



Seniors: The New “Social Gamers”

When you hear the word “social gamer,” do you immediately picture a pimply-faced teenager wearing headsets in front of a computer? Well, you might want to think again after you hear what recent studies revealed this year.

The *Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project* revealed that social networking sites nearly doubled in usage among people ages 50 and older since last year, and has grown 100% among people ages 65 and older. Surprisingly, usage among these older groups is growing at a faster pace than younger generations.

Even more surprising is that 46 percent of social gamers are at least 50 years old and dominated by women, according to the *2010 Popcap Social Gaming Research*.

“This study establishes social games as a fast-growing and quickly maturing pastime for an enormous portion of the population,” said Robin Boyar of Thinktank Research. “With more than 80 percent of social gamers stating that playing social games strengthens their relationship with friends, family and colleagues, social gaming reinforces the core appeal of social networks.”

Seniors are paving the way for the next generation social gaming sites. They enjoy playing multi-player games in real-time, making new friends and winning prizes on sites like Winster.com.

Social media sites have been a long time favorite among the younger generations, but now senior citizens are taking a deep interest and companies are starting to take notice on the demand and coming up with niche sites specifically to address their social needs.

“I’m in a wheelchair and pretty much homebound,” said Gail Davis, a 55-year-old from Chattanooga, Tennessee. “I used to be so depressed and lonely until I discovered online game sites that let me play with real people at the same time. Social game sites have been a lifesaver for me, so many friends and so much fun!”

Davis’ story is just one of thousands of seniors who are finding a new way to form rewarding relationships online.

Popularity of social games among seniors has taken off for a variety of reasons:

1. Connecting with old and new friends
2. Limited mobility restricts seniors from getting out for real life social interaction
3. Games provide mental stimulation that improves health
4. Social games offer real-time interaction for those seeking companionship to help overcome social isolation
5. Cooperative games promote positive interaction that lead to feelings of happiness and long-lasting friendships

6. Social Networking sites are designed so that EVERYONE can easily create a profile and start connecting with others immediately
7. Seniors are more likely to have access to high-speed Internet
8. Bridges generational gap by providing a unique platform where parents, teenagers, grandparents, friends and neighbors regularly communicate
9. Seniors with chronic disease are more likely to seek support online

For these reasons and more, social gaming sites will continue to gain rampant popularity among the fifty-plus population. Seniors are wired and embracing technology at full speed now more than ever.

Article written by Michelle Kaplan, co-founder of Winster.com, a social gaming site geared toward older adults who enjoy playing games, making friends and winning prizes. Winster.com offers companionship, positive social interaction, and mental stimulation.