



Never Too Old For Facebook: Identifying the Information and Technology Needs of Older Adults in the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston



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What We Learned

OLLI members were actively engaged with modern technology. Almost all survey respondents owned a cell phone or smart phone (97%) and/or a computer or tablet (96%). Both users and non-users wanted to learn more about a variety of topics—from ID theft to Facebook to finding the most economical E-Reader.

Background

- OLLI recognizes that technology provides opportunities for learning and socialization.
- OLLI's Technology Committee wanted to assess members' interest and need for courses and brown bags about the use of technology to enhance everyday life.

Purpose & Aims

The primary aims of the OLLI technology survey were to:

- Determine members' interest in, ownership of, and desire for training in the use of digital technology.
- Assess demand for technology-related courses, brown bag lectures, workshops and Special Interest Groups.
- Identify new opportunities for distance learning.

Sample and Methods

- About 1000 participants in U-Mass Boston's OLLI were surveyed between 10/26/2012 and 11/10/2012.
- The online survey was made available to participants who receive the OLLI newsletter via email (n=729). Paper surveys were mailed to the remaining members (n=271).
- About 45% (n=446) returned the 42-question survey.

Table 1: Users of Technology and the Internet, By Gender

	Male (n=81)	Female (n=347)
HD or Internet-Enabled TV	74%	66%
Digital Camera	70%	78%
Email	97%	94%
Reading the News	65%	49%
Facebook	35%	42%
Blog	23%	12%

Results

22% of respondents had been the victims of ID theft. Victims were more likely to be male and to be confident users of all types of technology.

Figure 1: Interest in Security Training, by Experience with ID Theft.

The desire to learn more about...

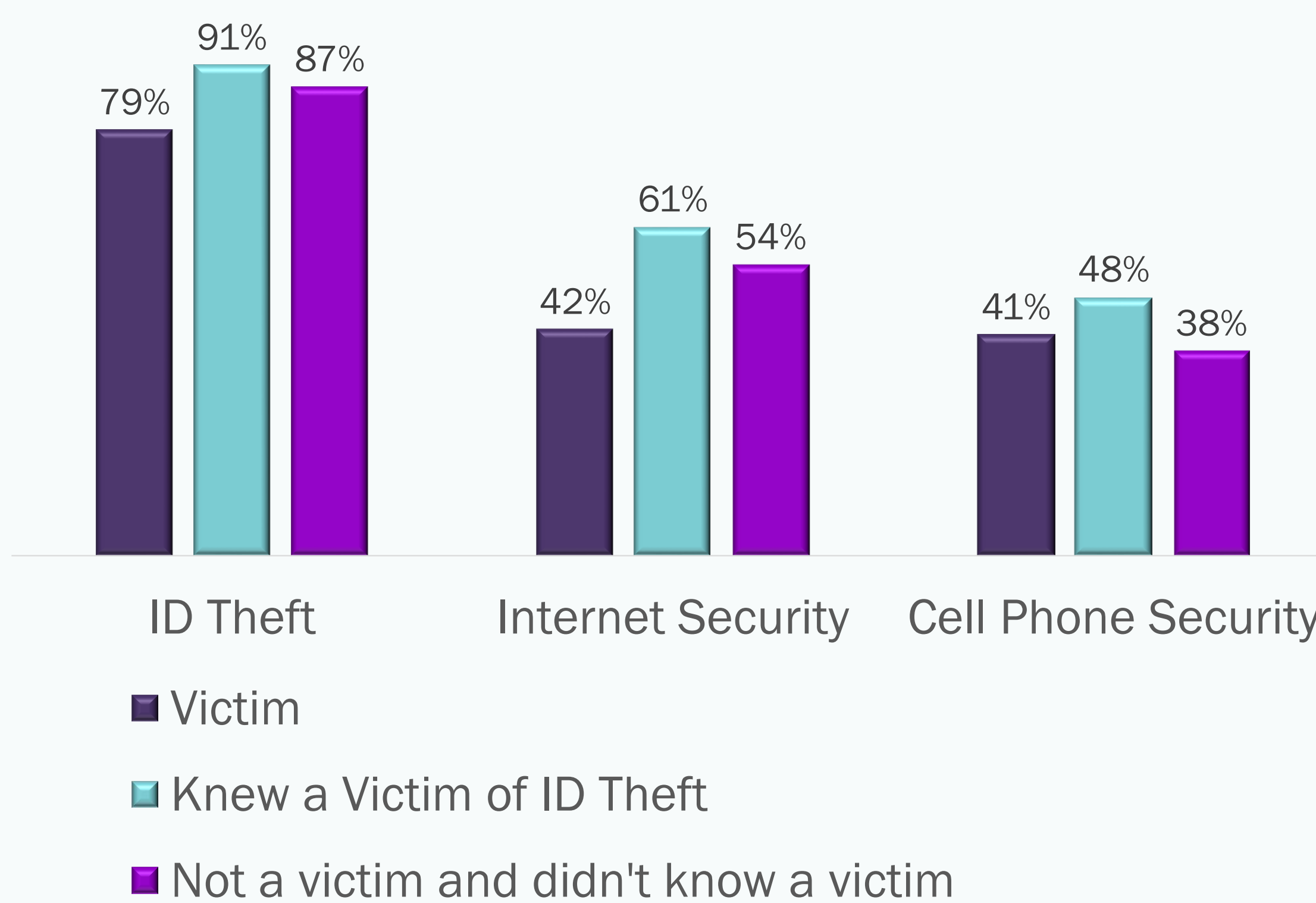
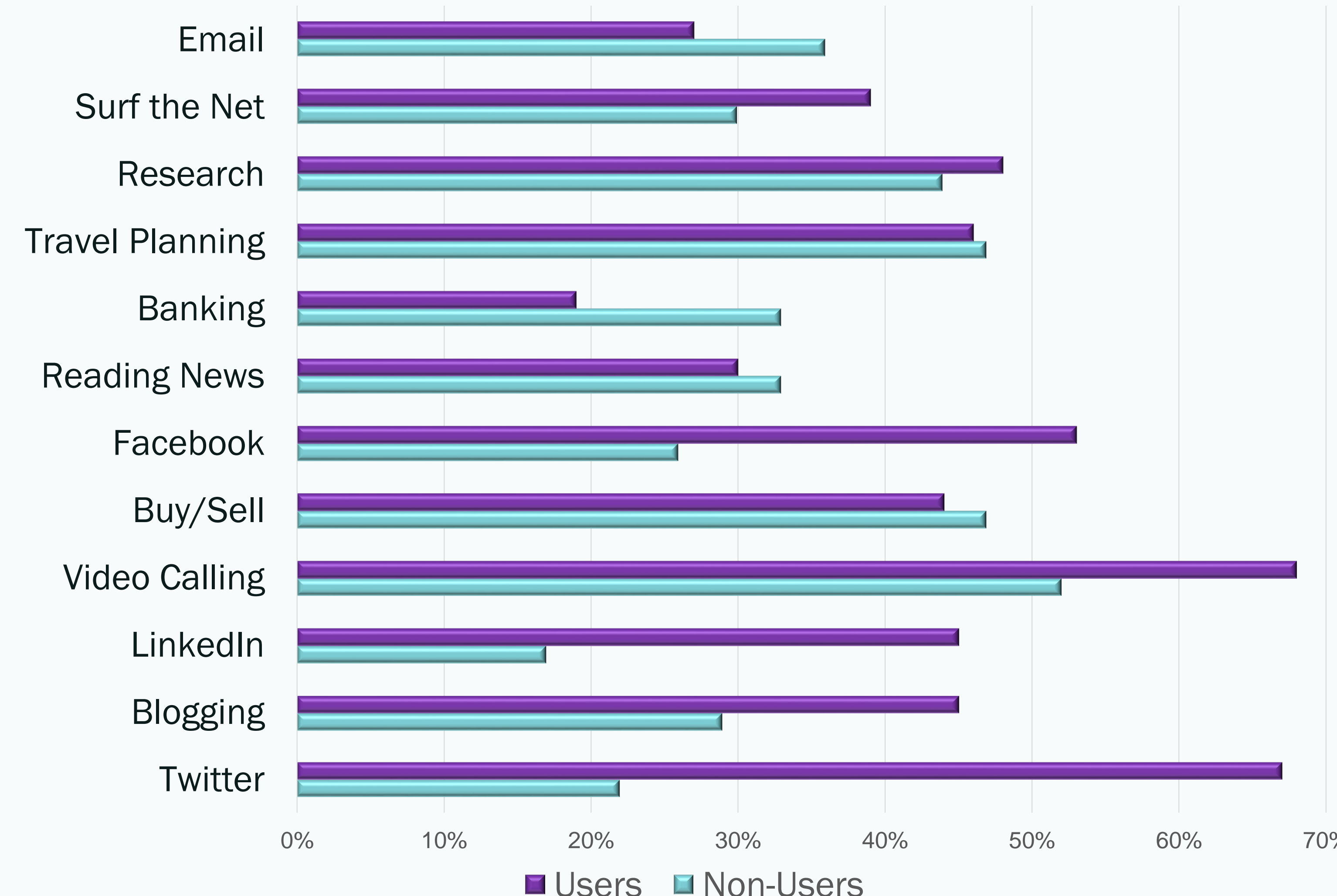


Figure 2: Desire to Participate in Learning Opportunities by Users and Non-Users of Internet Applications



Meeting the Need

Since completion of the OLLI technology survey, the Technology Committee has

- Offering third-party courseware such as Mango Languages, an Internet-based program that offers computer-based language learning to OLLI members.
- Webinars on art appreciation, U.S. history, and Medicare.
- Increased the number of Brown Bags that focus on technology topics. Talks have included: Cyber Security, Social Networking, and use of assistive devices to enable technology use by those with physical limitations.
- Introduced course offerings for current users of technology. (e.g. advanced I-Pad classes added to offerings for beginners).

Discussion

- OLLI members have a keen interest in all aspects of technology—from using a tablet or e-reader to learning how to use GPS technology.
- Technology users were most interested in learning how to use their digital cameras and social networking more effectively while non-users wanted to know about laptop computers, smartphones, tablets, on-line travel planning, and buying/selling on the Internet.
- More than half of users and non-users were interested in learning more about photo-editing software and on-line communication, such as SKYPE.

Limitations

- Survey was limited to OLLI participants.
- 51% of online surveys were completed while only 27% of paper surveys were returned. Computer users are disproportionately represented in the survey.
- Cross-sectional design prohibits analysis of changes over time or causal effects.