

C-J. CHIU, Y-H. HU, Y-C. YU. **Surfing the net in 50+ adults in Taiwan: Change in level and purpose of Internet use in Taiwan 2004-2012.** *Gerontechnology* 2014;13(2):190; doi:10.4017/gt.2014.13.02.158.00 **Purpose** Web-based services have the potential to improve quality of life for older adults in a variety of ways; however, a digital divide hampers the potential for older adults to engage effectively with online services<sup>1</sup>. The digital divide is not only a matter of age and education, but may also be related to geographic area. Previous studies on this topic focus primarily on studying which groups of people do or do not use the Internet, and less on assessing the number of online activities in which people engage<sup>2</sup>. To increase the adoption of web technology among middle aged and older adults, it is necessary to comprehensively understand the online behaviors and activities of adults from heterogeneous backgrounds<sup>3</sup>. The present study examined changes in the level and purpose of Internet use by middle-aged and older adults in Taiwan from 2004 to 2012 by their place of residence (i.e., northern, central, southern, and eastern Taiwan or offshore islands), to explore factors promoting Internet use, and to see if factors influencing Internet use differ by region. **Method** Data were drawn from the Individuals and Households Digital Opportunity survey (2004-2012)<sup>4</sup>, which is a nationally representative telephone interview survey of persons aged  $\geq 12$  in Taiwan. Data from a total of 623-1,898 adults aged 50+ in each annual survey were analyzed. Internet use was measured with 7 online activities, including e-mail use, connecting/communicating with others, shopping, financial work, multimedia use or games, searching for information, and reading government announcements. Regression analysis was used to explore the geographic divide in Internet use in middle/older adults. **Results & Discussion** (i) The adoption of Internet use in middle-aged and older adults increased from 19% to 32% during 2004-2012. (ii) A digital divide remains across all demographics, with the level of Internet use increasing in northern Taiwan more rapidly than in other areas. (iii) The purpose of Internet use changed over time, with shopping and connecting/communicating with others increasing most dramatically. (iv) Younger age, higher level of education, living together with a person who uses Internet, continuing employment, and living in northern or southern Taiwan were positively associated with higher levels of Internet use.

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