

Seniors and New Technologies in France

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1. General introduction: Social demographic analysis of the French senior population

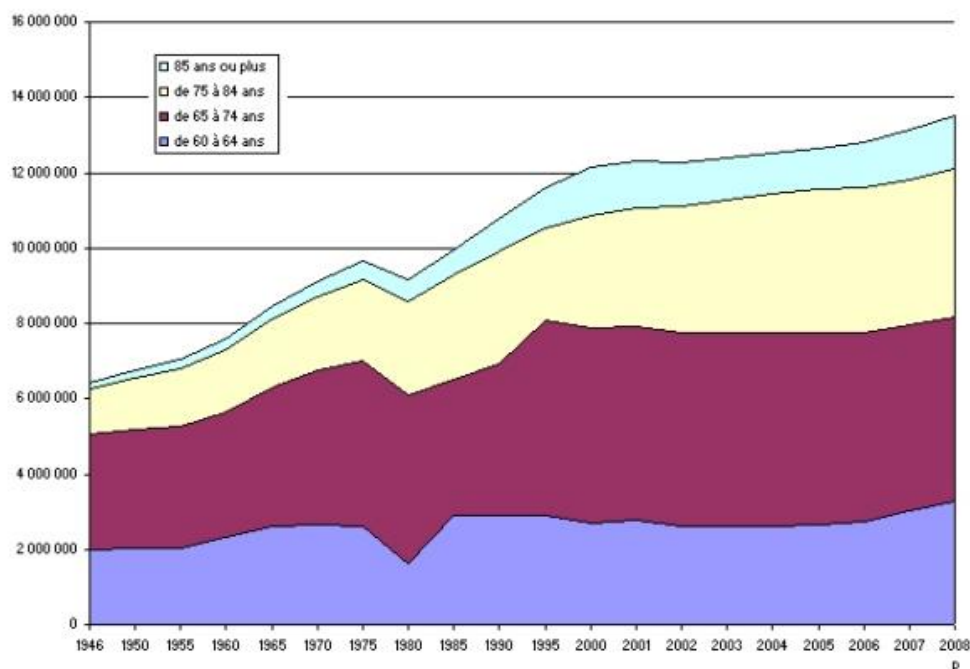
Senior population in France

On 1 January 2016, France had 66.6 million inhabitants. With the extension of life expectancy and the advancing age of the baby boom generations, the aging of the French population continues. **Population aged 65 and over represents 18.8% of the population, an increase of 3.7 percentage points over 20 years.** The increase is 2.8 percentage points over the same period for residents aged 75 and over, who represent nearly one in ten residents as of January 1, 2016¹. It is forecast that by 2050, 1 in every 3 person will be aged 60 and more (in comparison with one every 5 persons in 2005). As demonstrated by the graphic below the growth of the population aged 65 to 74 and 75 to 84 years-old is rapid.

Chart 1 – Evolution of the number of aged persons in France (Insee, 1946-2008)

Evolution du nombre de personnes âgées en France

Sources : www.insee.fr



¹ <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/1906664?sommaire=1906743>

Senior activity in France

Employment

The employment rate of seniors varies greatly according to their age, decreasing rapidly after the age of 54, at which 90% of men and 80% of women are active. At age 59, 50% of French seniors leave the labour market, although most of them didn't reach the legal retirement age yet. By the age of 60, only 30% are active and by the age of 63% the rate plumbs to 14%. Labour market retention also varies according to occupation and status. Thus, between 60 and 64 years old, there were almost 40% of active seniors among the self-employed, executives, higher intellectual professions and public service, compared with 20% of employees in SMEs and 20% employees in the private sector (DARES, 2011).²

Retirement and pensions

According to a study published by DREES in 2017³, 16 million people were receiving a direct pension under French pension plans in 2015. Compared to the numbers in 2014, 1% increase in this population was observed.

Retirees thus represent almost 24% of the French population and have never been more numerous. If the number of people benefiting from the reversion pension is added, there are 17 million pensioners in France in all schemes combined.

These retirees receive a monthly gross pension that is in average 1,376€ (+0.7% compared to 2014), which gives an average of 1283€ a month in net. The pension amount of the retirees is revalorized with the inflation rate, which explains the annual increase in the average pension rates.

There are inequalities of the average pension rate between men and women, which can be explained by the fact women tend to have shorter careers (i.e. less contribution years) than men. According to the DREES, the women's average pension was 39.2% lower than for men in 2015.

Furthermore, regional disparities exist; in the Parisian urban region the average retirement pension is 23% higher than the national average, which can be explained by the more qualified jobs and better salaries than elsewhere in the country.

² http://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/DE164_Emploi_seniors-280911.pdf

³ <http://drees.solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/etudes-et-statistiques/publications/panoramas-de-la-drees/article/les-retraites-et-les-retraites-edition-2017>

Associative activities and intergenerational relations

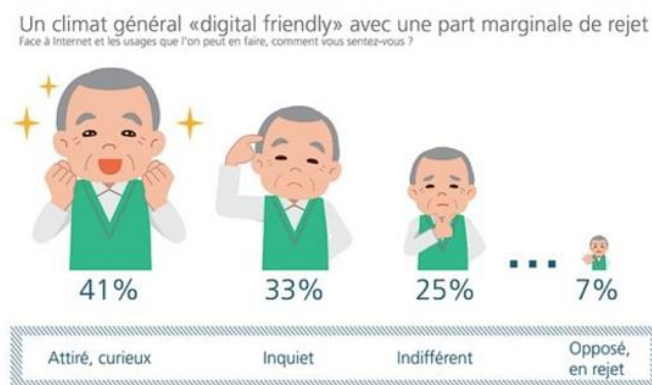
In France, there are in total 1,3 million associations, animated by 13 million volunteers and specialising in the most diverse domains such as for example housing, sports, education, health, migration and social inclusion. 35% of volunteers are seniors. In a 2013 survey by TNS Sofres⁴, 14% of surveyed persons declared that they are part of an association working with intergenerational cooperation. There is nevertheless a difference in the type of intergenerational activities practiced according to the age: according to the TNS Sofres survey, younger persons (less than 35 years-old) are mostly attracted to knowledge exchange, knowledge transfer and education while older persons (more than 50 years old) are mostly focusing on social activities and communication with their close circle (family and neighbours).

2. Seniors and ICTs: use of technology and main obstacles and barriers to use technology for older persons in France

A digital friendly society

Overall, France is a digital friendly society. In the figure below, the sentiment of French people towards ICTs is measured. 41% of people aged 60 and plus are curious and attracted to new technologies, 33% have some doubts and express concern, 25% are indifferent and only 7% reject it.

Figure 1 Cogedim Barometer 2016 ⁵



Seniors and digital challenges

⁴ <https://www.silvereco.fr/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Interg%C3%A9n%C3%A9rationnel-TNS-Sofres-Silver-Economie.pdf>

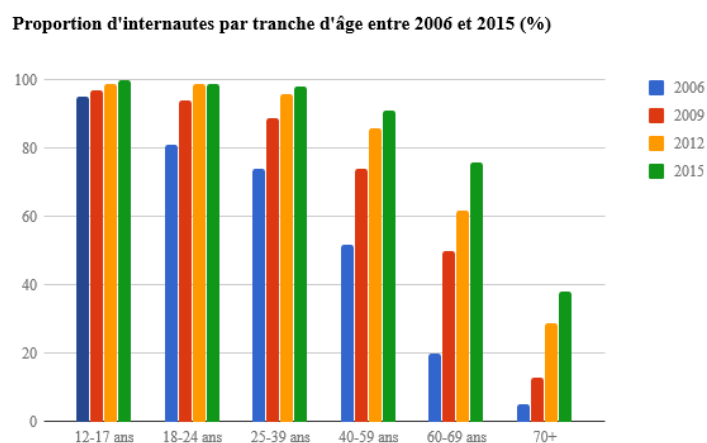
⁵ <https://www.blogdumoderateur.com/seniors-digital-connexion/>

A survey realized in 2017 by the CREDOC⁶ (French research center for study and observation of living conditions) presents the use of technologies by people living in France. Even if the use of digital tools among older people is growing incrementally, **there is still a gap between youngest and oldest**. Indeed, this target group hasn't grown up with new technologies for communication unlike young people that are used to handle and to adapt to those new tools. The study highlights that more than **40% of the people aged over 70 years old have never learnt how to use new technologies**. For that matter, the lack of knowledge and competences along with the perception that new technologies are expensive and the impression that they are not adapted to seniors are among the main obstacles preventing seniors to use ICTs and to learn more about digital tools.

Increasing usage and awareness of digital opportunities

Nevertheless, in our modern digital societies, these obstacles are being overcome and seniors are using more and more digital tools. As shown below, **the most rapid growth of internet users between 2006 and 2015 was the one of the age categories 60-69 and 70+** (Digital Barometer 2015)

Chart 2 – proportion of internet user by age category between 2006 and 2015 (%) ⁷



Source : tableau page 53 du Baromètre du Numérique (2015) – graphique interactif –

⁶ https://www.arcep.fr/uploads/tx_gspublication/barometre_du_numerique-2017-271117.pdf

⁷ observatoire-des-seniors.com/barometre-du-numerique-2015-les-usages-dinternet-par-tranches-dage/

That being said, some tools are preferred over others. **The CREDOC study (2017) confirms that people over the age of 60 are more comfortable with a computer than a Smartphone or a tablet.** This is the age range that uses the most computers in comparison with the youngest. Older people are mostly used to **look at their emails or surf the web, go on social networks, read the news or consult the weather forecast.** Moreover, 46% of seniors aged 60+ has the habit of buying online.

Furthermore, the use of mobile phones or Smartphones remains strongly linked to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. For instance, youngest people surf the web very often or almost every day unlike this practice is decreasing with age. **Only one third of the people aged between 60 and 69 years old and 16% of people over 70 are browsing the web through a mobile phone or a Smartphone.** When the respondents were asked about their skill level on digital tools, **40% of the 60-69 age group considered themselves as competent. This share drops by 20% for people over 70.** It is precisely this age group that uses more fixed-line than mobile.

Finally, for people aged over 60 and that are used to handling digital tools; they are mainly using them for **Internet, e-administration and social networks.** Indeed, **58% of the 60-69 age group has completed administrative procedures** in the last twelve months and **30% of the people aged over 70.** Even if the ratio is lower than for the youngest people, the CREDOC study points out an increase over the years. **The use of social networks is also growing among people over 60 years old** (35% among 60-69 age group in the last twelve months). Since 2013, their sense of competence is consequently increasing over the years and the gap with other age groups is decreasing.

3. Solutions and best practices existing for seniors

Faced with the challenges of promoting active ageing and forming seniors to IT competences, the solutions and best practice developed in France rely on **participative methods promoted by public entities, associations and even private organisations.** More specifically, initiatives are very often embedded in the local web of social relations and social resources.

Initiatives promoted by public bodies

Public bodies and local administration have spotted the problems of internet and ICT usage among seniors and have been actively fighting against the digital generational gap. Some city halls such as the one of Paris or the city of Sceaux in the Ile de France region have put into place workshops and classes to allow seniors to develop their competences in the usage of computers, tablets, Smartphones and dedicated apps. These initiatives are closely linked with healthy and active ageing policies. Notably, during tax declaration campaigns, specific services are dedicated to welcoming seniors and helping them fill out their tax declarations online. Indeed, from 2019, the only available tool for tax declaration will be the online tool. Senior citizens being directly affected by such change, public bodies are enhancing their support services.

Initiatives promoted by associations

Associations are also central elements in field of senior digital education and initiatives keep developing. In the framework of this research we underline two of them, Emmaus Connect and Astroliens.

Emmaus connect is the digital branch of the association Emmaus which works more widely with social integration. Convinced that digital technology offers a unique opportunity to increase its integration capacities, Emmaus Connect has been working since 2013 to ensure that digital technology also benefits those who need it most: people in precarious situations.

Being a grassroots association, Emmaus Connect answers as closely as possible to the needs of socially excluded persons and those of the professionals who accompany them. The association designs educational resources, offers workshops to learn about key digital services and enables free access to IT materials and connection. It is also developing services (assessment tools, mapping, and training) for social actors and public service operators to enable them to better adapt to the digital society.

Astroliens is a smaller association offering intergenerational support to seniors who wish to learn more about ICTs. The organisation pairs young students (18 -25 years old) with seniors. The classes take place at the residence of the senior and are free as the young teachers are volunteers. The sessions are scheduled once a week during a month. The pair can renovate for one extra month, after that the senior can continue the programme but will be put in contact

with another volunteer. The association Astroliens is in charge of recruiting volunteers, training them to teach seniors digital skills, pairing them with seniors and mediating their relations.

Initiatives promoted by private organisation

Further initiatives are put into place by private entities. Following the same model as Astroliens, **Geekzie** puts into contact technical university students that wish to give IT classes and seniors. Classes take place at the residence of the senior and the student is paid a reasonable amount. Long term relations are stimulated and family members and seniors' entourage can offer them Geekzie classes.

One last initiative, Espace ***Idees Bien Chez Moi***, developed by a health and pension fund, focuses on **educating seniors about domotics and new technologies that can improve healthy and active ageing** as well as compensating physical impairments thus allowing them to live independently at home as long as possible. Such issue is crucial in European societies which are experiencing the demographic changes of an ageing population and the constant pressure on social and health expenditures as well as a possible shortage in public health services for seniors.

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