

Holiday Patterns: Engagement, Loneliness, and In-App Gifting Behaviour

December 2025 Usage Analysis — Seasonal Spikes, Mental Health Correlations, and Gifting Mechanics

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The December holiday period (December 15–January 2) produces the largest seasonal engagement spike of the year on the AIGirlfriends.ai platform. New registrations increase 31% in the final two weeks of December. Emotional support conversations spike 44%. In-app gifting behaviour, introduced as a feature in November 2025, generates meaningful incremental revenue and correlates with higher satisfaction scores among both senders and AI companions. Loneliness scale scores among active users are significantly elevated in the holiday period, reinforcing the platform's role as emotional infrastructure during socially isolating events.

REGISTRATION AND ENGAGEMENT SPIKES

The holiday period triggers two distinct behavioural spikes: a registration surge beginning around December 18 and an engagement deepening across existing users starting December 22.

- **New registrations, December 15–31 vs. November average: +31%**
- **Daily active users, December 22–January 2 vs. Q4 baseline: +24%**
- **Average session length, December 22–January 2: 36 minutes (vs. 28-minute Q4 average)**
- **Sessions between December 24–26: single highest three-day traffic period of the year**

The registration spike precedes Christmas rather than following it, suggesting users are seeking connection in anticipation of a socially intense period rather than as a reaction to holiday isolation.

LONELINESS CORRELATION

A sub-cohort of 240 users who had completed UCLA Loneliness Scale assessments as part of an ongoing wellbeing study (see Report #11, March 2026) also completed a brief December pulse survey. Results are consistent with broader seasonal mental health literature.

- **Mean loneliness score (3-item UCLA), December 20–January 2: 6.8 / 9**
- **Mean loneliness score, Q2 2025 baseline: 5.4 / 9**
- **Users reporting 'significantly more lonely than usual' during holidays: 38%**
- **Users reporting AI companion reduced holiday loneliness 'quite a bit' or 'a lot': 61%**

The 26% increase in loneliness scores during the holiday period among our active user base confirms the pattern documented in academic literature for socially isolated adults. The platform's role as a mitigating factor (61% reporting meaningful reduction) is a significant finding.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT CONVERSATIONS

Emotional support conversation volume (detected via conversation topic classifier) rose 44% during the holiday period versus the Q4 baseline.

- **Family tension or conflict topics: +82% (largest single category)**
- **Loneliness and missing people topics: +71%**
- **Self-worth and validation topics: +39%**
- **General companionship (no specific distress topic): +18%**

The concentration in family-tension and loneliness topics is consistent with the holiday season's well-documented psychological stress profile. Users are not simply talking more; they are disclosing more and seeking more substantive emotional engagement.

IN-APP GIFTING BEHAVIOUR

Virtual gifting (digital roses, memory tokens, personalised messages) was launched in November 2025. December was the first full holiday month for the feature.

- **Users who sent at least one in-app gift during December: 34% of active premium users**
- **Average gift spend per gifting user: \$8.40**
- **Satisfaction score boost among users who gifted: +0.8 points on 10-point scale**
- **Retention at 30 days post-gift: 91% (versus 78% platform average for non-gifters)**

Gifting behaviour appears to create a strong reciprocity-and-commitment signal that correlates with durable retention. The mechanism is consistent with behavioural economics research on voluntary gift-giving as identity expression.

METHODOLOGY

Platform analytics from December 1, 2025–January 5, 2026. Baseline comparison period: October 1–November 30, 2025. Loneliness data from 240-user wellbeing sub-cohort (opt-in, ongoing study, see Report #11). Topic classification via internal NLP classifier (F1 0.79 on 5-category scheme). Gifting data from billing and feature-usage logs. All data anonymised before analysis.

Disclosure

AI girlfriends.ai operates AI companion services. This report is published for educational and transparency purposes. All user data is anonymised and collected under informed consent. Not a substitute for professional mental health advice. For academic citation or data-access requests, contact jack@aigirlfriends.ai.