



| 20
26



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Entertainment Software Association

ESSENTIAL FACTS

About the U.S. Video Game Industry

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FOREWORD

Several years ago, the Entertainment Software Association adopted a new tagline: **Everyone Plays**. The expression was inspired, in part, by the results of our annual *Essential Facts About the U.S. Video Game Industry* report. Year after year, we see a growing number of Americans joining in on the fun of gameplay, shaking up stereotypes about who is and who can be a "gamer." This year's report is no different.

Today, more than 212.3 million Americans play video games regularly—that's more than two in three Americans who turn to video games to relax and unwind, connect with friends and family, or exercise their brains in an effort to keep their minds sharp.

Today's players are comprised of men and women at nearly equal rates. There are players from every generation, and the **average player is now 37 years old**. Kids still love to play games, of course, but more adults play than ever before. In fact, about one in three of the Silent Generation (80+) play their favorite video games every week.

For many households, playing video games has become a regular and invaluable way to engage, upgrading passive screen time with memorable moments for adults and kids alike. Three-quarters of American parents play video games, and **81% of parent players say they play video games with their kids**.

Our 2026 report not only examines **who plays**, but also takes a closer look at **why, how, and when** Americans play, as well as **with whom they are playing**. There are more gameplay options than any other time in history, which players can access from mobile devices, consoles, PCs, and VR headsets. Players can choose from a variety of genres and titles across those platforms, meaning there truly is a **game for everyone**.

It's clear from this year's report that video games make life more fun. Take a look for yourself and discover why **everyone plays**.

Sincerely,

Stanley Pierre-Louis
President & CEO

Entertainment Software Association

Video games are one of America’s favorite forms of entertainment, bridging ages, genders, regions, and ethnicities.

212.3 million
Americans (ages 5-90) play video games

Percentage of the U.S. population who report playing video games **1+ hours a week**

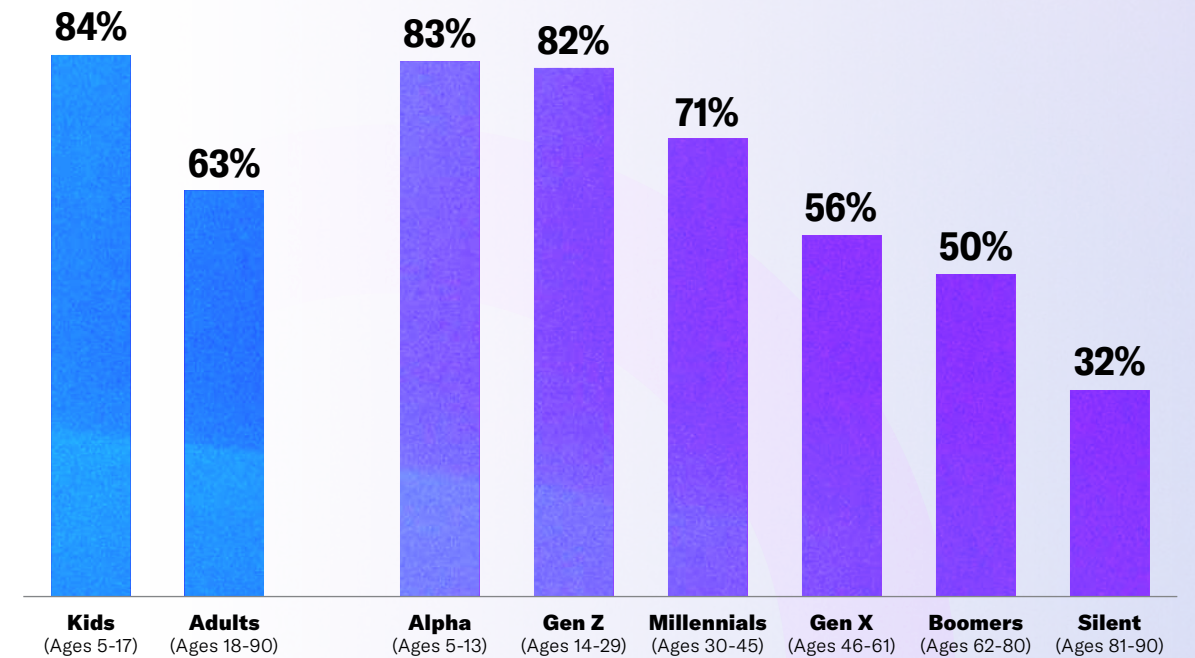
67%

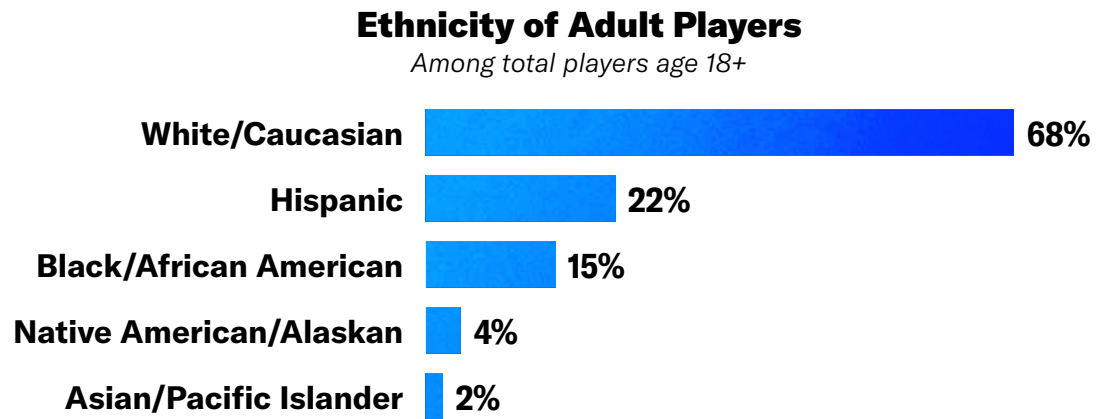
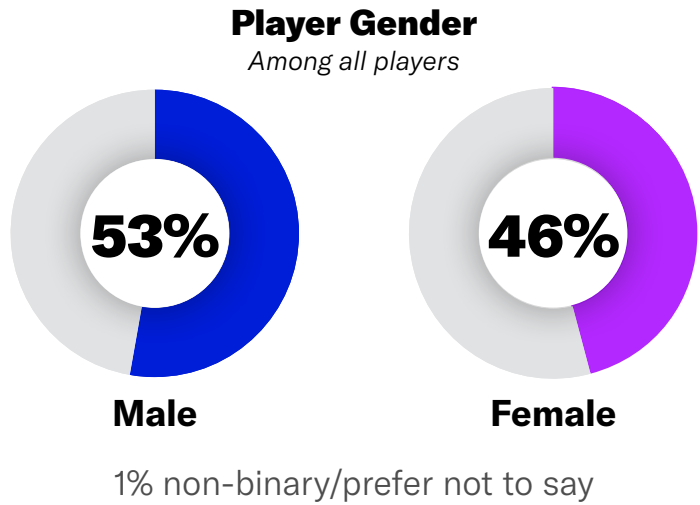


Average Player Age

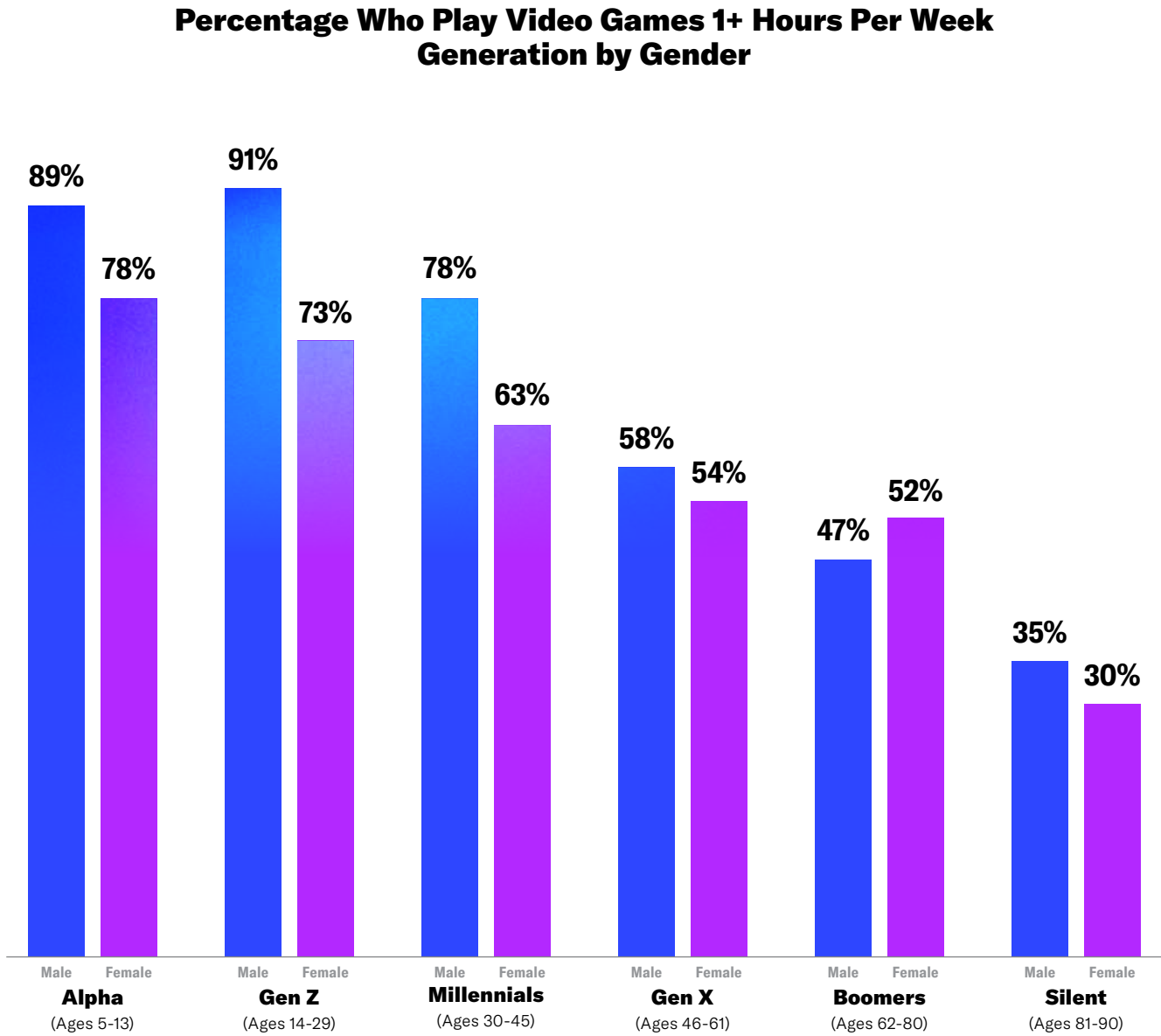
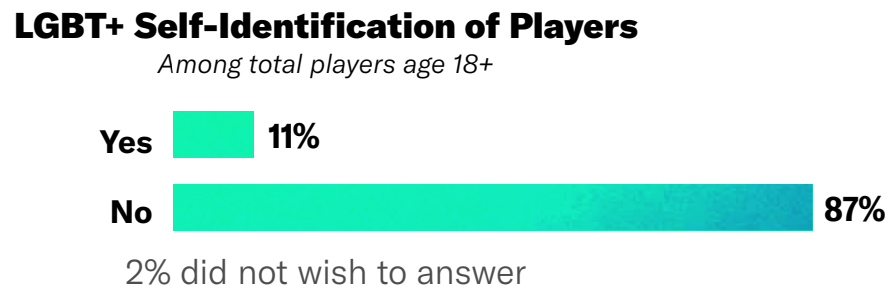
37

Percentage of Americans Who Play Video Games 1+ Hours Per Week
(Any platform)





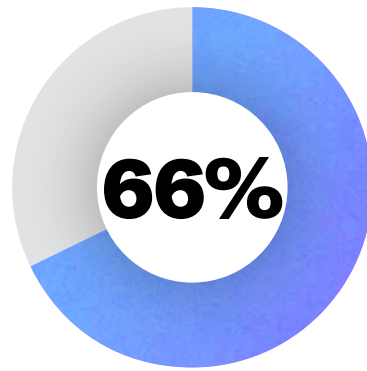
*Question allows for more than one answer



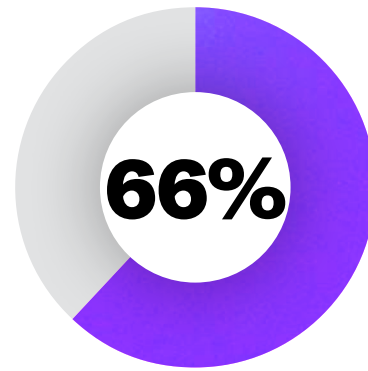
The top two reasons that Americans play video games are to relax and to have fun. Older generations also play to keep their minds sharp.

Motivations for Playing Video Games

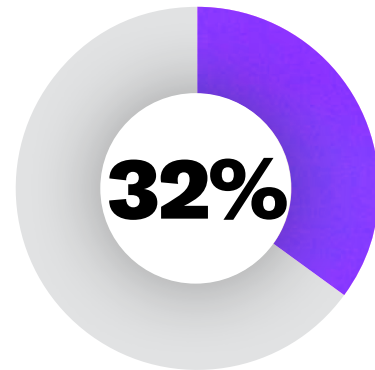
Among total players age 18+



Pass the time
or relax



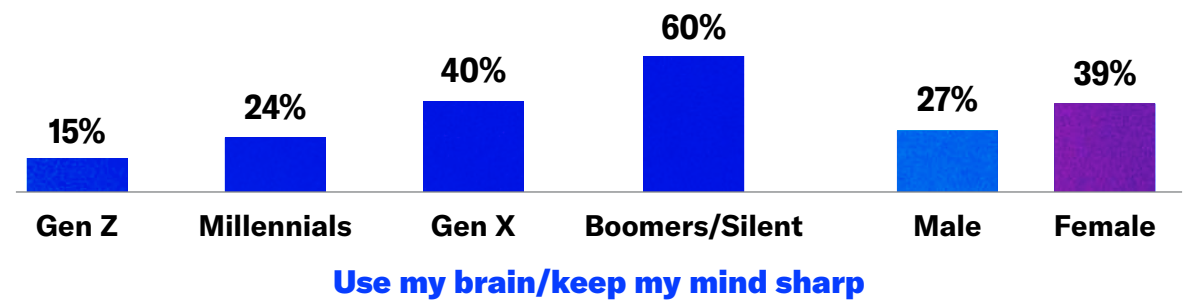
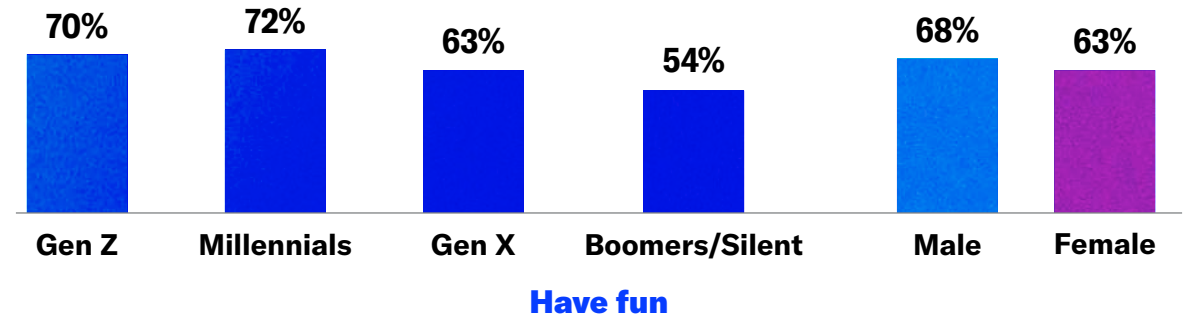
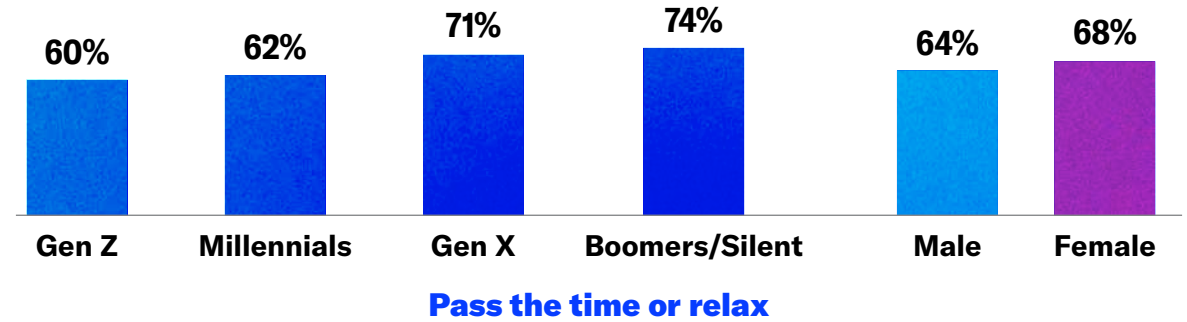
Have fun



Use my brain/keep
my mind sharp

Motivations for Play – By Generation and Gender

Among total players age 18+



Video games are fun—and America knows it! Even non-players say that games support mental, social, and emotional health.

Benefits of Playing Video Games

Percentage agree – Among total adults age 18+

			Among players 18+				Players	Non-Players
			Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers/Silent		
Are fun		85%	93%	96%	94%	93%	94%	68%
Bring people joy through play		81%	92%	92%	89%	81%	89%	66%
Provide mental stimulation		79%	89%	88%	87%	89%	88%	64%
Provide stress relief		78%	88%	92%	85%	83%	88%	60%
Provide accessible experiences for people with different abilities		74%	87%	85%	80%	75%	83%	60%
Can be educational		74%	85%	87%	80%	80%	84%	58%
Can be a great way to spend free time		73%	90%	88%	84%	79%	86%	51%
Help improve cognitive skills		73%	84%	84%	82%	83%	83%	55%
Bring different types of people together		70%	88%	84%	74%	61%	78%	56%
Help improve creative skills		64%	84%	80%	67%	63%	75%	44%
Introduce people to new friends and new relationships		63%	87%	78%	63%	50%	72%	47%
Create a feeling of community		60%	87%	79%	61%	45%	70%	42%
Promote social interaction		57%	79%	72%	58%	50%	66%	40%
Inspire people		54%	80%	76%	53%	38%	64%	36%

Skills Developed Through Video Games

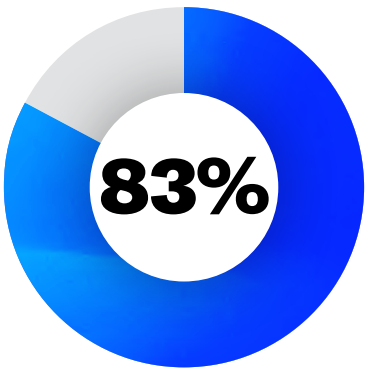
Percentage agree – Among total adults age 18+

			Players	Non-Players
Problem-solving skills		76%	86%	60%
Teamwork & collaboration skills		67%	77%	50%
Adaptability and resilience		58%	69%	38%
Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math (STEAM) skills		53%	64%	36%
Communication skills		52%	63%	33%
Inclusive attitudes towards different groups of people		48%	58%	30%
Conflict resolution skills		48%	58%	32%
Leadership skills		46%	57%	26%

Puzzle, arcade, and action games are the overall favorite genres among Americans.

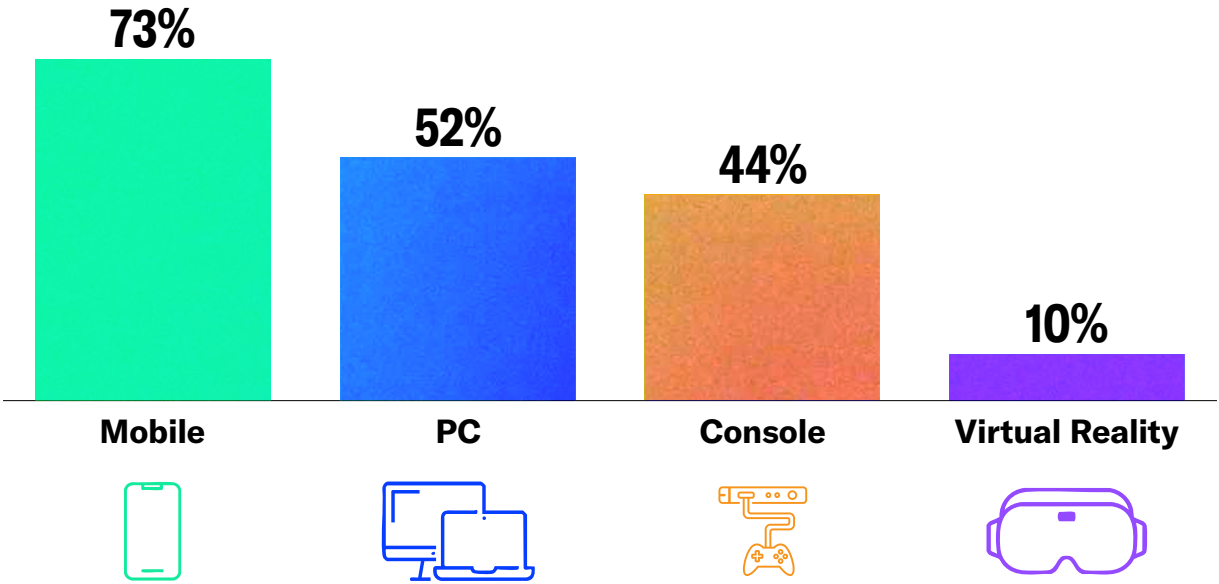
Genres Played Regularly in Past Year
Among total players age 8+

		Alpha	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers/Silent	Male	Female
Puzzle	59%	54%	51%	58%	67%	74%	49%	71%
Arcade & Other	46%	67%	57%	47%	35%	21%	47%	44%
Action	43%	60%	60%	51%	25%	10%	53%	32%
Shooter	37%	41%	57%	43%	21%	9%	50%	23%
Skill & Chance	35%	21%	29%	31%	44%	53%	31%	41%
Role Playing	34%	35%	47%	44%	23%	7%	42%	24%
Racing & Vehicle Simulation	32%	45%	41%	40%	19%	9%	38%	25%
Simulation	32%	38%	43%	36%	22%	12%	29%	34%
Strategy	31%	35%	42%	35%	21%	12%	39%	22%
Sports	26%	30%	37%	30%	16%	6%	36%	14%
Fighting	25%	31%	40%	28%	13%	2%	32%	17%



of U.S. households have played at least one video game device in the past 12 months

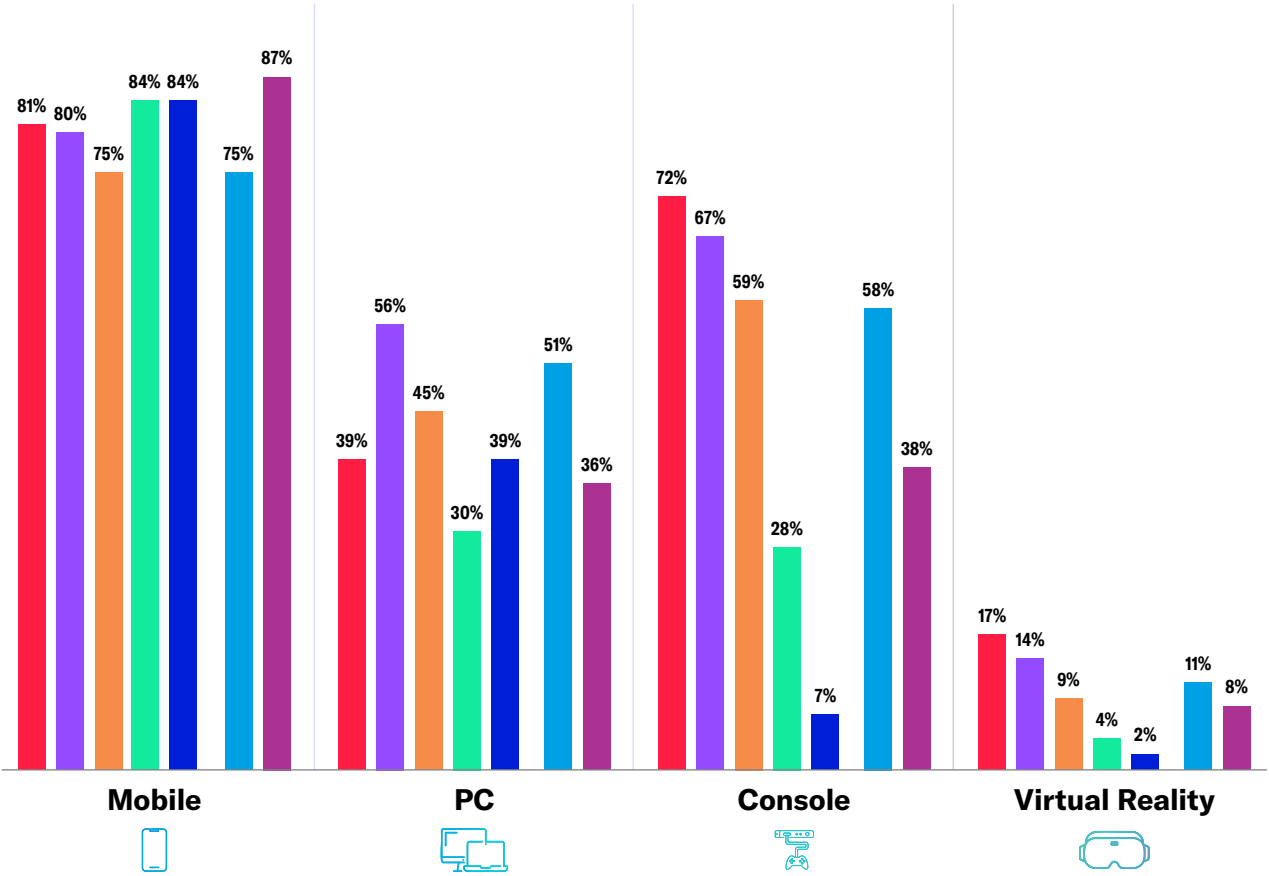
Platforms Played Among Total U.S. Households



Video Game Platforms Played Among Individual Players

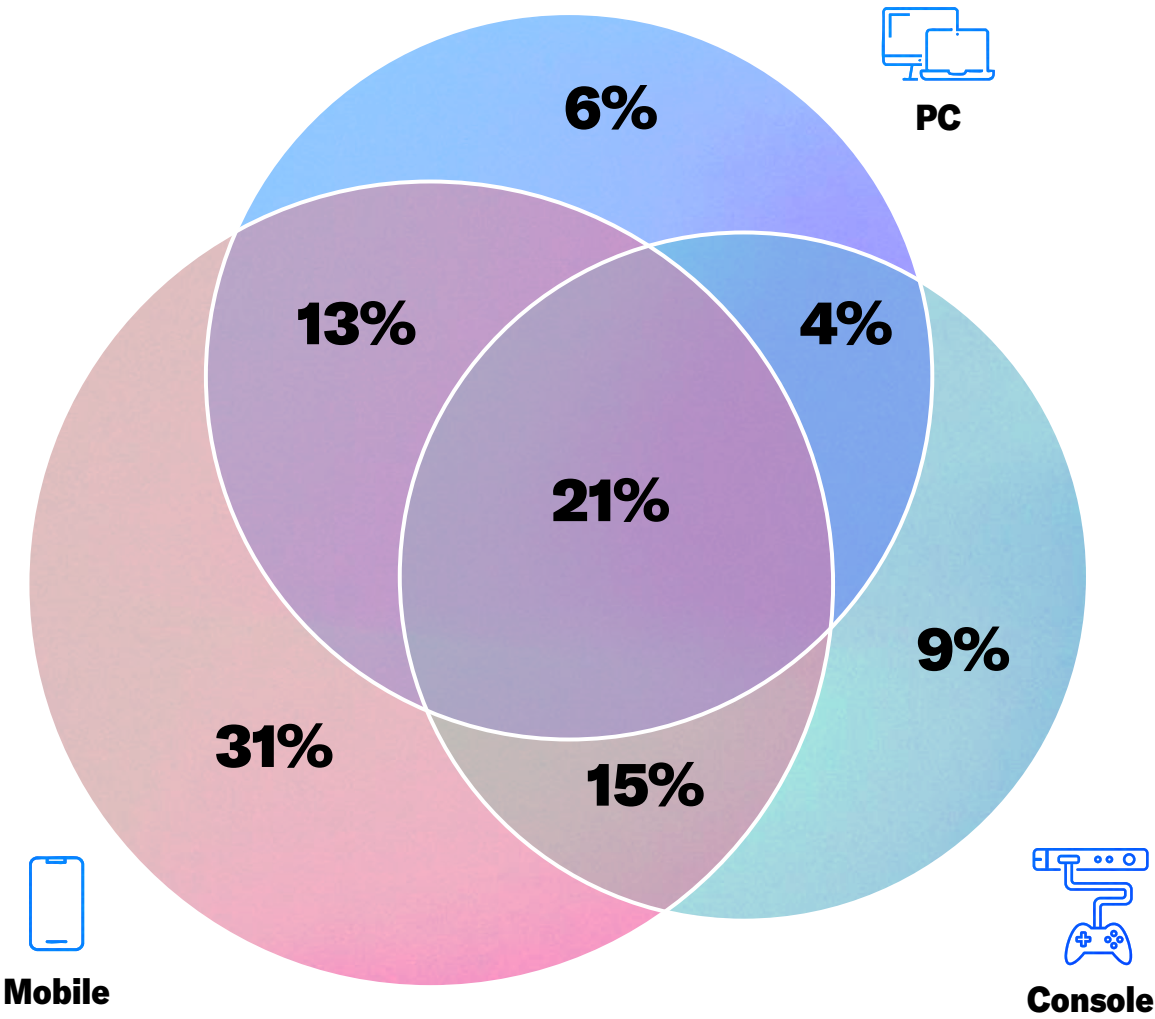
Among total players age 8+

Alpha (Ages 5-13) Gen Z (Ages 14-29) Millennials (Ages 30-45) Gen X (Ages 46-61) Boomers/Silent (Ages 62-90) Male Female



Platform Crossover of Individual Players

Among total players age 8+



For most players, playing video games is reserved for the evenings, nights, and weekends.

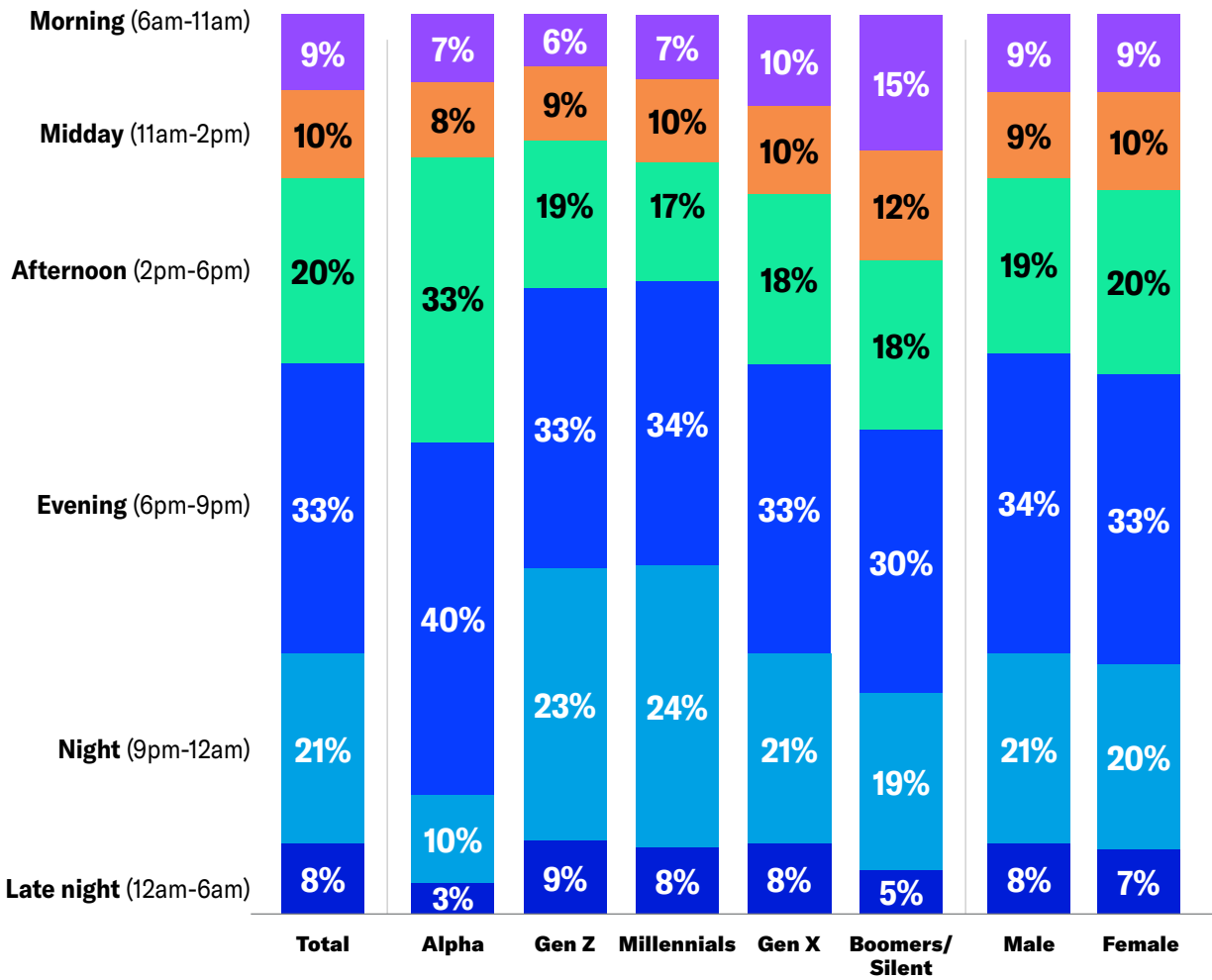
Share of Playing Time by Day of the Week

Among total players age 8+

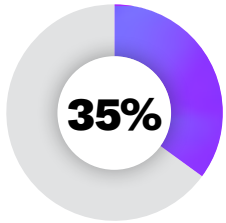
			Alpha	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers/Silent	Male	Female
Monday		11%	9%	11%	11%	11%	13%	11%	11%
Tuesday		11%	9%	11%	11%	11%	13%	11%	11%
Wednesday		11%	9%	11%	11%	12%	13%	11%	11%
Thursday		11%	9%	11%	11%	12%	14%	11%	12%
Friday		16%	16%	17%	16%	16%	15%	16%	16%
Saturday		22%	27%	24%	23%	21%	18%	22%	23%
Sunday		17%	20%	17%	17%	16%	14%	17%	16%

Time of Day for Playing Video Games

Among total players age 8+



Through sports video games, players can simulate real-life scenarios and build skills that extend beyond the screen.



of players age 18+ play sports

Top 5 Sports Played by Video Game Players in Real Life

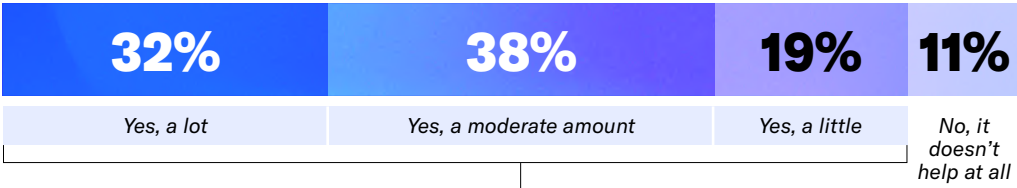
Among the 35% of players age 18+ who play sports

	Basketball	23%
	Soccer	14%
	Football	10%
	Tennis	6%
	Golf	6%

Video Game Players Who Believe Playing the Game Version of Sports Improves Their Real-Life Performance

Among players age 18+ who play a video game version of the sport

89%
say playing the game version of a sport improves real-life performance!

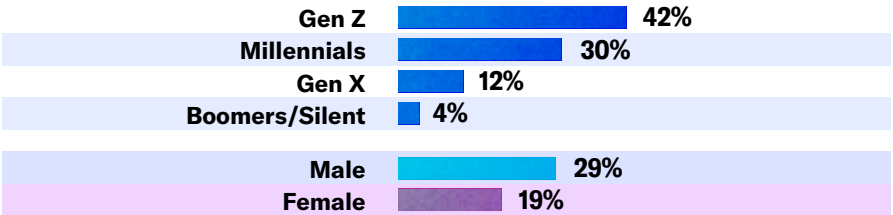


Players are finding that the video games they love can lead them to a new show or soundtrack, while other forms of entertainment can introduce them to a new game.

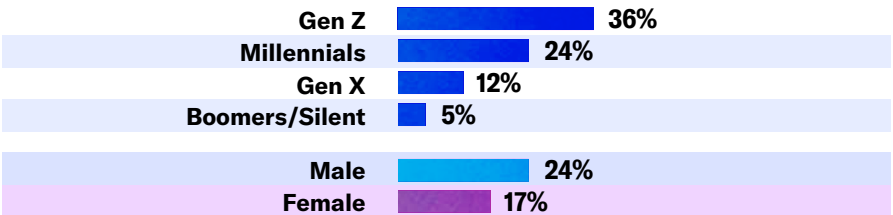
Past Year Video Game Discovery

Among total players age 18+

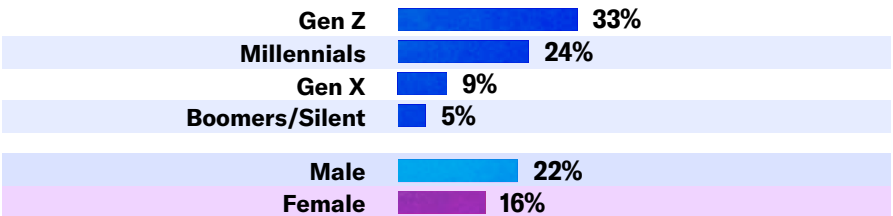
 **24%** Discovered a new song because of a video game I played



 **21%** Discovered a TV show or movie to watch because of a video game I like to play

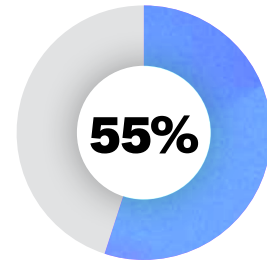


 **19%** Discovered a video game because of a TV show or movie I watched

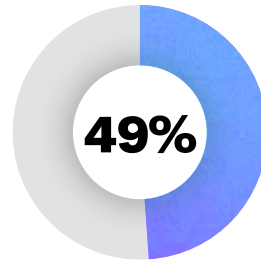


The social value of games is undeniable.

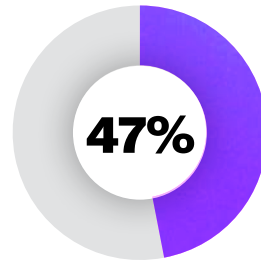
Total Players Age 18+:



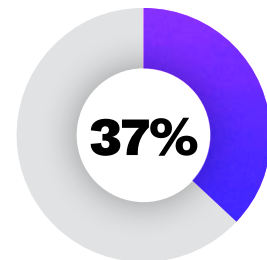
say games make lasting memories



say games help them stay
connected to friends and family



have met people through
video games they otherwise
would not have met

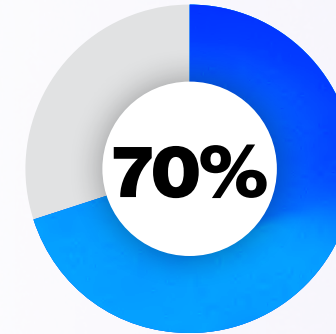


have met a good friend, spouse, or
significant other through video games

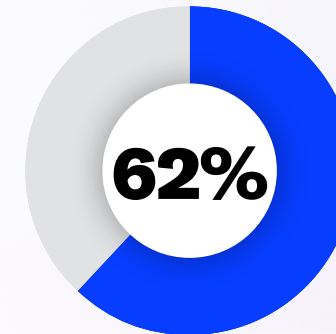
82%

say there is a
video game for
everyone!

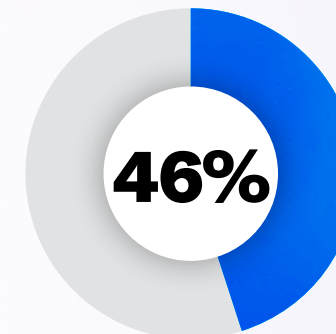
Games bring people together.



of players age 8+ have played
with others (online or offline)



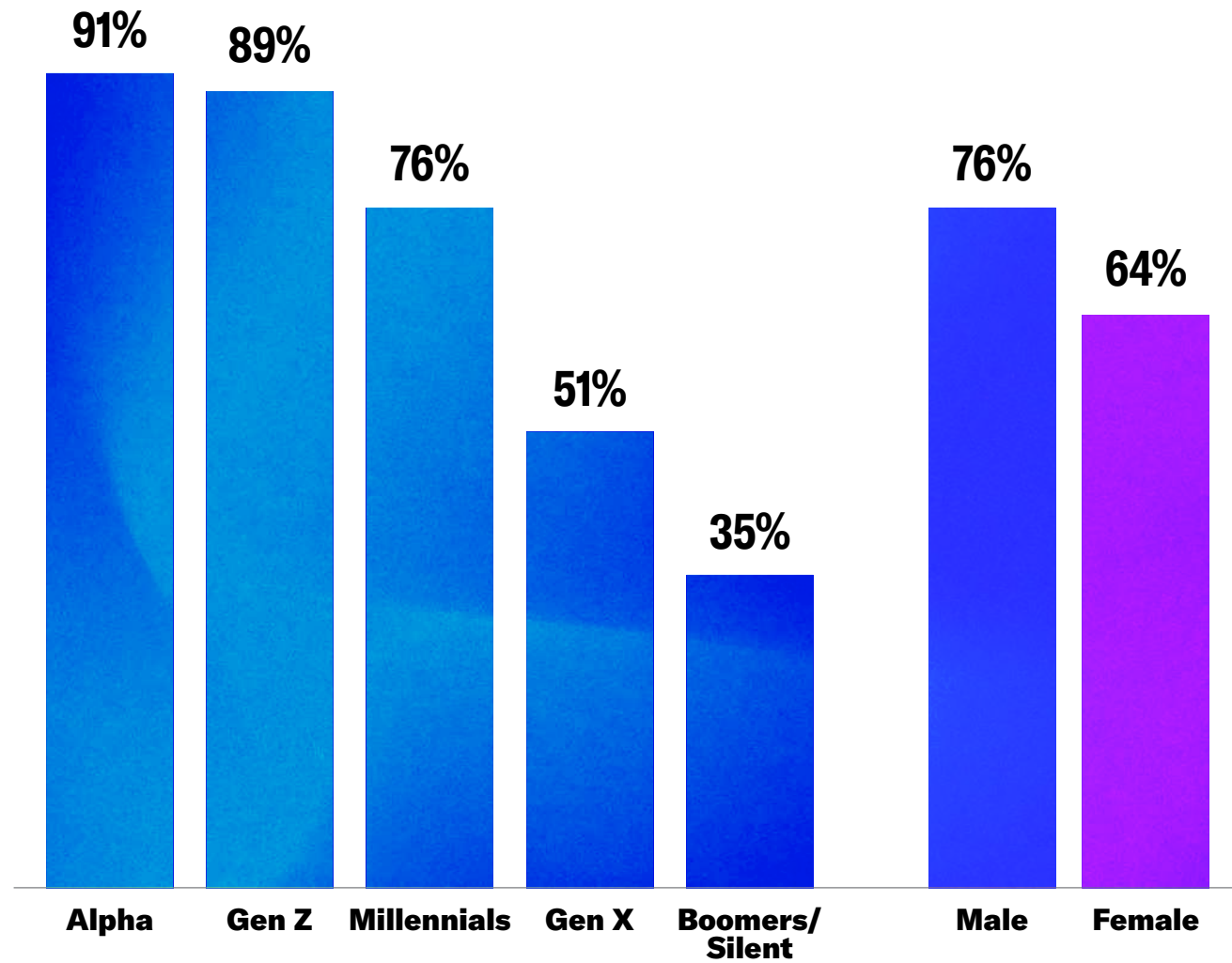
of those players age 8+ play
video games online with
friends they know in person



of players age 8+ play
video games with others
at least weekly

Percentage of Players Who Have Ever Played Games with Others Online or Offline

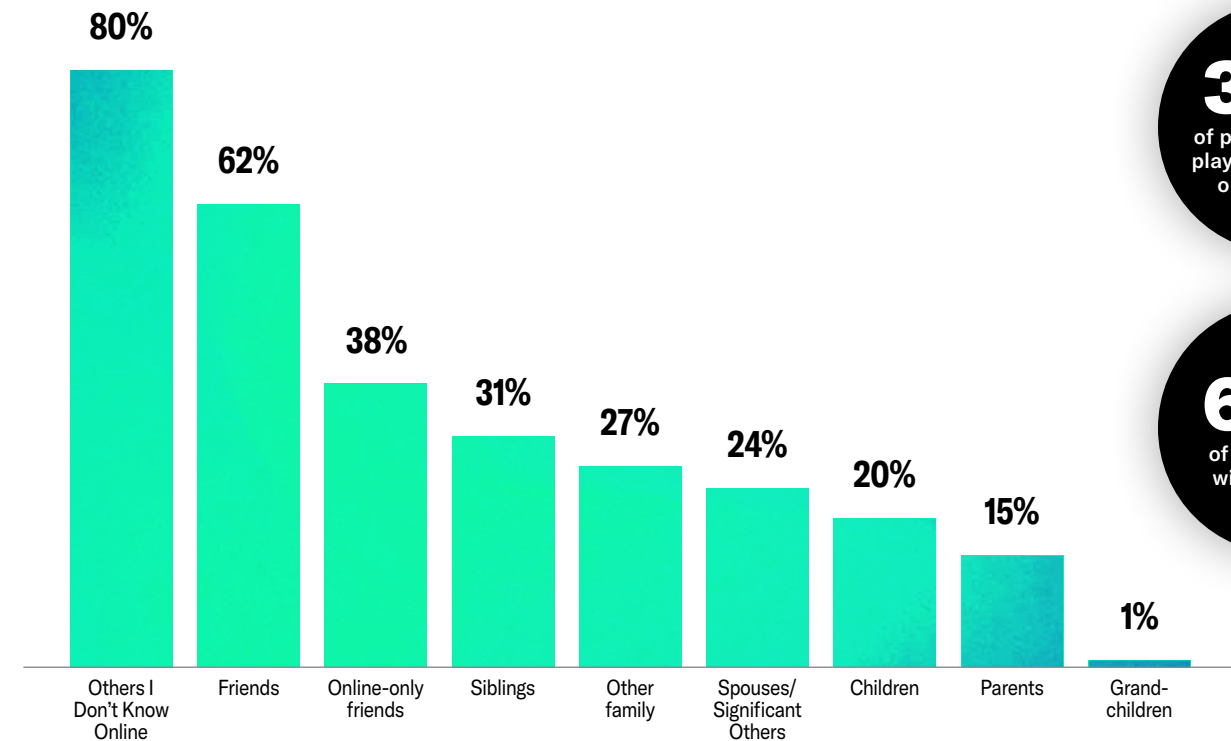
Among total players age 8+



Of those who play with others...

Who Do Players Typically Play With?

Among 70% of players age 8+ who play with others

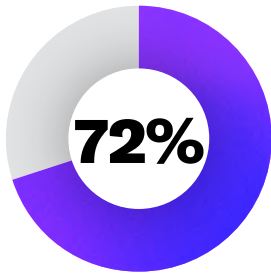


50%
of Gen Alpha plays with their parents

32%
of players age 18+ play with a spouse or significant other

69%
of parents play with their kids

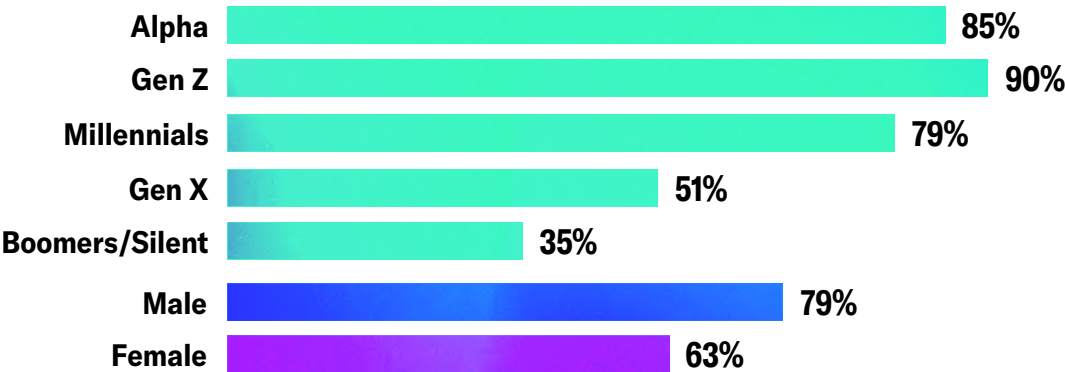
In-game communication helps players improve their gameplay and foster a sense of community.



of online players age 8+ have used communication tools like in-game text and voice chat to talk to others while playing

Players Who Use In-Game Communication Tools by Gender and Generation

Among total players age 8+ who communicate online



How Do Players Typically Communicate While Playing Online?

Among total players age 8+ who communicate online

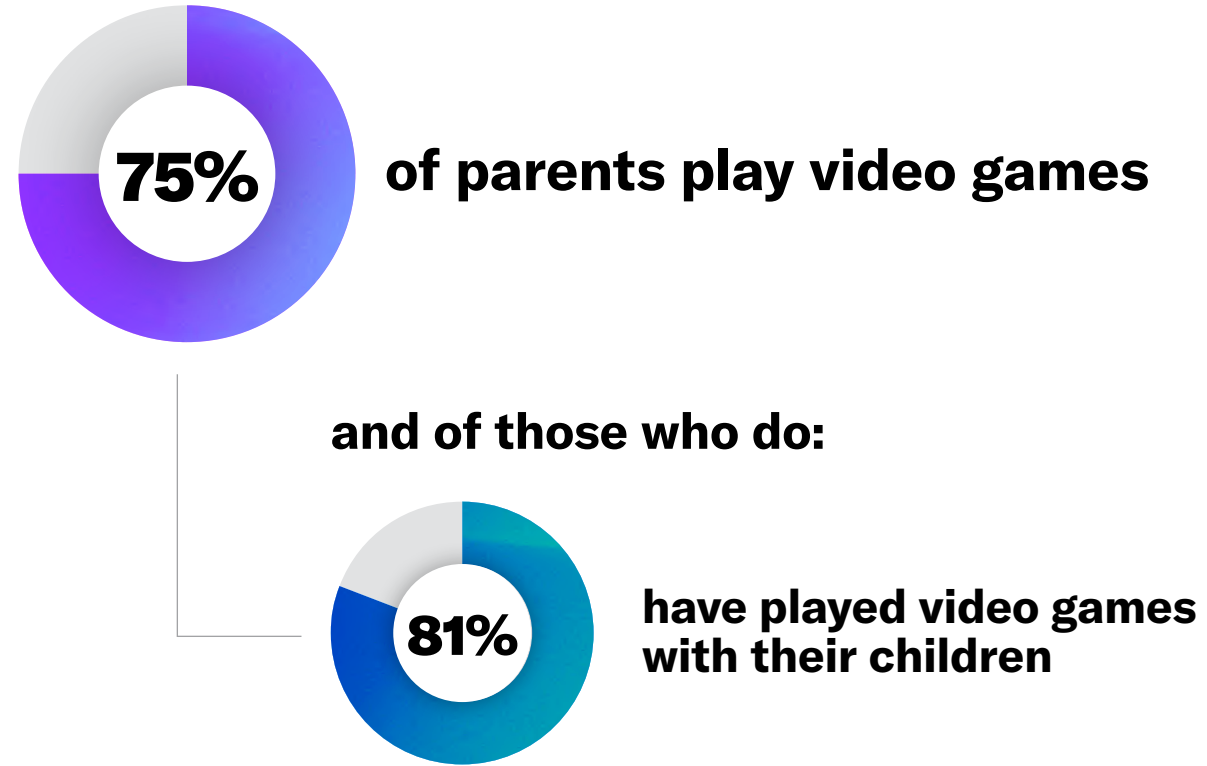
	Have Used	Most Preferred
Platform/in-game text chat	58%	35%
Platform/in-game voice chat	52%	36%
Discord (text or voice chat)	28%	16%
Over audio/video service	23%	11%

Top 5 Reasons Players Communicate With Others Online

Among total players age 8+ who communicate online

- 1 Improve their gameplay
- 2 Be part of a community/spend time with friends
- 3 Get information about games they play
- 4 Learn new skills
- 5 Find new games to play

Video games are fun for the whole family.



52% of parents who play video games play with their children weekly

Reasons Why Parents Play Video Games With Their Children

Among 75% who play with their children



Top Three Reasons Parents Love Video Games for Their Kids

1

Their kids enjoy it

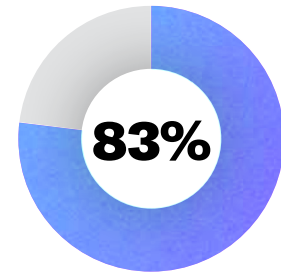
2

Video games teach their kids skills

3

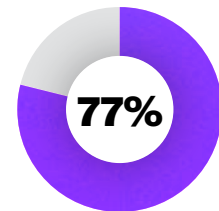
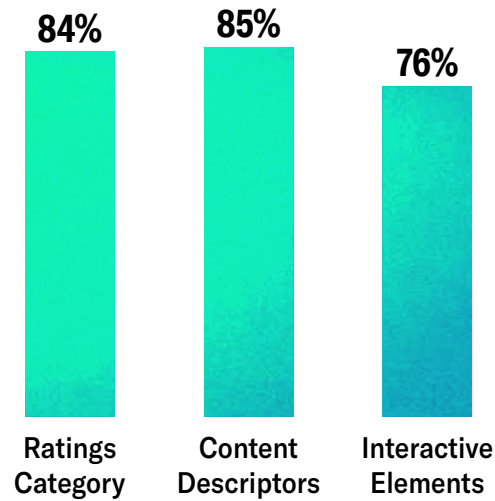
They enjoy playing together as a family

For 30+ years, the ESRB has helped families make informed choices about which video games are appropriate for their children.

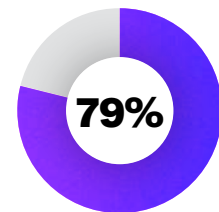


of parents whose kids play video games say that they are aware of ESRB ratings

Most parents say that all three parts of the ESRB rating system are extremely or very important when deciding on video games for their family.



of parents say they check the age rating "every time" or "most of the time" when buying or downloading a new game for their children

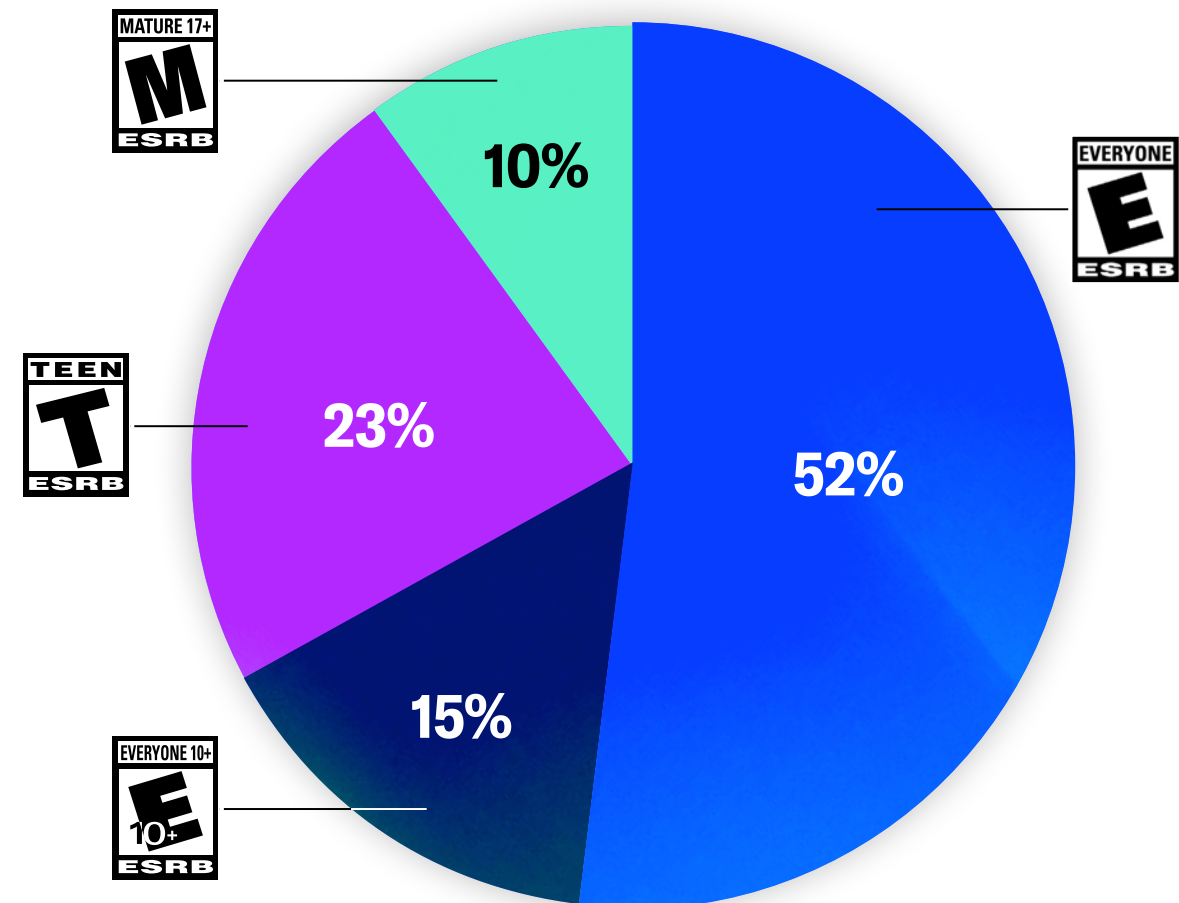


of parents say they use parental controls on a video game device

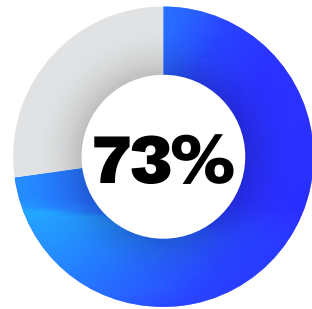
Source: ESRB

In 2025, 90% of the 6,761 ESRB ratings assigned were E, E10+, or T.

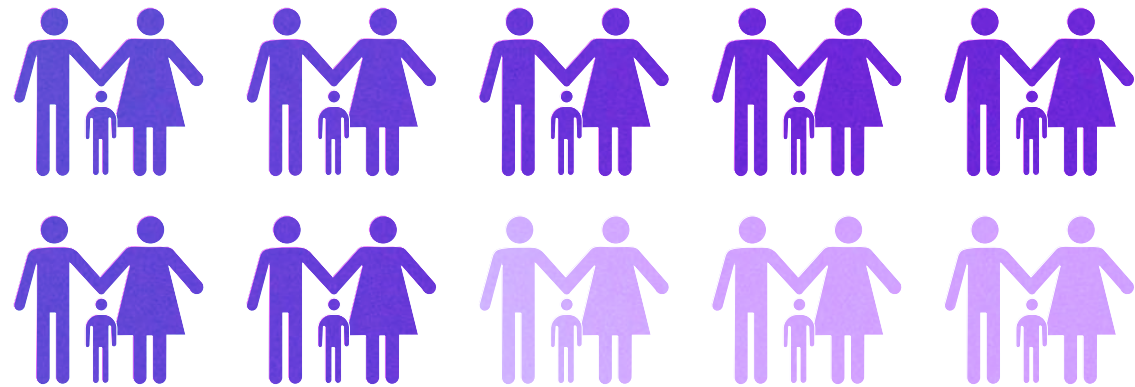
ESRB Ratings Assigned in 2025



NOTE: Includes ratings assigned for boxed (physical) video games and downloadable titles playable on consoles
Ratings numbers provided by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)



of all parents prefer their child spend time playing video games than on social media



7 in 10 of all parents say playing video games offers more potential benefits for their children compared to social media

More than two thirds of parents say ESRB ratings and content descriptors help them to better understand what their kids see when playing video games compared to social media



Video games have been an important driver of the U.S. economy for decades, now outpacing consumer spending on movies, TV, and music combined.

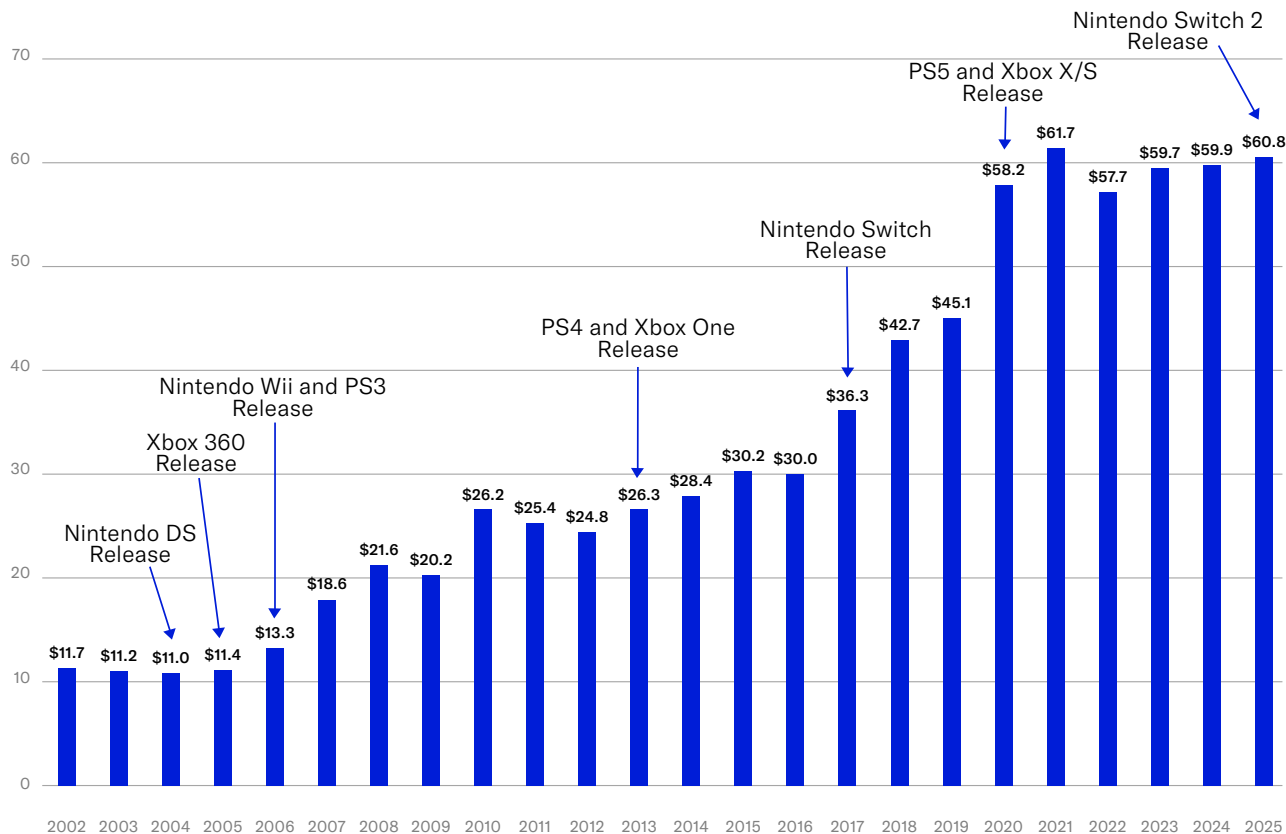
Total Consumer Spending on Video Games in 2025

Source: Circana

\$60.7 billion

- \$52.3 billion on content
- \$5.4 billion on hardware
- \$2.95 billion on accessories

U.S. Video Game Industry Sales, 2002-2025 (in billions)



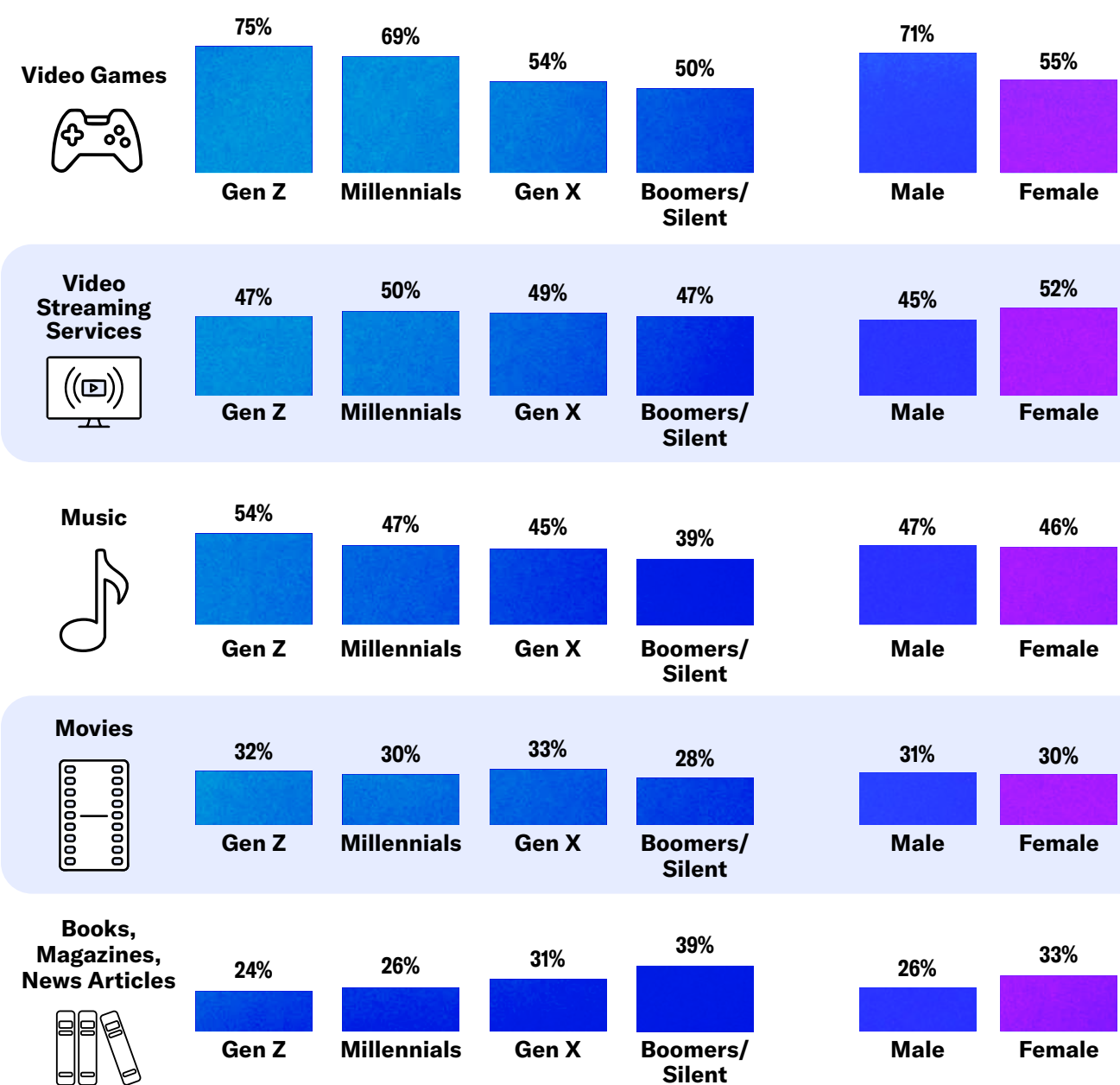
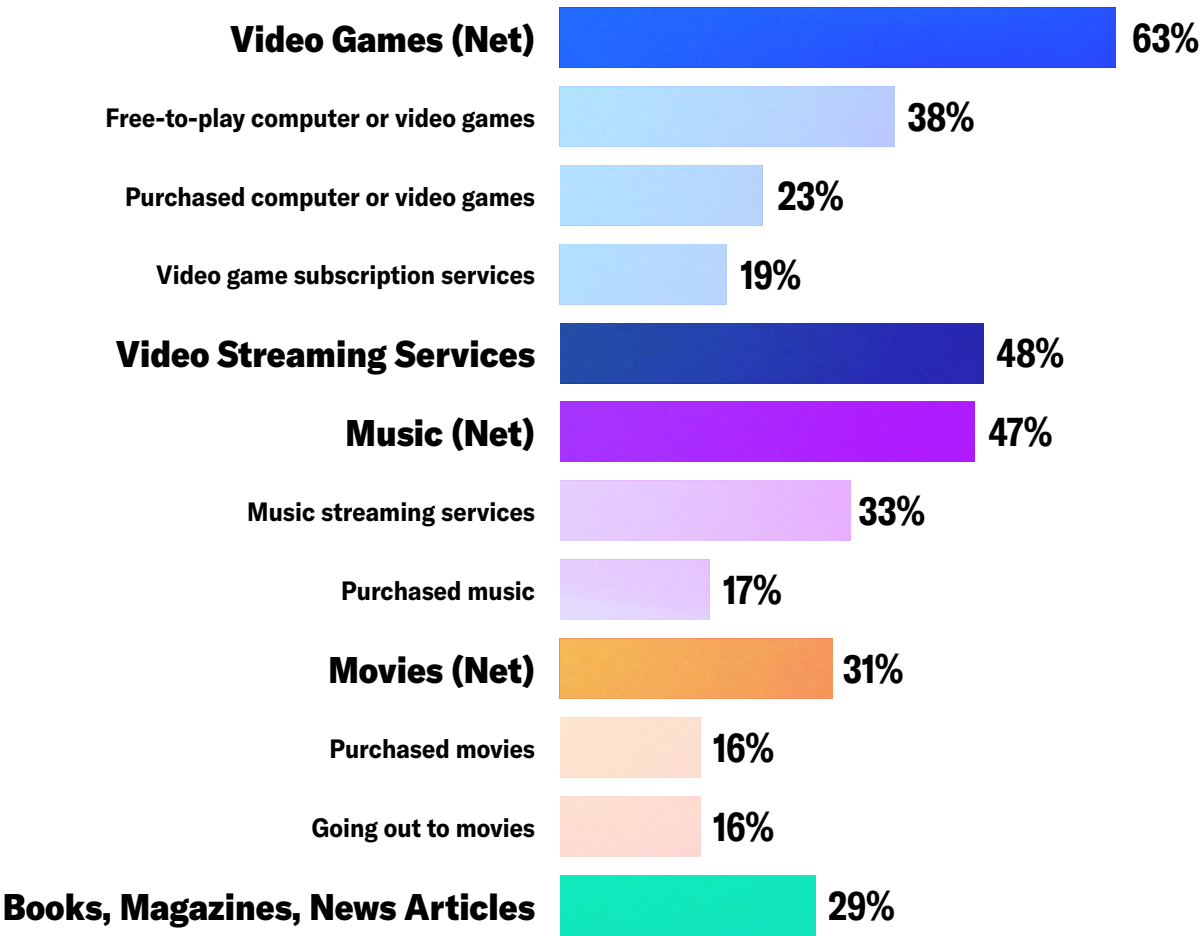
Top Games in the United States in 2025

Console & PC Full Game – Top Grossing		Mobile – Top Grossing	
Rank	Title	Rank	Title
1	Battlefield 6	1	MONOPOLY GO!
2	NBA 2K26	2	Royal Match
3	Borderlands 4	3	Last War: Survival
4	Monster Hunter: Wilds	4	Candy Crush Saga
5	Call of Duty: Black Ops 7	5	Whiteout Survival
6	EA Sports Madden NFL 26	6	Township
7	EA Sports College Football 26	7	Clash Royale
8	EA Sports FC 26	8	Roblox
9	The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion Remastered	9	Coin Master
10	Call of Duty: Black Ops 6	10	Gossip Harbor: Merge & Story

Most players agree that video games offer one of the best values for the money.

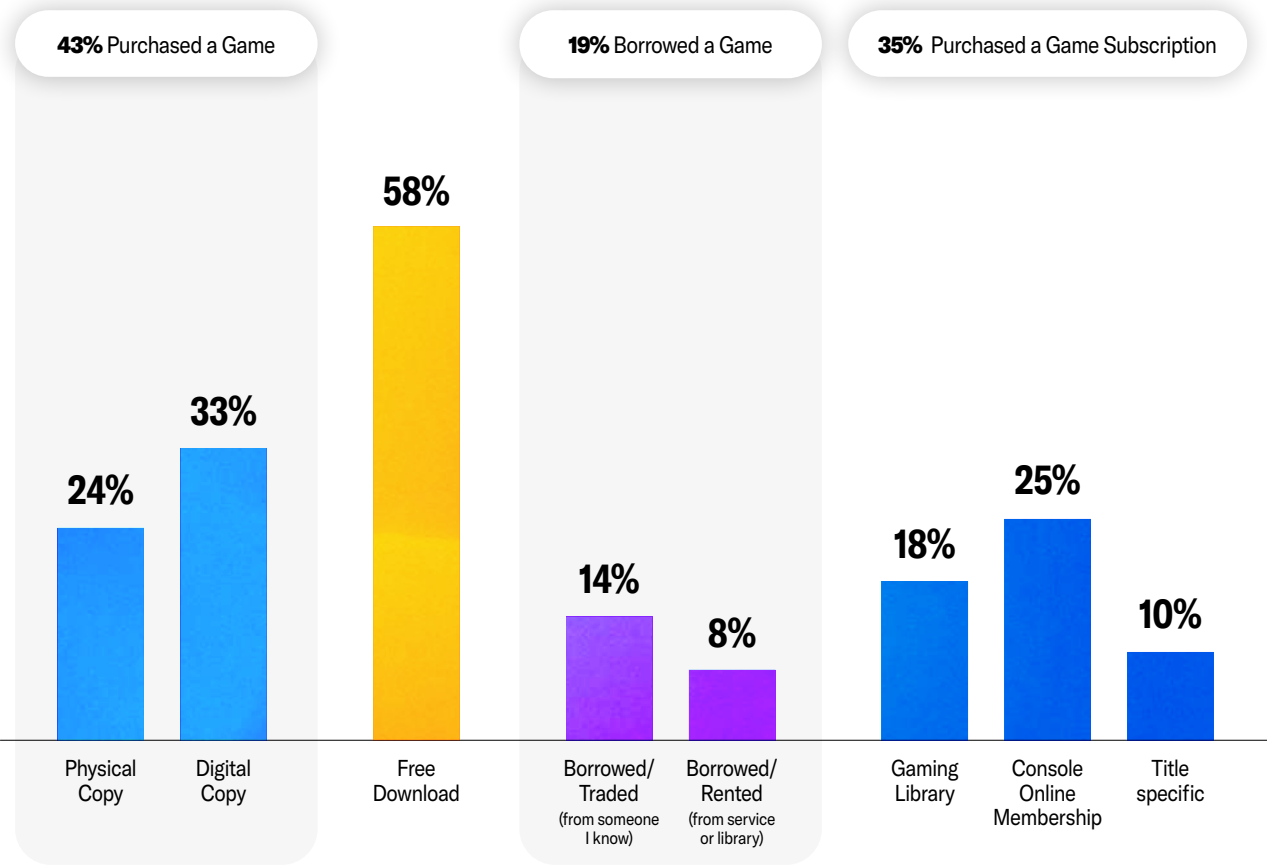
Entertainment with the Most Value for the Money

Percentage agree – among total players age 18+

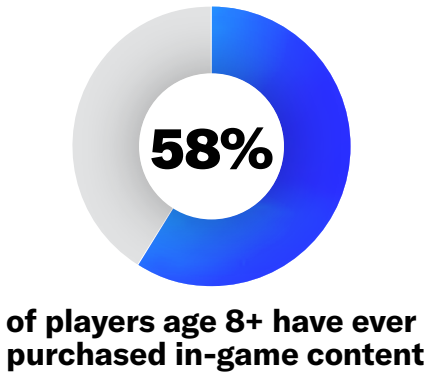


How Players Acquired Games in the Past 12 Months

Among total players age 8+



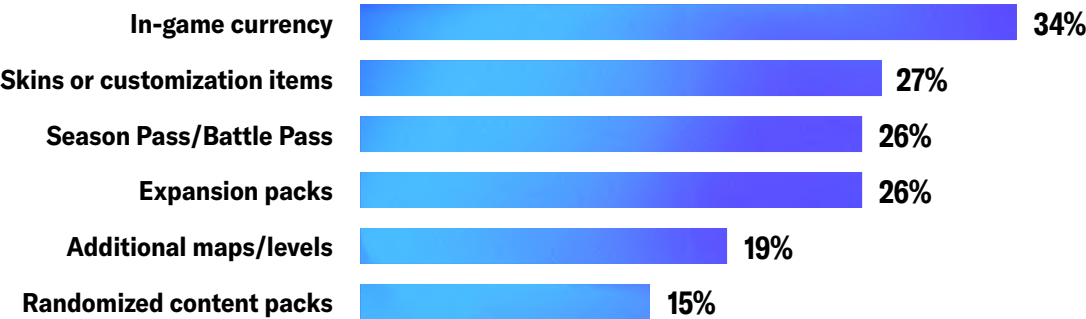
From cosmetic items to downloadable content, players increasingly embrace in-game purchases as a way to personalize and enhance their playing experience.



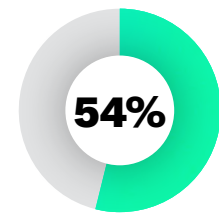
Alpha	69%
Gen Z	78%
Millennials	67%
Gen X	41%
Boomers/Silent	22%
Male	65%
Female	50%

Types of In-Game Content Purchased

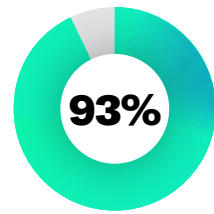
Among total players age 8+



Parents are in charge when it comes to in-game purchases.



of parents have purchased in-game content for their children



of parents who have purchased in-game content for their children require approval for purchases

Most Important Game Attributes When Considering a New Game

Among total players age 18+



YouGov conducted a 20-minute online survey in the U.S. from February 11-25, 2026 among 13,545 total respondents recruited from their proprietary online panel.

n=9,932 Gamers (including n=1,961 Kids/Teens, n=7,971 Adults) who spend at least 1 hour/week playing video games on a smartphone, tablet, PC, console, or VR headset

n=3,613 Non-Gamers (Adults) who either don't play video games, or spend less than 1 hour/week playing

Data is weighted to be representative of the overall U.S. population in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, education, census region, and the distribution of players vs. non-players, as defined above. 18+ respondents were asked about all members of their household in order to size players as young as 5 years old. Players aged 8-17 were asked to complete the survey under the supervision of a parent.

ESA MEMBERS

Amazon
Atari
Bandai Namco Entertainment
Capcom U.S.A.
Disney
Electronic Arts
Epic Games
Konami Digital Entertainment, Inc.
Mattel
Microsoft Corporation
Netflix
Nintendo of America
Riot Games
Roblox
Sony Interactive Entertainment
Square Enix
Take-Two Interactive
Tencent America
Ubisoft
Warner Bros. Games
Wizards of the Coast



ESA & OUR PARTNERS

Entertainment Software Association theESA.com

Founded in 1994, the Entertainment Software Association (ESA) has served as the voice and advocate for the U.S. video game industry for more than 30 years. 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 to secure a vibrant future for the industry for decades to come.

For more information, visit the ESA's website or follow the ESA on X @theESA or Instagram @theesaofficial.

Entertainment Software Rating Board ESRB.org

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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