

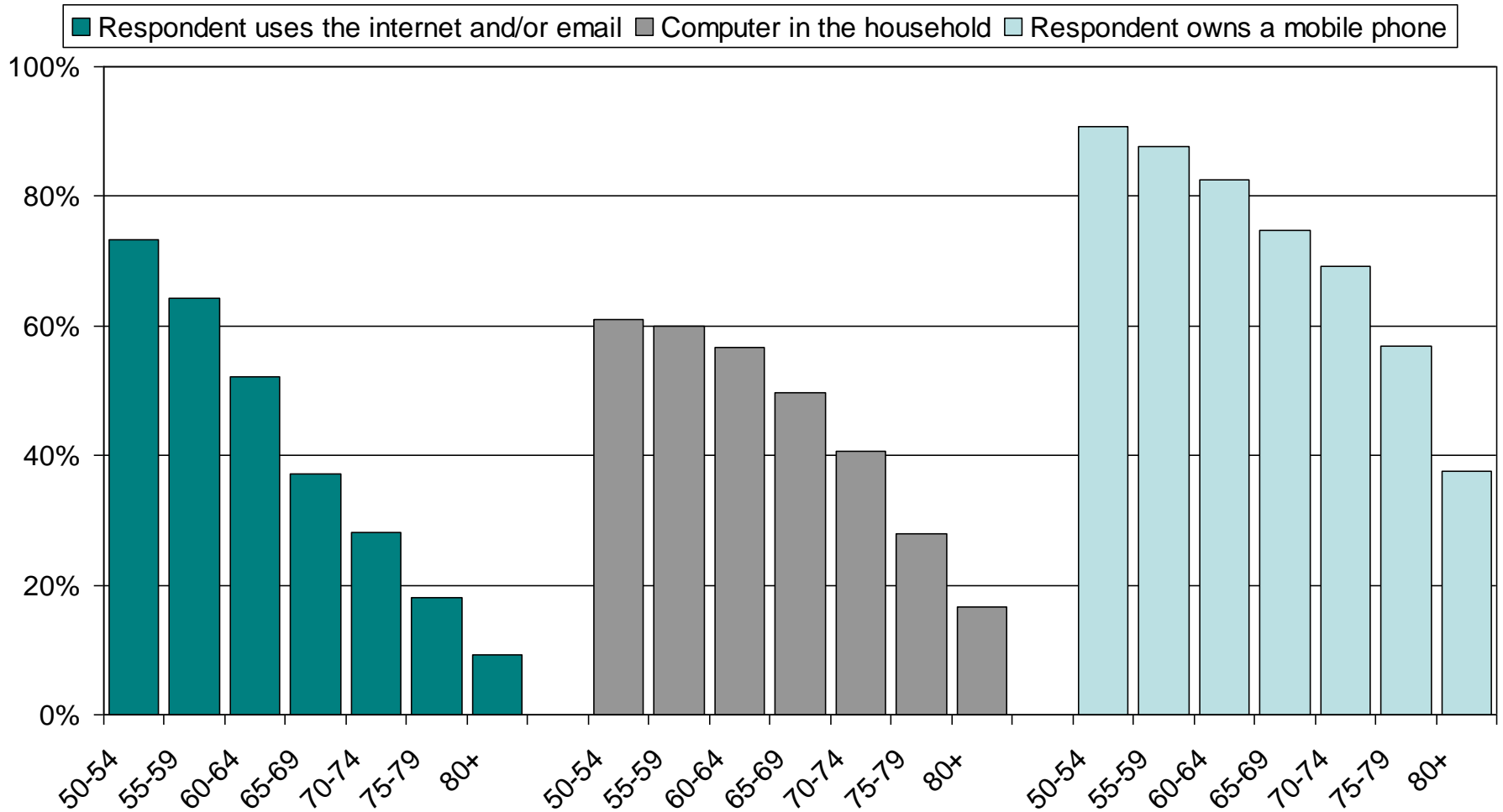
Ageing and everyday interactions with technology: Habits, material culture and changing social values

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The Inter/Generational Dynamics study

- How inter/ generational dynamics are related both to people's experiences of personal ageing and to their understandings of socio-cultural change (e.g. technology)
- English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) survey data
- In-depth interview data
- Focus group data

Ownership and use of technology drops with age



Too old?

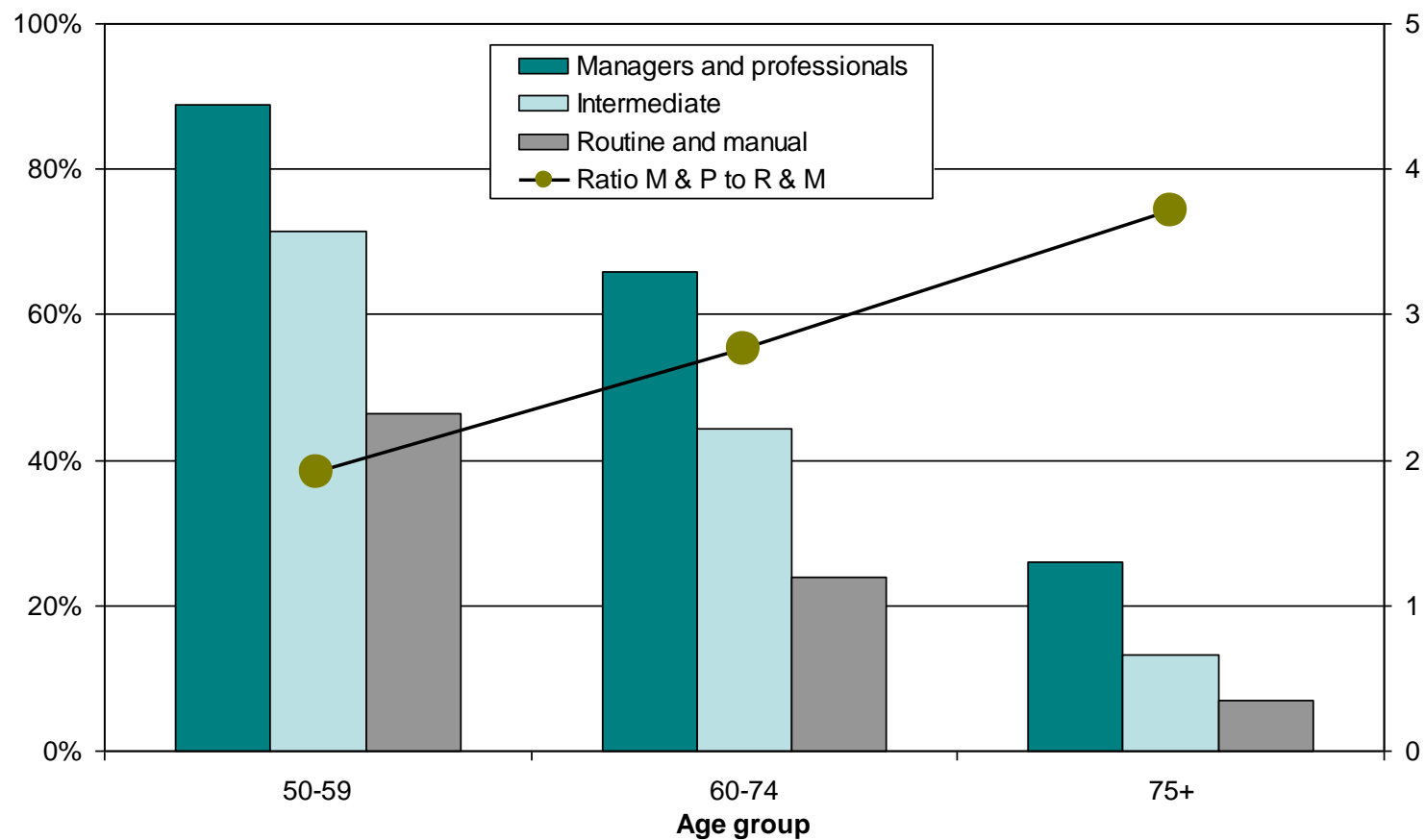
'We're behind the times' ... 'computers and all that' ... 'it's hard cos we're older' ... 'when you're older you can't do it cos your mind is here, there and everywhere' (FG1)

'Technology is alright for those in their 50s but if you're in your 70s it's a bit late. You know what you want to know and that's enough. Computers are just a headache'(FG1)

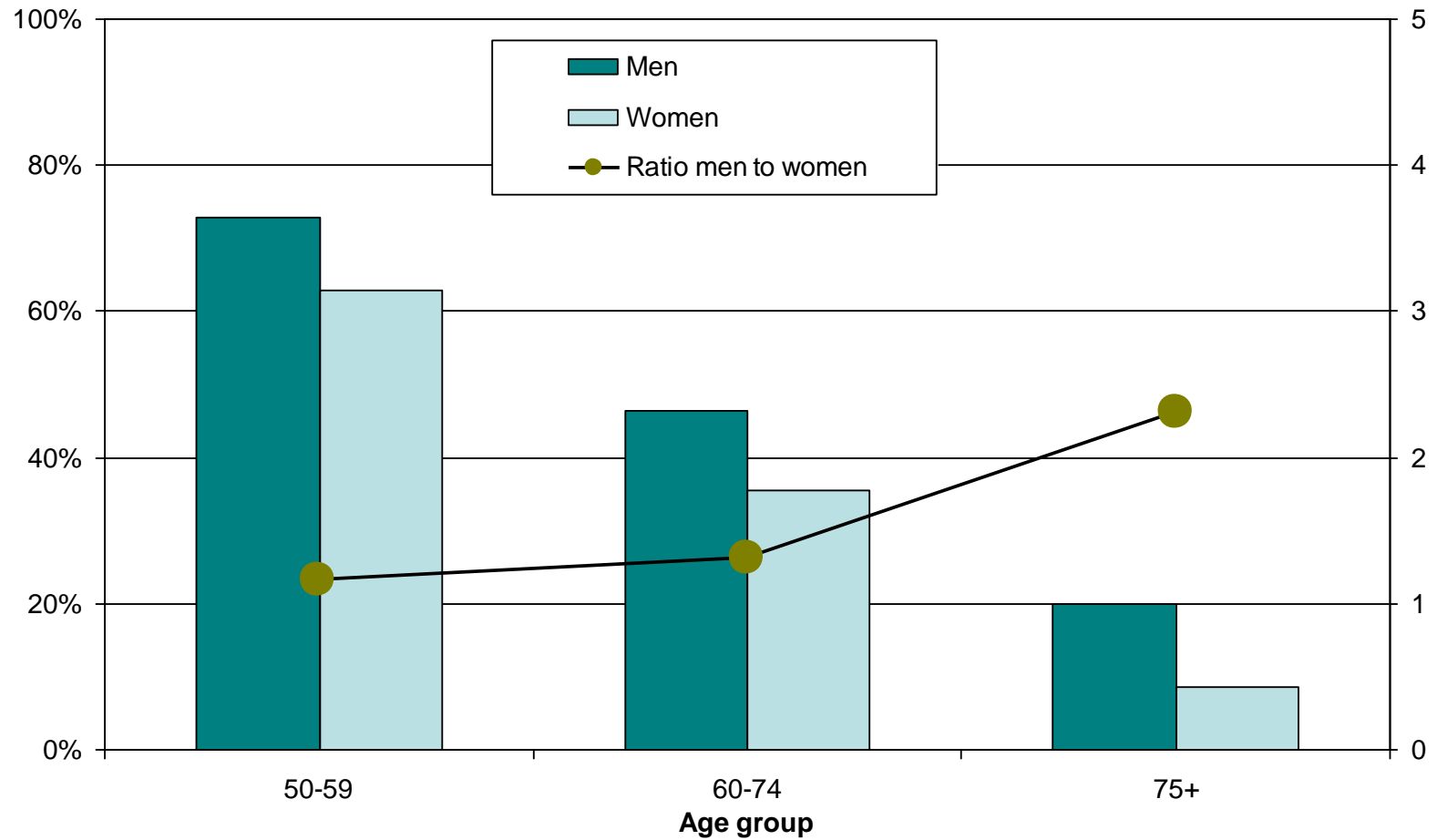
'You've got to have a good memory [to use technology]' (FG1)

Elizabeth: 'He [husband] can't cope with all this new stuff and people think he knows all about it and everything's changed in that way. But he is an engineer, he's got an engineer's brain but even he gets a bit foxed and says, oh, you know I don't know what that's doing. [. . .] now he's lost the, the impetus really to, to do too much. So he used to like gadgets.'

Occupational class, age and use of internet and/or email



Gender, age and use of internet and/or email



The habituated self

- Bourdieu's theory of habitus i.e. objective structures produce sets of dispositions that are internalised by people
 - People in similar social locations (e.g. social class) share the same habitus
 - Our habitus is embodied and largely unconscious = difficult to change
- The way that we structure things and places reflects the same underlying order or pattern of organization as our habitus
- We gain a practical mastery over both the conceptual and the material world (e.g. using implements, knowing how 'things are done')
- Generational habitus?

Old habits die hard – no need for new ones

- Interviewer: Would you use it [the computer] for shopping?
- Elizabeth: No. [. . .] I would do it if I needed to because I couldn't get out but not from choice. I like going out shopping on the hoof. Pick up all the bargains. **I've been doing that all my life.**
- Gareth: MP3s and that lot, we don't use. I don't even know exactly what they are. I-pods, don't use. That's not to say we never will but **we've got no need at the moment.** Mobile phones, I've been dragged kicking and screaming into having a mobile phone. I very rarely use it.
- Interviewer: I'm wondering if you own many gadgets or technological things.
- Louise: Not really. No, **I manage without them**, so I didn't bother. I think I probably could cope if I wanted.

The material self

- Things are not superficial: Our material relationships with things help constitute who we are (British or Spanish, male or female, old or young)

'... material culture matters because objects create subjects much more than the other way around.' (Miller, 2008: 287)
- Objects habituate us, and by so doing they 'command' a particular attitude in us and prompt us to certain behaviours (Miller, 2010: 51, 94)
- By interacting with material culture, individuals grow up 'assuming the norms that we call culture' (Miller, 2010: 53)
- Culture comes from material objects, though we tend to be unaware of this – however, older people seem to be very much aware of the impact that technology is having on culture

Changing values

- 'Young people talking on mobile phones so that everyone can hear... **they don't care** ... talking to themselves walking round the supermarket' (FG1)
- '**rude youngsters** who come to your house and are on the mobile phone' ... 'they could turn off their phone on the way in. Why go visit someone if you want to chat on the mobile?' (FG1)
- 'Young people talking loudly rubbish into their mobile phones. No proper conversation, a load of nothing ... when I hear them on the bus ... **You don't start having a conversation in public**. I don't want everybody hearing what I'm saying'(FG2)

Not just gadgets

- Even many of the self-confessed 'techno-phobes' *did* use technology but on their own terms
 - People create their own cultural aesthetic or overall cosmology out of the different potentials they have on offer in terms of material things (Miller, 2008: 203, 294)
- Technology is more than just learning how to use gadgets; connected to fundamental questions around selfhood and culture
 - Technology might feel alien to a person's (established) sense of self or how the world should work