

J.L.H. BIRKLAND. *How is older adult ICT-use influenced by work status?* *Gerontechnology* 2012;11(2):154; doi:10.4017/gt.2012.11.02.272.00 **Purpose** The purpose of this study was to understand how information and communication technologies (ICTs) are used in work and retirement by older adults of the younger half of the Lucky Few generation (born from 1936-1946 in the United States).¹ Previous research has shown that older adults feel that their ICT-use increased following retirement, but retirees have not been compared to those still working². **Method** An intensive interpretive comparative case study^{3,4} was completed with older adults and members of their social networks to understand what, how, and why older adults were using ICTs in various areas of their lives including work, leisure, family, and community. Ten cases were completed. Each case was comprised of 3 two-hour interviews with an older adult and 2-3 one-hour interviews with friends, family, and coworkers close to the older adult. Cases were compared to understand if there were differences between males and females, education levels, and other emerging factors. Older adults ranged from very savvy tech users to individuals who did not know how to operate a computer. Ten more cases are planned. **Results & Discussion** Older adults had diverse work trajectories, with many of the participants having several distinct careers. This was particularly true of women in the sample, several of which had returned to work or changed careers after divorce. Of those who were working part-time, both had left or retired from high-ranking office-based careers and were currently employed in retail and serving jobs. Preliminary results suggest that older adults are often exposed to ICTs at work, and also through their working partners. Working older adults tended to have the greatest use of ICTs, particularly those who were self-employed. They were more likely to be using videoconferencing, internet purchasing, smart phones, and work-specific software. Those who were retired were split in their exposure to ICTs in the workplace: all had used the phone extensively within their work but only some had used the computer, internet, and email. The older adult's exposure to computers in the workplace was often highly related to their type of position, with those who had administrative assistants being less likely to have had computer exposure during their work. All retired individuals expressed their dislike of chatting on the phone, based upon their heavy use of the phone during their working careers. Women who stayed at home primarily became exposed to computer technology through their working spouses. Individuals who were retired or had stayed at home (homemakers) were more likely to express frustration with ICTs and their lack of computer skills than those who were still working. Retirees and homemakers tended to rely more heavily on friends and family members for technological help.

References

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Table 1. Work status and gender of current participants

Work Status		Gender	
		Males	Females
Retired		1	3
Working	Part-Time	1	1
	Full-Time	1	1
Homemaker		0	2