

Researchers examine older adults' willingness to accept help from robots

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Most older adults prefer to maintain their independence and remain in their own homes as they age, and robotic technology can help make this a reality. Robots can assist with a variety of everyday living tasks, but limited research exists on seniors' attitudes toward and acceptance of robots as caregivers and aides. Human factors/ergonomics researchers investigated older adults' willingness to receive robot assistance that allows them to age in place, and will present their findings at the upcoming HFES 56th Annual Meeting in Boston.

Changes that occur with aging can make the performance of various tasks of daily living more difficult, such as eating, getting dressed, using the bathroom, bathing, preparing food, using the telephone, and cleaning house. When [older adults](#) can no longer perform these tasks, an alternative to moving to a senior living facility or family member's home may someday be to bring in a robot helper.

In their HFES Annual Meeting proceedings paper, "Older Adults' Preferences for and Acceptance of Robot Assistance for Everyday Living Tasks," researchers Cory-Ann Smarr and colleagues at the Georgia Institute of Technology showed groups of [adults age](#) 65 to 93 a video of a robot's capabilities and then asked them how they would feel about having a robot in their homes. "Our results indicated that the older adults were generally open to robot assistance in the home, but they preferred it for some daily living tasks and not others," said Smarr.

Participants indicated a willingness for [robotic assistance](#) with chores

such as housekeeping and laundry, with reminders to take medication and other health-related tasks, and with enrichment activities such as learning new information or skills or participating in hobbies. These older adults preferred [human assistance](#) in personal tasks, including eating, dressing, bathing, and grooming, and with social tasks such as phoning family or friends.

"There are many misconceptions about older adults having [negative attitudes](#) toward robots," continued Smarr. "The older adults we interviewed were very enthusiastic and optimistic about robots in their everyday lives. Although they were positive, they were still discriminating with their preferences for robot assistance. Their discrimination highlights the need for us to continue our research to understand how robots can support older adults with living independently."

Provided by Human Factors and Ergonomics Society

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