

R.M. BERINGER, G.M. GUTMAN, B. DE VRIES. *Internet use among LGBT seniors in Canada. Gerontechnology 2016;15(suppl):72s*; doi:10.4017/gt.2016.15.s.913.00 **Purpose** A myth persists that seniors do not use information and communication technologies (ICT). Statistics on Internet usage by Canadian seniors are scant and even less is known about ICT use among sub-populations. This study explores the level of engagement with ICT in the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) seniors and reflects on the development of an LGBT End-of-life planning website. **Method** Focus groups were held with LGBT older adults in Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax between August 2014 and March 2015 (49 women, 40 men, 2 identified as other, M=67.8yrs, age range: 55-89 years). Participants completed a questionnaire where they provided information regarding ICT use. We examined our participants level of engagement and compared it to existing Internet and social media use data. We also examined level and patterns of engagement of users of our newly developed LGBT End-of-Life Conversations Website¹. **Results & Discussion** Table 1 summarizes data regarding hours of Internet use per day and level of engagement with social media among our participants. The table is arranged into two age groupings so that we may compare our results to those found in the general population age 65 years and up. In comparison to Smith² where it is reported that 59% of seniors aged 65 and over use the Internet, 89.1% of our sample reported using the Internet. Similarly, 54.7% of our sample used social media in comparison to 27% of the general adult population aged 65 and up². Sum and colleagues have reported that Internet usage is associated with an increased sense of community³. Given the high levels of reported use among our participants one goal in the development of our website was to build community among older LGBT adults. Specifically, we hoped to provide a forum for an ongoing virtual conversation by incorporating a message board into our web design. Interestingly, in spite of the overall success of our website in terms of site visits and praise from community members, activity on our message board has been very low. Unfortunately, we had invested in a platform (message board) that is nearing the end of a 10-year decline⁴. Our research suggests older LGBT people are robust Internet/social media users.

References

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Table 1. Internet and social media use

Parameter	Frequency, %	
Age, years	55-64	65-89
INTERNET USE, HOURS / DAY		
0	7.4	10.9
<1	22.2	23.9
1 or 2	44.4	43.5
3 or 4	7.4	15.2
>4	18.5	6.5
Count	27	46
SOCIAL NETWORKING		
Not at all	31.4	45.3
Just a little	8.6	17.0
Somewhat	17.1	18.9
Very much	42.9	18.9
Count	35	53