00:00:07 Interviewer

So, the way I'm working this <JULIA> is I'll just go through the consent statements because you know what the study is about, you've read through that on the survey.

Then I'll just ask you for your consent and then I'll just go through just what you'd mentioned on the survey just to make sure that those details are correct.

It's very easy for us to just slip the finger and press the wrong button at times so and then we'll just go through a few questions. Does that sound OK?

00:00:40 Participant

That's OK, thank you.

00:00:50 Interviewer

And if you have, any questions about the consent then you can ask those, but they're pretty similar to the ones for the survey. Because this is an interview, I have to do it again just to just to make sure that everything is in order from an ethical perspective.

Number one. I confirm that I understand the information about the study that has been explained to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.

Number two. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I'm free to withdraw my participation within two weeks of the date of the interview without giving any reason and my data will be removed.

Number three. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications, or presentations by the researcher but my personal information will not be included and all reasonable steps will be taken to protect my anonymity when I'm involved in this project. Anonymized data will be offered to Lancaster University Archives and will be made available to genuine research for reuse.

Number four. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles, or presentations without my consent.

Number five. I understand that interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.

Number six. I understand that data will be kept according to university guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study and

Number seven. I agreed to take part in this study.

So how does that all sound <JULIA>?

00:02:29 Participant

That's grand, I agree to take part in the study.

00:02:32 Interviewer

Lovely, thank you so much for that. Now I'm just going to go through the just the general questions.

There's five, or six of them and it's just to confirm that we've captured everything correctly, so I'll just go through each of these and you can let me know if they're OK.

00:02:49 Participant

OK.

00:02:52 Interviewer

You've indicated that your age range is 65 to 74.

00:02:57 Participant

That's right, yes.

00:02:57 Interviewer

Your gender is female.

00:03:00 Participant

That's right.

00:03:01 Interviewer

You live in County Cork like myself.

00:03:04 Participant

Yes, that's right.

00:03:04 Interviewer

You live in an urban area, so I just wanted to explain that I'm taking the CSO guidelines for urban and rural.

00:03:24 Interviewer

You live with your partner or spouse.

00:03:29 Participant

Yes, my husband.

Interviewer

And your highest level of formal education, which is when you left school or college full-time is lower secondary. Is that OK?

00:03:39 Participant

Yes. I did a secretarial course after leaving in Junior cert as they call it now, it was Inter cert in my day. I did a secretarial course after that for twelve months.

00:03:54 Interviewer

OK. I did Inter cert myself, it was in 1980.

00:04:02 Participant

I was a long time before you <laughs>.

00:04:11 Interviewer

I’ll come back to the secretarial course in a moment because I think that will certainly have an interesting angle to it. So because my study is about lifelong learning and intergenerational learning I think it's important to explain what I mean for the purposes of my study by lifelong learning and what it is made up of.

00:04:44 Interviewer

And then I'll ask you <JULIA> what lifelong learning means to you, but you know, we've just talked about the formal piece of lifelong learning, so that's when we leave school. So in your case, after doing the secretarial course. Then you have non-formal learning which is usually offered by a provider, so it could be you know an evening class or night class or it could be something where a speaker is brought in to talk to a group. All of these are organised so we call these non-formal and then of course you've got informal learning and this is important as well. So for me it's the intergenerational aspect so you know what we learn from our family members younger or older and that kind of thing.

The reason I say all this is because some of the policies that I've been reading on lifelong learning all seem to be about getting people back to work and skilled in new things. And it's not really about lifelong, it seems to be about the labour market,

00:06:03 Interviewer

So I'm really interested in finding out from your perspective <JULIA> what does lifelong

learning mean to you?

00:06:06 Participant

I suppose learning more about how to use the computer, even the phone, you know the iPhones, learning more about how to do that.

We have an Active Age group here in Little Island and I'm actually the chairperson of it and we have different people in, teaching us different things.

Would that be what you mean?

00:06:37 Interviewer

Yes. I'm very, very happy that I'm getting a few through from the active retired groups. Is that the Active Retirement Association?

00:06:50 Participant

Active Retirement Association, yes.

00:07:01 Participant

So we have different speakers in, speaking to us on different things.

00:07:11 Interviewer

OK perfect and that's all, as I said, that's all non-formal, so definitely a form of lifelong learning.

00:07:19 Interviewer

OK, so the next set of questions that I have are really just to help me understand your experience with technology and devices. So, with that in mind, I'd like to hear about your experience of the secretarial course, learning to type, using a keyboard that many others might not have. How that might have affected your use of technology.

00:07:51 Interviewer

I can tell you use an iPhone. because it's coming through as an iMessage to me, so perhaps what devices you use, how long you've been using them for, what you use them for? Just that kind of thing <JULIA>, if you could share with me?

00:08:06 Participant

From when I got my first mobile phone, back that far?

00:08:13 Interviewer

Yes please. When was that?

00:08:18 Participant

That would be over 20 odd years ago.

00:08:21 Interviewer

You were there at the beginning, so, pretty much?

00:08:25 Participant

I was. If you remember the Automobile Association at the time, they were giving them out, very reasonable. So I took one. And it was big huge device. You know it was like hands free at the moment, I have one of those, so it would have been that size for the mobile.

00:08:48 Interviewer

Was that? somebody not in relation to this research, said that to me recently. Was that about keeping women safe in their cars?

00:08:58 Participant

It was, yes.

00:09:00 Interviewer

So that was sometime in the 90s I believe? I'll look it up but OK, brilliant.

00:09:03 Participant

Yeah, it would have been, yeah.

00:09:07 Interviewer

And how was that experience for you <JULIA>, back then?

00:09:11 Participant

I'm originally from Cork City, but I'm living in Little Island now so all my friends would have been in Cork City, school friends and things that I would meet up with. I just felt the road that time wasn't as built up as it is now. There was no motorway or anything, and it was just the safety aspect of having something in the car that I could contact somebody if I got broken down or a puncture or anything like that. You know?

00:09:44 Interviewer

Yes, it totally makes sense. OK, so that's how you get started. What about after that? Technology moves on. Maybe the phone doesn't work anymore, although I have to say the iPhone that I'm talking to you on is an SE and I think it's at least five years old and still going strong <laughs>.

00:10:05 Participant

Oh yeah.

00:10:05 Interviewer

So, what happened then after that, what else did you use?

00:10:11 Participant

I suppose I used television video recorders. And DVD's. Would you call those digital devices?

00:10:24 Interviewer

Yes, absolutely.

00:10:24 Participant

And then. Well, actually, years ago, would have been 20 odd years ago, I think, when my husband got a computer and now I'm very basic on it and that I can look up different things. I can send an email, get an email. Basically that would be my thing, you know, go on to look at something on YouTube.

00:10:54 Interviewer

So, for communication obviously and a little bit of entertainment by the sound of it?

00:10:58 Participant

Yes, entertainment.

00:11:04 Interviewer

With the communication side of it, certainly with regard to email, we just seem to need email for everything these days?

00:11:13 Participant

For everything, and especially for the Active Retirement Group, I would get a lot of emails and notifications of different things going on and things like that you know?

00:11:22 Interviewer

So with a group like that, and obviously you've got a communication role, how do you make contact with them? I'm thinking back as well because when there would have been the lockdown and maybe the groups couldn't meet and things like that. So, how would you have stayed in touch <JULIA> as a matter of interest?

00:11:46 Participant

I’d use the phone, communicate through the phone, basically. because we have a split group. One group would be from 60 to say 70/75 by age group and then we have another group who would be from 75 to 90 so they wouldn't understand emails.

00:12:15 Interviewer

So, on that point now <JULIA>, and this is separate (from the interview topic) and you might just think about this and maybe I can connect with you afterwards. I'm having a difficult enough time getting access to that second group that you talked about who are not online, who have no interest in email so my requests through the various retirement groups are not reaching them. The manager of Friendly Call programme from Cork City Partnership that I volunteer with daily said she'll reach out to some people who she thinks might like to talk to me about their experiences of not being online in their daily lives.

So, interview over the phone for their experience of life without technology.

If there’s any chance that maybe some of your group members might want to talk to me about this, I would really, really appreciate it.

00:13:21 Participant

I would, yes, fine.

00:13:22 Interviewer

Lovely, OK, well we'll take that offline for the moment, but it is important because we take even the basics of the mobile phone and the email for granted. And I know that there are people out there, I've only spoken to two of them, and they have family members to help them with that kind of thing.

But I'm particularly interested in people who don't have family members to help them, or basically who are not interested in technology or don't use technology for communication and that kind of thing. But anyway, I'm digressing a little bit.

00:13:52 Participant

Yes, I'm just thinking of one lady in particular now. She does have a mobile phone, but she doesn't use a computer and thing. No. She has only one daughter who's living in Waterford, so maybe she might. I’ll have a chat with her.

00:14:09 Interviewer

Would you? That would be fantastic.

At this stage, I've got ten who are online. I've only got two who are offline. If I could get four people just to give me, a perspective on the different experience because people have different motivation. For example, just not being interested, find it unnecessary, or it's too much hassle or that kind of stuff. So, look, we’ll park that.

00:14:37 Participant

Yes, there's another lady as well. I'll write down their two names to remind me and you just wanted to ring them and I just want to get this right now so I know what I'm telling them, that it's kind of a friendly chat really to know about...

00:14:53 Interviewer

Yeah, it's a friendly chat and I would like to record it and I just want to understand their experiences of not being online.

A few questions about their quality of life, their life generally without technology. It just gives me an indication of whether they are very positive about their life or maybe not so positive.

So, I will be asking like those types of questions, obviously I'm not asking anything about their digital skills, so I just want to have a chat with them about what their life is like without technology.

00:15:34 Interviewer

They're obviously active members of your group and phone serves them perfectly well. That's all I'm expecting. So, 30 minutes I would say it would take for the chat at the most <JULIA>.

00:16:22 Interviewer

There's obviously no obligation or any rush, I’m interviewing through September. I'm sorry now for digressing, but that's very important and I really appreciate it. Thank you so much.

00:16:41 Interviewer

OK, so from time to time and it happens us all somewhere with email or the phone or the computer won't turn on or any of those kind of things. Who do you usually? Who would you typically go to for help in the first instance in <JULIA>?

00:17:01 Participant

My two sons.

00:17:03 Interviewer

Great, your two sons <laughs>

What ages are they, can I ask?

00:17:07 Participant

One is 40, one is 45.

00:17:11 Interviewer

Great. They are what I am calling an adjacent generation, and the fact that you said that without hesitation just really tells me a whole lot.

Obviously they're adults so I'm interested in how that support works. Do they actually come in and look at the computer? Or do they talk you through the issues over the phone?

How does that support work for you <JULIA>?

00:17:46 Participant

We have one son because he's living in Navan and he would talk me through it.

00:17:51 Interviewer

OK.

00:17:52 Participant

And the other son, he would talk me through it or he'd pop up because he's only down in Carrigaline.

00:18:00 Interviewer

OK, perfect, and how did that work then when he couldn't pop up? So, during that lockdown period?

00:18:08 Participant

Billy, my husband is good enough. He'd work it through a little bit, you know, and if he was stuck then we would get the boys in about it after that.

00:18:22 Interviewer

And you managed to work your way through it within the family?

00:18:25 Participant

Yes, we did, we worked through it.

00:18:35 Interviewer

That's fantastic because and it's interesting to see how that happens. Sometimes you just want something fixed and be able to move forward and then other times you want to know why did this happen and how can I stop it from happening again? So, it sounds like you have good support.

00:18:47 Participant

Yes, that actually happened with my phone the other day because someone tried to hack my account on Facebook.

00:18:54 Interviewer

Oh, OK.

00:18:55 Participant

And my niece actually rang me and said “<JULIA> you want to check your phone. I think your phone has been hacked.” So I rang my son in Carrigaline then and he told me to just how to put up a message on it just to say this isn't me sending out this message. This isn't a new profile.

00:19:14 Interviewer

Yeah, well, and that's quite scary I think, isn't it?

00:19:19 Participant

It is. The only thing is I don't have any details on it as regards my age. You know some people have their date of birth, everything, their telephone number even. I don't have anything at all. I don't even have an address or what schools I went to. I don't do anything like that and I don't have a photograph of myself. It’s my two grandchildren I have on it with their parents permission.

00:19:42 Interviewer

Yeah, absolutely. And I found that interesting because when I looked through your list of self-assessment on your digital skills and confidence you disagreed that you understood how to keep yourself safe online, but what you've explained to me there <JULIA> shows me that you're a lot more careful and confident about staying safe, you know?

00:20:10 Participant

Well, I wouldn't have known anything about this, and if my niece ringing me and asking the had I been texting her on Facebook and I said no, I haven't, but she said I think somebody has been hacking with your phone.

00:20:23 Interviewer

Do you use Facebook much <JULIA>?

00:20:28 Participant

Not really, I don't know how to put anything up. I had to actually ring my husband, son in Carrigaline to find out how do I put something up, but he explained to me what to do. I was able to do it once he explained it to me.

I wouldn't. I'd make a comment on something, but that would be all, I'd never put anything up about myself on Facebook or anything.

00:20:49 Interviewer

Yeah, you're better off. I keep mine very, very limited as well and I keep it tight because I'd be very nervous because you don't know who's going to access it.

00:21:00 Participant

No, I wouldn't put any photographs of my grandchildren or anything like that now. Nothing like that.

00:21:15 Interviewer

So, is it on the phone that you access Facebook or through the computer?

00:21:24 Participant

On the phone.

00:21:25 Interviewer

On the phone. OK, and do you have an iPad or a tablet of any kind?

00:21:36 Participant

We have a tablet. Let me see what’s written on it (the brand) <laughs>.

It’s a Dell. One you can take away.

00:21:54 Interviewer

OK. What do you use that for?

00:21:58 Participant

I’d only use it to read the papers and to look up emails in case there's anything in from the Active Retirement. Basically that’s it really.

00:22:19 Interviewer

That’s all great and we're flying through these now, which is brilliant.

Sometimes we can get a little bit carried away but we’ve gone through quite a lot (already).

00:22:31 Participant

Perfect.

00:22:32 Interviewer

So, a few questions in relation to how digital technologies impact your general quality of life. So, in an overall perspective, like positive and negative and I'd like to explain what I mean.

The way I look at this is that quality of life can be your health, your happiness, your welleing.

So, you could be healthy, but you might not be happy. Vice versa, and your general well being. I kind of look at those together because there's quite a lot in, you know, in the government policies and the EU policies about active ageing and positive ageing and all of these things.

00:23:20 Interviewer

The first question I would ask <JULIA>, is do you think your use and experience of technology has had a positive impact on your quality of life generally?

00:23:31 Participant

I suppose it has as regards being able to make contacts through the phone and through the emails. It would have, especially during lockdown. It's the phone. During lockdown. I mean, I'd have been lost completely. I could honestly spend half the night on the phone chatting to people which I love doing. More than sitting down watching TV. I'm not a TV person.

00:24:05 Interviewer

So, did you, were you and Bill tempted during lockdown to do video calling?

You have an iPhone, so you would have access to FaceTime with other people who have iPhones. Zoom seems to have been popular too, or anything like that at all, <JULIA>?

00:24:22 Participant

Yes, we had a lot of Zoom calls with family. We used to do once a week every Sunday morning on the laptop.

00:24:35 Interviewer

How did you find that?

00:24:37 Participant

Well, now, I wouldn't have been it was my husband was quite getting into that. Maybe if he wasn't there I would have learning how to do it. But I suppose when there's someone there that will do it, you just don't bother doing it then. I suppose I should take more notice really.

00:24:54 Interviewer

Well, no, not really, because, you know, in in many households where people live with a spouse or partner, you really only need one person who would be the Warm Expert. This is the technical term that we used for non-professional support. So, you don't need two experts in the same thing.

And how was the experience of using the video connection then with the family? What was that like?

00:25:22 Participant

It was lovely, it really was because we have a daughter in London as well. So we were all on it together and to see the grandchildren as well, it was lovely.

It kind of kept you going, you know, during the week you said, well, at least at the weekend I'll see them, you know, maybe not in person, but it was lovely seeing them.

00:25:45 Interviewer

I think there are some positive things that have come out of, COVID and the lock down like that.

So, once lockdown ended or, maybe with your daughter in London? Do you keep up those Zoom weekend calls at all?

00:26:04 Participant

No, we don't, we don't.

00:26:04 Interviewer

OK.

00:26:05 Participant

No, not after lockdown. Actually, we did for a little bit for birthdays and things like that. And just for those days. But I would be on the phone to her every night.

00:26:17 Interviewer

Well, there you go, that says it all, all you need is a phone <laughs>.

00:26:21 Interviewer

OK, that's fantastic. I want to ask you now about any negative experiences, so it sounds from what you said about that Facebook hacking issue that it didn't cause you any major stress or anything like that <JULIA>, did it?

00:26:41 Participant

It didn’t because I don't do banking online or anything on my phone so I knew they couldn't get into accounts or anything. The only thing that worried me was that I got a new car and had issues with all these new fandangles in them.

Anyway it turns out, I think it's the battery, but they gave me a rental car in between, but I gave my debit card number over the phone in Cork railway station. And I was wondering, was there anybody around that was listening to me giving the number. So I'm actually going to go down to the bank later and just check that my account is OK.

00:27:22 Interviewer

OK.

00:27:22 Participant

You know that was the only thing, though, there would be nothing on my phone, but that phone call, you know.

00:27:29 Interviewer

Yeah, well, you keep yourself very safe and I would absolutely do that.

00:27:38 Interviewer

On the situation with the bank and the way the bank branches are going at the moment.<Aside about Skibbereen Tidy Towns and changes to banking arrangements>

How does that work for you in your local branch <JULIA>? Do you have counter service still?

00:28:13 Participant

We do have counter service. Not for lodging or withdrawing, it's really basically for bigger amounts of money if you want to withdraw. The counter service is limited let's say if you want sterling or a foreign currency. It's basically for that. Everything else you do on the two machines that are there.

00:28:37 Interviewer

But you there's still someone to talk to there?

00:28:37 Participant

Yes. There’s plenty of people around that you can talk to. That’s the Little island branch of <bank>.

00:28:58 Interviewer

So, you don't bank online? What about shopping online <JULIA>?

00:29:05 Participant

No, I don't be honest. I'm not very good at that. No, I don't.

00:29:10 Interviewer

Well, I think to be fair, I think you know that that's how to keep yourself safe.

00:29:14 Participant

I did a small bit during lockdown. Just different birthdays that I had coming up and I did it with Newbridge jewellery. I was able to go on the laptop now and get into the Newbridge site and I did buy some little bits so that I could post on to people.

So that was my only experience really.

00:29:37 Interviewer

So you would have found the Newbridge site, made sure there was an S in the toolbar and it was?

00:29:47 Participant

There was.

Interviewer

Sure if everybody was like <JULIA> it would be great altogether <laughs>

00:29:57 Interviewer

So, and I'm not sure that this is I, I suppose, entirely relevant, but talk to me just a little bit about, you know when you did the secretarial course. What happened then from a work perspective? Did you go into an office environment to work with typewriters, pre-computer world, that kind of thing?

00:30:18 Participant

I was pre-computer world alright <laughs>.

And yes, because typewriters that I learned on, those ones that you really have to press down hard.

00:30:32 Interviewer

Pre-electric then?

00:30:33 Participant

Prehistoric <laughs>.

00:30:35 Participant

Pre-electric definitely and shorthand and typing is what I did. Place called Miss Haynes’ just off the English market. There was a jewellers around there as well in the Grand Parade and just over that. I got my certificates and then I went working in an office for three years.

00:31:05 Interviewer

OK. And in that time, then did the typewriters changed from manual to electric? And how was that?

00:31:11 Participant

They did.

00:31:14 Interviewer

What was that like?

00:31:14 Participant

Oh it was fabulous. You barely tipped the keys and you were going then, where you had to really press down in the older ones.

<Sandra shared her experience learning to use a typewriter before going on co-op placement from college to the Bank of Ireland>

00:32:12 Interviewer

So for me, that was a lifelong learning experience, so if I was being interviewed for this, I would talk about that because it was something I took off on my own back while at college to help prepare myself for a job that was part of my course, not that I wanted to work in a bank after college.

00:32:24 Interviewer

I suppose if you were using the computer a lot I would say that you use those keyboard skills that you learned way back, but I know you don’t. Still, those are skills you don’t forget.

00:32:35 Participant

I don't (use the computer much) no.

No, you don’t forget (those skills).

00:32:48 Participant

I also did switchboard in office for a while, that was my first job, actually, doing switchboard and sending out letters, but mainly the switchboard I was on for a good bit. It was the old type switchboard when you plug out one thing and plug in another thing <laughs>.

Then we went to a newer switchboard and you just flicked the thing up and down so you could transfer the calls and things like that.

00:33:20 Interviewer

I have one of those. It looks like a telephone, but it's got all these switches. It came from my my father-in-law, it was the factory he worked in and you just flip the switch up and down to connect to the different departments.

00:33:38 Participant

Yes, that was the newer ones. I'd say that was about 1969.

00:33:44 Interviewer

OK, well, we've covered quite a lot in in that short time, it's only just half an hour.

00:34:05 Interviewer

I don't have anything else that I really want to cover.

I think we've covered it all <JULIA>, but is there anything at all that say when you were thinking about this, you might have thought “I must tell her that or I must say this. Is there anything at all relevant that you think might be useful for this?”

00:34:28 Participant

Well, I suppose we did get a smart TV a while back and I am absolutely useless doing that <laughs>.

I know how to turn it off and turn it on. And sometimes it works for me. Sometimes it doesn't. Turning off I'm good at because I'm usually the last one going to bed. And I know there's two buttons I turn off and that's it.

00:34:52 Interviewer

So that's Bill’s baby then?

00:34:55

It is.

I'm really not a TV person. Give me a book any time of the day, and I'd be quite happy.

<Sandra’s non-experience of smart TV and dreads the day when it will arrive>

00:35:22 Interviewer

What I'm finding is that anybody who's been talking about smart TV's it's one person in the household who knows about it and the other doesn't, but that's fine. You know, they just want to be able to turn it on, turn it off, change the channels and that kind of thing you know.

You know for me, it's all down to whether it adds value or it benefits us. If it doesn't benefit us, then don't do it, you know.

00:35:50 Participant

I suppose my husband would be into history and geography and all , National Geographic, so he would be a television person where I am not.

It wouldn't bother me if I never had one in the house, but don’t let me without a phone, whether it be a landline, mobile, anything, as long as I can communicate with people.

00:36:10 Interviewer

Absolutely. So, you've got an iPhone. What kind of iPhone is it <JULIA>?

00:36:17 Participant

I think it's a 5, iPhone5.

I'm on a Bill Pay phone so I get an upgrade every so often.

Now, I did have to pay €100 for this one, but I know it was after the grandkids dropping it a couple of times.

I mean, I admitted it to the girl, she said “has it been dropped?” and I said “I'll put my hands up and tell the truth” and said that the children had flung it <laughs>.

So, I had to pay €100 for this one, it wasn't the most up to date one. I'd have had to pay a couple of hundred (euros) for an up-to-date one so I didn't bother with that.

00:37:52 Interviewer

Well, that's brilliant and thanks for telling me about the smart TV because that's useful (information) to have as well.

So, that's pretty much everything I wanted to cover <JULIA>. What I’ll do next is I'll listen back obviously to the recording, there will be lots of transcription corrections to do, and when I have that done, so probably tomorrow or the next day because it's not overly long. I'll email that across to you and you can have a look at it in your own time and see if is there anything that might be misrepresented, or something that you might want to clarify

For the most part, everybody so far seems to be fine but the opportunity is there to change anything through September. Come October.

I'll start reviewing all the many, many thousands of words that I have and I'll just start to tell the story and make sense of it. And that becomes part of my research.

I think there are policy changes that need to happen and not forcing people to go online. You know, digital first is an OK approach, but not digital only, and that's really why it would be nice to talk to people who are not digitally connected at all. So that's really where this is at.

00:39:54 Interviewer

So does that sound OK?

00:39:58 Participant

That sounds OK Sandra. I will ring those two ladies and I'll ask them.

<<JULIA> gave Sandra her email address to forward the interview transcript>

00:41:00 Interviewer

<JULIA>, it just leaves me to say thank you so much for giving me your time this morning and I’ll let you get on with your day.

00:41:12 Participant

Not at all Sandra. Glad to be able to help. I wish you the best of luck.