MEDIA USERS OVER THE AGE OF 65 IN SERBIA

Research team

OSCE Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Mission to Serbia

Content

Key findings

All respondents

95.8% watch TV

57.2% daily
29.4% often

The most watched TV channels among older adults are RTS (23.6%) and Pink (23%).

The most watched programs are films and series (20.3%) and news (15.9%).

Women: Pink (26.4%), RTS (22.7%) and Television Prva (16.8%)
Men: RTS (25%), Pink (18.3%) and Happy (15.9%)

Women: films and series (25.9%), news programs (16.2%) and studio entertainment shows (16%)
Men: news programs (25%), political shows (20.2%) and films and series (12.5%)

35.8% listen to the radio

45.2% of men
29.1% of women

The most listened to radio stations are local (36.4%) and Radio Belgrade 1 (23.8%).

29.1% read the daily press

42.3% of men
19.7% of women

The most read daily newspapers are Večernje Novosti (29.7%), followed by Informer and Kurir with 14.4% each

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32.3% read the weekly press
52% do not read at all (neither the daily nor weekly press nor books)
41% neither read, nor listen to the radio

34.3% read books
58% of women
43% of men

0.03% neither follow traditional media nor use the Internet
0.08% follow all traditional media and use the Internet

Mostly men, younger, from the urban areas, in better health, who trust experts the most

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38% just watch TV of all traditional media

26% just watch TV and don't use the Internet

60% follow media because they have the most content they like
15% follow the media to better understand the topics they are interested in
13.9% say the media keeps them company

61.5% of women
57.7% of men
26.2% of men
8.5% of women
18.4% of women
7.7% of men

28.4% trust experts in the media

32.1% of men

25.6% of women

42.3% post-secondary and higher
education
29.9% secondary education
22.8% primary and lower education

20.4% trust journalists

26.1% of women
12.5% of men

23.5% from rural areas
18.8% from urban areas

28.5% primary and lower education
19.4% secondary education
10.3% post-secondary and higher
education

14.4% trust politicians

17.9% of men
12% of women

16.3% primary and lower education
15.4% post-secondary and higher
education
12.9% secondary education

Internet users

49.8% use the Internet

96.5% access using mobile phone
41.5% using desktop computers

71.3% of non-users are not interested or
have no need for the Internet

51.8% of men
34.2% of women

12% use a laptop

18.1% of men
7.7% of women

8.5% use smart TV

14.5% of men
4.3% of women

0% with primary and lower education use
desktop computers, laptops, tablets or
smart TV

**39.3% use the Internet for private
communications.**
26.8% for search/browsing
95% use Viber
75% YouTube
47% WhatsApp
33% Facebook
32.55% e-mails
10% Instagram
7.5% Twitter
6.5% Telegram

42.5% play games

Women are more likely to use Facebook
and Instagram.

Introduction

Serbia belongs to the category of demographically old countries whose population has been declining in recent decades[1]. According to the official data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter: SORS), older adults make up 21.3% of the total population of Serbia[2]. According to their *Statistical Yearbook* for 2022, the percentage of over-65s increased from 17.3% in 2011 to 21.3% in 2021 (Gavrilović, 2022: 25). The same source indicates that the most illiterate persons are in this age category, and women predominate among them.

In both literature and strategic documents, it is often stated that older adults are among those who are most at risk of social exclusion. According to the *Report on Digital Inclusion*, the most important indicators of the digital divide in Serbia are poverty, living in rural areas, old age and social exclusion (Stojiljković Rolović, 2021:8). In rural areas, the standard of living is significantly lower than in urban areas. Actually, the same document reports, citing data from 2018, that the absolute poverty rate is twice as high in rural areas (10.5%) as in urban areas (4.9%)[3]. Additionally, women over the age of 65 are at greater risk of digital exclusion than men, and this is especially true for women living in the countryside, having low incomes and low levels of education. The report also notes that the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications supported 27 projects in 2020, in addition to 22 in 2021, based on a public tender, aiming to increase the digital competencies of women from rural areas. However, there is no precise data on how many women aged 65+ were included in those projects[4] (Stojiljković Rolović, 2021).

All of these socio-demographic characteristics are important for understanding this population as media users. It is often found in the literature and official documents that the digital skills of the elderly population are at a low level. The *Strategy for Digital Skills Development in the*

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[1] https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/serbia-population
[2] Population by age groups, absolute value and share in the total population, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, available at: https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/180107?languageCode=en-US
[3] According to the Project for the Construction of Broadband Communication Infrastructure in Rural Areas, around 80,000 households in 500 rural settlements should receive broadband infrastructure for high-speed Internet by the end of 2023.
[4] Older women were also included in the Government and the line ministry programmes for women's empowerment in the field of ICT for the period 2019-2020.

Republic of Serbia for the period 2020-2024 indicates that the low level of education of the elderly population makes it difficult to master the skills needed to navigate the digital sphere (Strategy, p. 9).

In terms of media usage, this population is without a doubt the most loyal television audience. According to the *Report on Television Viewership Trends, 2012 -2021* of the Center for Public Opinion, Program and Audience Reserch Radio Television of Serbija, television viewing among the 60+ population has increased in the last two years. This was particularly triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the fact that the majority of television viewers are over 60 years of age (44.4%), this audience consists mainly of women (53.9%) from urban areas (58.7%) with high school degrees (56.7%) and predominantly from central Serbia (51.1%). In the previous year, the most watched television channels among the 60+ population were TV Happy (70.20%), TV Pink (55.3%) and RTS 1 (50.2%), (Josifović, 2022). Although not nationally representative, independent research supports these findings: for example, a representative sample of New Belgrade seniors, over 65s spend the majority of their free time watching TV – as many as 93% of respondents spend their free time watching television programs. No age or gender differences were observed. The only difference is notable in the category of household income – those whose income is below the poverty line watch television below average, while all the others do it in an almost identical percentage (Satarić and Perišić, 2017).

Glued to the TV screens, this population is often excluded from the digital space, or rather not encouraged to join it. This is underpinned by the fact that over the last two decades, the greatest efforts have been invested in developing digital skills and competencies of children and youth, their parents and teachers, as well as the working population so that they would become active participants in the digital transformation process. In strategic documents, the older adults are often mentioned in strategic documents along with other marginalized social groups as those who should be afforded special attention. In recent years, our country has invested in the development of e-services and utilities that facilitate the completion of administrative tasks, scheduling, procurement or reducing waiting times. However, a survey conducted by Todorović and associates shows that these digital services are used by less than 10% of Internet users in this age group (Todorović et al., 2019: 42). The findings indicate as the major obstacle the fact that the elderly and their needs were not considered in process of designing digital solutions. Although they could greatly benefit from them, technologies are often not simply

and easily accessible to older adults (Stojiljković Rolović, 2021: 53). They are not "*senior-friendly*", because they do not take into account the sensory, psychomotor, cognitive and physical characteristics of ageing. It is also important to keep in mind the social context, which does not solely refer to infrastructure and institutional capabilities. Namely, dominant perceptions of ageing (which often result in self-perception of being an outsider in the digital space), lack of social interactions and support also play a part, and effectively reduce internal motivation for getting acquainted with technological novelties and the benefits of mastering new skills (Bozek et al., 2022).

The latest SORS survey emphasizes that in Serbia, 55% of the population aged 65-74 never used a computer, and 46.5% of them never used the Internet (Kovačević et al., 2022). Among the oldest population, gender differences play a more significant role when it comes to the use of technology. The report from the previous year indicates that, compared to older women, older men more frequently use computers (51% of men, 37.4% of women), the Internet (55.8% of men, 49.9% of women) and mobile phones (89.7% of men, 84.9% of women), (Kovacević et al., 2021). This is the reason why one of the central issues in *the Gender Equality Index* is focused on raising the digital skills of older and less educated women (Babović and Petrović, 2021: 91)[5].

This research project follows the goal of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021-2030, to improve the lives of the older adults[6]. Among other issues, it tackles combating stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination about ageing and the elderly, as well as their inclusion in digital transformation and well-being in the digital environment. The project is also in compliance with the Action Plan of the Strategy for the Development of the Public Information System in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2020 – 2025 (hereinafter: Media Strategy), adopted by the Ministry of Culture and Information, in particular Chapter 5, which refers to the promotion of media literacy of all citizens of Serbia. The results of this research project will also contribute to the Action Plan of the Digital Skills Development Strategy,

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[5] Among other things, this document highlights, that 30% of all informal caregivers in Serbia who provide unpaid care to family members or those in need are pensioners. While technology could provide support in their day-to-day work, the largest percentage of informal caregivers do not use assertive technologies, such as video surveillance. More than half of them think it would be of great help to be able to rely on them. Another important support that digital devices can provide them is access to the Internet and social networks which can play an important role in reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation to both unpaid caregivers and the elderly they take care of (Babović and Petrović, 2021: 89-90).

[6] https://www.decadeofhealthyageing.org/about/about-us/what-is-the-decade

adopted by the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications, in the part related to the improvement of digital skills of all citizens (Special Goal 2 of the Strategy). Improving digital skills is part of the European Union's Digital Decade 2021-2030[7] aimed at a sustainable and more prosperous, human-centred digital future. In the European Pillar of Social Rights adopted in 2017 by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament[8], several principles guide and support a more equitable approach towards the older adults when it comes to media and digital technologies. These principles apply to education, training and lifelong learning (Principle 1[9]), equal opportunities (Principle 3[10]) and access to essential services (Principle 20[11]).

The goal of the research

This research aims to examine how older adults use traditional and digital media and whether there is any significant connection between the use of both. Most surveys so far have observed this population as just one of the age categories or have focused on a particular type of media. However, taking a closer look at the data, these surveys actually identify at least two subgroups of this media audience: those who primarily use traditional media and those who use both traditional and digital media. In addition to attempting to encompass both types of media and starting from the assumption of heterogeneity of the population over the age of 65, the idea behind the research was to explore traditional and digital media practices together, where possible, to better understand the usage patterns among the population of older adults. This research does not provide answers to all questions, but it opens the way to a more integrated study of a large and heterogeneous population of media users that often eludes audience surveys.

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[7] https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/europes-digital-decade-digital-targets-2030_en

[8] https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

[9] "Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire the skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market."

[10] "Regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, everyone has the right to equal treatment and opportunities regarding employment, social protection, education and access to goods and services available to the public. Equal opportunities for under-represented groups shall be fostered."

[11] "Everyone has the right to access essential services of good quality, including water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communication. Support for access to such services shall be available for those in need."

In line with the aforementioned, another goal was specified - to contribute to the implementation of the Media Strategy Action Plan adopted by the Ministry of Culture and Information. This is especially true of Measure 5.1.1, which underlines the importance of "conducting an analysis of the level of media literacy in the Republic of Serbia across the target groups" and Measure 5.1.2, which highlights the development of "the plan of activities with a focus on raising the level of media literacy across different target groups based on the analysis, including the gender-sensitive media education" and designates the institutions and actors "who will be the main implementing parties for the activities focused on raising media literacy level in the Republic of Serbia".

By focusing on the age category that accounts for approximately one-fifth of the total population, the emphasis is placed on gender differences in media and technology usage habits, as well as their attitudes and needs related to them.

We believe that the findings which are presented in this report will benefit all those whose efforts are aimed at promoting and finding better and more inclusive social solutions for healthy ageing, those working on developing media literacy and increasing digital competencies, as well as researchers, decision-makers, civil society organizations, but also the media who are instrumental in finding ways to make both media literacy and digital skills accessible to this age group. Data can also be useful to institutions that provide various types of assistance and support to this population.

Methodology

The empirical research had three objectives:

1. Identify dominant media habits of senior citizens

2. Identify motivations and attitudes regarding these media habits

3. Identify possible differences between male and female media users aged 65+

The survey was conducted from July 10 to August 15, 2022, on the territory of Serbia. The telephone survey technique was used with the help of the telephone-computer platform CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) which utilizes specialized software to provide direct computer support to various stages of research.

The sample size was 402 citizens aged 65 and over. The sampling was *stratified multistage*. The basic stratums in defining the sample were large territorial units: Vojvodina, Belgrade, central and western Serbia and eastern and southern Serbia. Within each stratum, urban and rural sub-stratums were defined, which gives a total of eight stratums. The gender structure of the sample reflects the proportional representation of this population in the total population of Serbia[12]. The proportions of stratums in the sample were determined by their proportions (age population 65+) in the total inhabitants of Serbia. Such a sample enables inference at the level of Serbia with a tolerable error of up to 3.5 percentage points in the estimation of the population. Data processing enabled the presentation of findings in absolute and relative amounts and refers to the estimated mass of 1,419,386 inhabitants of Serbia aged 65 years and over.

The questionnaire is divided into three thematic units. The first unit covers the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, including their most important activities during the day. The second concerns the use of traditional media, and respondents' trust and views on the media's attitude towards the older adults. The third unit is focused on the use of digital technologies and the Internet, followed by the most important Internet activities, the use of Internet applications and social networks. Finally, all respondents were asked if they wanted to develop their knowledge in media literacy as well as their digital skills.

The analysis of the data obtained is descriptive. The data were analyzed in the SPSS program. Since the variables are categorical (nominal and ordinal), chi-square was used to determine the possible statistically significant relationship between the variables. When there were more categories with fewer responses, categories were merged where possible and are presented as such in this report. Since the focus of this research was primarily on gender divergence of older adults as media users, wherever it was observed in the analysis, it was presented in tabular form that points to these differences. Other demographic characteristics are also indicated where they proved to be of importance for understanding the findings.

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[12] According to data from 2021, the total share of women in the population of 65+ was 57.3% and men 42.7%. See more at: https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-Latn/vizuelizacija/interaktivni-grafikoni/mapa

The term respondent in this text refers to both men and women who participated in the survey and therefore to both male and female respondents. Where the views, characteristics or specifics of a particular gender as a media user are clearly discussed, namely the differences between men and women as media users, the terms male respondent and female respondent are used.

Sample[13]

The final sample consists of 402 respondents, among whom 58.2% are women and 41.8% are men. The average age of the respondents is 72.24 years for the entire sample or 71.88 for women and 72.74 for men. Since there were more women than men in the sample, in order to establish gender differences the "men" and "women" categories were considered as sub-samples. The data are presented in the report for the entire sample and for each gender separately.

Table 1: Sample of respondents by sex

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Women	234	58,2
Men	168	41,8
Total number of respondents	402	100

Most respondents were between 65 and 69 years old (39.3%), one-third were aged between 70 and 74 (32.6%), and the fewest were those between 75 and 79 years old (12.2%). The oldest, those aged 80 and over, was 15.9%.

With regard to the educational structure, most respondents completed secondary school (50%), followed by primary school and lower (30.6%), while less than a fifth of them completed some of the higher levels of education: post-secondary 9.2%, university 10% and only one respondent completed doctoral studies. None of the respondents stated they had completed master's or magister's studies. More women have primary and lower education (33.3% compared to 26.8% of men), while more men have secondary education (53.6% compared to 47.4% of women). An equal number of men and women have post-secondary and higher

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[13] Percentages in tables and charts are displayed with two decimal places to make the sum 100%, and in text, they are rounded to one decimal place to make the text easier to read.

education (women (19.2%), men (19.6%)). However, these differences were not found to be statistically significant.

Table 2: Education of women and men

	Men		Women		N (402)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Primary and lower	45	26,79%	78	33,33%	123	30,60%
Secondary	90	53,57%	111	47,44%	201	50,00%
Post-secondary and higher	33	19,64%	45	19,23%	78	19,40%
Total	168	100%	234	100%	402	100%

More notable differences in education can be seen through age categories. Namely, the older the respondents, the lower their level of education. For example, more than two-thirds of respondents aged 80 and over have completed primary school or lower (70.3%), as well as 61.2% of those aged between 75 and 79. Conversely, the youngest in this population have predominantly secondary (60.8%) and higher education (31.6%). More than half of respondents aged between 70 and 74 completed secondary school (51.1%), and one in four have post-secondary or higher education (21.4%).

Chart 1: Educational structure of respondents within age categories
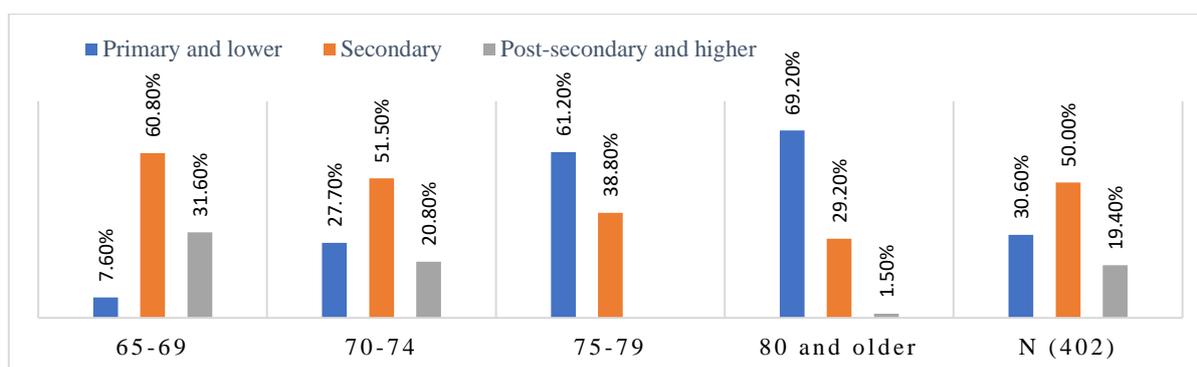
In terms of their place of residence, two-thirds of respondents are from urban (66.2%), while one-third are from rural areas (33.8%). Every fourth person lives in the territory of Vojvodina (25.1%), slightly less in Belgrade and its surroundings (23.4%), while almost a fifth lives in the territory of Southern Serbia (19.4%). There are 13.7% of respondents from Western Serbia, 12.4% from Šumadija and 6.0% from Eastern Serbia. Respondents with higher levels of education are predominantly from two regions: Vojvodina (42.3%), and Belgrade and its

surroundings (38.5%), while respondents with lower levels of education are mostly from Southern (26.8%) and Western Serbia (22.8%).

Table 3: Regional distribution of respondents by educational structure

		Primary and lower		Secondary		Post-secondary and higher		N (402)	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Belgrade and its surroundings		9	7,32%	55	27,36%	30	38,46%	94	23,38%
Vojvodina		25	20,33%	43	21,39%	33	42,31%	101	25,12%
Šumadija		14	11,38%	31	15,42%	5	6,41%	50	12,44%
Southern Serbia		33	26,83%	37	18,41%	8	10,26%	78	19,40%
Western Serbia		28	22,76%	26	12,94%	1	1,28%	55	13,68%
Eastern Serbia		14	11,38%	9	4,48%	1	1,28%	24	5,97%
	Total	123	100%	201	100%	78	100%	402	100%

In rural areas, almost all respondents have primary and lower (52.2%) or secondary education (44.1%). Only 3.7% have completed some level of higher education. Of all respondents who stated that they lived in an urban environment, over half completed secondary school (53%), 27.4% post-secondary or higher and 19.6% lower levels of education.

The sample consists mainly of pensioners without any work engagement while 11.9% of all respondents them stated they were farmers or housewives. In terms of some sort of work engagement, 7% of pensioners are part-time engaged, 1.7% are employed, and 1.2% of pensioners volunteer. The link between work engagement (whether it is employment, part-time work or volunteering) and the respondents' gender proved to be statistically significant. Although both men and women are predominantly pensioners without any work engagement (81.5% of men and 75.6% of women), pensioners with some kind of engagement are primarily men (16.1% versus 5.6% of women). One in five female respondents stated they were a housewife or a farmer (18.8%), which is significantly higher in relation to the male population (2.4%).

Table 4: Working status by sex

	Men		Women		N (402)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Pensioners without any work engagement	137	81,55%	177	75,64%	314	78,11%

	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Pensioners and an employee/part-time/volunteer	27	16,07%	13	5,56%	40	9,95%
Other (housewives and farmers)	4	2,38%	44	18,80%	48	11,94%
Total	168	100%	234	100%	402	100%

Exactly half of the male respondents stated that they live in a marital or partner relationship and just under a third of the women who participated in the research (31.2%). Women not only live alone more often (26.5%) then men (17.3%) but also more often live in a multi-generational family (42.3%) compared to men (32.7%).

Table 5: Household members by sex

|	Men		Women		N (402)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Alone	29	17,26%	62	26,5%	91	22,64%
Spouse or partner	84	50,00%	73	31,2%	157	39,05%
In a multi-generational family	55	32,74%	99	42,31%	154	38,31%
Total	168	100%	234	100%	402	100%

Differences between women and men were noted when assessing their own health status, but they did not prove to be statistically significant. Their health, in their opinion, is predominantly poor or very poor. That was the response of 36.3% of men and 40.2% of women.

Table 6: Self-assessment of the health status of respondents by sex

|	Men		Women		N (402)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Very poor/poor	61	36,31%	94	40,17%	155	38,56%
Neither good nor poor	49	29,17%	68	29,06%	117	29,10%
Very good/good	58	34,52%	72	30,77%	130	32,34%
Total	168	100%	234	100%	402	100%

On the issue of estimating their household's material status, once again gender disparities were not found to be statistically significant for generalization, but they are important for understanding the research data. The economic status is, for the most part, assessed as low - 50% stated their household income is below average, 14.2% that it is much worse than the average, while a third consider their household income to be around average.

Chart 2: Self-assessment of the material status of the respondents by sex
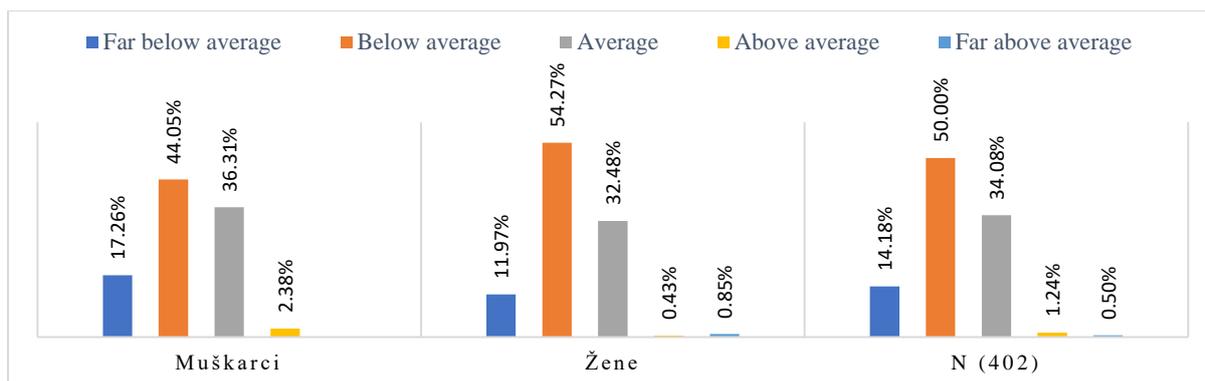
Differences in household material status emerge when the data is viewed through the prism of the region where they live. Of the overall population of 65+, over half of respondents across the regions have incomes below the average. However, the fewest respondents whose household incomes are below and far below average (54.3%) as well as 45.7% of those who stated that their incomes are about and above average, live in Belgrade and its surroundings. This income gap shows a slight upwards trend in Vojvodina (56.4% of respondents with below-average incomes) and Šumadija (60%). It continues to increase across Eastern Serbia (70.8%) and Southern Serbia (74.4%) and is the largest in Western Serbia (81.8%).

Chart 3: Self-assessment of the material status of respondents by region
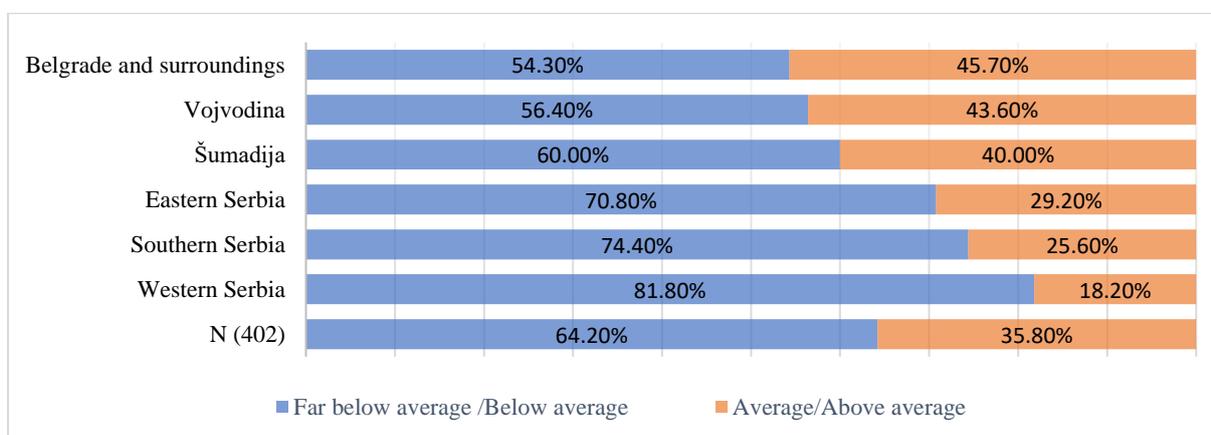
The household material status also correlates with the education level of respondents, which is most evident in the gap between respondents who have completed primary school and lower – 37.2% of them have incomes below average or far below average, while in the category of "average and above average" one in five respondents has the lowest level of education. Conversely, one in three respondents with average or higher household incomes has a higher
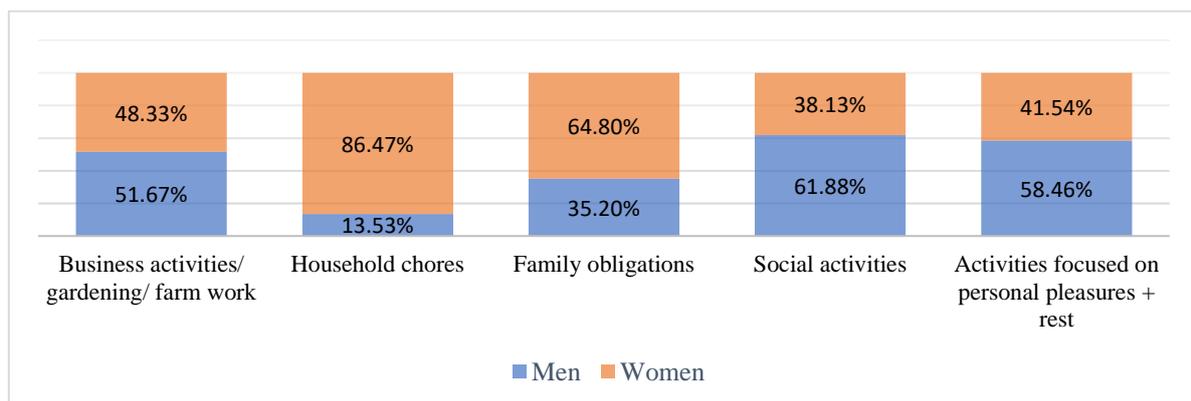
education as well as 11.6% of respondents whose household material status is below or significantly lower than the average.
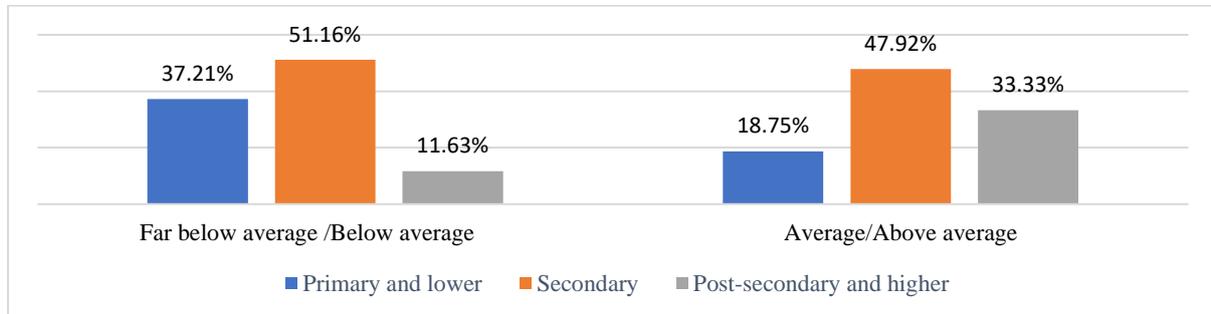
There are disparities between men and women when it comes to the most important activities of the day. For women in the population of 65+, household chores such as grocery shopping, cooking and home maintenance come first (86.5% compared to 13.5% of men who chose this answer) as well as family obligations, such as caring for household members (64.8% versus 35.2% of men). Men consider social activities and socializing with friends as most important (61.9% compared to 38.1% of women) and activities focused on personal pleasures and rest (58.5% compared to 41.5% of women). The gender gap is smallest when it comes to business activities that are predominantly related to gardening and farm work - 51.7% of men versus 48.3% of women.

Older adults and traditional media

The data obtained by the research confirm that in Serbia the oldest media audience is most loyal to television - 57.2% of respondents watch television every day and 29.4% say they watch

it often. Older adults who stated they watch television sometimes comprise 6.2%, 3% say they watch it rarely, while 4.2% never watch it. The data is quite similar for both gender. The most watched television channels are RTS and Pink (23% each). Women watch Pink TV more than men (26.4% compared to 18.3% of men) and twice as many watch channel Prva (16.8% versus 8.2%). On the other hand, men more than women watch RTS (25% compared to 22.7% of women) and TV Happy (15.9% versus 10.9%), but also N1 and Nova S channels – 6.4% and 5.8% respectively, in comparison to 2.4% of women who watch both televisions.

Chart 6: Most watched TV channels by sex, frequency in %
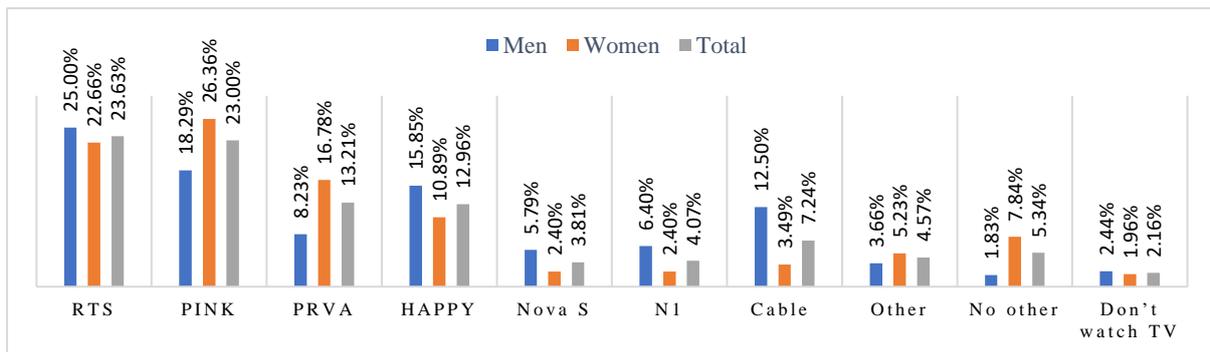
One in four women of this age group watches movies and series, while one in four men watches news programs. These are also the most watched shows on television in this population for both men and women. Men are twice as likely as women to follow political shows (20.2% in contrast to 8.8% of women) and it represents the second most watched program for the males. Men are also watching more sports. On the other hand, women are three and a half times more likely than men to follow reality shows (13.7% compared to 3.9% of men) and spend twice as much time watching studio entertainment shows (16% versus 8.6% of men).

Chart 7: Most watched shows by sex of respondents, frequency in %
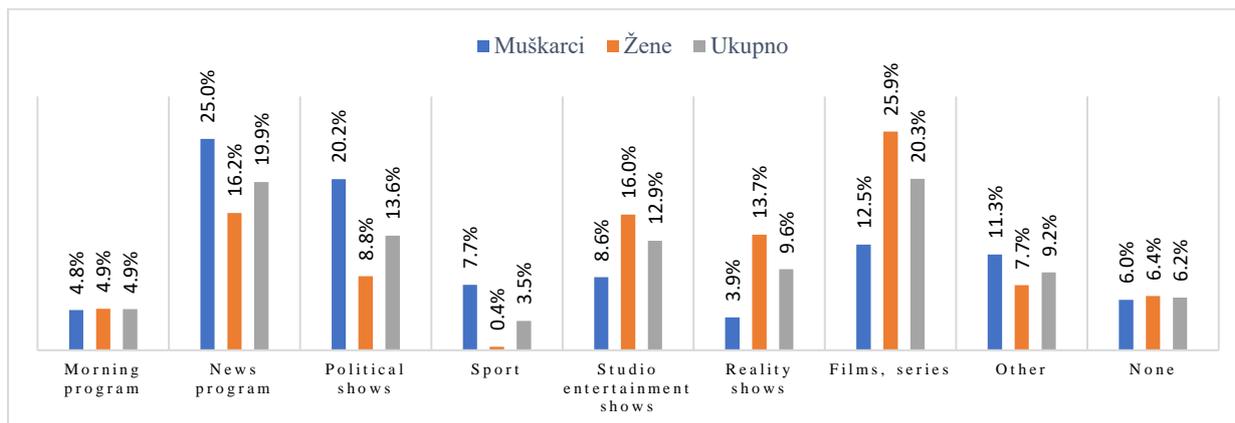
Two-thirds of respondents never listen to the radio. Men listen to the radio more than women -45.2% of men stated they listened to it compared to 29.1% of women. Moreover, men also listen to the radio more often.

Chart 8: Radio listening frequency
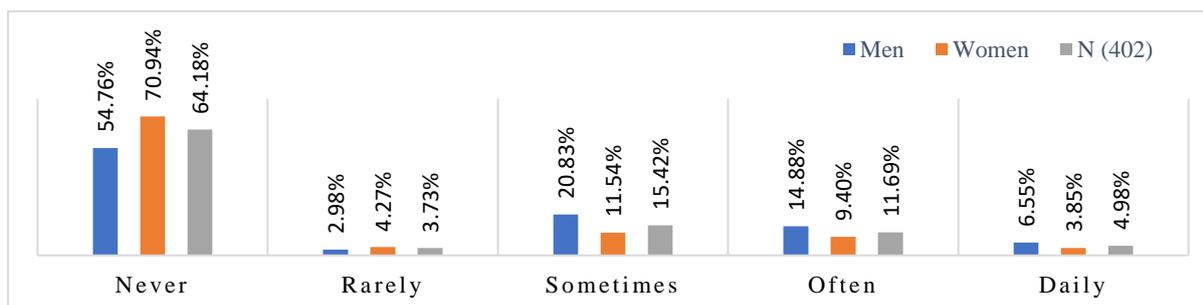
Although the highest percentage of respondents do not listen to the radio (n = 144), of those who do listen to it more than a third reported listening to local radio stations (36.36%), almost a quarter listen to Radio Belgrade 1, while one in ten listens to Radio S (primarily S1). Belgrade 202 is listened to by 7.69% while every 20th respondent said that they listen to radio Nostalgija, Hit FM and, in a similar percentage, Radio Belgrade 2.

Chart 9: The most listened to radio stations

Station	Percentage
Local	36.36%
Radio Belgrade 1	23.78%
Radio S	9.79%
Belgrade 202	7.69%
Nostalgija	4.90%
Hit FM Radio	4.90%
Radio Belgrade 2	4.20%
Play radio	2.80%
Karolina	2.80%
Other	2.80%
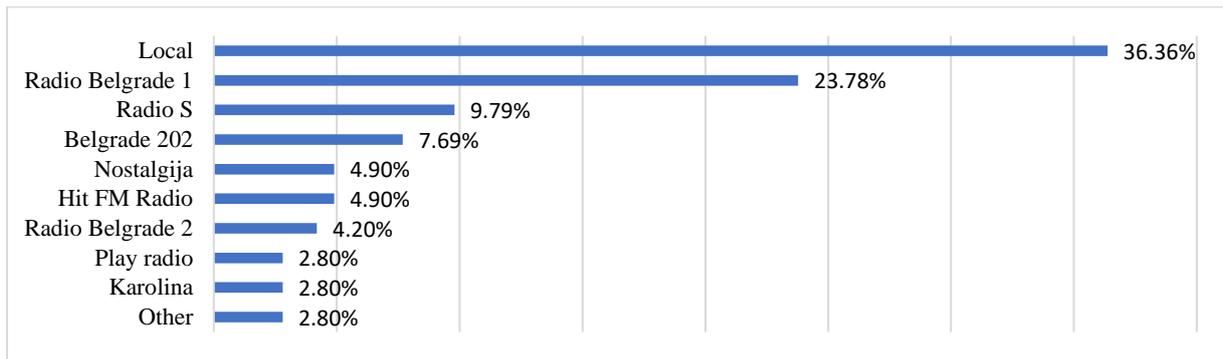
Significant differences in radio listenership emerged in relation to the type of respondent's household. Radio is most rarely listened to by seniors who live alone,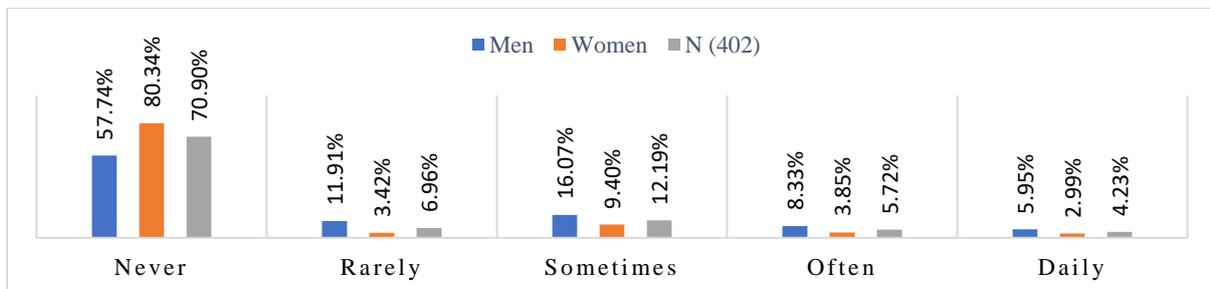 but at the same among them are also the most respondents who listen to it every day. On the other hand, those living in a multi-generational family listen to the radio in the highest percentage.

Table 7: Radio listening frequency by household type

	Alone	With a spouse or partner	A multi-generational family	N (402)
Never	73,63%	64,97%	57,79%	64,18%
Rarely	3,30%	2,55%	5,20%	3,73%
Sometimes	6,59%	19,11%	16,88%	15,42%
Often	5,49%	10,82%	16,23%	11,69%
Daily	10,99%	2,55%	3,90%	4,98%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

According to research findings, there are significant differences between women and men when it comes to the frequency of reading the daily press. Namely, women in this population generally don't read the daily newspapers. Similar to the data on radio listenership, men read daily newspapers more as well as more often than women.

Chart 10: Daily press reading frequency

Frequency	Men	Women	N (402)
Never	57.74%	80.34%	70.90%
Rarely	11.91%	3.42%	6.96%
Sometimes	16.07%	9.40%	12.19%
Often	8.33%	3.85%	5.72%
Daily	5.95%	2.99%	4.23%

Among those who read the daily press (n=117, i.e. 29.1% of the total sample N=402), the most are readers of *Večernje Novosti* (29.7%), followed equally by *Informer* and *Kurir* (14.4%).

Chart 11: The most read daily newspapers

Večernje novosti	29.66%
Informer	14.41%
Kurir	14.41%
Danas	11.86%
Blic	8.47%
Alo	5.93%
Srpski telegraf	4.24%
Nova	4.24%
Politika	4.24%
Dnevnik	2.54%
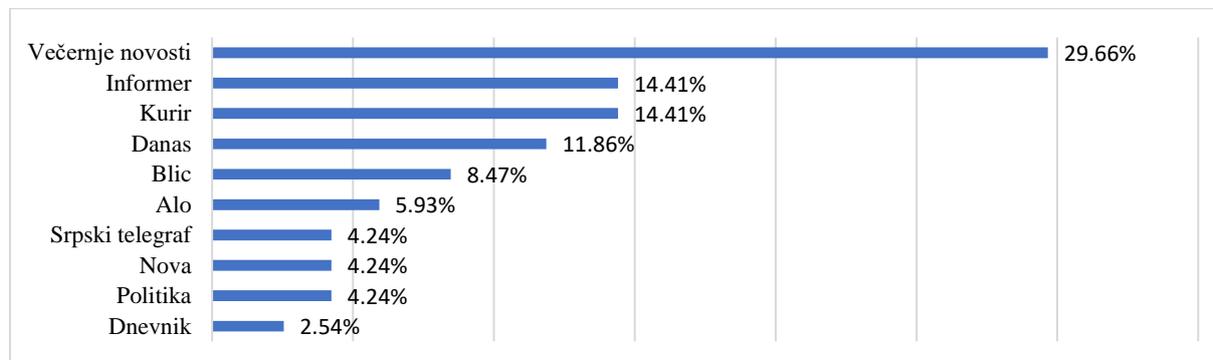
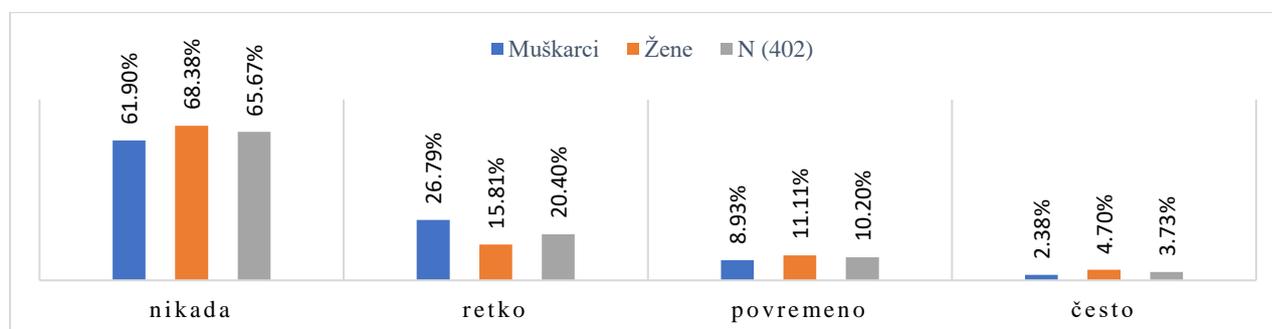It is interesting that two-thirds of respondents do not read the weekly press or books. Of those who read them, no one replied that they read any of them every day.

Table 8: Frequency of reading weekly press and books

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Weekly press	67,66%	12,94%	14,43%	4,97%
Books	65,67%	20,40%	10,20%	3,73%

There are no major gender differences regarding weekly press, but there are some when it comes to reading books. Although women read books less than men (31.6% of women stated they read books and 38.1% of men), data shows that women who read them do so more often than men.

Chart 12: Reading frequency of books

Legend: ■ Muškarci ■ Žene ■ N (402)

|	nikada	retko	povremeno	često
Muškarci	61.90%	26.79%	8.93%	2.38%
Žene	68.38%	15.81%	11.11%	4.70%
N (402)	65.67%	20.40%	10.20%	3.73%

Interestingly, 208 respondents, or 52% of the total sample, do not read either daily or weekly papers or books. Among them, there are almost twice as many women (n=135) as men (n=73),

and they make up 58% of all female and 43% of all male respondents. Of the total number of persons who do not read anything (n = 208), 75% (n = 165) are those who do not even listen to the radio. They comprise 41% of the total sample. Eleven respondents do not follow any media - they use neither traditional media nor the Internet.

As regards traditional media, at the level of the entire sample (N = 402), 38% of respondents watch only television (or 154 respondents). Among them, the majority watch it daily (83) or often (52), and a very small number watch it occasionally (14) or rarely (5). Also, it is interesting that two-thirds of respondents (105 of them, or 68%) who only watch TV do not use the Internet, which amounts to 26% of the total sample. Among them, only 18 are under the age of 70.

Most seniors follow the media because of the content they like. More men (26.2%) than women (8.6%) state that the media provides them with information to help them better understand the topics they are interested in. On the other hand, more women (18.4%) than men (7.7%) say that the media keeps them company.

Chart 13: Reasons why they follow the media
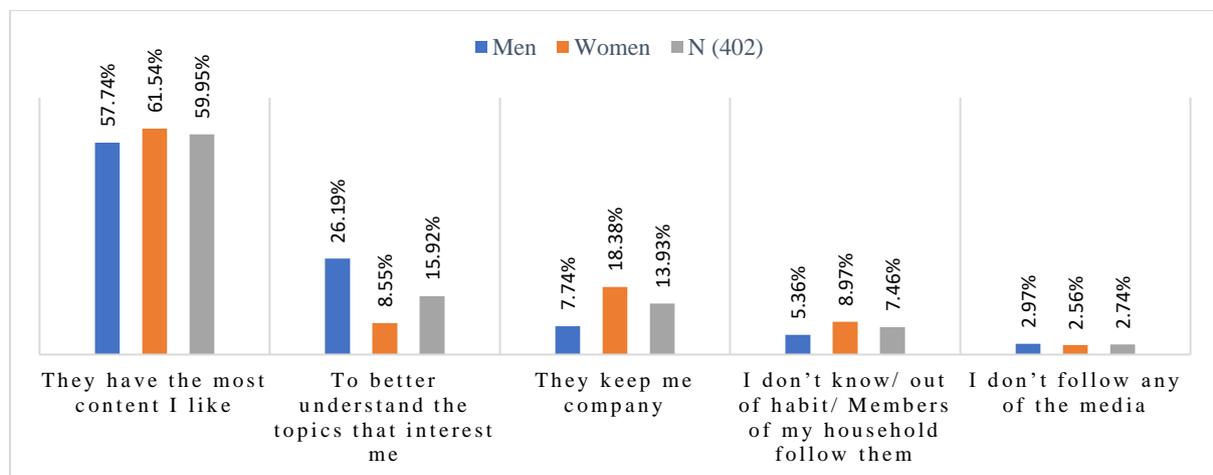
Every third respondent who follows the media in order to better understand the topics that interest him most often watches news programs and political shows. Interestingly, almost a quarter of respondents who follow the media out of habit or because they are followed by other members of their household, also say that they watch the news program the most. Among respondents who stated they follow the media because they have the most content they like, one in four persons named movies and series as the program they watch. Respondents who said

that the media keeps them company, mostly watch movies and series (26.7%) and reality shows (24.8%).

Table 9: Reasons why they follow the media and television shows that they watch the most, frequency in %

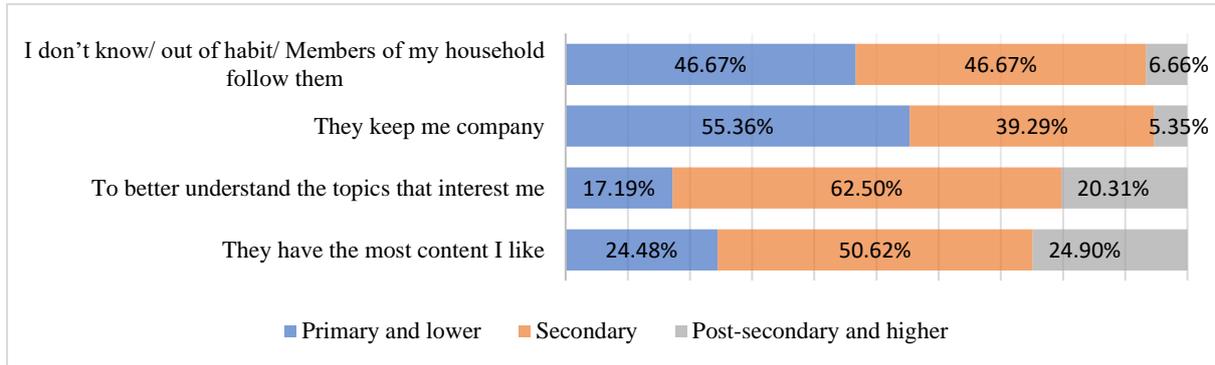| TV shows	They have the most content I like	To better understand the topics that interest me	They keep me company	I don't know/ out of habit/ household members follow
Morning program	4,45%	7,14%	4,76%	7,69%
News program	18,26%	32,54%	18,10%	26,92%
Political shows	12,10%	31,74%	7,62%	7,69%
Sport	4,46%	5,56%	0,00%	0,00%
Studio entertainment shows	16,14%	6,35%	12,38%	13,46%
Reality shows	9,77%	1,59%	24,76%	5,77%
Films, series	24,63%	8,73%	26,67%	15,39%
Other	10,19%	6,35%	5,71%	23,08%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Respondents who stated that the media keeps them company singled out TV Pink (38.1%) and RTS (26.7%) as the channels they watch the most. RTS is also the channel that is mostly followed out of habit or because the household members follow them (37.5%). Those who follow the media to better understand the topics they are interested in, primarily chose RTS followed by TV Happy (19.8%) or TV Pink (18,2%). Although Nova S and N1 televisions are watched by a small percentage, respondents predominantly follow them in order to better understand the topics that interest them.

Table 10: Reasons why they follow the media and TV channels they watch the most, frequency in %

TV channels	They have the most content I like	To better understand the topics that interest me	They keep me company	I don't know/ out of habit/ household members follow
RTS	**24,70%**	**23,14%**	26,70%	37,50%
PINK	**24,20%**	**18,18%**	**38,10%**	**18,75%**
PRVA	15,40%	9,10%	13,30%	**18,75%**
HAPPY	11,90%	**19,83%**	16,20%	14,60%
Nova S	3,70%	10,74%	0,00%	0,00%
N1	4,00%	10,74%	0,00%	2,10%
Other	16,10%	8,27%	5,70%	8,30%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

The connection between education and the reasons why they follow the media was found to be significant. Namely, the lowest percentage of respondents with post-secondary and higher education are among the more passive media users, while among the more active users there are the fewest respondents with the lowest level of education.

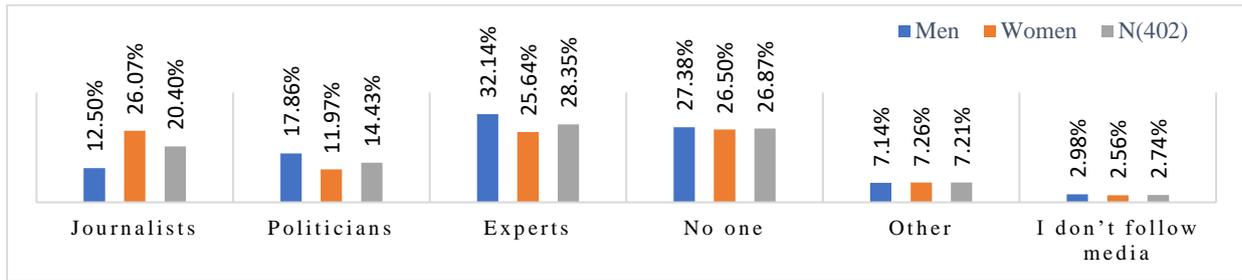|	Primary and lower	Secondary	Post-secondary and higher
I don't know/ out of habit/ Members of my household follow them	46.67%	46.67%	6.66%
They keep me company	55.36%	39.29%	5.35%
To better understand the topics that interest me	17.19%	62.50%	20.31%
They have the most content I like	24.48%	50.62%	24.90%

It is interesting to observe the link between the reasons why respondents follow the media and their health status self-assessment. Respondents who reported that their health is poor or very poor make up the majority of those who follow the media out of habit, because of the household members or do not know why they follow them (60%), as well as the majority of respondents who said that the media keeps them company (58.9%). On the other hand, 42.2% of those who reported that their health was good or very good said that they follow the media to better understand the topics they are interested in. It seems that seniors who are in poorer health follow the media more passively than those whose health status is good or very good.

There is also a significant link between the reasons why older people follow the media and their assessment of the material status, which indicates that respondents with lower material status follow the media more passively. For example, the majority of those who said that they follow the media out of habit or because of other household members (86.7%), as well as those for who the media is used to keep them company (75%), assess the material status of their households as below average. Specifically, those with a material status about/above average follow media in a higher percentage because of the content they like (40.7%) and to better understand the topics they are interested in (42.2%).

In general, this population trusts experts the most (28.4%) or trusts no one (26.9%). Experts are trusted by one in three men and one in four women. However, twice as many women (26.1%) as men (12.5%) place their trust in journalists. Men, on the other hand, are more inclined to trust politicians (17.9%) than women (12%).

Chart 15: Who do seniors trust in the media

	Men	Women	N(402)
Journalists	12.50%	26.07%	20.40%
Politicians	17.86%	11.97%	14.43%
Experts	32.14%	25.64%	28.35%
No one	27.38%	26.50%	26.87%
Other	7.14%	7.26%	7.21%
I don't follow media	2.98%	2.56%	2.74%

Trust correlates with the level of education. Among those who have completed some degree of higher education, 42.3% trust experts and professionals, while almost one in four trusts no one. This educational category has the lowest percentage of respondents who trust journalists (10.3%), who they trust even less than politicians (15.4%). Among those with secondary education, there is an equal share of those who trust experts (29.9%) and those who do not trust anyone (29.4%). In this educational category, one in five trust journalists (19.4%) and trust politicians the least (12.9%). Trust in politicians is the highest with seniors who have completed primary school and lower (16.3%). Respondents with lower education trust journalists the most (28.5%) and, compared to all other educational categories, they trust experts the least (22.8%).

In terms of trust, the differences are also apparent when it comes to the type of settlement. In rural areas, older people are more inclined to trust journalists (23.5%) than those living in the urban environment (18.8%), while seniors from urban areas are more prone to trust politicians (16.9%) than those living in rural areas (9.6%). However, respondents who do not trust anyone are mostly from urban settings (28.9% versus 22.8% from rural areas). When it comes to trust in experts, there are minor differences - 29.4% of those living in rural areas and 27.8% from urban areas state they do trust them.

When asked for an opinion on how the media they follow treat the elderly, about a third of all respondents answered they did not know or remained neutral in responses. The share of respondents who agree that seniors appear in the media only in connection with certain topics is 58.2%, while 52.2% of them agree that they are always covered by the media in the same manner. In terms of other statements opinions are divided. More seniors agree, rather than disagree that the media portrays the elderly as they really are (35.8% versus 30.1% of those who disagree). Similarly, there are more who agree that most topics of interest to the elderly can be found in the media (36.3% compared to 31.8% who disagree). On the other hand, there

are more who disagree that the opinions of older people are sufficiently heard in the media (38.3% versus 31.3% of those who agree with this statement).

Table 11: Statements about the elderly in the media

	Strongly disagree/ disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree/strongly agree	I don't know
Older people appear in the media always in relation to certain topics.	12,93%	6,22%	58,21%	22,64%
The elderly are always presented in the media in the same way.	15,67%	5,22%	52,24%	26,87%
The media portrays the elderly as they truly are.	30,10%	8,71%	35,82%	25,37%
Most of the topics that interest elderly can be found in the media.	31,84%	7,71%	36,32%	24,13%
The opinions of older people are sufficiently heard in the media.	38,31%	7,96%	31,34%	22,39%

There are not many deviations between women and men when it comes to these statements, except for *The elderly are always presented in the media in the same way*, with which more men than women agree (56.5% versus 49.1%), while women are more likely to respond that they don't know (31.2% in contrast to 20.85% of men), or that they neither agree nor disagree (6.4% versus 3.6% of men). The fact that a high percentage of respondents state that they do not know indicates their uncertainty regarding the given statement.

Using devices

Older adults in the 65+ population use mobile phones the most (59.2%). It is used daily by 23.1% of seniors, every fifth uses it often (19.4%), while every sixth (16.7%) uses it occasionally (12.2%) or rarely (4.5%). There are no significant differences between women and men when it comes to mobile phone use – 59.4% of women and 58.9% of men. The desktop computer is used by 21.6% of respondents and this is where there are disparities between women and men. More specifically, this device is used by 26.8% of men and 17.9% of women. Other devices are used by the older adults in a very small percentage – 14.4% use a smart TV, 6.5% a laptop, 3.7% a tablet and no respondent uses an e-reader. The percentage of respondents who state they never sent an SMS is 47.5%, while the rest send them rarely (28.1%) or occasionally (21.6%), while only 2.7% send them often. In this population, 11.6% reported

they used digital technologies for work purposes, 2.4% use it daily or often, 4.7% occasionally and 4.5% rarely.

In the total sample, 200 respondents use the Internet (49.8%), while 202 do not (50.2%). When asked what is the reason for not using the Internet, 71.3% of respondents said that they have no need for it, or that they are not interested. The rest stated that they have other reasons (17.8%) or that they do not have the money to pay for the Internet package (5.9%). There was no notable difference between men and women.

Internet users

Out of the 200 respondents who use the Internet, 117 are women and 83 are men. Internet users are mostly younger seniors, from urban areas, with post-secondary and higher education, from Belgrade and the surrounding area, with better material and health status, who are pensioners with some kind of work engagement, living in a marital or partner relationship, or a multigenerational family. The highest percentage of them access the Internet via mobile phone (95.5%), while 41.5%, access it using a desktop computer. Far fewer respondents from this population access the Internet through other devices: 12% through a laptop, 8.5% using a smart TV, and 8% via tablet.

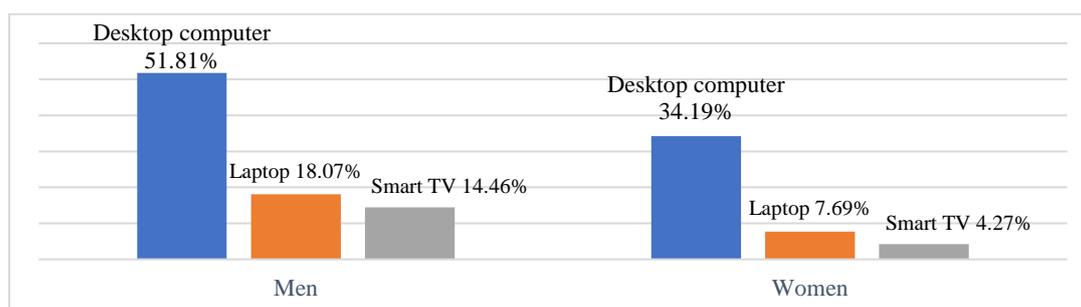*Table 12: Internet users and non-users according to socio-demographic characteristics*

Socio-demographic characteristics	Categories within socio-demographic variables	Do you use the Internet?	
		Yes	No
Urban/rural environment	Rural environment	26,47%	73,53%
	Urban environment	61,65%	38,35%
Sex	Men	49,40%	50,60%
	Women	50,00%	50,00%
Education	Primary and lower	6,50%	93,50%
	Secondary	62,19%	37,81%
	Post-secondary and higher	85,90%	14,10%
Region	Belgrade and its surroundings	73,40%	26,60%
	Vojvodina	50,50%	49,50%
	Šumadija	36,00%	64,00%
	South Serbia	39,74%	60,26%
	Western Serbia	41,82%	58,18%
	Eastern Serbia	33,33%	66,67%

Household material status	Significantly/below average	43,02%	56,98%
	Eye and above average	61,81%	38,19%
Respondent's health status	Very bad/bad	24,52%	75,48%
	Neither good nor bad	58,12%	41,88%
	Very good/good	72,31%	27,69%
Household	Alone	28,57%	71,43%
	With a spouse or partner	59,87%	40,13%
	A multigenerational family	51,95%	48,05%
Age	65-74	65,74%	34,26%
	75+	8,85%	91,15%
Working status	Pensioners without any work engagement	49,04%	50,96%
	Pensioners and employees/part-time/volunteers	95,00%	5,00%
	Other (housewives and farmers)	16,67%	83,33%

*Note: percentages of Internet users and non-Internet users are shown separately for each category within socio-demographic variables

There are no significant differences between women and men of this age when it comes to accessing the Internet via a mobile phone. However, there are disparities when it comes to desktop computers, which are used for this purpose by 34.2% of all female and 51.8% of all male respondents. There are also differences regarding laptops that are used for accessing the Internet more by men (18.1%) than women (7.7%), as well as when it comes to smart TV that men in this population use three times more than women.

Chart 16: Internet access via device by sex, N=200*

Desktop computer 51.81%
Laptop 18.07%   Smart TV 14.46%
Desktop computer 34.19%
Laptop 7.69%   Smart TV 4.27%
Men   Women

*Note: The percentage of device users is presented separately for all men and for all women

Within this sample, respondents with post-secondary and higher education are twice as likely (62.7%) to use a desktop computer as those with secondary education (32.8%). None of the respondents with completed primary school or lower reported accessing the Internet through this device, and neither does any person who stated that they are a housewife or farmer. This device is used almost twice as much by pensioners with some kind of work engagement (68.4%

versus 31.6% who do not use it), than those who are not work engaged (37% compared to 63% of those who do not use it).

Statistically significant differences emerged in relation to the link between education and the use of laptops, tablets and smart TVs for Internet access. They are used significantly more by persons with post-secondary and higher education than those with secondary education and not a single respondent with primary and lower education.

Chart 17: Usage of laptops, tablets and smart TV by education*, N=200
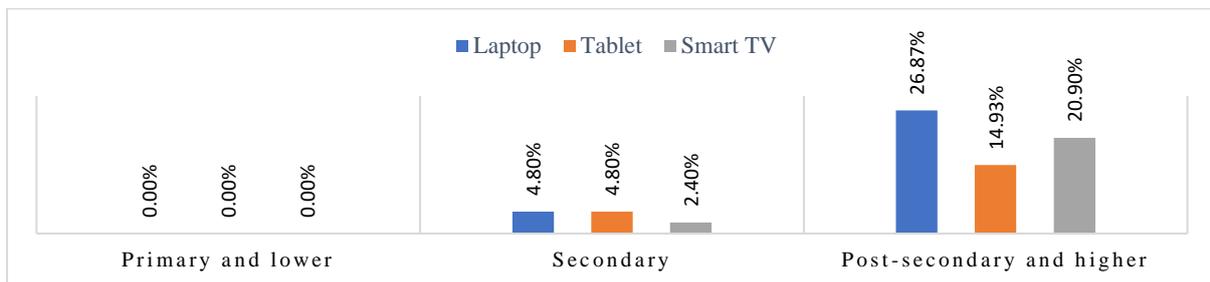
*Note: The percentage of device users is presented separately for each educational category

The material and health status are linked to the use of devices to access the Internet. Namely, those who believe that their material status is about and above average use laptops and smart TVs to a much greater extent than those who said that their material status is below and far below average.

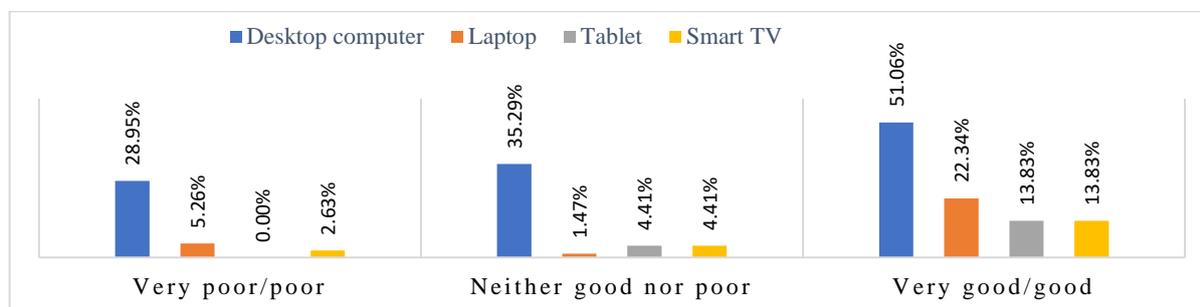*Chart 18: Using a laptop and smart TV to access the Internet in relation to material status*, N=200*
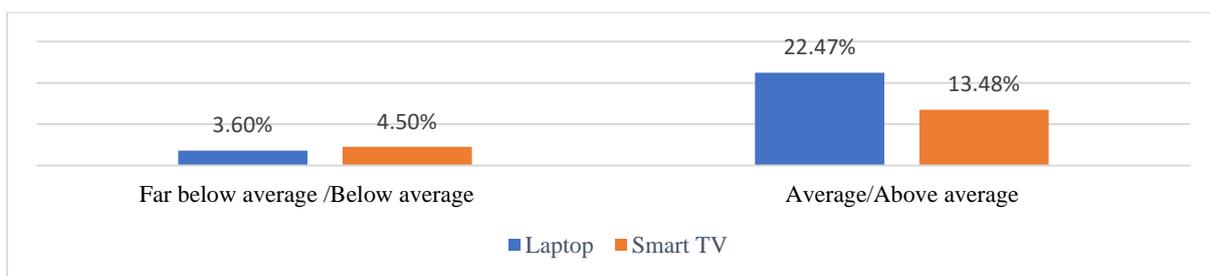
*Note: the percentage of device users is shown separately for each category within the variable household material status

While it is clear that material status plays a considerable role in the use of technologies - reducing or increasing the digital divide - when it comes to the older adults, the findings show that their health status plays a more significant role and points to an even greater gap among Internet users. More specifically, the possibility that people with good (and very good) health status will use all devices besides a mobile phone is increased up to several times, depending on the device, compared to those whose health is mediocre or poor (and very poor). Among

Internet users, when it comes to desktop computer use, there is even a direct positive correlation with the state of health.

Chart 19: Use of Internet access devices in relation to respondents' health status*, N=200

*Note: the percentage of device users is shown separately for each category within the variable respondents' health status of the

Although they most often access the Internet via a mobile phone, 97% of respondents who stated to be Internet users predominantly access it from home, while only 2% of them access it from work, and only 1% use the Internet in public places.

Among Internet applications, the older population primarily uses Viber - 71.5% of them reported they use it often or daily, while one in five uses it occasionally. The next most commonly used is YouTube. It is used by 75% of seniors who use the Internet, mostly occasionally (37.5%) or often (31.5%). WhatsApp ranks third in terms of frequency of use. It is used by 47% of the elderly irrespective of frequency. Interestingly, as many as 42.5% of older adults play games, while Facebook and e-mail are used by 33% and 32.55% of this oldest Internet population. Other applications are used in a much smaller percentage: 10% Instagram, 7.5% Twitter, and 6.5% Telegram.

Table 13: Frequency of use of Internet applications and services

|	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Daily
Viber	5,0%	3,0%	20,5%	51,0%	20,5%
YouTube	25,0%	4,5%	37,5%	31,5%	1,5%
WhatsApp	53,0%	13,0%	20,5%	10,0%	3,5%
Playing games	57,5%	19,5%	15,0%	7,5%	0,5%
Twitter	67,0%	3,0%	17,5%	11,0%	1,5%
E-mail	67,5%	19,0%	10,0%	3,5%	0,0%
Instagram	90,0%	2,5%	2,5%	4,5%	0,5%
Twitter	92,5%	2,0%	2,0%	3,0%	0,5%
Telegram	93,5%	4,0%	1,0%	1,5%	0,0%

While there are no notable differences between women and men in using Viber, they do exit when it comes to all other applications and Internet services. Irrespective of frequency, men use YouTube and WhatsApp and play games more than women. They even use e-mail more than women, which can be explained by the fact that they are more often than women work engaged as pensioners. Men also use Twitter nearly three times as much as the opposite sex and nearly five times as much as Telegram. Women, on the other hand, use Facebook and Instagram more than men.

Chart 20: Use of Internet applications and services among men and women, N=200
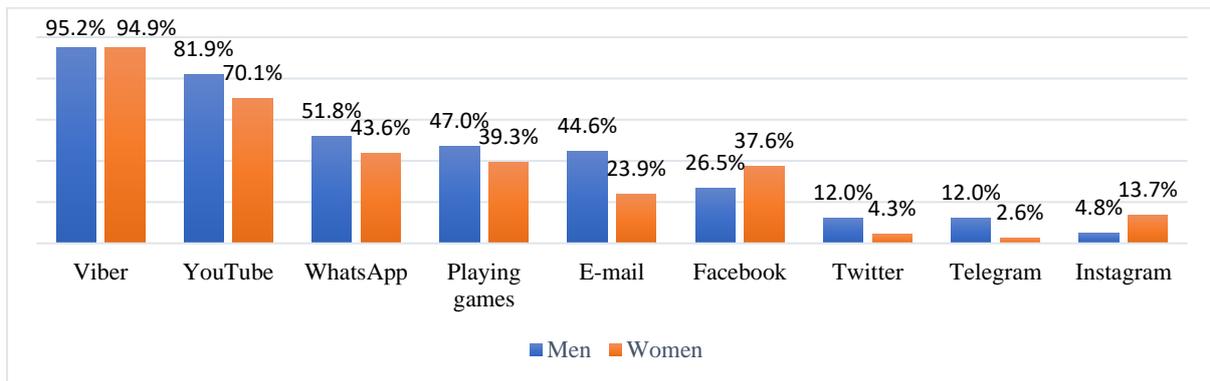
Members of the oldest generation use the Internet primarily for private communication (39.3%) and searching or browsing (26.8%), while one in ten seniors use it primarily to have fun or relax. All other activities are significantly less represented. There are no notable differences between men and women when it comes to Internet activities.

Chart 21: What they use the Internet for the most, frequency, N=200
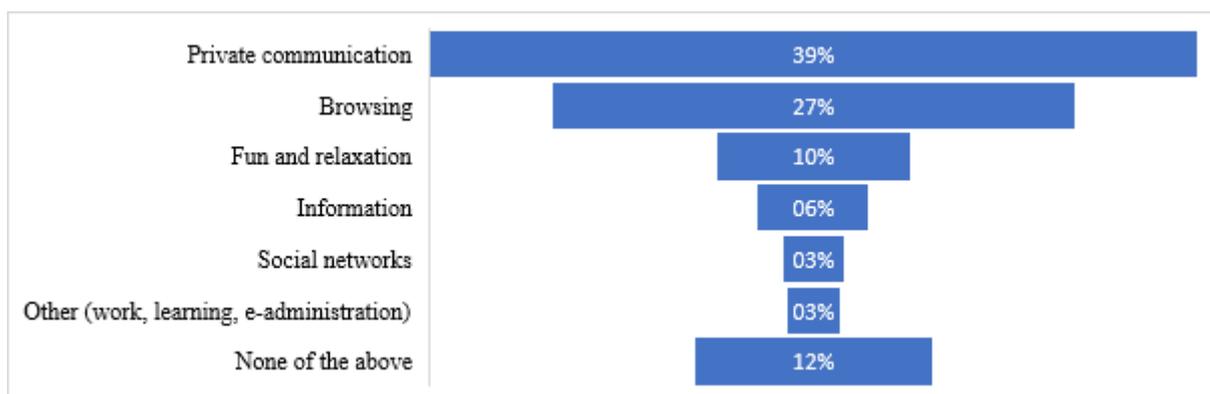
Although obtaining information is not considered the most important Internet activity, those who get informed through it most often follow media portals (54%), while 13% get news through social networks.

Finally, we wanted to find out whether respondents would like to improve their knowledge in media literacy and their digital skills. As high as 92.8% responded that they do not want to improve their knowledge in media literacy, while 91.3% of respondents are not interested in improving digital skills. The most common answer to this question given to interviewers was "we're too old for it."

Table 14: Do they want to improve their knowledge in media literacy and their digital skills, N=402

	Yes	No	I don't know
Would you like to improve your knowledge in media literacy?	5,7%	92,8%	1,5%
Would you like to improve your digital skills?	7,5%	91,3%	1,2%

Although the majority of seniors do not wish to improve either skill, we wanted to find out who are the respondents who answered they want to improve them and who are the ones who do not. As a result, the respondents who wish to improve media literacy and digital skills predominantly live in urban areas (95.7%) and are better educated – two-thirds with post-secondary and higher education and one-third of respondents have completed secondary school. No respondent with completed primary school or lower stated they would like to improve their knowledge in media literacy, and only 3.3% want to develop their digital skills.

Furthermore, those whose incomes are around and above average are more willing to improve these skills. In terms of the willingness to improve digital skills, material status plays a considerable role. At the same time, respondents with incomes below average and far below average wish to improve their digital skills slightly more (26.7%) than their media literacy knowledge (17.4%).

Similarly, those who stated that they want to improve their knowledge in media literacy generally assessed their health status as good/very good (82.6%). Those with poorer health were more likely to respond that they did not wish to improve their knowledge in media literacy, comprising 41.3% of all those who did not wish to. Among the others, there is an equal share of those whose health status is neither good nor bad (29.5%) and those whose health is good or very good (29.2%). Respondents living in a partner relationship wish to improve both their media skills (65.2%) and digital skills (70%), while those who live alone want it the least.

Table 15: Do they want to improve media literacy/digital skills according to demographic characteristics

		Would you like to improve your knowledge in media literacy?*		Would you like to improve your digital skills?	
		Yes I do	No	Yes I do	No
Urban/rural environment	Rural environment	4,35%	35,92%	10,00%	35,97%
	Urban environment	95,65%	64,08%	90,00%	64,03%
Education	Primary and lower	0,00%	32,71%	3,33%	32,97%
	Secondary	34,78%	50,67%	36,67%	50,95%
	Post-secondary and higher	65,22%	16,62%	60,00%	16,08%
Age categories	65-74	100%	69,7%	10,56%	89,44%
	75+	0,00%	30,3%	0,00%	100%
Material status	Far below/below average	17,39%	67,29%	26,67%	67,30%
	Average and above average	82,61%	32,71%	73,33%	32,70%
Respondents' health status	Very poor/poor	0,00%	41,29%	6,67%	41,42%
	Neither good nor poor	17,39%	29,49%	20,00%	29,43%
	Very good/good	82,61%	29,22%	73,33%	29,15%
Household	Alone	8,69%	23,86%	10,00%	23,98%
	With spouse or partner	65,22%	37,27%	70,00%	36,51%
	A multi-generational family	26,09%	38,87%	20,00%	39,51%

*Note: N=396, those who answered "I don't know" are not included
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Conclusion

This research profiled two types of media users in Serbia over the age of 65 - one more active and the other more passive.

More active media users among the older population are predominantly younger older persons, from urban areas, in better health, with higher education and who live in a marital or partner relationship. They are more likely to choose media whose content they like, as well to better understand the topics that interest them. For this purpose, they primarily choose RTS and TV Happy, followed by Pink and watch news programs and political shows. They read more books and newspapers. These are more often men than women. More active media users use mobile phones equally, irrespective of sex. The Internet is used for private communication. Although they use the Internet as much as women, men access it through desktop computers and other devices more than women do. Even though they are retired, they are more often work engaged in some way. Men also use different applications more and much more frequently than women. The more active use of media by men fits into their most important daily activities. Much more than women of the same age, men spend their time on social activities and personal pleasures, which include following media and resting.

More passive media users are mostly persons over the age of 70, with lower education, in poorer health, and from single households. They live equally in urban and rural areas. The media more often keeps them company, that is, they use media out of habit or because of other members of the household. For these purposes, they follow television channels Pink and RTS, where they watch films and series, as well as reality programs. They read the press and books less. They use the Internet and smartphone less often, as well as other devices. They are not at all interested in improving their media literacy knowledge or their digital skills. They are more often women than men. Women are also the most numerous among those who do not use any media other than television. When we look at their most important daily activities, we can see what role the media plays in their everyday lives, where women are more involved than men in household and family responsibilities.

Although the older population is the most loyal to traditional media, ageing seems to correlate with the withdrawal from that sphere, without moving into the digital space. In effect, when it comes to the use of traditional media, apart from passivity, **a trend** has been observed of older

people **disengaging from media** that have long been considered as media of their generation, such as the press (especially dailies) and radio. A large percentage of the older adults use only television for information (where there are gender differences). This means that a considerable percentage of senior citizens remain disconnected from the sphere of information they previously relied upon in the process of forming their opinions. The literature confirms the trend of partial exclusion of persons over 70 in more developed countries, where gender differences decrease if respondents have similar education, material and marital status, or if they have previously used computers (Friemel, 2014).

The follow up research is highly recommended in order to investigate the phenomenon of self-isolation, in the context of its causes considering biological, psychological and social changes associated with ageing and their specific reflections on an individual level. Sex, education, age, assessment of one's own health and material status, interests and ways of spending free time, are some of the predictors that are of different importance when it comes to reliance on traditional media, which could be explored in depth in order to obtain answers to how potential self-isolation manifests itself and what are its consequences for the elderly in Serbia. Qualitative research could provide some answers to the question of what is this symptom of: material status or oversaturation, lack of contents of importance to the elderly or inappropriateness of their presentation, the challenges faced by the press and radio in the digital age, or something else. Given that it can be assumed that different factors contribute to the distancing of the elderly from the traditional media, it is worth investigating which factors led to this outcome, or more specifically, which combination of factors produced the consequent situation. Many questions remain open to be answered using different methods and techniques, which should be participatory and senior-focused, in order to ensure that their voices and their perspectives are appreciated.

With regard to **the use of the Internet and digital technologies**, the use of mobile phones for private communication is dominating, mostly through the Viber application. It can be said that mobile phones are primarily replacing the traditional form of the telephone for older citizens. In addition to communication, their most common activities are browsing (surfing) and entertainment, i.e. using the YouTube platform. It appears that in this way their experience of watching television is transferred to the digital space. One-dimensional media consumption is accompanied by a failure to use the full potential of digital media - not only for informing about social events but also for obtaining information that can make their daily lives easier, as well

as for developing the digital skills that would raise self-confidence and reduce digital anxiety (Bozek et al., 2022). This is affected by many diverse factors that produce a "secondary digital divide" (Taipale et al., 2021), including the health and material status of the elderly, their personal biographies, the context in which they live and the relationship they have built with technological innovations. The latter concerns their media and digital habits that were developed before entering this age group – as we have seen, data shows that younger older adults are more likely to use digital technologies than older ones. Although it is certain that all those who are now developing their digital skills will one day make up the population of older adults, it should be considered that at this moment, in the era of super-connectivity and interactivity, we are facing a situation in which those for whom digital technologies can be of great benefit in everyday life do not use them or use them sparingly, and often disengage from the communication space. This is not only due to the speed of technological development, but perhaps even more importantly because of the failure to take into account the elderly population when adopting strategic plans related to the human and civil rights of each individual in the public and digital space. This situation is alarming since it results in being poorly informed or not at all, and consequently unable to make informed decisions and democratically participate in social processes. That is why it makes sense to work intensively on media and digital training and literacy programs for all ages. Working on intergenerational support is very cost-effective, because only in this way can we bridge the gap between the inevitability of ageing (for all of us) and the ever-younger media technologies.

Recommendations

When it comes to traditional media, the requirement to present content which is addressed exclusively to the elderly, especially on television, can be problematic. The reason for this is a theoretical approach that emphasizes the universality of human needs and argues that children are the only group that has needs that are specific in relation to other age groups (Spicker, 2013). The elderly, as well as citizens of all other ages, have needs that are partly universal and partly conditioned by a number of factors, such as gender, education, material status, interests, etc. In this regard, there are no differences between them and the rest of the population. In this case, it becomes even more important that their voices and their perspectives are included and represented in media content for all ages, which has great potential to foster intergenerational solidarity. On the other hand, this does not deny that the population of the older adults, as already noted in this research, is extremely heterogeneous, just like other age cohorts are in the

same way and to the same extent. Therefore, it is important that certain aspects of the specificity of the elderly are taken into account, combined with their gender, material status, interests and other variables that have proven to be significant in this research when presenting media content.

Another phenomenon, in which the media have an important role in both developing or suppressing it, is the stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against the older adults. Stereotyping the elderly in the media is a consequence of their stereotyping in society. The social construction of ageing does not favour the recognition and appreciation of the older adults as equal members of society, who contribute to society. The reason for this is a valuation of appearance, physical looks and status symbols. The elderly are expected to retire from life, which is supposed to represent a logical and inevitable consequence of ageing that society constructs as "normal" (Lynch, 2016). All deviations from socially prescribed "normality" are overlooked or labelled. In this context, it is not unusual for the older adults to state that they appear in television content only in connection with one and the same topics and in a customary manner, which is very stereotypical. In this regard, it is necessary to take into account the heterogeneity of the elderly population, and the differences that exist between them in terms of health status, material status, ethnic origin and cultural diversity, lifestyle, etc. Such a portrayal of the diversity of the older adults would have a positive impact on combating ageism.

All mentioned above is also extremely important for creating a more digitally just society that does not ignore exclusion on any grounds. This means that when formulating policies, programs and technical/digital solutions related to the participation of seniors in the modern digital media space, it is crucial to keep in mind the target group, its needs and the obstacles it encounters. It seems that in our society the link between ageing and modern technological possibilities is underdeveloped. Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account the financial barriers to the use of digital technologies and the Internet, as well as the obstacles resulting from the lack of sufficient knowledge and skills to use them. Inclusion in the digital environment is just one of the steps of inclusion in society, which should be linked to stable material status in old age, good health and decent living conditions. Since these are not the common features of life for the older adults in Serbia, the question arises as to how to compensate for low incomes in old age, poor health and poor housing conditions, as prerequisites for digital inclusion. The use of digital technologies and the Internet will certainly

increasingly represent a segment of social participation, without which social inclusion is also unimaginable.

Recommendations for media and audience researchers

o **Investigate the phenomenon of self-isolation** (disengagement from traditional media) in the context of its causes from the perspective of biological, psychological and social changes associated with ageing and their specific reflections on an individual level.

o Since little data is available on **the 75+ population as media users**, it is necessary to encourage this research that would use both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the specifics of this population and their media practices, whether it is traditional or digital media, or both combined.

Recommendations for public broadcasting service and other socially responsible media

o Actively promote and support **the creation and broadcasting of content involving seniors as equal and full participants in social life**. Foster the creation of content that will imply different perspectives, which should ensure the reduction of stereotypes, change of dominant perception and self-perception of ageing and old age, and support the narrative that perceives old age as an active age.

o Production and support to the production of **content that would use traditional media to incite the motivation of seniors to engage more actively in the development of media literacy and digital skills and knowledge.**

o Encouraging the creation and broadcasting of content **that promotes intergenerational cooperation in the development of media literacy and digital competencies**.

o Encouraging the creation and promotion **of content that enables an understanding of the importance** of the development of media literacy, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of using digital media and technologies in the lives of older adults. This would have the most effect if this content were broadcast through the media that the seniors use the most – television. The TV Bukvar (*TV Primer*) series broadcasted on the then Yugoslav Radio Television, which played a major role in raising the awareness of citizens, especially women, about the importance of literacy, could serve as a model.

Recommendations for the inclusion of seniors in the digital space

o **Facilitate access to technology and the Internet**, with an emphasis on financial access and competencies for safe use.

o Develop **state actions in cooperation with mobile and IT companies** to enable the procurement of devices and Internet packages for pensioners /seniors /farmers and housewives at affordable prices and for the poorest free of charge. This includes "second chance" type of actions in which older citizens would be gifted digital devices that are no longer used but are in working order, in exchange for a voucher for the one who donated the device, for example.

o **Adapt digital and technological solutions** used by older adults to the psycho-physical characteristics of ageing, such as sensory, psychomotor, cognitive, and physical.

- **Facilitate access to digital services and content** by adapting them to the biological, psychological and social characteristics of ageing (for example, read me applications and similar).

- It would be encouraging that **digital solutions respond to the diverse needs and interests of** this heterogeneous age population.

- **Launch a campaign aimed at raising knowledge about the benefits, risks and solutions that digital technologies can provide for older persons**, in order to reduce technological anxiety and feelings of exclusion, which would enable seniors to more easily exercise their rights (such as health and social care rights or obtaining documents) and needs (such as online shopping in case they are prevented from leaving home). Involve seniors in digital literacy campaigns and designing approaches to improve digital literacy.

- Following the example of *the Digital Expedition* program**, launch a caravan of digital skills, social connectivity and digital inclusion for seniors**, especially older women in rural areas, in cooperation with local communities.

- **Encourage social connectivity with and among older citizens**, both in urban and suburban areas, as well as in rural areas, because it is closely related to digital inclusion.

- Foster projects and programs that are focused on **intergenerational cooperation** in mastering digital skills by seniors, as well as on intragenerational, **peer-to-peer learning**. Programs of intergenerational cooperation, which would entail "communication" between different generations, should be conceived in such a way that the elderly are both givers and recipients of knowledge, and not objects to which knowledge is transferred.

- **Encourage linguistic adaptation** of content offered across different platforms and applications that are installed in devices, because lack of knowledge of a foreign language (primarily English, which is dominant in the digital sphere) can in some cases be an additional obstacle to the use of the Internet, digital media and devices.

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