The Entertainment Software Association (ESA) released 2020 Essential Facts About the Video Game Industry in July 2020. Ipsos conducted the annual research for the ESA. The study gathered data from approximately 4,000 Americans about their video game playing habits and attitudes. 2020 Essential Facts About the Video Game Industry also includes data provided by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) and The AbleGamers Charity.
The release of the 2020 Essential Facts About the Video Game Industry comes amid a global pandemic that has required each of us to change how we interact with one another. Everyday greetings have given way to “social distancing” and “stay-at-home” orders. Yet, through it all, video games have become an important touchstone for keeping audiences around the world connected while staying at home. Now more than ever, it has become clear that video games impact people's lives in meaningful ways beyond the intrinsic joy of playing.

Players of all ages and backgrounds embrace that power of play through video games. There are more than 214 million video game players across the United States, three quarters of all U.S. households have at least one person who plays video games, and 64 percent of U.S. adults and 70 percent of those under 18 regularly play video games. Large majorities of players say video games provide mental stimulation (80 percent) and relaxation (79 percent).

Video games help to connect us, and 65 percent of players say they play with others online or in person. More than half of parents (55 percent) say they play games with their children, and 92 percent pay attention to the games their child plays.

As the 2020 Essential Facts demonstrates, video games have become the leading form of entertainment because they bring us joy, connection and a sense of belonging when we need it most. Their value to society has never been more vital.

– Stanley Pierre-Louis
  President & Chief Executive Officer, Entertainment Software Association
A NATION OF GAMERS: WHO WE ARE

We’re a nation that believes in the power of play. No matter who you are or where you’re from, there’s a game for everyone.

6% 65+
9% 55-64
26% 35-54
38% 18-34
21% under 18

Age Breakdown of Video Game Players

35-44 YEARS is the average age range of a video game player

75% of Americans have at least one video game player in their household.

There are approximately 46 MILLION video game players with disabilities*

* Source: The AbleGamers Charity
Total U.S. Video Game Players

214.4 MILLION

70% of kids (under 18) are video game players

51.1 MILLION

64% of adults (18 and older) are video game players

163.3 MILLION

Across all players: 59% are male, 41% are female
Games are uniquely able to connect us, to entertain while inspiring teamwork, cooperation, and sometimes a little competition. It's not about who you are, but how you play—and anyone can play.

65% of video game players play with others

Friends/Family That They Play With:

- 42% friends
- 27% spouse/partner
- 24% other family members
- 17% team/guild/clanmates/“online only” friends of all types
- 7% parents

Adult video game players spend...

- 6.6 hours a week playing with others online
- 4.3 hours a week playing with others in person
30% of players have met a good friend, spouse or significant other through video games.

Players think that video games have a positive impact on their lives:
- 80% say games provide mental stimulation.
- 79% say games provide relaxation and stress relief.
- 63% say games help with problem solving.
- 57% say games bring joy through play.
- 55% say games help connect with friends.
- 50% say games help the family spend time together.
An entire generation of adults grew up on computers and smartphones. Even for those who didn't, video games are a natural part of their lives and their children's lives.

**Devices Owned by Gamers**
- 73% own a game console
- 43% own a handheld system
- 29% own a VR device
- 25% own a mobile VR device

**Most Common Devices Used for Video Game Play Among Adult Players**
- 61% smartphone
- 52% game console
- 49% personal computer

**Most Popular Game Genres**
- 71% casual games
- 53% action games
- 48% shooter games
When People Play

- **51%** after work or school
- **30%** while waiting for appointments
- **26%** during break at work/school
- **16%** during a commute (bus, train, carpool)

**Years Spent Playing Video Games**

- **21%** 1-5 years
- **29%** 6-14 years
- **25%** 15-24 years
- **25%** 25+ years
The typical video game player may not be who you think. Video games appeal to the spirit of play in us all, no matter where we play or who we play with. Anyone can play... and just about everyone does.
From education to family game night, parents know that video games have a positive impact on their lives and their families.

**Families: Finding the Right Balance**

Among Parents with Children Who Play Video Games Regularly

- **87%** of parents are aware of ESRB ratings*
- **83%** are confident that the ratings are accurate**
- **92%** of parents pay attention to the games their child plays
- **87%** find parental controls useful***

Percentage of Parents That Limit the Amount of Time Spent on the Following Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>playing computer &amp; video games</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mobile device screen time</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watching TV (on-demand)</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>browsing the Internet</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watching TV (live)</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participating in social networking</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watching TV (pre-recorded)</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>going to the movies</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Source: ESRB  
** Of parents who are aware of ESRB ratings  
*** Of parents with kids who play video games regularly and are aware of Parental Control Settings
Among Parents of Video Game Players

- **95%** of parents are present when the child obtains video games
- **86%** of parents require permission for new game purchases
- **73%** of parents believe video games are educational
- **66%** play games with their kids because it’s fun for the family
- **65%** play games because it’s a good opportunity to socialize with their children
- **55%** of parents play games with their child at least weekly

ESRB Rating Data*

Of the 4,034 ratings assigned by the ESRB to physical and downloadable console games in 2019:

- **45%** received an E rating (Everyone)
- **14%** received an E10+ rating (Everyone 10+)
- **28%** received a T rating (Teen)
- **13%** received an M rating (Mature)

* Source: ESRB
For many young adults, entertainment is the biggest reward of playing video games. But in today’s "always on" society, play also unlocks our imaginations and helps people to feel connected.
**MEN 18-34**

- **75%** play video games on a console
- **51%** most often play action games
- **68%** prefer to play with friends

**FAVORITE GAMES**

- **80%** Shooter games (e.g., Call of Duty, Fortnite)
- **68%** Adventure games (e.g., Tomb Raider, Uncharted)
- **65%** Role-playing games (e.g., World of Warcraft, The Witcher)

- **70%** say games help them stay connected with friends and family

**WOMEN 18-34**

- **77%** play video games on a smartphone
- **46%** most often play casual games
- **48%** prefer to play with friends

**FAVORITE GAMES**

- **59%** Family games (e.g., Super Mario Party, Just Dance)
- **52%** Action games (e.g., Grand Theft Auto, Super Mario Odyssey, God of War)
- **50%** Racing games (e.g., Need for Speed, Mario Kart)

- **55%** say games help them stay connected with friends and family
**MEN 35-54**

- **70%** play video games on a console
- **38%** most often play action games
- **44%** prefer to play with friends

**FAVORITE GAMES**

- **67%** Casual games (e.g., Tetris, Solitaire)
- **61%** Shooter games (e.g., Call of Duty, Fortnite)
- **54%** Adventure games (e.g., Tomb Raider, Uncharted)

- **83%** say games help them relax

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**WOMEN 35-54**

- **78%** play video games on a smartphone
- **67%** most often play casual games
- **58%** prefer to play with friends

**FAVORITE GAMES**

- **40%** Arcade games (e.g., Pac-Man, Pinball FX3)
- **37%** Family games (e.g., Super Mario Party, Just Dance)
- **30%** Action games (e.g., Grand Theft Auto, Super Mario Odyssey, God of War)

- **77%** say games help them relax
AGES 35-54
The Games of Our Lives

For a generation that grew up playing video games, the power of play has never been as important, bringing people together through common ground, relieving stress, and having fun.
AGES 55-64
The Joy of Play is Universal

Video games transcend gender and age. Playing makes us all part of a community, connecting friends and family alike through shared experiences.
MEN 55-64

- 56% play video games on a smartphone
- 48% most often play casual games
- 42% prefer to play with friends

FAVORITE GAMES

- 32% Shooters, adventure, and action games
- 31% Role-playing and arcade games
- 26% Racing games (e.g., Need for Speed, Mario Kart)

- 87% say games provide mental stimulation

WOMEN 55-64

- 63% play video games on a smartphone
- 74% most often play casual games
- 37% prefer to play with friends

FAVORITE GAMES

- 25% Family and arcade games
- 16% Action games (e.g., Grand Theft Auto, Super Mario Odyssey, God of War)
- 14% Adventure games (e.g., Tomb Raider, Uncharted)

- 82% say games provide mental stimulation
MEN 65+

68% play video games on a PC

58% most often play card games

77% prefer to play alone

FAVORITE GAMES

86% Casual games (e.g., Tetris, Solitaire)

41% Arcade games (e.g., Pac-Man, Pinball FX3)

26% Action, adventure, and racing games

46% have been playing video games for 10 years or less

WOMEN 65+

60% play video games on a PC

76% most often play card games

81% prefer to play alone

FAVORITE GAMES

95% Casual games (e.g., Tetris, Solitaire)

24% Arcade games (e.g., Pac-Man, Pinball FX3)

13% Family games (e.g., Super Mario Party, Just Dance)

63% have been playing video games for 10 years or less
Whoever said video games were only for the young? Seniors are increasingly embracing play as a way to connect and stay mentally sharp.
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ESA offers a wide range of services to interactive entertainment software companies, including: conducting business and consumer research; providing legal and policy analysis and advocacy on First Amendment, intellectual property, and technology/e-commerce issues; managing a global content protection program; owning and operating E3; and representing video game industry interests before federal and state governments.

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Created by the American entertainment software industry, the ESA Foundation works to make a positive difference in the lives of America’s youth by providing scholarships to the next generation of industry innovators and supporting charitable organizations and schools that leverage entertainment software and technology. The ESA Foundation receives its primary funding proceeds from the signature annual fundraiser Nite to Unite and other charitable initiatives.

ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD | ESRB.ORG • @ESRBRATINGS

The ESRB is a non-profit, self-regulatory body that assigns age and content ratings for video games and mobile apps so parents can make informed choices. It also enforces advertising guidelines adopted by the video game industry and helps companies implement responsible online and mobile privacy practices under its Privacy Certified program.

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