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NEW STUDY RELEASED BY THE CENTER FOR THE DIGITAL FUTURE AND AARP SHOWS INTERNET USERS 50+ ARE RAPIDLY CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE WITH BOOMING ONLINE ACTIVITY

Online Community Involvement Even Mirrors Teenage Use

WASHINGTON – Americans 50+ are increasingly becoming immersed in the Internet and in many ways can be compared to users who are decades younger, according to findings from the **Center for the Digital Future** released today in conjunction with **AARP**. The study takes a look at online behaviors of those age 50+ compared to the under 50 demographic.

“The perception is that Americans over 50 only dabble on the Internet, but we are finding that they are increasingly spending time online becoming involved in robust Internet activities, such as online communities,” said Jeffrey I. Cole, director of the Center for the Digital Future at the USC Annenberg School for Communication. “In specific areas, there is often little difference in use of online technology between older users and some of the youngest users.”

As the leading membership organization for the 50+ demographic with nearly 40 million members, AARP is the industry authority on behaviors of the boomer and 50+ audiences.

“AARP members are continuing to expand the ways in which they choose to receive information and the ever-changing Internet landscape allows us to do this in more integrated ways than ever before,” said Kevin Donnellan, Executive Vice President and Chief Communications Officer, AARP. “Our Web site, aarp.org, is experiencing steady growth among people 50+. Not only are they visiting our site for information, but they are also using our social networking, gaming, and news channels in ever-increasing numbers as this study confirms.” Because of an increased interest in news, AARP recently launched AARP Bulletin Today (<http://bulletin.aarp.org>), the go-to daily news source for and about 50+ issues.

The following are key findings from the study comparing Internet users 50 + to those under 50:

- **The Internet as news source** – Users 50+ go online more frequently to check for news compared to those under 20. Forty-two percent of users 50 and older check the Internet for news daily or several times a day, compared to 18 percent of users under 20.
- **Participation in online communities** – A large percentage of Internet users 50 and older who are members of online communities report extensive involvement in their communities and benefits from their participation. Fifty-eight percent of members 50 and older log in to their online community daily or several times a day, compared to 47 percent of members under 20.
- **Social activism** – Thirty-six percent of members 50 and older said their social activism has increased since they began participating in online communities for social causes, compared to 29 percent of members under 20.

- **Online games** – Eighteen percent of users 50+ said they go online daily or several times a day to play games, compared to 22 percent of users under 50.
- **Browse in retail stores, then buy online** – Users in both the 50+ and under 50 groups have similar online shopping habits. Sixty-eight percent of users 50+ say they sometimes or often browse in retail stores and then buy online, compared to 72 percent of users under 50.
- **Maintaining social relationships** - forty-six percent of users under 50 said the Internet was important or very important in maintaining their social relationships, which is identical to the percentage for those over 70.
- **Importance of online information** - A larger percent of users under 20 compared to those over 50 (85% vs.76%) said that the Internet is an important or very important source of information. However, the percentage of those over 50 who state this has grown substantially in five years (2002 to 2007), up slightly more than half (51%).
- **Importance of online communities** – Both 50+ and under 20 online community members say their online community is very important or extremely important to them: (70 percent of members 50 and older, and 58 percent of members under 20).
- **Instant messaging and video downloads still tools for young users** - While many Internet functions are used increasingly by older people, some online technology is still in the realm of the young – in particular instant messaging and video downloading. When asked about the importance of instant messaging in maintaining social relationships, only 9 percent of users 50+ said IM was important or very important compared to 48 percent of users under 20.

The complete study from The Center for the Digital Future and AARP is available upon request.

About AARP

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce AARP The Magazine, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world's largest-circulation magazine with over 33 million readers; AARP Bulletin, the go-to news source for AARP's nearly 40 million members and Americans 50+; AARP Segunda Juventud, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic community; and our website, AARP.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

About The Center for the Digital Future

The Center for the Digital Future at the USC Annenberg School for Communication created and manages the World Internet Project, which includes the Digital Future Project and similar studies in North America, South America, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Australia and New Zealand. The Digital Future Project produces a broad year-to-year exploration of the influence of the Internet and online technology on Americans. Since 2000, the project has examined the behavior and views of a national sample of Internet users and non-users, as well as comparisons between new users and very experienced users. For other highlights of the 2008 Digital Future Project or to order a copy of the complete report, visit www.digitalcenter.org.

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