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Self-assessed Internet skills of long-term unemployed persons in Finland

Rehabilitation Foundation in Finland developed in recent project (in Finnish, Laasanen & al., 2019) an enhanced personal employment support model for long-term unemployed persons. One essential element was to understand what kind of digital skills the participants had, especially using Internet. Understanding that helped the project team to provide targeted support both from the interest and need perspective.

The digital skills analysis was based on the framework created by van Deursen and Helsper (2014). They have developed a set of 35 items and factors to measure Internet skills, grouped under five themes. The framework was tested in the Netherlands and UK.

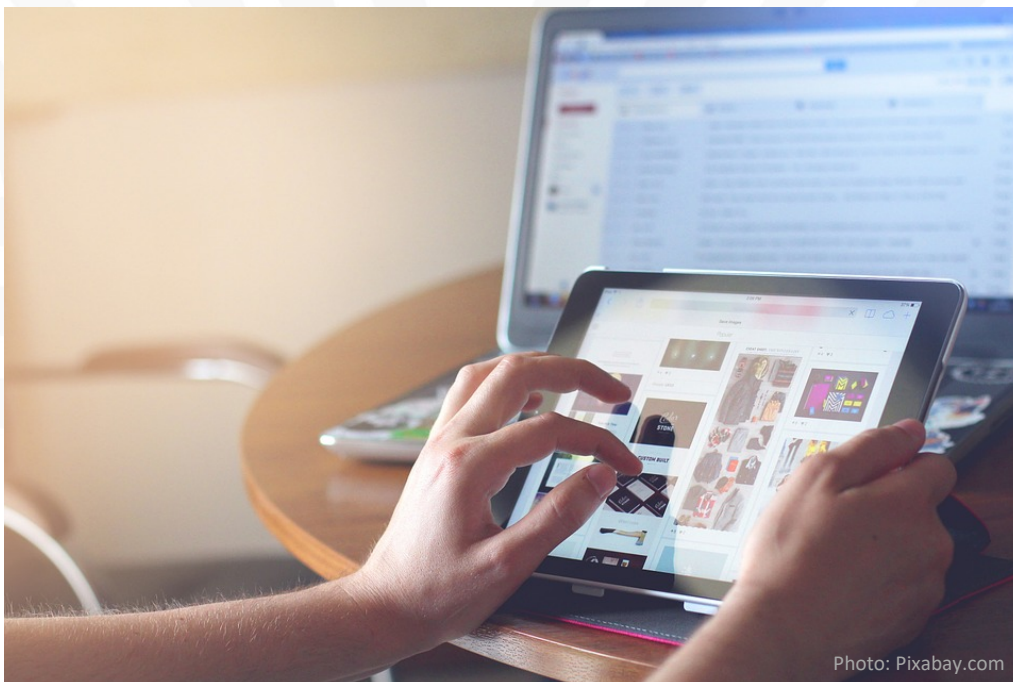


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#unemployment
#digitalskills
#selfassessment
#internet
#internetskills

Key findings

- Long-term unemployed persons are most certain about the operational Internet skills.
- They are least comfortable in creating new content in Internet.
- Unemployed persons need more support in developing their self-confidence in using Internet, not that much in technical skills.
- The result of the study is well in line with the similar study made in the Netherlands.

Framework

The five group of skills were (definitions by van Deursen and Helsper 2014, Finnish translations were used in the study)

1. Operational

- I know how to open downloaded files
- I know how to download/save a photo I found online
- I know how to use shortcut keys (e.g. CTRL-C for copy, CTRL-S for save)
- I know how to open a new tab in my browser
- I know how to bookmark a website
- I know where to click to go to a different webpage
- I know how to complete online forms
- I know how to upload files
- I know how to adjust privacy settings
- I know how to connect to a WIFI network

2. Information navigation

- I find it hard to decide what the best keywords are to use for online searches
- I find it hard to find a website I visited before
- I get tired when looking for information online
- Sometimes I end up on websites without knowing how I got there
- I find the way in which many websites are designed confusing
- All the different website layouts make working with the internet difficult for me
- I should take a course on finding information online
- Sometimes I find it hard to verify information I have retrieved

3. Social

- I know which information I should and shouldn't share online
- I know when I should and shouldn't share information online
- I am careful to make my comments and behaviors appropriate to the situation I find myself in online
- I know how to change who I share content with (e.g. friends, friends of friends or public)
- I know how to remove friends from my contact lists
- I feel comfortable deciding who to follow online (e.g. on services like Twitter or Tumblr)

4. Creative

- I know how to create something new from existing online images, music or video

Study group

- Size: 24
- Age: 25-64
- Gender:
13 men, 11 women

Study setup

- As some of the participants in the study group were uncertain with their English skills, all items and factors were translated into Finnish, following original meaning as closely as possible.
- Project participants self-assessed the items using simple Internet survey tool.
- Answers were collected during January-September 2018.

- I know how to make basic changes to the content that others have produced
- I know how to design a website
- I know which different types of licenses apply to online content
- I would feel confident putting video content I have created online
- I know which apps/software are safe to download
- I am confident about writing a comment on a blog, website or forum
- I would feel confident writing and commenting online

5. Mobile

- I know how to install apps on a mobile device
- I know how to download apps to my mobile device
- I know how to keep track of the costs of mobile app use

Results and considerations

Not surprisingly, operational skills were assessed to be strongest, closely followed by social skills. Information navigation and creative skill were most uncertain (Figure 1).

The results guided us in the project to give more support for the study group in information search and content creation. We also found out that guidance how to use social media (especially in job search) was necessary, though the participants answered that they master it well.

When working with the study group, it was quite clear that this kind of self-assessment was positively biased. We noticed that participants estimated easily their skills to be better than what they actually were.

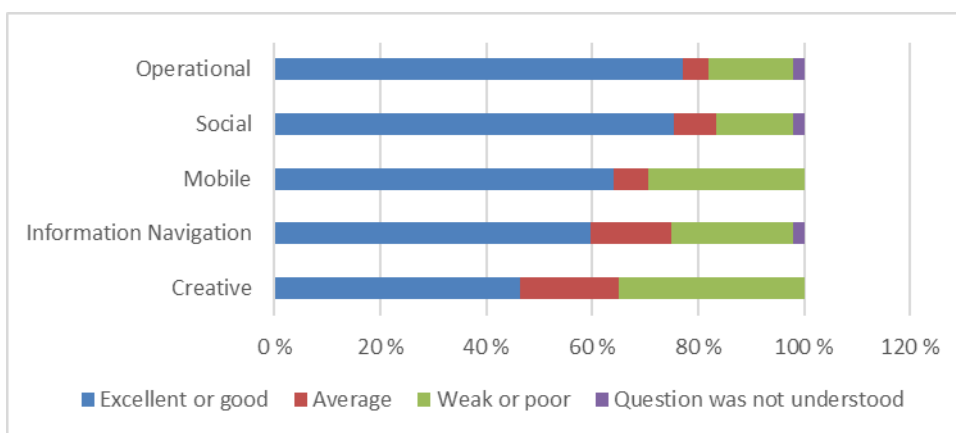


Figure 1: Self-assessed Internet skills of the long-term unemployed persons in KUTU project.

Comparison with the Dutch findings

The results were compared with the analysis by van Deursen and Helsper (Figure 2). The outcome of the assessment was remarkably similar to the results they got in their study in respect to the same socio-economic group, i.e. unemployed persons in the Netherlands, thought the sample size in our study was much smaller than in the Dutch study.

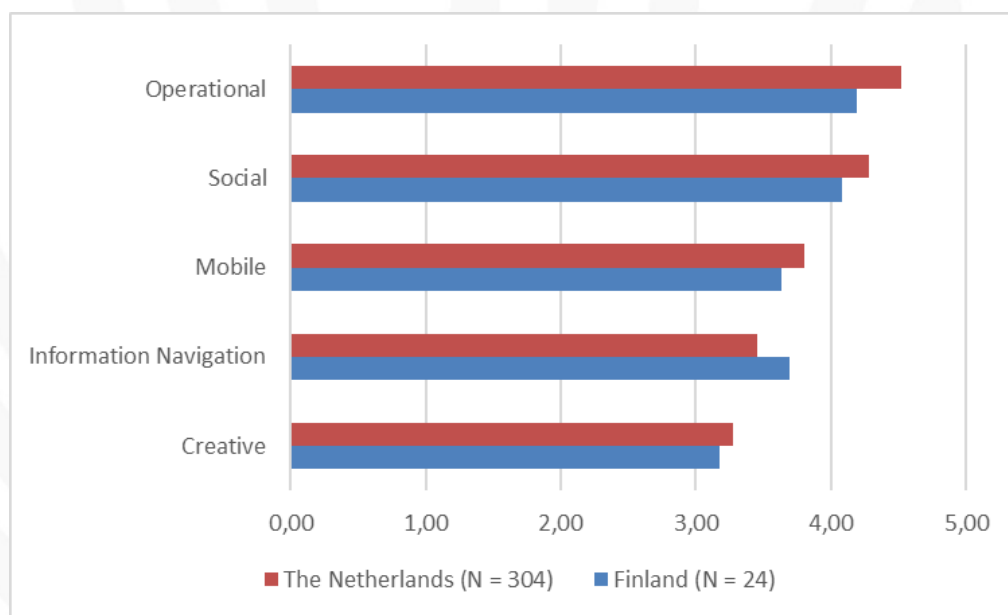


Figure 2: Comparison of the self-assessed Internet skills of unemployed persons in the Netherlands and in Finland.

References

- Van Deursen, A.J.A.M., Helsper, E.J. & Eynon, R. (2014). Measuring Digital Skills. From Digital Skills to Tangible Outcomes project report. Available at: www.oii.ox.ac.uk/research/projects/?id=112
- Laasanen O, Boltar L, Liimatainen A-K, Forssén S (2019) Tuetun työllistymisen malli pitkäaikaistyöttömille. Kuntouttavan työn uudistajat (KUTU)-hankkeen loppuraportti. Kuntoutussäätiön työselosteita 58/2019. <https://kuntoutussaatio.fi/assets/files/2019/04/KUTU-ty%C3%B6seloste-58.pdf>

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