Plain Language Statement

School of Computing and Information Systems
The University of Melbourne

THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Project: Using digital technologies to maintain the social engagement of older adults living independently: experiences from COVID-19

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Introduction
Thank you for your interest in participating in this research project. The following pages will provide you with further information about the project, so that you can decide if you would like to take part in this research.

Please take the time to read this information carefully. You may ask questions about anything you don't understand or want to know more about.

Your participation is voluntary. If you don't wish to take part, you don't have to. If you begin participating, you can also stop at any time.

What is this research about?
This study aims to investigate how older adults have been using technologies to maintain social engagement, especially during COVID-19 lockdowns, and to understand their experiences and perceptions of maintaining social engagement through digital tools.

What will I be asked to do?
If you choose to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview with one of the researchers. The researcher will ask questions about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected your social life, your experiences of using technologies to maintain social engagement, and what factors affected your experiences. You will be also asked to share photos to illustrate your use of technology if needed. Before the interview, you will be asked to fill out a short questionnaire collecting information such as age, living status and experience of technologies. The interview and questionnaire together will take about 1 hour.

What are the possible benefits?
You will have the opportunity to share your thoughts about your experiences in using digital technologies to maintain the social engagement of older adults living independently. By doing this, you will be helping researchers to gain a better understanding of what needs to be considered in the design of digital systems or programs for older people living independently. You will receive a $20 gift card at the end of the interview as a thank you for your participation.

What are the possible risks?
There are minimal risks associated with participation. It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable or unsure of how to answer a question. If this is the case, please let the

researcher know, and the interview can be paused or stopped. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions, and your answers are not being judged. All information related to your identity (including names and photos with faces) will be de-identified by using pseudonyms and obfuscation in any reports and publications based on the finding of the research.

Do I have to take part?
No. Participation is completely voluntary. You can withdraw (quit) at any time. You can also ask us to destroy any data that has been collected prior to you withdrawing from the study if you wish.

Will I hear about the results of this project?
Here is a link to the project: http://go.unimelb.edu.au/w5bi. We will add a short summary of the findings to the web page once they are available. If you have difficulty reading on computers, we can also send you a printed copy of the results once requested.

What will happen to information about me?
The researcher will protect the confidentiality of your data. The data will be stored in a password-protected computer and will only be used for this project. You will be referred to by pseudonyms in any published work. Any references that might allow someone to guess your identity will be removed. The data will be retained for five years after the last date of publication. The data will then be destroyed under university regulations.

Where can I get further information?
If you would like more information about the project, please contact the primary researcher: Wei Zhao (wzhao10@student.unimelb.edu.au).

Who can I contact if I have any concerns about the project?
This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Email: [HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au.](mailto:HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au) All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence, please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

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