

Technology to support leisure activities

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Purpose There has been a great deal of research on the potential of technology to support older adults in their performance of Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs), and this has been a major focus of CREATE over the past two decades. Supporting ADLs and IADLs through technology is an important and urgent goal as the world navigates the challenges and opportunities associated with population aging. There has been substantially less research, however, on exploring technology solutions that support hobbies, leisure activities, and new learning opportunities. These activities fall under the category of what has been termed Enhanced Activities of Daily Living (EADLs) (Rogers et al., 1998). This lack of attention is unfortunate, as quality of life and well-being are determined by more than just one's ability to manage everyday tasks related to independent living. EADLs enhance and enrich the lives of older adults and are associated with better mental and physical health (Hughes et al., 2010; Kuykendall et al., 2015; Menec, 2003). An overview will be presented of research CREATE has conducted with the goals of understanding and supporting older adults' performance of technology-based leisure activities. This research began during CREATE III and has continued through CREATE IV, spanning a total of 10 years. **Method** Many of these studies have involved videogaming, where there exists a substantial age-related digital divide. Currently in the U.S. only 24% of older adults (65+) play video games (Figure 1). CREATE research has evaluated older adults' attitudes and game experiences through survey and research studies, and has even recorded longitudinal gameplay over a year-long period in a large (N = 150) sample of older adults. These studies have provided insights into understanding this digital divide. **Results and Discussion** A number of lessons have been learned regarding aging and gaming: 1) With proper training and support, many older adults can become active and long-term gamers; 2) Older adults' game preferences are varied, just as game preferences differ among younger adults; 3) However, in general, there are some consistent patterns found by CREATE and other research teams, including an aversion to violent content by older adults, and a preference for games that do not depend on quick reflexes; and 4) Video games appear to have the potential to enhance older adults' engagement with technology in general. How these findings can be applied to support technology-based leisure activities and leisure activities in general will be expanded upon.

References

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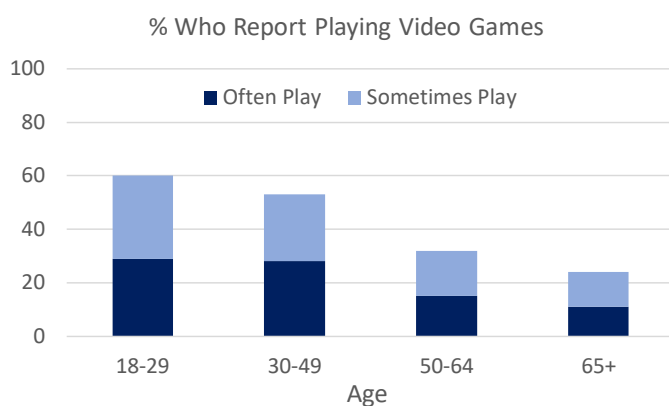


Figure 1. Percent of older adults who report often or sometimes playing video games as a function of age. Source: Pew Research Center, 2017