

Technology and older adults, new studies, but no news

By Laurie Orlov | March 2, 2015

The more studies emerge, the less news there is. Rant on. You probably have read it in [university study](#) after [university study](#). You probably read those milestone surveys from AARP, [Healthy@Home in 2008](#) and [Healthy@Home 2.0 in 2011](#). Maybe you read the [Linkage Study from 2012](#). All of those studies report the same thing in one way or the other: Seniors would like to benefit from technology to help them manage their health and stay longer in their own homes. They listen to news and echo the buzzwords, they worry about costs. But do interest and willingness make a thriving market? However, you will be reassured that large consulting firms and banker studies agree:

Older adults want to use technology to manage their health. Accenture issued a press release today that promised to be startling. Oh well, not really. “The survey showed that seniors who place a higher priority on technology are more likely to proactively manage their health. For example, most seniors (75 percent) who value technology are active in tracking their weight digitally, compared to 43 percent of those who do not. Similarly, half of tech-savvy seniors are actively monitoring their cholesterol, compared to 31 percent of those who do not value technology.” Although the overall study involved 10,730 responders aged 65+ from multiple countries, the US participation included 354 U.S. seniors (ages 65+) receiving Medicare benefits, assessing their perceptions. The survey was fielded between May and June 2014. What do they want? See **Figure**:

Age Wave and Merrill Lynch – people are free to live where they want. In [Home in Retirement: More Freedom, New Choices](#), Bank of America’s Merrill Lynch and Ken Dychtwald’s Age Wave partnered to survey another crowd, including older adults age 65+. This is hopefully the very last study that refers to anyone (in this case 749 responders aged 69-89) as the ‘Silent Generation’, please. I bet they’re not that silent. Of the 65+, 81% reported they are homeowners. 72% of these homeowners have no mortgage. [Really?? This is substantially more than a [2011 AARP Public Policy report](#).] Do you wonder, is this is the last generation for which either of those statements can be true? Not so surprising, according to the Age Wave study, by the time people are 61 (the so-called ‘freedom’ age) and while they are pre-retirees, they’ve made a decision about where they want to live and they’re happy with their choice.

What tech do folks want? How about that cleaning robot and heated driveway? In addition, “many retirees are also interested in new technologies that can make their homes more convenient, connected, secure, and easier to maintain. For instance, 80 percent are interested in innovative ways of reducing their home expenses, such as smart thermostats or apps to control appliances, while 58 percent are interested in technologies to help maintain their home, such as cleaning robots or heated driveways.” Really? If there’s a power glitch, the lights don’t come on, can’t be overridden by hand, the garage door doesn’t shut (or open), and the [remote control for the oven](#)? Forget about it.

Who buys this stuff? Let's just say it – seniors aren't going to buy what the Merrill Lynch responders say they're going to consider. On the other hand, for media visibility, tech reporters [under the age of 40](#) are absolutely known to buy things – like [learning thermostats](#) and the latest non-Android smartphones. Perhaps they will buy an app to [control their appliances](#) (hopefully with a positive outcome!). [Geeky websites attract cleaning robot fans](#) of a device that does [particularly well in an empty room](#) so that it doesn't get stuck under an end table or rocket down the stairs. **Rant off.**

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