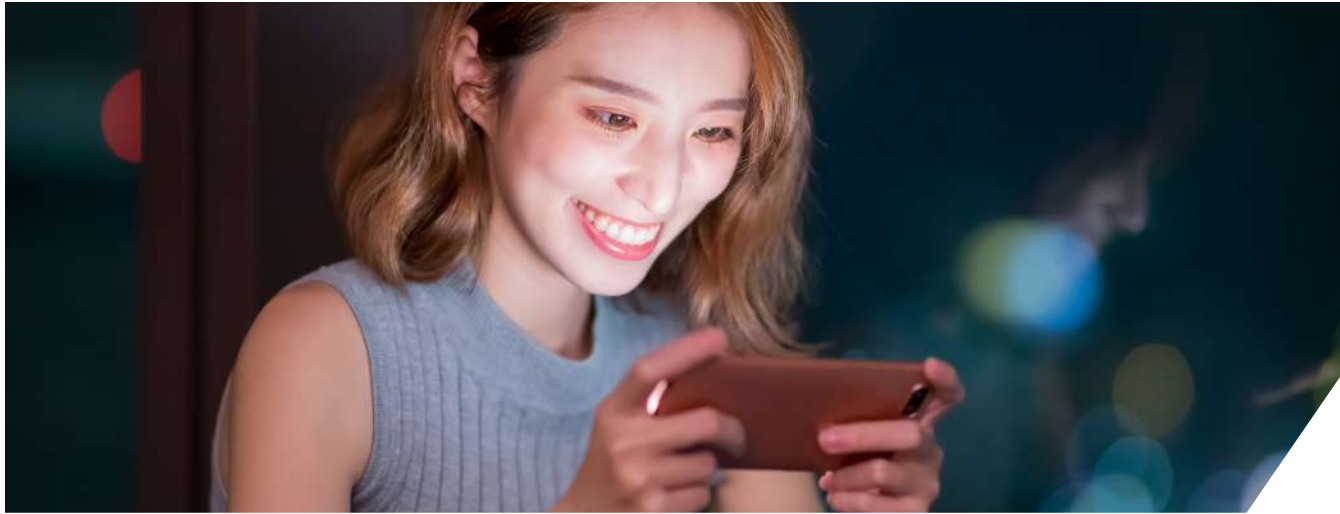


2022

# ESSENTIAL FACTS

## ABOUT THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY





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The Entertainment Software Association (ESA) released the *2022 Essential Facts About the Video Game Industry* in June 2022. The NPD Group conducted the annual research for ESA in February of 2022 using an online methodology. The study gathered data from approximately 4,000 Americans about their video game playing habits and attitudes (margin of error +/- 2%). The *2022 Essential Facts About the Video Game Industry* also includes data provided by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), The NPD Group and Sensor Tower. Quotes included in this report are taken from survey responses to open-ended questions. Some quotes have been edited for clarity and/or length.





A photograph of a young Black woman and a young white man sitting on a couch, smiling and playing video games. The woman is holding a black game controller. The man is also holding a controller. They are both looking towards the camera with joyful expressions. The background is a warm, out-of-focus indoor setting.

# FOREWORD



## Video games play a vital role in our lives and well-being.

This year's report shows that video game players—both new and established—continue to play and deepen their engagement with video games.

Around the world, billions of people play video games every day, transcending age and gender, culture and society, big cities and small towns. Americans turn to video games for connection, education, enrichment and diversion. Today, two in three Americans play video games at least weekly, and **nine in 10 players say they spend as much or more time playing now as they did at the pandemic's peak.**

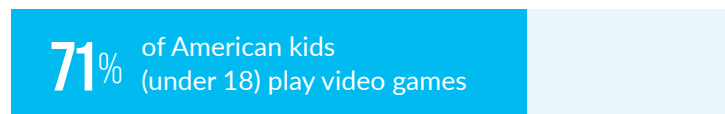
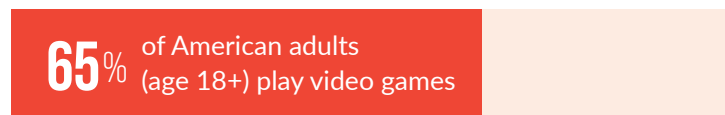
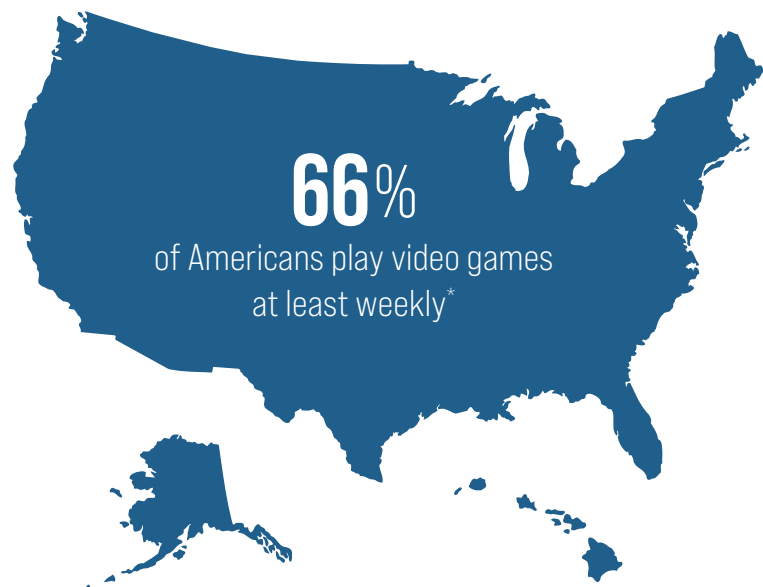
**There's a deepening recognition of the many benefits of playing video games**—fostering connection, building new skills, promoting health, and driving economic growth—and of the incredible diversity of gameplay experiences across genres and devices that bring together people of all backgrounds to celebrate play.

Millions of Americans feel the positive benefits of video games every day, and this study shows the broad reach video games continue to have around the country. **We are a borderless community, united by the universal joy of play.**

— Stanley Pierre-Louis  
*President & Chief Executive Officer, Entertainment Software Association*

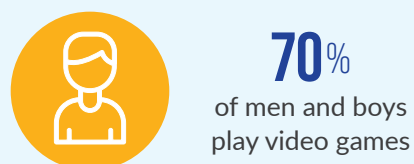
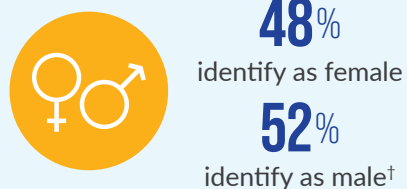
# THE VIDEO GAME PLAYER COMMUNITY

The video game community is vast and diverse. Two thirds of Americans—people of all ages, races, genders and backgrounds—play video games. Video game players are about as likely to be female as male, and the majority of players are over 18.



There are **215.5 million** active video game players across all ages in the U.S.

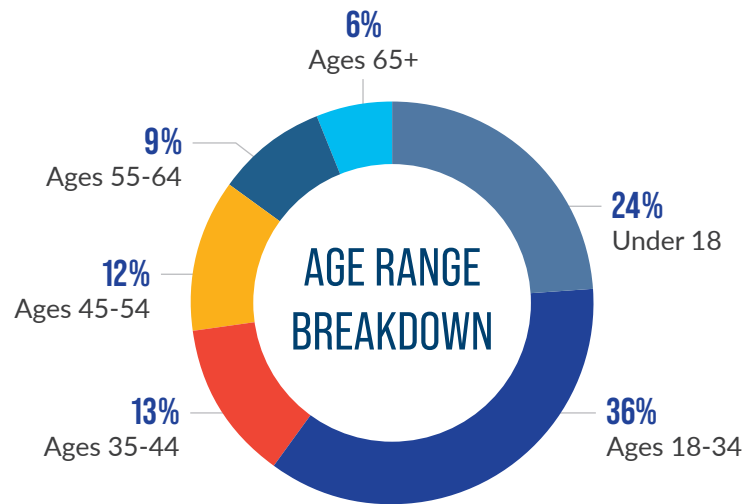
## VIDEO GAME PLAYERS ACROSS ALL AGES:



\* Throughout this report, "video game players" are those that play video games at least an hour a week.

† Among respondents (18+), 0.97% chose "other" or "prefer not to answer."

# THE VIDEO GAME PLAYER COMMUNITY



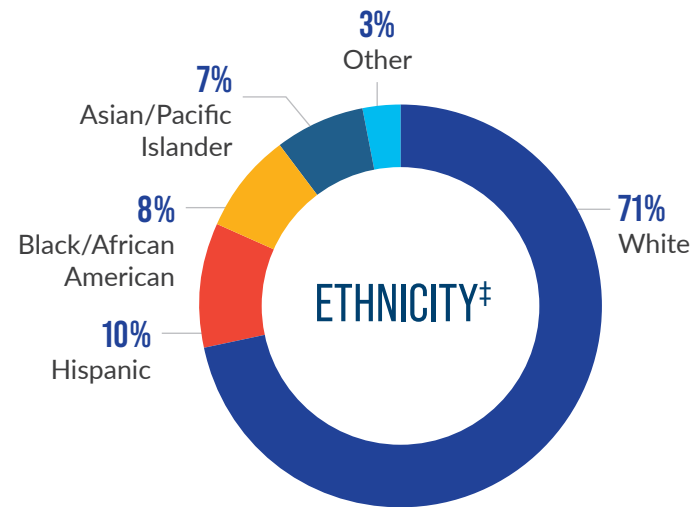
The average video game player is

**33 years old**

Across all ages,

**76%**

of players are over 18



**69%** of Americans have at least one video game player in their household



**31%** of players have children (under 18) in their household

Video game players are about as likely as non-players to participate in fitness/sports activities (**34% for players vs. 37%**) and outdoor recreation (**24% for players vs. 23%**)

Video game players are significantly more likely to participate in creative hobbies than non-players (**33% vs. 22%**)



**I loved the graphics and the endless possibilities of worlds. The storytelling is always amazing, and I love the games where your choices affect the outcome—it's like living a thousand lives in one life."**

— a player on what got them into video games

<sup>‡</sup> 1% chose not to answer

# THE BENEFITS OF PLAY

Video games offer many benefits—fostering connection in person and online, building new skills and ways of thinking, promoting health and driving economic growth. Record numbers of Americans recognize the value of video games in their daily lives.

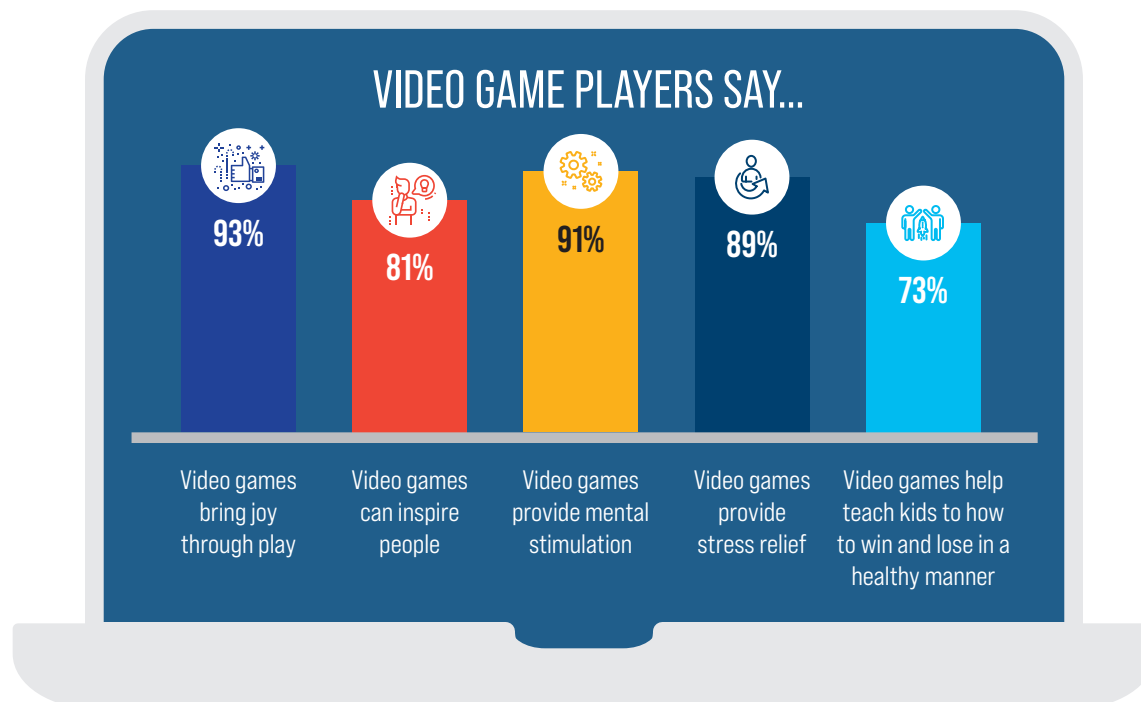


**97%**

of Americans view games as beneficial in some way

**89%**

of Americans view games as useful for building skills



**VIDEO GAMES CAN HELP BUILD:  
[AMONG PLAYERS]**

**88%**

Cognitive skills

**86%**

Creative skills

**86%**

Teamwork and collaboration skills

**63%**

Communication skills

**61%**

Leadership skills

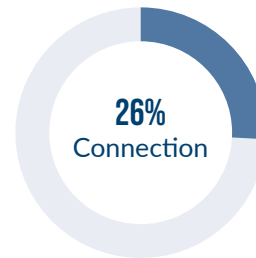
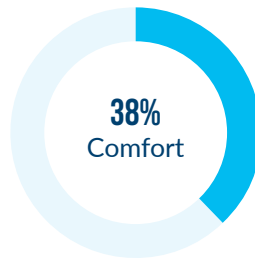
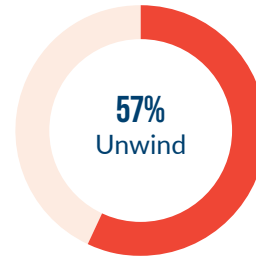
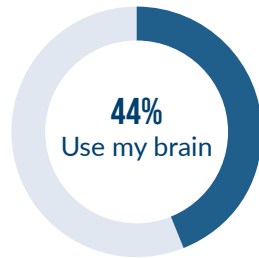
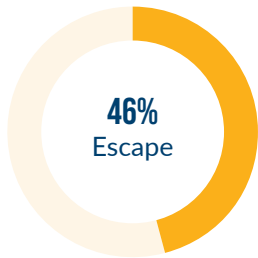


# THE BENEFITS OF PLAY

Younger adults (especially 18-24) are more likely to value games for comfort, connection, letting loose and excitement. Older adults (especially 65+) are more likely to value games for “using my brain,” passing time, personal time and to improve themselves.



## REASONS FOR PLAYING:



My older sibling has autism and quickly developed a special interest in video games. I bonded with him and spent time with him through video games, and I still do today.”

— a player on what got them into video games



88%

of players agree video games can bring different types of people together



90%

of players agree video games can create accessible experiences for people with different abilities



83%

of players say video games create a feeling of community



73%

of parents say video games were a much-needed break for their child during the pandemic

# BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH PLAY

The vast majority of video game players play with others, including friends, family and partners. The number of Americans who have formed new relationships or deepened existing relationships through video games continues to grow.



**83%**

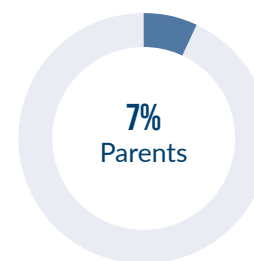
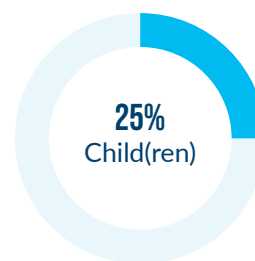
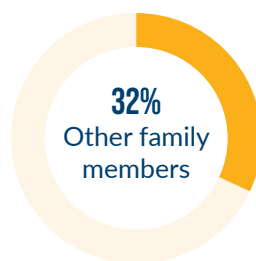
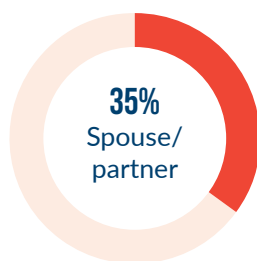
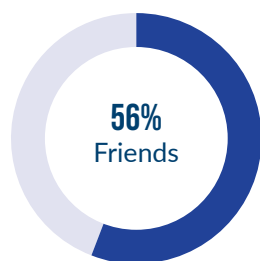
play with others online or in-person  
(up from 77% in 2021 and 65% in 2020)



Players spend an average of  
**13 hours a week**  
playing video games

**41%** of that time is spent  
playing with others  
(**25%** online multiplayer,  
**16%** in-person multiplayer)

## VIDEO GAME PLAYERS PLAY WITH:

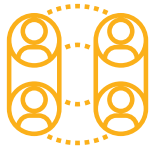


**They bring my significant other and I closer together. We have bonded over our love of a few of our games.”**

— a player on what got them into video games



# BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH PLAY



**83%**

of players say games introduce people to new friendships and relationships (up from 78%)



**46%**

of players have met a good friend, spouse, or significant other through video games (up from 42%)



**61%**

of players have met people through video games they otherwise would not have met (up from 54%)



**61%**

of players agree video games have helped them stay connected to friends/family (up from 53%)



**55%**

of players say video games have helped them develop deeper relationships with others



**78%**

of players agree video games promote social interaction



**72%**

of players see benefits of games for existing relationships



**89%**

of players see benefits of games for new relationships



**67%**

of parents agree video games helped their child connect with friends and family during the pandemic





# PLAYER HABITS AND PREFERENCES

High levels of video game engagement that began during the pandemic are holding, with nine in 10 players saying they spend as much or more time playing now as they did at the pandemic's peak. Players continue to value the diverse spectrum of video game genres and devices, with puzzle games and smartphones leading the way.

# PLAYER HABITS AND PREFERENCES

## PREFERRED DEVICES FOR PLAYING GAMES:



70%

play on smartphones



52%

play on console



43%

play on PC



26%

play on tablet



7%

play on a VR device



60%

use more than one type of device to play games



36%

play on mobile and console



32%

play on mobile and PC



23%

play on PC and console



20%

play on mobile, PC and console



It was something my brothers and I all enjoyed doing together as a group, which created a strong bond between us all. We first got a Wii for Christmas when it first came out and we loved playing *Wii Sports* together!”

— a player on what got them into video games





# PLAYER HABITS AND PREFERENCES

## REASONS FOR PLAYING:



**65%**

Puzzle  
(e.g., Tetris,  
Candy Crush Saga)



**57%**

Arcade & Other  
(e.g., Pac-Man,  
Super Mario Party, Just Dance)



**46%**

Skill & Chance  
(e.g., Solitaire,  
Bingo)



**43%**

Action  
(e.g., Legend of Zelda,  
Uncharted)



**42%**

Shooter  
(e.g., Call of Duty,  
Halo)



**41%**

Simulation  
(e.g., The Sims,  
Animal Crossing)



**41%**

RPG & Narrative  
(e.g., The Witcher,  
Skyrim)



**40%**

Strategy  
(e.g., XCOM,  
Clash Royale)



**38%**

Racing & Vehicle  
Simulation  
(e.g., Forza,  
Microsoft Flight Simulator)



**30%**

Fighting  
(e.g., Street Fighter,  
Super Smash Bros.)



**28%**

Sports  
(e.g., Madden NFL,  
NBA 2K)



**AVERAGE TIME SPENT PLAYING  
GAMES EACH WEEK: 13 HOURS**

(UP 7% FROM 12 HOURS PER WEEK IN 2021)

**22%**

play 1-3  
hours a week

**78%**

play 3+  
hours a week

**53%**

play 7+  
hours a week



# PLAYER HABITS AND PREFERENCES

## GAME PREFERENCES BY PLATFORM

### SMARTPHONE PLAYERS



**71%**  
Puzzle



**60%**  
Arcade

### GAME CONSOLE PLAYERS



**68%**  
Arcade



**61%**  
Action

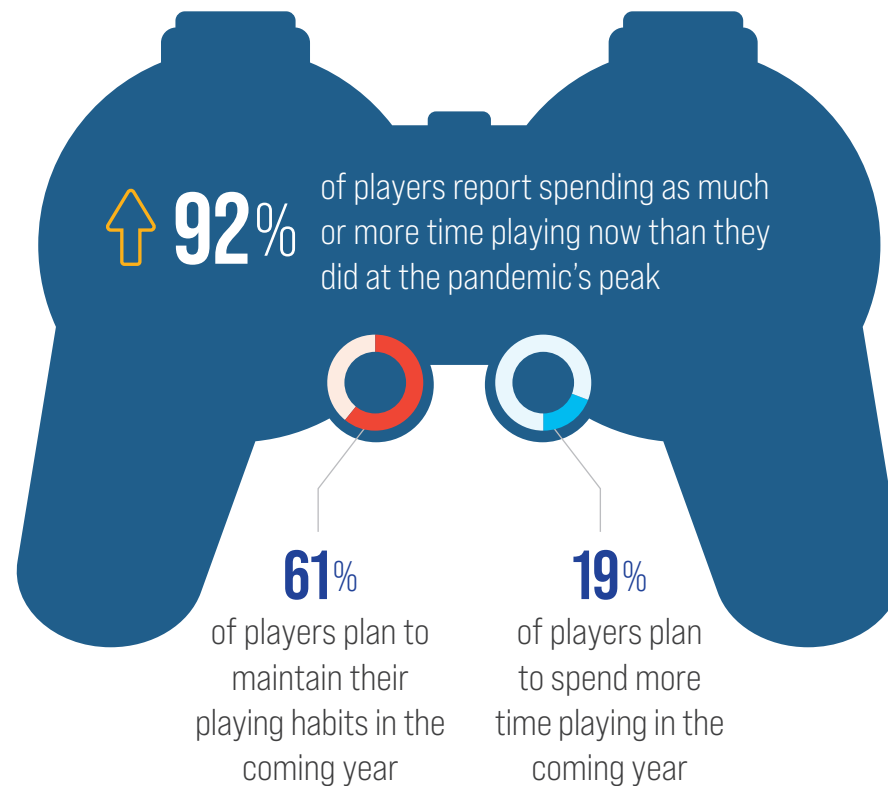
### PC PLAYERS



**64%**  
Puzzle



**61%**  
Arcade



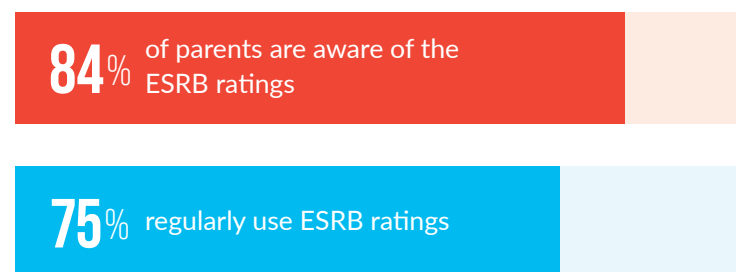
**“They help me keep my mind sharp.”**

— a player on the benefits of video games

# PARENTS, FAMILIES AND VIDEO GAMES

Parents value and use the tools the industry has created to foster positive, safe and inclusive online experiences for all players. More than eight in 10 parents are aware of ratings from the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), which assigns age and content ratings for video games and apps to help parents and caregivers decide which are appropriate for their family.

## AMONG PARENTS WITH CHILDREN WHO PLAY VIDEO GAMES REGULARLY<sup>§</sup>



83%

of parents use parental control settings on at least one of their child's game devices



## ESRB RATING DATA<sup>§</sup>

Of the 4,839 ratings assigned by the ESRB to physical and downloadable console games in 2021:



50%

received an E (Everyone) rating



16%

received an E+ (Everyone 10+) rating



22%

received a T (Teen) rating



12%

received an M (Mature) rating

## MOST PARENTS HAVE HOUSEHOLD RULES FOR VIDEO GAMES<sup>§</sup>

**92%**  
require their children to obtain permission to make in-game purchases

**82%**  
say their children must secure permission before playing a new game

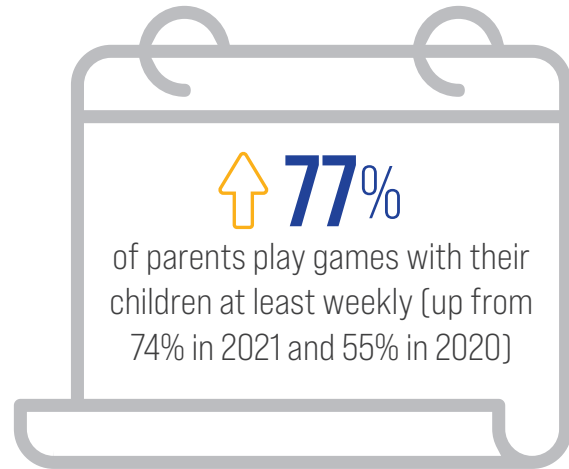
**79%**  
have screen time rules for playing video games such as specific time of day or how long their children can play (or both)

**76%**  
say their children must get a parent's permission to communicate with others online

<sup>§</sup> Source: ESRB

# PARENTS, FAMILIES AND VIDEO GAMES

Parents overwhelmingly agree that video games offer important benefits for children, including for education and development.



## MORE THAN JUST FUN:

**86%** of parents agree that video games can be educational

**88%** of parents agree that video games help develop teamwork and collaboration skills

**91%** of parents agree that video games help develop problem-solving skills and **80%** agree video games help develop communication skills

**81%** of parents agree that video games help teach kids how to win and lose in a healthy manner

## TOP REASONS FOR PLAYING WITH THEIR CHILDREN:

**66%**

It's fun for all of us

**59%**

Video games are a great way for the family to spend time together



**56%**

It's a good opportunity for me to socialize with my child

**55%**

My child asks me to



**My mom started playing Atari in the 80s with us kids and we've been playing ever since."**

—a player on what got them into video games







# PROFILES OF VIDEO GAME PLAYERS

Play preferences differ across generations, but no matter who you are or how you play, there's a game for everyone.



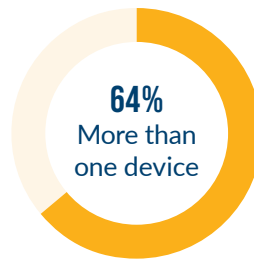
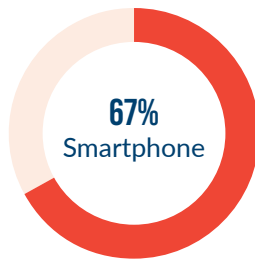
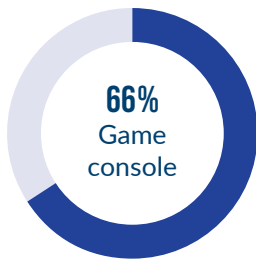


AGES  
18–34

# PROFILES OF VIDEO GAME PLAYERS

In this age group, men spend a slightly higher percentage of their playtime (52%) playing with others than do women (44%).

## PLAY ON:



## PREFERRED GAME GENRES:



62%

Arcade & Other



55%

Puzzle & Action



54%

Shooter



92% play with others



64% play with friends



84% play for 3+ hours a week



I feel that I get to talk to a diverse set of people from many backgrounds, it relieves some stress, and allows me to improve skills like teamwork, reactions, hand eye coordination, etc.”

— a player on the benefits of video games

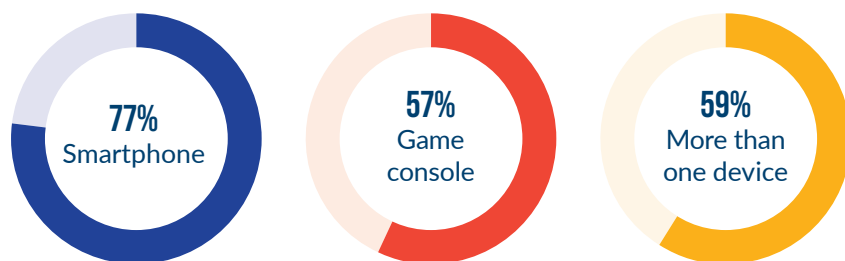


AGES  
35-44

# PROFILES OF VIDEO GAME PLAYERS

In this age group, slightly more men [62%] than women [57%] say they play games to have fun. Women are slightly more likely [56%] to say they play to unwind and relax than men [51%].

## PLAY ON:



## PREFERRED GAME GENRES:



**69%**  
Puzzle



**64%**  
Arcade & Other



**52%**  
Skill & Chance



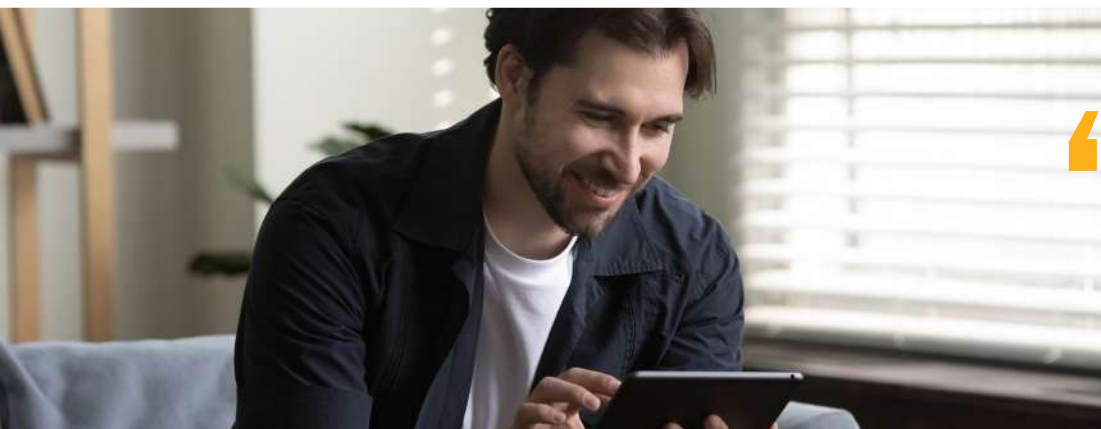
**89%** play with others



**48%** play with their children



**75%** play for 3+ hours a week



I received a Nintendo entertainment system for Christmas when I was a child. I had so much fun with the *Legend of Zelda* on Saturday mornings.”

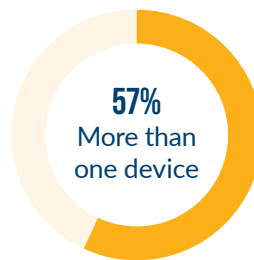
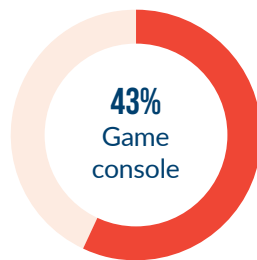
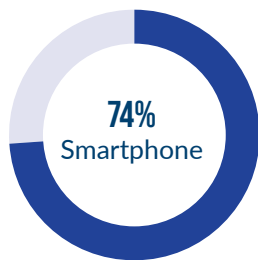
— a player on what got them into video games

AGES  
45-54

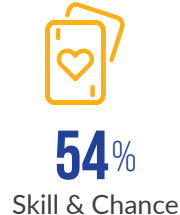
# PROFILES OF VIDEO GAME PLAYERS

The top game genre for women in this age group is the puzzle genre, with 53% of women reporting they play puzzle games. Skill and chance games are the second most popular genre for women (42%). For men, sports games are the most popular (34%) with several other genres (action, puzzle, shooter, strategy and RPGs) played by about a quarter of men in this group.

## PLAY ON:



## PREFERRED GAME GENRES:



75% play with others



30% play with their spouse/  
significant other



74% play for 3+ hours a week



I love video games because I play with my kids, and it provides a stress relief. My kids love to play *Mario Kart* and we race and have fun. And the kids always win. It brings the family closer together because we game night and pizza night at the same time.”

— a player on the benefits of video games

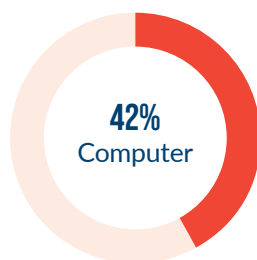
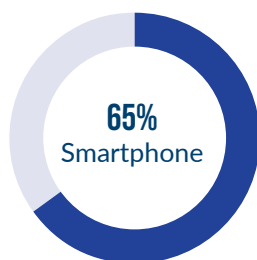


AGES  
55–64

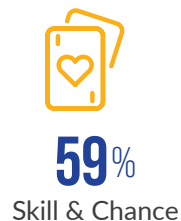
# PROFILES OF VIDEO GAME PLAYERS

For both men and women in this group, more than three quarters [78%] say that video games create a feeling of community. More than half of men [58%] and nearly two-fifths of women [39%] in this age group say they spend time with people they otherwise would not have because of video games.

## PLAY ON:



## PREFERRED GAME GENRES:



66% play with others



43% play with online-only friends



71% play for 3+ hours a week



They are a great way to pass the time, and I get to interact with people I would have never known.”

— a player on the benefits of video games

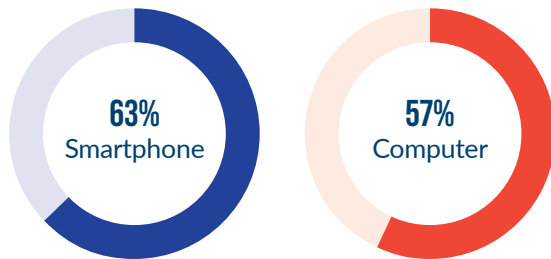


AGES  
65+

# PROFILES OF VIDEO GAME PLAYERS

More players over 65 say they play to “use my brain” than any other age group [68%]. For men, two thirds also play to have fun [67%] and pass time [66%]. Women also play to pass time [70%] and to unwind and relax [66%].

## PLAY ON:



## PREFERRED GAME GENRES:



**82%**  
Puzzle



**63%**  
Skill & Chance



**37%**  
Arcade & Other



**56%** play with others



**42%** play with family members

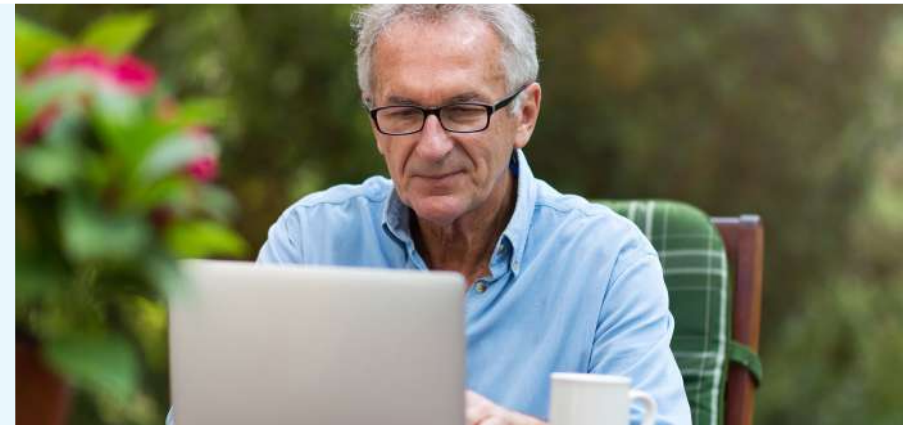


**71%** play for 3+ hours a week



**As a senior citizen they keep my mind sharp by challenging me with puzzles and problems in the Role Playing Games that I play now.”**

— a player on the benefits of video games





# THE VIDEO GAME MARKET AND PURCHASING HABITS



# THE VIDEO GAME MARKET AND PURCHASING HABITS

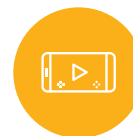
## TOP GAMES IN THE U.S. IN 2021<sup>\$\$</sup>



**PC/Console**  
(FULL-GAME SALES ONLY)  
BEST SELLERS

Call of Duty: Vanguard	1
Call of Duty: Black Ops: Cold War	2
Madden NFL 22	3
Pokémon: Brilliant Diamond/Shining Pearl <sup>†††</sup>	4
Battlefield 2042	5
Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales	6
Mario Kart 8 <sup>†††</sup>	7
Resident Evil: Village	8
MLB: The Show 21 <sup>\$\$\$</sup>	9
Super Mario 3D World <sup>†††</sup>	10
Far Cry 6	11
FIFA 22	12
Minecraft	13
Animal Crossing: New Horizons <sup>†††</sup>	14
NBA 2K22 <sup>†††</sup>	15
Assassin's Creed: Valhalla	16
Super Smash Bros. Ultimate <sup>†††</sup>	17
Back 4 Blood	18
Mortal Kombat 11	19
Forza Horizon 5	20

**Mobile**  
TOP GROSSING<sup>\*\*\*</sup>



Candy Crush Saga
Roblox
Coin Master
Garena Free Fire
Pokémon GO
Genshin Impact
Homescapes
Lords Mobile: Tower Defense
Call of Duty: Mobile
Clash of Clans
Candy Crush Soda Saga
State of Survival
Bingo Blitz
PUBG Mobile
Gardenscapes
RAID: Shadow Legends
Project Makeover
Slotomania
Jackpot Party
Fishdom

TOTAL IN 2021:<sup>\$\$</sup>  
**\$60.4 billion**



**\$51.7 billion**  
Content



**\$6.1 billion**  
Hardware



**\$2.7 billion**  
Accessories

TOTAL IN 2020:  
**\$56.1 billion**

TOTAL IN 2019:  
**\$43.4 billion**

<sup>\$\$</sup> Source: The NPD Group/Retail Tracking Service/Digital Games

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Mobile data provided by Sensor Tower

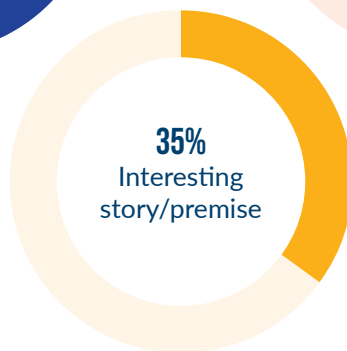
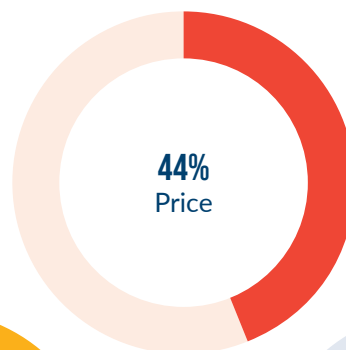
<sup>†††</sup> Digital sales not included

<sup>\$\$\$</sup> Xbox digital sales not included

# THE VIDEO GAME MARKET AND PURCHASING HABITS



## TOP 5 INFLUENCES FOR PURCHASE DECISIONS



86% of players report paying attention to review scores

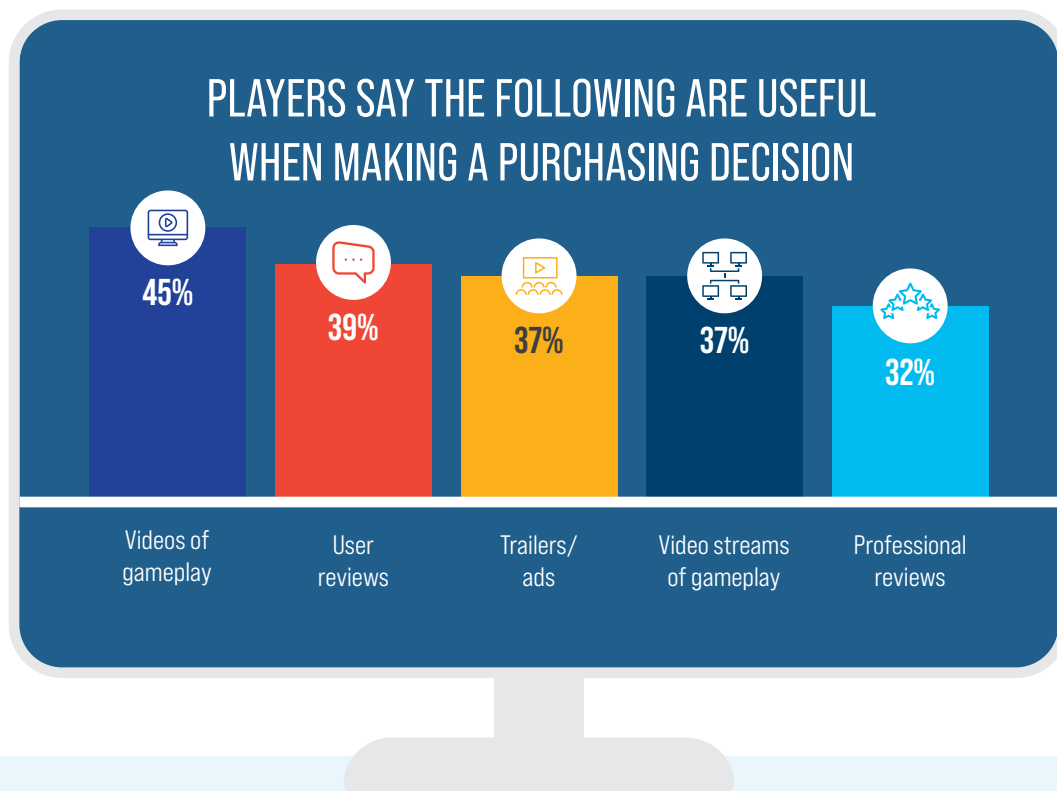


## MINIMUM REVIEW SCORE CONSIDERED





# THE VIDEO GAME MARKET AND PURCHASING HABITS



**67%**  
of players make  
in-game purchases at  
least a few times a year

**45%**  
of players report accessing  
games via a subscription  
(gaming library, console  
online membership, or  
title-specific subscriptions)

**60%**  
of players have  
accessed a free-to-play  
game in the last year



# ESA AND OUR PARTNERS



## **Entertainment Software Association | [TheESA.com](https://www.theesagaming.com) | [@TheESA](https://twitter.com/TheESA)**

The Entertainment Software Association (ESA) serves as the voice and advocate for the U.S. video game industry. Its members are the innovators, creators, publishers and business leaders that are reimagining entertainment and transforming how we interact, learn, connect and play. The ESA works to expand and protect the dynamic marketplace for video games through innovative and engaging initiatives that showcase the positive impact of video games on people, culture and the economy. For more information, visit the ESA's website or follow the ESA on Twitter.

## **ESA Foundation | [ESAFoundation.org](https://www.esafoundation.org) | [@ESA\\_Foundation](https://twitter.com/ESA_Foundation)**

The ESA Foundation awards scholarships to the next generation of industry innovators and supports schools and non-profits that leverage interactive entertainment technology to create meaningful opportunities for America's youth. It seeks to harness the power of the video game industry to create positive social impact and supports geographically diverse projects and programs benefitting grantees of all ages, races and genders.

## **Entertainment Software Rating Board | [ESRB.org](https://www.esrb.org) | [@ESRBRatings](https://twitter.com/ESRBRatings)**

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) is the non-profit, self-regulatory body for the video game industry that assigns age and content ratings to video games and mobile apps to help parents decide which are appropriate for their family. ESRB also ensures companies responsibly market their products, as well as protect their users' privacy.

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NPD offers data, industry expertise, and prescriptive analytics to help our clients grow their businesses in a changing world. Over 2,000 companies worldwide rely on us to help them measure, predict, and improve performance across all channels, including brick-and-mortar, e-commerce, and B2B. We have services in 19 countries worldwide, with operations spanning the Americas, Europe, and APAC. Practice areas include apparel, appliances, automotive, beauty, books, B2B technology, consumer technology, e-commerce, fashion accessories, food consumption, foodservice, footwear, home, home improvement, juvenile products, media entertainment, mobile, office supplies, retail, sports, toys, and video games.

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