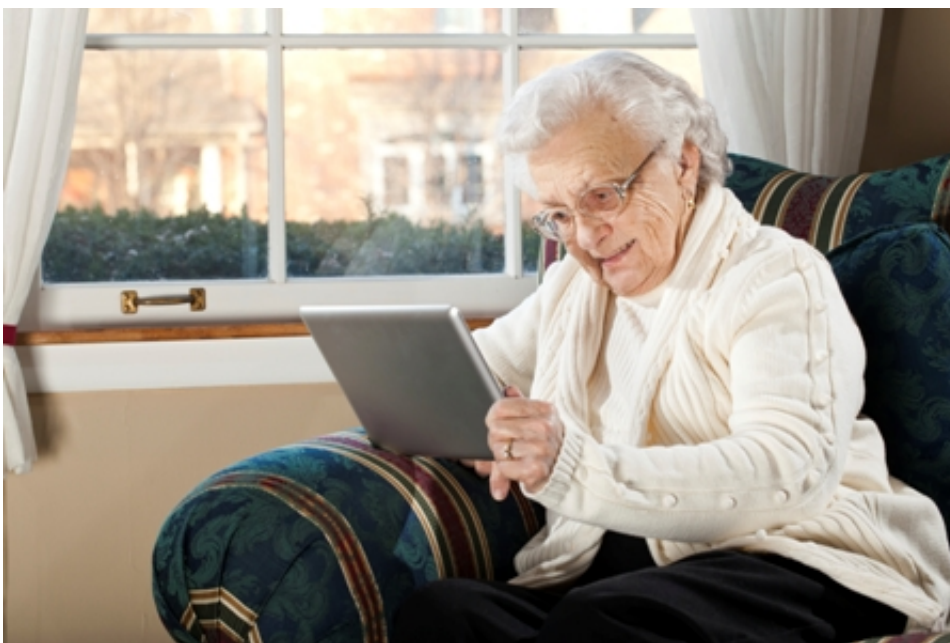


Surfing the net helps the elderly stay connected

September 26 2012



Seniors in rural areas are embracing new technology, according to a University of Adelaide study. Credit: Jim David

The internet is giving older people in rural areas a new lease on life, according to a report released today by the University of Adelaide.

Surfing the net, using Skype, email and [social networking sites](#) is literally keeping older people "connected" with their communities, says lead report author Dr Helen Feist.

Dr Feist, the Deputy Director of the Australian Population and Migration Research Centre at the University of Adelaide, has spent the past three years investigating how technology can be used in remote and rural areas of Australia to improve the lives of older people.

The project, which was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, looked at the best ways of encouraging older people to adopt new technology in a non-threatening way.

A survey in the Murray Lands region of South Australia found that nearly 25% of people aged 80 years and over and more than a third of those in the 65-79 year age bracket were open to learning new technologies.

"In order for people to remain integrated within a world that increasingly relies on new technology, it is important that older people are offered opportunities to adopt and use these new technologies such as computers, [smart phones](#), personal tablets and the Internet," says Dr Feist.

[Study participants](#) introduced to [iPads](#) and [laptop computers](#) quickly embraced the new technology, reporting a 30% increase in comfort levels with computers and the internet after using them over a 12-month period.

"[Older adults](#) who adopt new skills as they age improve their confidence, health, enjoy richer levels of social and [civic engagement](#) and are more resilient to life stressors and crises," Dr Feist says.

"New technology is enabling older people to keep connected regardless of location, distance or mobility."

Dr Feist says the most important motivator among the elderly for taking up new technologies is to stay connected to family and friends.

"Their willingness to learn suggests there is indeed an untapped market for information and communication technology training in rural areas.

"Given the right device, along with personalised training and support, older people of all ages will take up and continue to use new technology," Dr Feist says.

The report makes a number of recommendations, including better financial support for seniors for learning new technologies; subsidies for Internet connections; and the introduction of 'come and try' programs in local community centres.

Provided by University of Adelaide

Citation: Surfing the net helps the elderly stay connected (2012, September 26) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-09-surfing-net-elderly.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.