Calvin Tham

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IGN Code Foo

Number of Gamers in SF Bay Area

Introduction

Before dealing with statistics of the number of gamers, we need to define one thing first. Who are and what defines a gamer? Way back in 2006, gamers were usually just classified into two categories: casual and hardcore gamers, usually people who played Nintendo games versus everyone else. Nowadays, it's quite more complicated. There are Facebook games, smartphone games, lots of independent games, and oddly enough, games that may or may not be games. These range from simple iPhone apps to complicated categories, such as Dysphoria, which is a WarioWare styled indie title without many elements that people would define as a game. What about length of play per session, and number of sessions? And what about board games? It's going to be a lot more complicated than I thought. Let's define the types of gamers first.

Hardcore

It's safe to say that the criteria for a "hardcore" gamer has been relatively unchanged throughout the years. These people tend to have long play sessions, and a lot of play sessions. They're very competent and play large scale, time consuming, full of depth games, usually mastering the game. These guys usually are guys, meaning male, and often play intense, competitive multiplayer games and shooters. Gaming is obviously very important to them, and they take it as a serious hobby. Without thinking, hardcore games that come to mind are Halo, Starcraft, World of Warcraft, Call of Duty, Assassins Creed, DOTA, Portal. Today, there's a lot of gray area as to what constitutes a hardcore gamer. I've seen my college mates spend night after night playing League of Legends, and for every two of them, I've seen one that spends hours upon hours playing Candy Crush and Farmville clones.

Though a lot of people won't agree with me, I'm going to be flexible and just say that if you spend more than a few hours playing games a week, you're likely a hardcore gamer. Now let's move on to the opposite.

Casual

Wii Fit, Angry Birds, Cut The Rope, Fun Run, Temple Run, Farmville are all games created to be played in short bursts. These are what casual gamers play, as they spend little time playing games and want something that doesn't take much time, yet is fun and keeps you coming back. Whether it be at a bus stop or a quick homework break, casual gamers often spend these moments feeding their virtual pets or playing a mini-game. Because of convenience and ease of use, smartphones are a huge market for casual gamers and almost all smartphone users are casual gamers.

Core

I lied when I wrote "without thinking" in the hardcore paragraph. I was actually having some cognitive dissonance about what games to label as "hardcore." It's complicated, see. I'm a Nintendo gamer; I basically only play Nintendo games and spend much of my time on them. I've played through all the Mario titles and always complete everything in the game, from collecting all the stars to mastering all the glitches. I also take the games seriously and play them competitively. Yet at the same time, I also enjoy casually playing through these titles and playing through other more casual titles such as Rhythm Heaven Fever, Animal Crossing, and dare I say Banana Kong. This "core" category is intended for people who play both hardcore and casual games. At the same time, Nintendo nowadays develops games for both hardcore and casual gamers, resulting in this core category. So if you play the recent Nintendo games, you're likely a core gamer. And if you're both a hardcore and casual gamer, you're a core gamer.

Nongamer

There's not much to say here. If you're not a casual, core, or hardcore gamer, you're not a gamer. You don't touch video games or board games often. You don't care for them probably or you think they're a waste of time. You're usually over sixty years old, as you likely do not possess electronics such as a computer or cellphone.

Calculations

The question is "how many gamers are in the San Francisco bay area." According to bayareacensus.ca.gov, the bay area in 2010 had 7,150,739 people in total. After some googling around, it seems safe to say that the 2010 stats are a good comparison to 2013, as the bay area has not grown much in number, so lets use that number. I'm going to be using this site for the people stats. Now in terms of how many gamers, this is going to be tough because there are so many variables.

The census site has multiple categories, but let's simplify them to relevance. Race, nope, ethnicity doesn't matter. Sex, yes that's relevant. Age, yes that's relevant, obviously a baby doesn't count and possibly really elderly, handicapped people don't either. Households and housing occupancy don't seem too relevant. Place of birth doesn't seem relevant either. Income is important, but there are not enough statistics on that. Education doesn't seem relevant. Commuting, nope. Means of transportation, nope. Type of employment, probably not. There we go, the categories to look at for gamers are age and sex.

Time for age and sex statistics, and number crunching. According to the Entertainment Software Association, the average gamer is 30 years old and sixty-eight percent of all gamers are 18 years old or older. Looking at the bay area census, 65.5% of the bay area are 18-64 and 12.3% 65 years and older. I'm going to say that over 65 is a pretty small market for gamers and it's unlikely that many people of this age are gamers anyways, so lets cut that out. Assuming all these people are gamers, this means that

there are 4,682,837 18 year old and above gamers.

X x 68/100 = 4,682,837, where X is the total amount of gamers.

This means there are 6,886,525 gamers in total. But this includes those under age 5, which doesn't make sense. So let's take that out. The census says there are 447,811 people under age 5, so 6,886,525 – 447,811 = 6,438,714. Lets round it to about 6.4 million gamers in the bay area based on age. As for gender, the Entertainment Software Association says that 47% of all gamers are woman and 53% male, but this doesn't help as I need how many woman or men are gamers, not the other way around. I wasn't able to find these stats online, so I can't find out the number of gamers based on that.

The Verdict

There are 6.4 million gamers in the bay area max. Since there are 7,150,739 people in the bay area, this means at the max, 90 percent of all people in the bay area are gamers, whether casual, core, or hardcore. Obviously this number and percentage is basically the max amount, as based on the calculations, I assume that if you're between 5 and 64, you're a gamer. Obviously, it doesn't make sense to assume everyone ages 5-64 is a gamer, so lets round it even further to 6 million. So to conclude, I would say there are about 6 million gamers in the San Francisco bay area, meaning about 84 percent of all people in the bay area are gamers.