

Gaming's Cheating Crisis Report

The Impact on
Players and Profit

Foreword from the CEO

"I hate cheating in games. So do all of my friends and everyone that I know. We're all aware of the impact of cheating on a personal scale; It ruins the experience, and in my circle of relatively hardcore gamers, we've all quit games or stopped spending due to the effects of cheating.

There's been a lot of speculation that cheating has become a crisis, and we wanted to understand if that's true. We wanted to find out how a wide range of gamers feel across different countries, gender, and age.

Eager to understand the reality, this study was commissioned to unpack the cheating crisis. Built on a survey of over 2,000 gamers, this whitepaper explores the real-world impact on gamers, revenue, and communities, and offers a clear path forward to rebuild trust and accountability, and most importantly, bring back what makes games fun. Playing without cheating, where you know everyone is playing by the rules, and nobody has an unfair advantage."

Andrew Wailes

Andrew Wailes,
Founder and CEO, PlaySafe ID



Key Findings

The survey commissioned for this report uncovered powerful insights about the state of cheating in gaming. Here are the key takeaways you need to know:

- Cheating is now a crisis, with **80%** of gamers encountering it in online games. Only **20%** of gamers say they never come across cheaters
- Player retention is at risk. A significant **42%** of gamers have considered quitting a game entirely because of cheaters
- The gaming community is highly receptive to identity verification as a solution. **73%** would be happy to verify themselves in order to play without cheaters
- Cheating has a direct financial impact on the games industry, as **55%** of gamers have either reduced or stopped spending on in-game purchases because of it
- Gamers are ready for a solution. A massive **83%** would be more likely to play a game that is credibly promoted as being cheat-free
- The vast majority of gamers, **79%**, agree that penalties for cheating should apply across multiple games, suggesting a desire for industry-wide accountability

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Audience Chart

2,013

gamers in the US and UK

Most likely to play first person shooters, sports games and casual games

82%

play games multiple times a week

Introduction

In the world of online gaming, fair play is the foundation of creating positive gaming experiences and building a thriving community. But a crisis is eroding that trust, threatening player enjoyment and the business models that developers and publishers rely on to both grow and serve customers. Cheating has become a serious business issue, impacting revenue streams, damaging brand reputation, and driving players away.

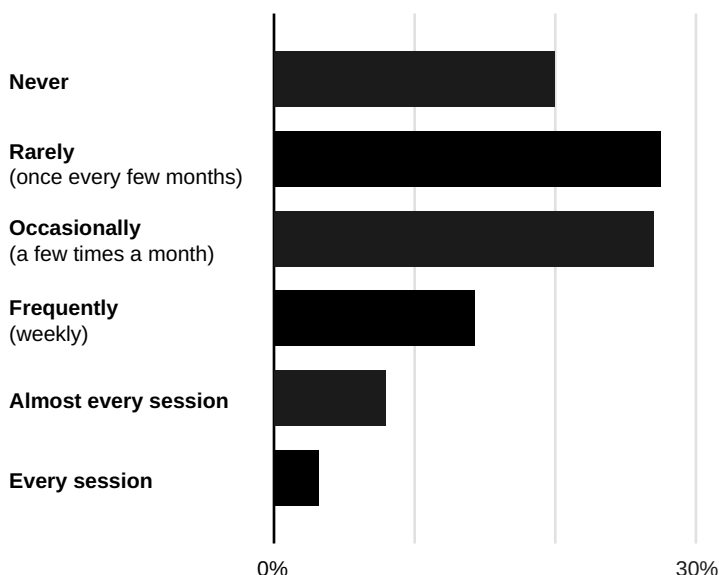
The aforementioned survey pooled insights from over 2,000 gamers across the UK and the USA, and was conducted by independent research agency Atomik Research on behalf of PlaySafe ID. It has revealed the massive scale of the cheating problem, painting a clear but disheartening picture: cheating is no longer a fringe issue, but a major cross genre challenge that the industry can't afford to ignore.

The Scale of the Problem

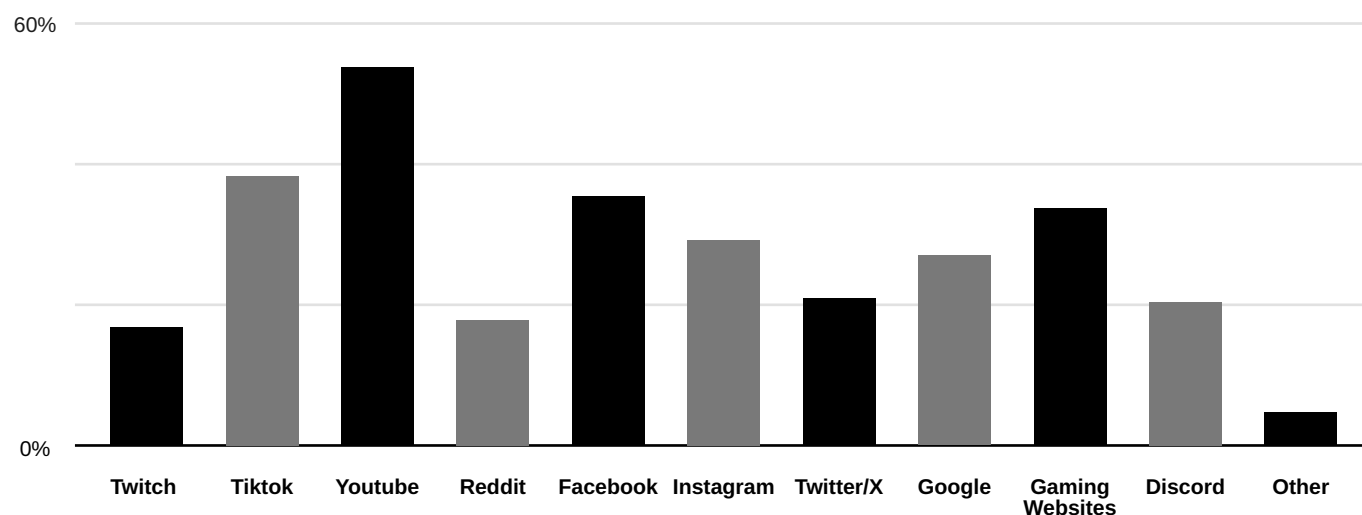
It's surprising to many outside of gaming just how widespread cheating has become. Our research found that **80%** of gamers have encountered cheating in online games. For the gaming community, cheating is a regular occurrence, with **52%** saying they encounter it at least a few times a month, if not more often. The problem is so common that only **20%** of players claim to have never seen it. This shows that for many, cheating has become an unfortunate part of their online gaming routine.

Cheating's increasing ease of implementation and visibility is also a big part of the issue. The survey found that **54%** of gamers come across content on how to cheat on YouTube, followed by TikTok with **38%**, and specific gaming websites with **34%**. With such easy access to tools and methods, developers are constantly battling to stay one step ahead.

How often do you encounter cheating in online games?



Where do you typically see content related to cheating in videogames?

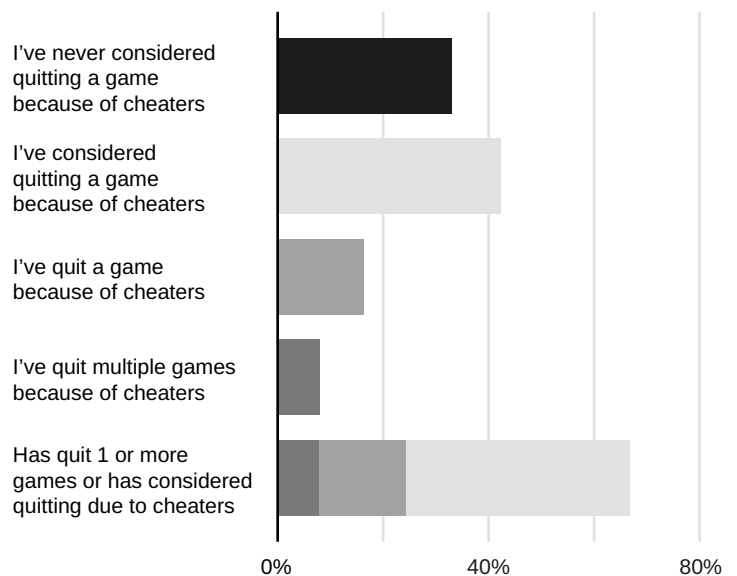


The Erosion of Player Trust and Satisfaction

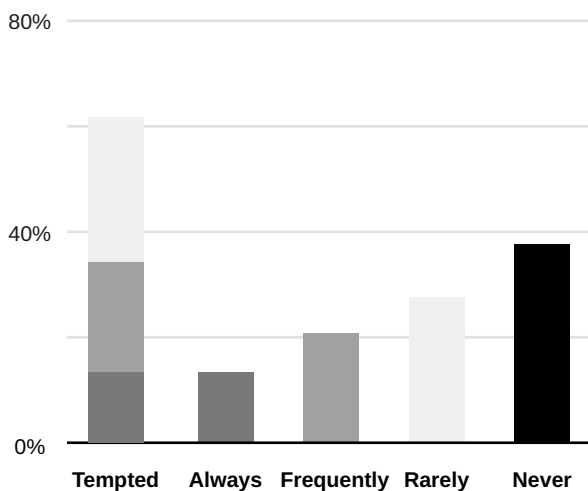
Cheating has a direct and significant impact on how players feel about a game. The data reveals that **42%** of gamers have considered quitting a game because of cheaters. This number is even higher in the UK, where **45%** of gamers have thought about leaving a title for the same reason. It is understandable too. Cheats undermine the very point of playing a competitive game. This highlights a serious retention problem that's not about any game itself, but about the failure to maintain a fair and secure environment.

The temptation to cheat is also worryingly high, with **62%** of gamers admitting to having felt tempted to cheat at least occasionally, and **25%** feeling the temptation frequently or always. This suggests a difficult cycle where a bad experience can lead to a breakdown of integrity, creating a culture of 'if you can't beat them, join them.'

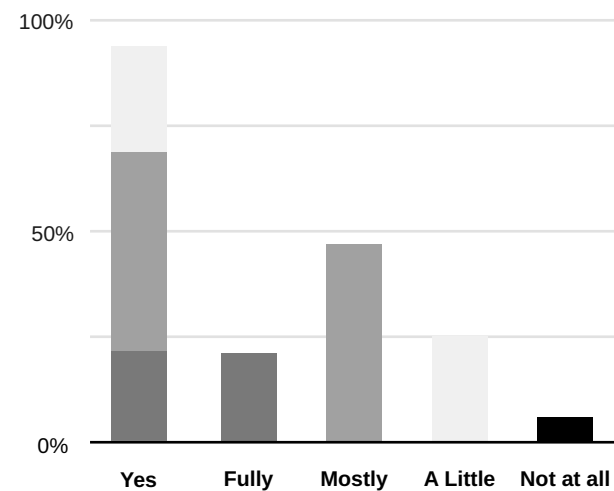
How close have you come to quitting playing a game because of cheaters?



Have you ever felt tempted to cheat in a video game?



How much do you trust game developers to effectively deal with cheating in multiplayer games?



Despite these challenges, gamers still have a lot of faith in developers. A huge majority, **94%**, expressed at least some trust that they can effectively deal with cheating. This trust is a massive opportunity for game studios to take decisive action and deliver on player expectations.

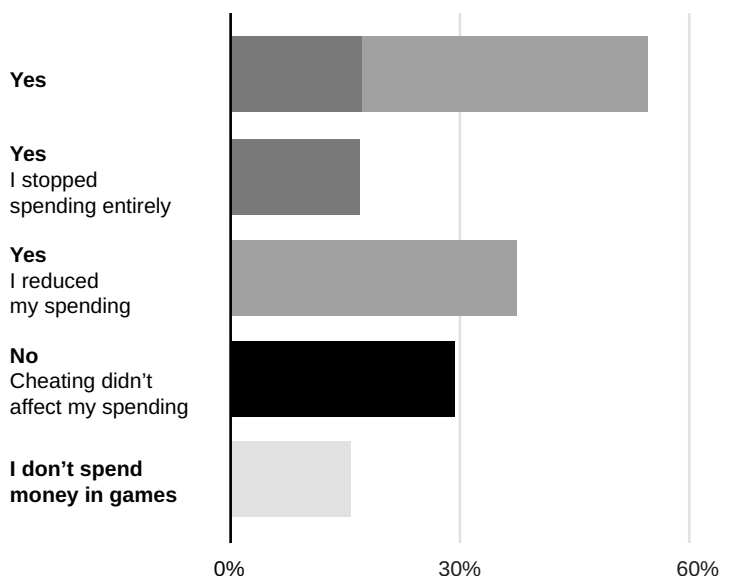
The Financial Impact on the Games Industry

Cheating has a major direct negative impact on a game developer's bottom line. The research shows that the majority of players, **55%**, have either reduced or stopped spending in games because of cheating. This includes **17%** who have stopped spending entirely, and **38%** who have reduced their spending.

More concerning, the data shows that those who spend **\$11-\$50 per month** are the most impacted, with **52%** of players in this group reporting that they are affected by cheating. These players are the revenue backbone of studios, and **33%** of them are negatively impacted to the point that they stop spending and/or quit playing.

For an industry that relies heavily on microtransactions, in-app purchasing, subscriptions, and related mechanisms of in-game economies, this represents a significant threat to both short-term revenue and long-term viability. Simply put, cheating appears to be one of the biggest costs/losses to game developers today, especially when it comes to the core playerbase.

Have you ever reduced or stopped spending money in a game because of cheating?

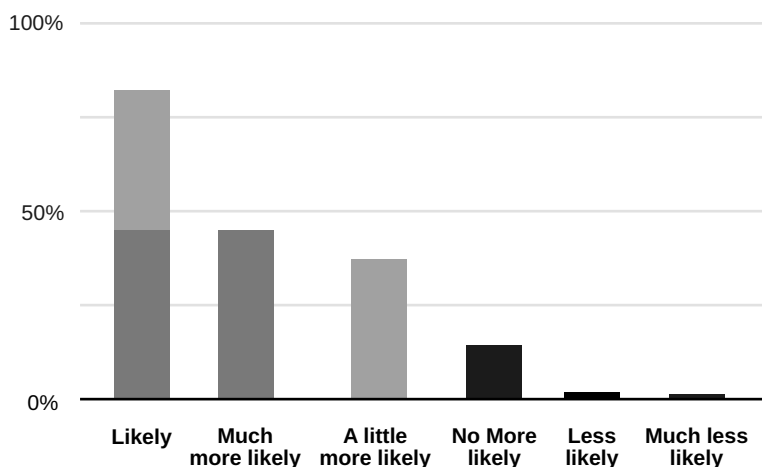


The Path to a Fairer Future

Solutions and Accountability

The findings paint a bleak picture of the impact cheating has on spending, retention and enjoyment: but there is hope. The majority of gamers surveyed were aware of the problem and open to solutions that will help restore a sense of fair play, with **83%** stating they would be more likely to play a game that promotes itself as being cheater-free and has credible measures in place to back up that claim. This shows that there is a strong demand for a more fair gaming experience. Players and industry are united in their desired outcomes – which creates an opportunity to meaningfully move forward.

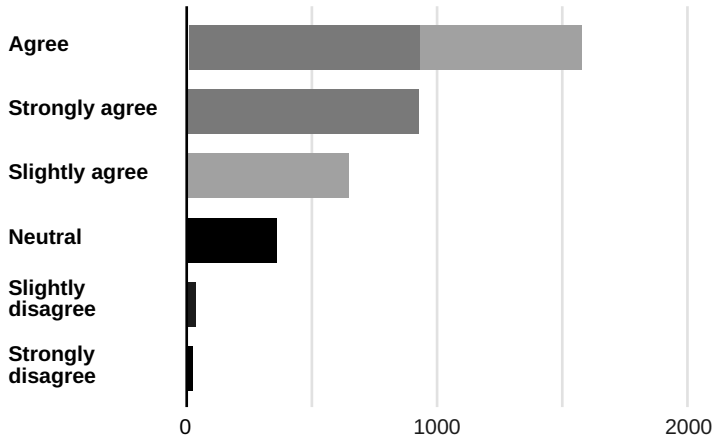
If a game promoted itself as “cheater-free” and had credible measures in place to support that claim, how would that affect your likelihood of playing it?



Importantly, the community is willing to embrace new approaches to avoid cheaters. When asked about identity verification to avoid being matched with a cheater, a large majority of gamers expressed support: **73%** answered that they would be happy to verify themselves in order to play without cheaters. This proves that players prioritise fair play and positive experience over potential privacy or data concerns, opening the door for innovative accountability technology.

Another key finding was that player desire for accountability extends beyond a single game, with **79%** of gamers agreeing that penalties for cheating should apply to other games as well. This points to a desire for a unified, industry-wide approach to tackling cheating, moving beyond game-specific solutions to a system of player-level accountability.

Do you agree that penalties for cheating in a specific title should apply to other games too?



The onus is now on the industry to implement technologies that address cheating in a way players find appropriate. Fortunately, that is relatively easily done, without having to do anything like costly adjusting or rebalancing of game design. Enter PlaySafe ID, a solution that stops cheaters from ruining games by making penalties stick across all connected titles. Unlike traditional anti-cheat that only bans individual accounts, PlaySafe ID gives each verified user one anonymised identity linked to all their games (and they can only ever get the one). So when a user is caught cheating, botting, or violating child safety rules, they can't just create a new account and return. By ensuring real accountability, PlaySafe ID breaks the ban evasion cycle and restores fair play to gaming.

The company was founded in response to the cheating and bots prolific in online games, and the growing need to keep children safe from predators and bad-actors.

Closing words from the CEO

"Almost all gamers have a gut feeling that cheating has gotten out of hand. They know it's a problem because they experience it all the time. I know that developers often prefer not to address cheating publicly, but players know it's happening. They are suffering because of cheating, and developers are missing out on massive amounts of revenue because of it. This study has been powerful in helping quantify that.

I found it shocking just how many players quit games, stop spending, and are tempted to cheat themselves. Before we commissioned this independent research, I had a hunch that the numbers were going to be big, but I had no idea that the issue was felt so strongly by so many.

It was also surprising to see the excitement and willingness of gamers to embrace new measures to keep cheaters out. It's surprising but great to see that **73%** of gamers are willing to verify to play without cheaters, that **79%** think that bans should work across games, and that **83%** would be more likely to play a game that is promoted as "cheater-free" with credible measures to prove it. Gamers are hungry for better, and they want developers to try these measures. Anti-cheat is an essential tool, but it falls short without accountability to enforce fair play.

It's clear that by addressing cheating head-on with new tools and methodologies, developers and publishers have a huge opportunity to massively increase revenue, protect their games, and build stronger and more loyal communities."

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Founder and CEO, PlaySafe ID

Methodology

An online survey was conducted by Atomik Research among 2,013 PC Gamers aged 18-plus in the UK and the USA. The research fieldwork took place between 28-and-31 July. Atomik Research is an independent creative market research agency that employs MRS-certified researchers, and abides to MRS code.



