

# How men and women organize their (online) social networks differently

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(Phys.org)—Men and women socialize differently, and it turns out these gender differences hold true in online games that involve social interaction.

A new quantitative study of data assembled from the online multiplayer game Pardus shows how females and males manage their social networks drastically differently.

"It is fascinating that we maybe see traces of a million years of [social evolution](#) in a computer game," says SFI External Professor Stefan Thurner, a professor for [Complex Systems](#) of Science at the Medical University of Vienna, who co-wrote the paper with his colleague Michael Szell, now at MIT.

The paper, "How Women Organize Social Networks Different from Men," published today in Scientific Reports, finds many of the same characteristic differences between men and women that are observed in the real world.

Females have more communication partners, engage in [economic activities](#) to a greater degree, attract positive behavior, organize in clusters, reciprocate friendships, take fewer risks than men, and show a preference for stability in local networks.

Males try to talk most often with those who talk with many, reciprocate friendships with other males much less frequently, and respond quite

quickly to female friendship initiatives.

Online multiplayer games like Pardus, with their detailed data about players' social interactions and networks, allow researchers to quantify the onlinesociety on a systemic level.

While taking into account the minimal probability of gender-swapping (an estimated 15 percent, from among the Pardus population of 300,000 players), Thurner and Szell were able to assess the networking behaviors of male and female players.

"In the real world," observes Thurner, "it is extremely difficult to obtain different types of social networks of a set of people at the same time with the same resolution, even though we leave electronic fingerprints almost everywhere nowadays."

As for its possible applications? "One can use these kinds of insights to do all sorts of things, from marketing to group formations," says Thurner. "Right now, I would not bet too many millions on business models based on these findings, but there is potential."

**More information:** Read their paper in *Scientific Reports* (February 7, 2013): [www.nature.com/srep/2013/13020 ... /full/srep01214.html](http://www.nature.com/srep/2013/13020.../full/srep01214.html)

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