / providing emotional support
- Taking them out e.g. to shops, bank, social events etc
- Other

Please state:

15. Do you have concerns about the safety of the adult(s) you care for*

- I have no concerns about their safety
- I have some concerns about their safety
- I have many concerns about their safety
- I am always concerned about their safety

**If you have concerns, please raise with the appropriate care service.*

YOUR HEALTH

16. How would you describe your health status?

- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Very poor

17. Do you ever feel lonely?

- I never feel lonely
- I sometimes feel lonely
- I often feel lonely
- I always feel lonely

18. What support, that you do not already receive, would make the greatest difference to your quality of life as an informal carer? (Please identify up to a maximum of 3 things you would like help with)

(a)

(b)

(c)

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

19. Do you use any of the following technology in your own home (select all that apply)?

- Desktop or laptop computer
- Tablet computer (wireless touch screen personal computer that is smaller than a notebook but larger than a smartphone)
- Smart television (one connected to the internet and allowing you to interact with services)
- Motion sensors (sensors that monitor activity e.g. door/bed sensors, Just Checking etc)
- Personal emergency alarm (e.g. Telecare, Careline pendant etc)
- Smart phone/iPhone (i.e. a mobile phone with a touch screen display)
- Voice-activated virtual assistant (e.g. Amazon Echo and Alexa)
- Wearable fitness trackers (i.e. devices you wear to track your health and fitness)
- I don't use any of the above

20. How would you describe your general level of technical knowledge?

- I can understand pretty well any information technology
- I am confident that I will be able to use most technology
- I have reasonable knowledge and can do things like sending emails, interacting with social media, using packages for creating documents and spreadsheets, etc.
- I know a bit but am only really able to do basic things like search the web and buy things online
- I don't know anything about technology

21. What would be your view if technology was available that could help you with your caring role?

- I would definitely be interested in this
- I would possibly be interested in this, depending on what the technology was and how it worked
- I would definitely not be interested in this

*The following questions relate to the **use of digital technology** in home care (any computers, monitoring devices, the web and internet, etc). For each one, select the box equating to how useful it would be to you as a carer.*

22. Technology that helps with finding information and advice online

- Very useful Quite useful Not useful

23. Systems that monitor the health status/signs of cared-for adults

- Very useful Quite useful Not useful

24. Sensors that detect motion/activity of cared-for adults (e.g. door/bed sensors, room movement monitors)

- Very useful Quite useful Not useful

25. Systems that provide alerts when a cared-for adult has a problem at home (e.g. falls over)

- Very useful Quite useful Not useful

26. Devices that prompt cared for adults to take medication, food or drink

- Very useful Quite useful Not useful

27. Equipment that helps carers with moving/handling situations

- Very useful Quite useful Not useful

28. Technology that connects carers with other carers

- Very useful Quite useful Not useful

29. Another form of technology not listed that you would find quite or very useful

Please state:

30. What, if anything, would prevent you from using technology at home that could help you with your caring role?

Please state:

31. What, if anything, would encourage you to use technology at home to help with your caring role?

Please state:

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer our questionnaire. If you would like to provide us with any additional information or comments, please email one of the researchers whose details are at the start of the questionnaire or add it below.

Any other comments: