# Cornell Cooperative Extension

Year Two Findings from a Cornell Cooperative Extension Digital Literacy Mentoring Program in a Rural Community

The Orleans Digital Literacy Initiative is a program of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Orleans County

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Agenda

o **Program Design to Address Digital Equity**

o Program Implementation

o Partnerships to Foster Digital Inclusion

o Program Impacts

o Success Stories

Orleans County Quick Facts
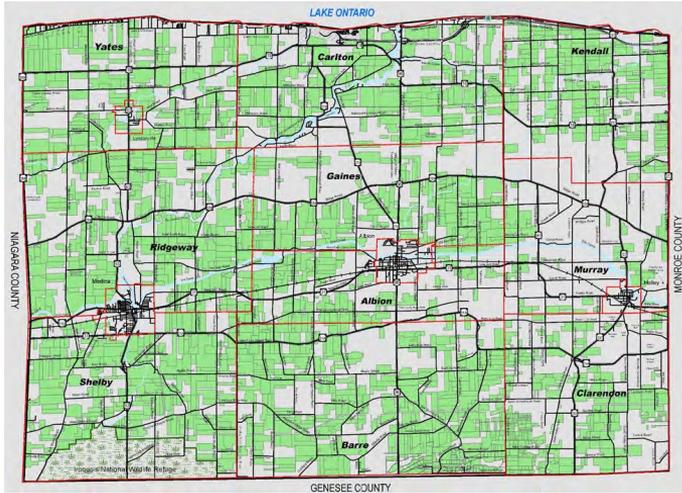
47% of agricultural land mass as of August 2019. Prepared by Orleans County Department of Planning and Development.

Photo of Albion courthouse curtesy of Elizabeth Carpenter.

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Orleans Digital Literacy Initiative 2020-2021 Steering Committee

Dean Bellack
Executive Director, United Way of Orleans County

Robert Batt
Executive Director, Orleans County Cornell Cooperative Extension

Ken DeRoller
Orleans County Legislator, Board Member of Orleans County Economic Development Agency

Kelly Kiebala
Director, Orleans County Job Development

Greg Reed
Executive Director, Orleans County YMCA

Mary Beth Debus
Consultant and President of Program Savvy Consulting

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Community Needs Assessment of Orleans County: Community Survey

## Some examples of things respondents indicated they could not do or not do well enough:

- 13% - renew their driver's license online
- 17% - register to vote online
- 24% - sign up for benefits like veterans benefits or unemployment
- 16% - sign up for a patient portal
- 13% - use Microsoft Word
- 19% - participate in a Zoom or Microsoft Teams meeting
- 33% - schedule a Zoom or Microsoft Teams meeting

Internet Accessibility & Map of Internet Gaps in Orleans County

~11% of households did not have access to internet

~60% of homes and businesses did not have broadband speed (25mbps↓/3Mbps ↑)

Source: The Niagara-Orleans Regional Alliance
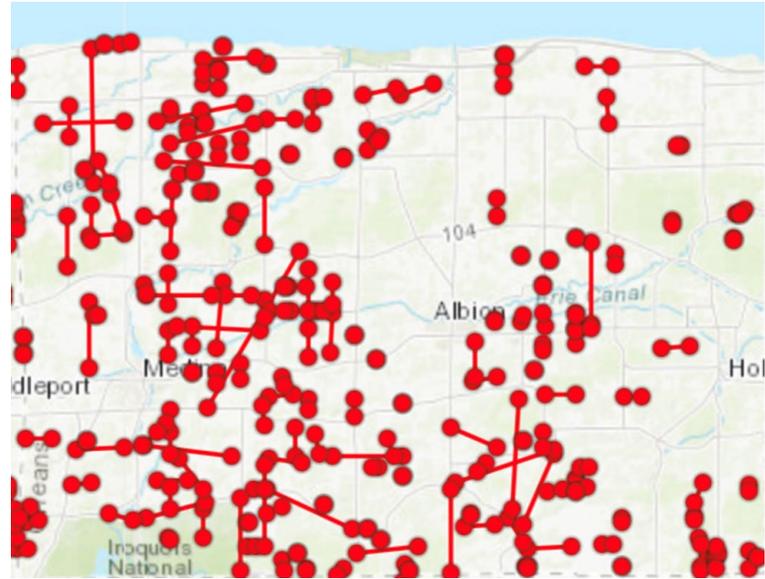
Red dots are start or end of a road without fiber broadband connectivity.

Source: Orleans County Planning Development

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Community Survey:

Internet Access and Connectivity:

- Only 22% said their internet was "very reliable." 27% said it was "spotty," and 50% had "occasional problems."
- 46% indicated their internet got worse if more than one device being use, and 31% said internet sometimes.
- 35% said they leave their home to use internet for work and school.
- **15% had the option to buy a higher level of internet.**

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Community Needs Assessment of Orleans County: Focus Groups

Each Solution Session was two-hours long:

- Digital Literacy Sessions:
    - Older Adults; Youth; Expanding Existing Services; The Unemployed and the Underemployed; Preparing the Future Workforce; Supporting Schools, Students, and Families; Supporting the Nonprofit Community's Digital Literacy and Technical Needs; Improving Internet Access; Improving Access for those with Disabilities
- Economic Equity: Access to Internet and Devices
- Increasing Content for the Spanish Speaking Community
- Developing an IT Workforce
- Improving Access to Healthcare
- Designing a Digital Literacy Campaign

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Program Implementation

Two Priorities:

1. Community Mentors facilitate digital literacy in Orleans County

2. A Public Campaign engages the community in digital literacy and better internet access

2022 Train-the-Trainer with Mary Beth Debus of Program Savvy Consulting

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Program Services: Digital Literacy and Equitable Access

- 1-on-1 mentoring
- Classes
- Affordable Connectivity Program
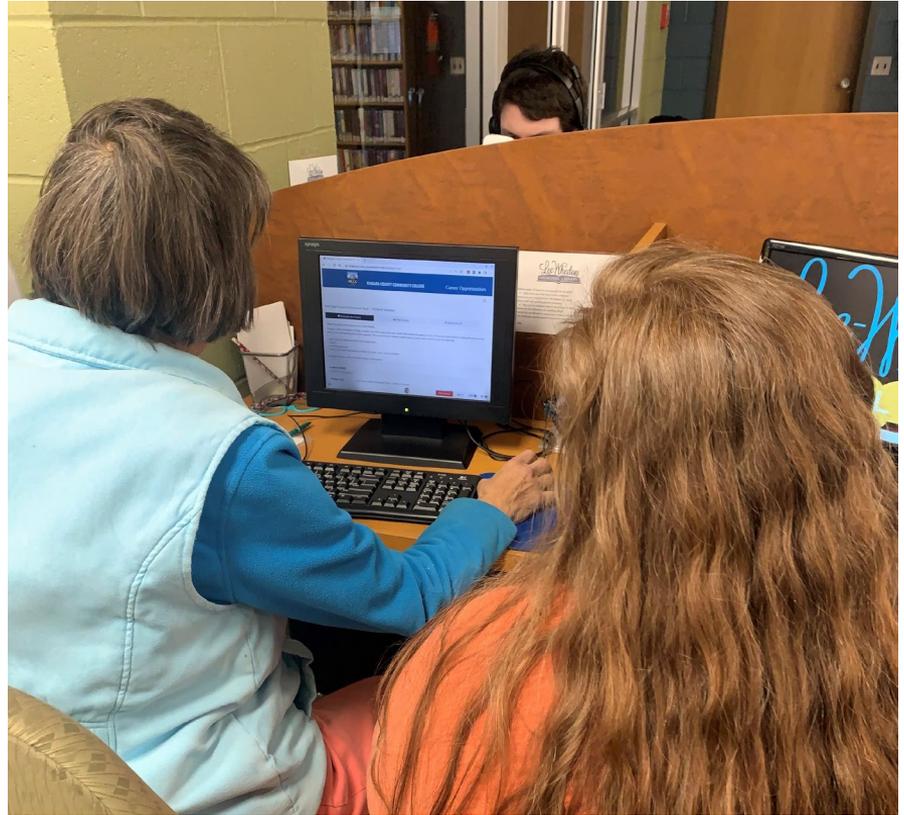
Mentoring at a public library

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Program Curriculum: can code communities

Units:

1. Computer & Device Basics
2. Peripherals
3. Operating Systems
4. Applications
5. Updates & Security
6. Getting Online
7. Productivity Software
8. Word Processing
9. Accessing Information Online
10. Online Shopping
11. Social Media Basics
12. Email basics
13. Video calling
14. Online Safety
15. Translation
16. Mobile Applications

Volunteers at Cornell's Translator Interpreter Program have translated 12 of the 16 modules into Spanish to date.

Program Evaluation

Post Mentoring Surveys

- Participant
- Mentor

Site Surveys

Did you receive help in any of the following areas? (select all that apply)

- ○ Device Basics (making/receiving phone calls, sending/receiving texts, etc)
- ○ Device Maintenance (help charging a device, troubleshooting, fixing a device)
- ○ Password Assistance
- ○ Cybersecurity (virus protection, malware, etc.)
- ○ Transportation (using car service like Uber/Lyft, looking up bus schedules, driver's license renewal/vehicle registration, using maps/navigation)
- ○ Food Access (online grocery shopping, food delivery, etc.)
- ○ Shopping (other than food-related)
- ○ Healthcare Management (virtual appointments, accessing medical records or test results, etc.)

- ○ Social Support (Video chatting w/ friends/family, social media access, etc.)
- ○ Financial Activity (online banking, managing retirement funds/investments)
- ○ Civic Participation (registering to vote, researching political candidates, etc.)
- ○ Housing/Utility Management (paying rent/mortgage/utility bills online, trash pickup, locating home service providers like electricians, etc.)
- ○ Entertainment (using streaming services, downloading music, etc.)
- ○ Education (taking/registering for online classes, researching learning opportunities)
- ○ Employment Activity (searching for/applying to jobs, setting up remote work, etc.)
- ○ Other (please specify) _____

Program Evaluation Considerations

Post Mentoring Surveys

- Rate of survey participation
- Accuracy of self-reporting

Outreach

- Monthly Drop-In Tech help hours at libraries
- Participation in public events
- Posters in public places
- Ads in local papers
- Every Door Mailers
- Billboards & Digital Boards
- Facebook: @OrleansTechHelp
- Collaboration with partners and outside agencies

Clockwise from top: Facebook post on catfishing, Pennysaver Ad on Tech 360 class, Facebook post on identifying online ads

Outreach:
Digital Inclusion & Affordable Connectivity Program

3,767 households receive the ACP benefit on Orleans County
(Source: ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker as of June 2023)

16.1% of persons living in Orleans County live in poverty
(Source: US Census data, July 2022 estimate)

12,982 people received Medicaid in Orleans county
(Source: NYS Medicaid Enrollment Databook as of December 2022)

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Collaborating Organizations

- Funder: United Way of Orleans County

- Educational Partner: Orleans County Cornell Cooperative Extension
    - Digital Literacy Program Coordinator

- Collaborating Organizations with Tech Mentors:

1. Office for the Aging
2. Job Development

Orleans County Accredited Learning Services

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Collaboration as a Tool in Digital Inclusion:

County Government Offices

Orleans County Office for the Aging:

- Volunteer tech mentor

- Referrals to Orleans Digital Literacy Initiative

- Outreach through monthly Friendly Carrier

Orleans County Job Development:

- Two volunteer tech mentors

- Outreach opportunities at in person job fairs and ads on a digital billboard next to the DMV in the county office building

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Collaboration as a Tool in Digital Inclusion:

Libraries

- One volunteer at Hoag Library
- Tech mentoring and monthly drop-in hours at all libraries

Existing Library Resources:

- Two libraries already offer tech help
- A NIOGA tech librarian teaches classes in Niagara, Orleans, and Genesee Counties

Map of NIOGA Libraries. Red locations are Orleans County libraries.
Source: Google Maps

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Collaboration as a Tool in Digital Inclusion:

Non-Profit Organizations

Orleans County Accredited Learning Services (OCALS):

- Tutors offer adult literacy, English as an Additional Language, after school tutoring, and other services
- Two volunteers and one board member with OCALS volunteer as tech mentors

Community Action of Orleans and Genesee:

- One volunteer tech mentors
- A community center is used as a mentoring site

Collaboration as a Tool in Digital Inclusion:

Education:

- Higher Education
  - *Interns as tech mentors*
- K-12
- Pre-School

AmeriCorps volunteers with Mission: Ignite Tech 360 Program

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Collaboration as a Tool in Digital Inclusion:

Informal Collaboration:

- Created a tech curriculum for an online wellness course offered by Community Action's ACT program
- Classes Requested by a Non-profit
  - Ex: Zoom safety class for an ARC self advocacy group
- Provided information on the Affordable Connectivity Program
  - Ex: Housing communities, community organizations, church groups

Collaboration as a Tool in Digital Inclusion:
Broadband Access:

Connect Orleans:

Ensure that low to moderate income residents of Orleans County have access to information and assistance to utilize government programs that offer reduced or free home internet service, as well as the opportunity to receive education and assistance in using technology.

Connect Orleans Postcard

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In the past two years:

- Over 500 mentoring sessions have been held to date
- Over 200 community members have received support

99%

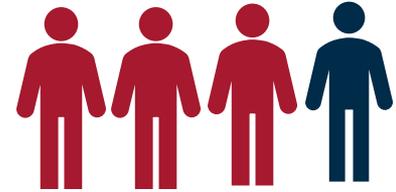of participants said their mentoring session was a **success**

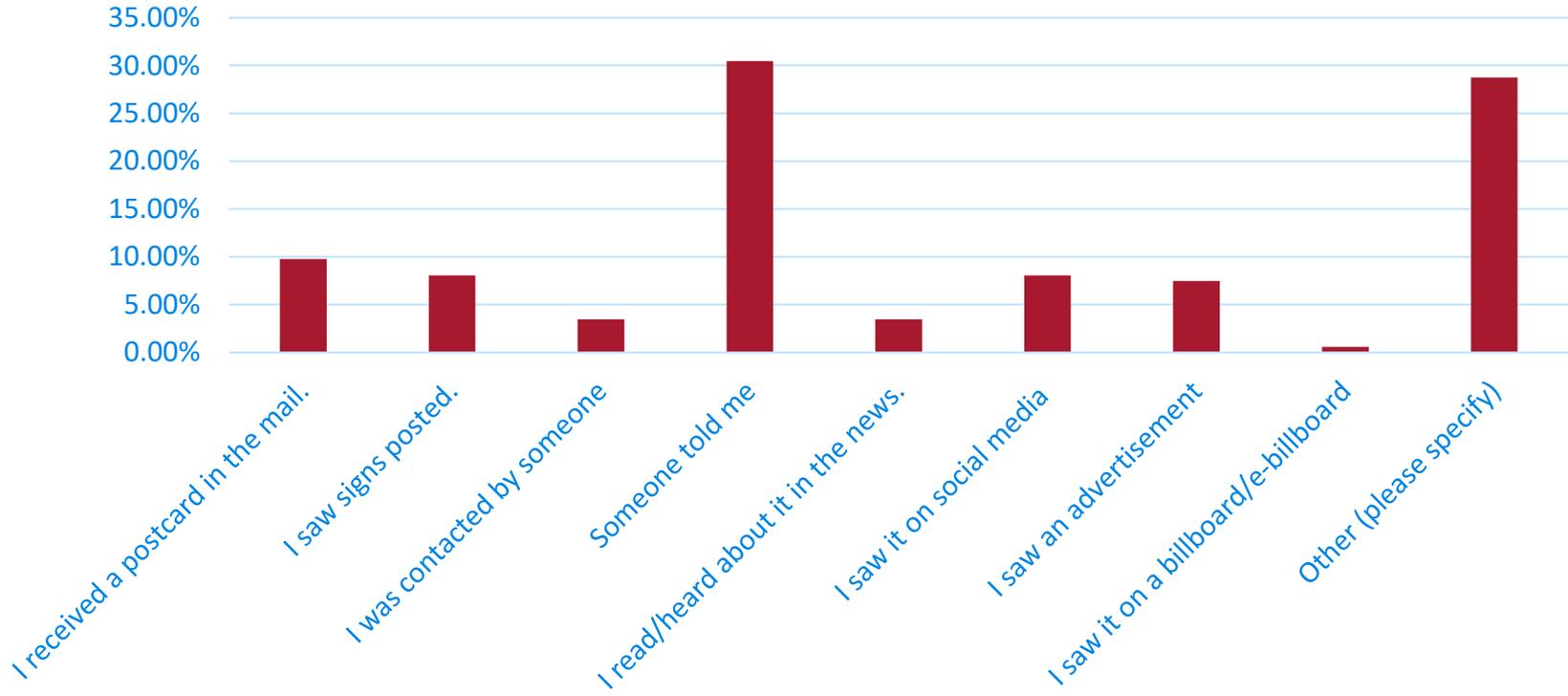**NEARLY 3 OUT OF 4**

participants come back for more help

How people reported first hearing about the program

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Devices Involved in Mentoring
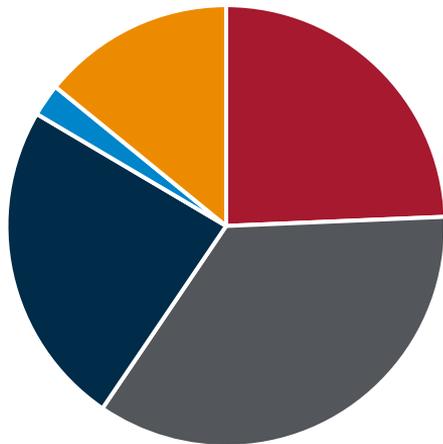
- ■ Setting up new technology
- ■ Using a computer
- ■ Using a smart phone
- ■ Using a flip phone
- ■ Using another digital device

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Community Needs:

Tech Help

- Device Basics
- Device Maintenance
- Password Assistance
- Cybersecurity
- Transportation
- Online Shopping
- Healthcare Management
- Social Support
- Financial Activity
- Civic Participation
- Housing/Utility Management
- Entertainment
- Education
- Employment Activity
- Other

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Trends in Participant Demographics: Age and Gender

Orleans County Population:

- 20.2% are aged 65 and over
- 49.3% are female

Population Source: US Census

Orleans Digital Literacy Initiative Participation:

- 61% are aged 60 and over
- 65.6% are female

Demographic Information:

Age of Participants

Legend: ■ Percentage

Chart: Bar chart showing age distribution of participants. X-axis categories: Under 18, 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, 80-89, 90 and over, Chose to not disclose. Y-axis scale 0 to 30.
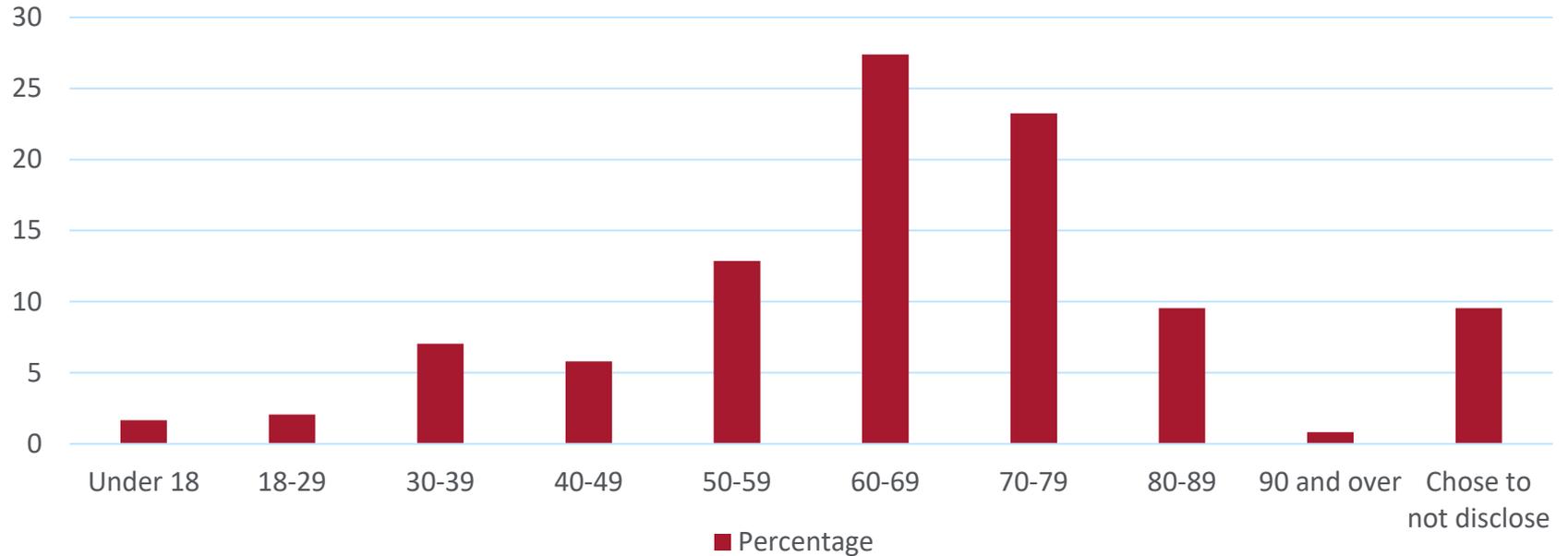
Demographic Information

Gender
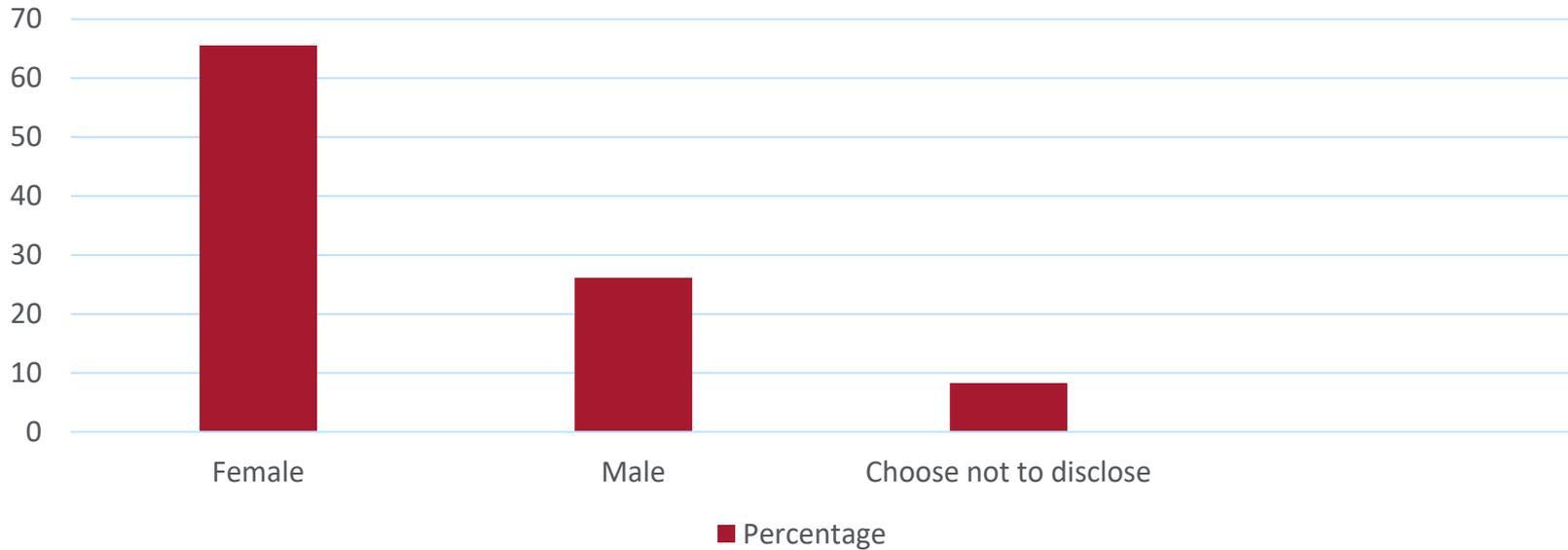
Facebook Followers Age & Gender:
@OlreansTechHelp

Legend: ■ Female ■ Male

Bar chart data (Female, Male):
- 18-24: Female ~1, Male ~0.8
- 25-34: Female ~6.5, Male ~4
- 35-44: Female ~17.5, Male ~4.7
- 45-54: Female ~21.5, Male ~4.7
- 55-64: Female ~13.5, Male ~4.3
- 65 and over: Female ~17.5, Male ~3
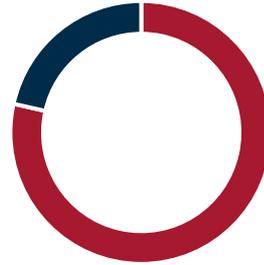
Legend: ■ Female ■ Male
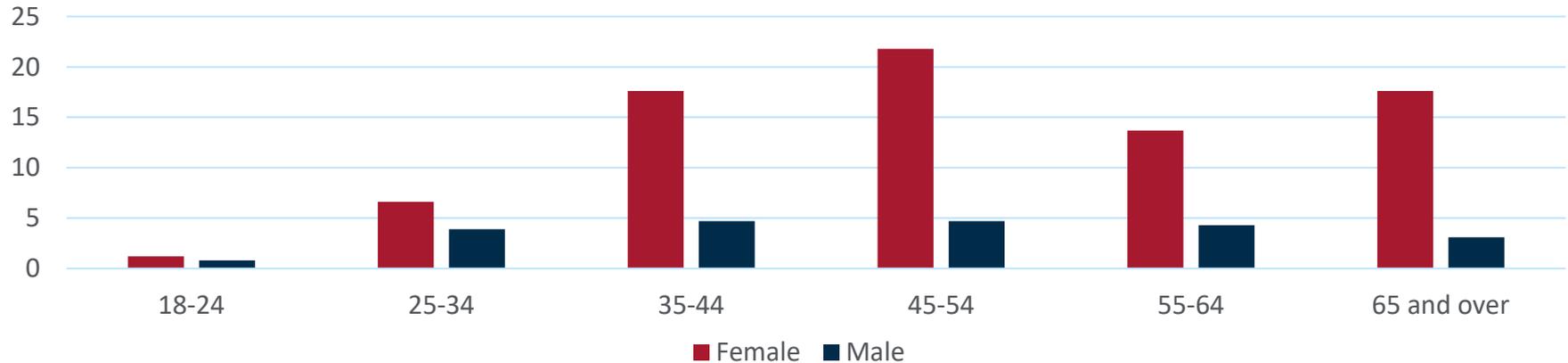
Program Impact: Overcoming Fear of Technology

Older adults may fear/distrust technology or feel left behind.

#1 scheduling request is for a patient mentor!

Negative Influences:
- Fear of breaking the device
- Impatient family that takes over
- Pushy salespeople
- Difficulty in school as a youth

This isn't my world anymore.

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What people have said about our program:

"Easy to understand, and no stress!! Thank you."

"[The program] gives me confidence to find out more."

"Great support!"

"I keep learning something new!"

"I appreciated the class. I know I will succeed!"

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Success Story: Computer Skills for Employment

Participant:
- Certified Nursing Assistant 75% disabled involved with Workers' Compensation.

Initial Help Received:
- A librarian referred her to our program coordinator who assisted her with learning how to use a computer and how to apply for jobs online.

Resolution:
- A tech mentor at Orleans County Career Services who was able to enroll her in nearby GED classes and with an ACCESS-VR (vocational rehabilitation) representative for long-term services.

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Success Story: Internet Access and Safety

Initial Need:

- A woman in her 80s saw our Pennysaver ad on the Affordable Connectivity Program and received help applying for it.

Continued Assistance:

- She received help using her tablet and navigating Facebook to see pictures of her great-grandkids.
- One day she spoke about a weird phone call. She had allowed someone pretending to be her ISP to remote into her computer. Once she understood what happened, she accepted help in securing her devices and accounts. She contacted her bank and told her family. She learned how to monitor her credit.

Success Story: Financial and Health Management

Participant Background:

- A woman in her 70s who receiving help using her phone and tablet suddenly needed to manage her health portals and finances when her partner passed.

Resolution:

- She learned how to pay her bills online, set up auto-pay, access her health portals. She can now shop online and use her health credits for over-the-counter medications and toiletries. She now receives the ACP benefit, and she received help from Office for the Aging for other benefits.

Success Story: Accessing Government Benefits

Department of Labor and ID.me:
- A man in his 50s was laid off and struggled to apply for unemployment because he lacked the resources and skills needed to be verified with ID.me.

Continued Assistance:
- A librarian contacted our program and asked if a tech mentor could attend his next appointment.

Resolution:
- His application was approved after his identity was verified. He was assisted in setting up his direct deposit and tax withholding with NYSDOL.

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Questions?

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