

Recent research had indicated clear links between social isolation and loneliness, and a host of negative consequences, including poor mental and physical health, cognitive decline, and even increased mortality risk. These consequences make clear that social isolation is a significant and urgent public health concern that requires attention and action. Increasingly, researchers have begun to explore the role technology can play in reducing social isolation and increasing social support. This symposium contains five talks that address this question directly, presenting a nuanced picture of the potential effects of technology on well-being among older adults. The first presentation will highlight the potential positive side of internet use on wellbeing using longitudinal data from the Health and Retirement Study. The next talk explores how the internet can support older adults undergoing significant life transitions. Importantly, the link between internet use and well-being appears to be context-dependent, with internet use being associated with positive or negative effects depending on other contextual factors. This presentation is followed by another, finding that technology use can have varying effects depending on how and what the technology is used for. This is followed by a presentation that directly compares technology-based communication to in-person communication, and the different effects of each on well-being. The session concludes with a presentation on how novel robotic technology might provide emotional and social support. In answer to the question of whether technology can reduce social isolation and loneliness, and improve social support: It's complicated.

#### INTERNET USE AND LONELINESS OF OLDER ADULTS OVER TIME: THE MEDIATION EFFECT OF SOCIAL CONTACT

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Internet is increasingly popular among older adults and have changed interpersonal interactions. However, it remains controversial whether older people are more or less lonely with internet use. This paper tests the longitudinal association of internet use and loneliness among older people. One pathway that explains the association, the mediation effect of social contact, was examined. Data from the 2006, 2010 and 2014 waves of Health and Retirement Study was used. Hierarchical liner modeling results showed internet use was related to decreased loneliness over 12-year period of time ( $b=-0.044$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Internet use was associated with more social contact with family and friends overtime ( $b=0.261$ ,  $p<.001$ ), social contact was related to less perceived loneliness longitudinally ( $b=0.097$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The total effect of internet use on loneliness is  $-0.054$  and the mediated effect is  $-0.025$ . The findings imply that online activities can be effective for reducing loneliness for older people through increased social contact.

#### INTERNET USE AND SOCIAL ISOLATION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LIFE TRANSITIONS

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Social isolation has emerged as a significant public health risk for older people, and can be triggered by a number of life transitions in old age, such as retirement, bereavement, and divorce. Using the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), the current study aims to examine how internet use is associated with significant life transitions in marital and employment status in a longitudinal analysis. Results showed that using the internet was associated with lower social isolation and depression for people who became separated or divorced, but no significant interaction was observed for people who became widowed. On the other hand, becoming unemployed and using the internet was associated with more depressive symptoms. The results indicate that the link between psychological well-being and use of internet differs depending on the context of life transitions and may not have universal benefits for reducing social isolation.

#### THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY: EXAMINING OUTCOMES OF TECHNOLOGY USE AMONG OLDER ADULTS

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Older adults are increasingly using information and communication technologies (ICTs) to communicate with social ties, gather information to make decisions, and for entertainment purposes. Research is increasingly showing that using ICTs has a range of potential benefits for older adults. However, less research examines the potential negative outcomes of ICT use for older adults. Data from a nationally representative sample of older adults in the United States is used to examine positive and negative outcomes of ICT use. Traditional well-being and social connection outcomes are examined as well as new stressors associated with mobile phone use. Our findings suggest that ICT use has varying effects on older adults, depending upon the type, level, and purposes of use. Implications are discussed for entities seeking to encourage ICT use to enhance health and quality of life among older adults.

#### SOCIAL INTERACTIONS AND WELL-BEING: THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION METHOD

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Given the increased usage of technology for social interactions, it is important to consider whether the method of communication makes a difference in one's daily well-being. We conducted a diary study, over seven days with 142 participants, to examine the role that communication method (in-person, phone, technology) plays in daily stress exposure, stress reactivity, and positive and negative affect among adults ages 22 to 94. Multilevel modeling results revealed that on days with higher use of technology (text, video, internet) communication than their weekly average, individuals had more negative outcomes (greater stress exposure and negative affect). On days with more in-person communication than their weekly average, individuals had more positive affect. On days with more phone communication than their weekly average, individuals had less negative affect. The discussion highlights the benefits of in-person and phone communications for well-being, while also considering the