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association

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**26**

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

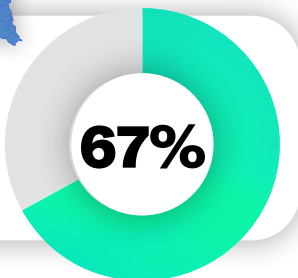
Entertainment Software Association

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

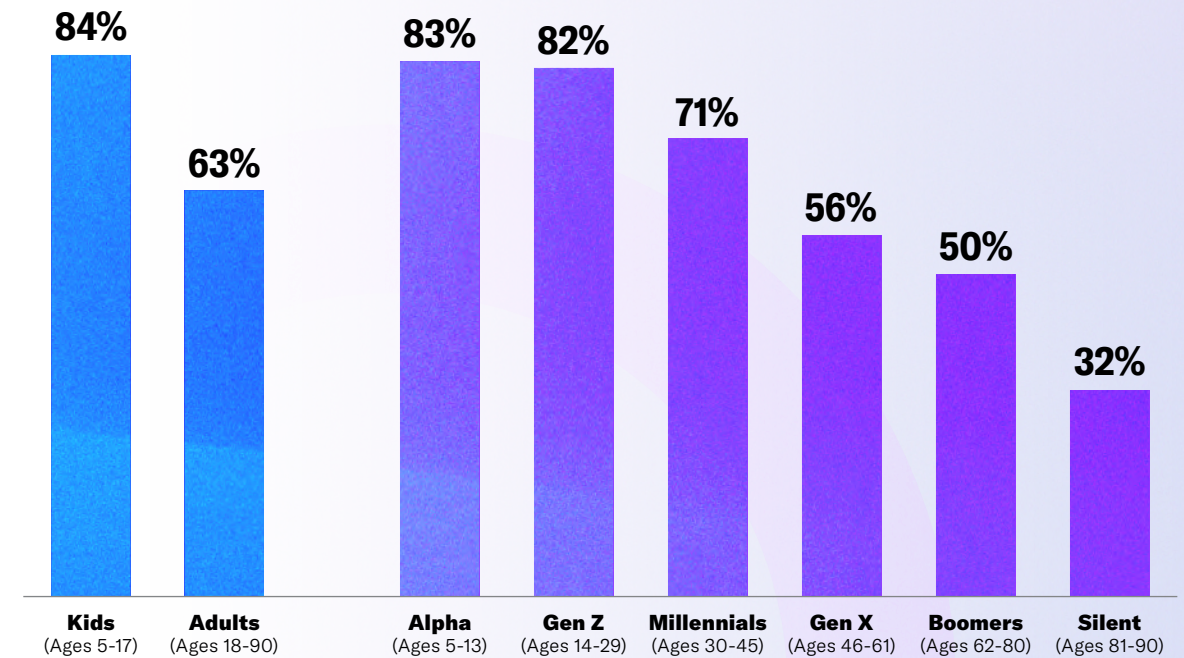
**212.3 million**

Americans (ages 5-90) play video games

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

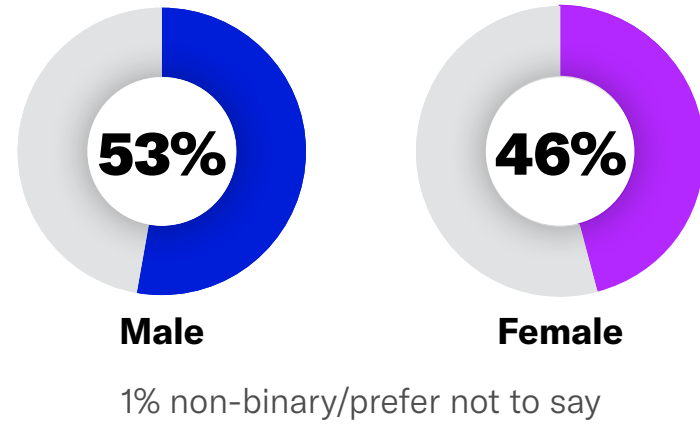


Percentage of Americans Who Play Video Games 1+ Hours Per Week (Any platform)



**Player Gender**

Among all players



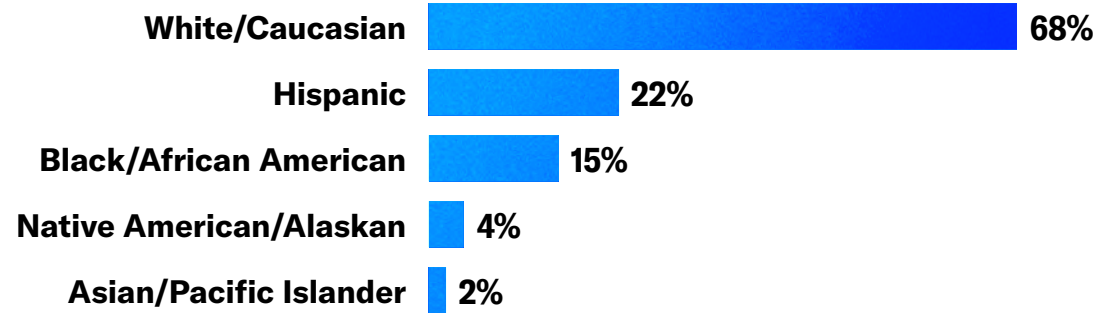
Male

Female

1% non-binary/prefer not to say

**Ethnicity of Adult Players**

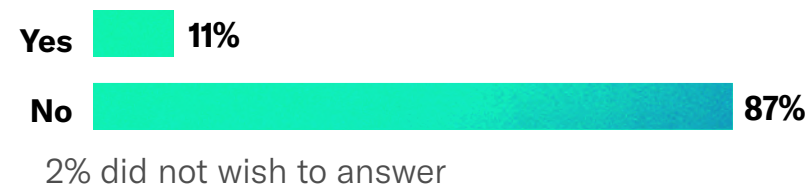
Among total players age 18+



\*Question allows for more than one answer

**LGBT+ Self-Identification of Players**

Among total players age 18+



Yes

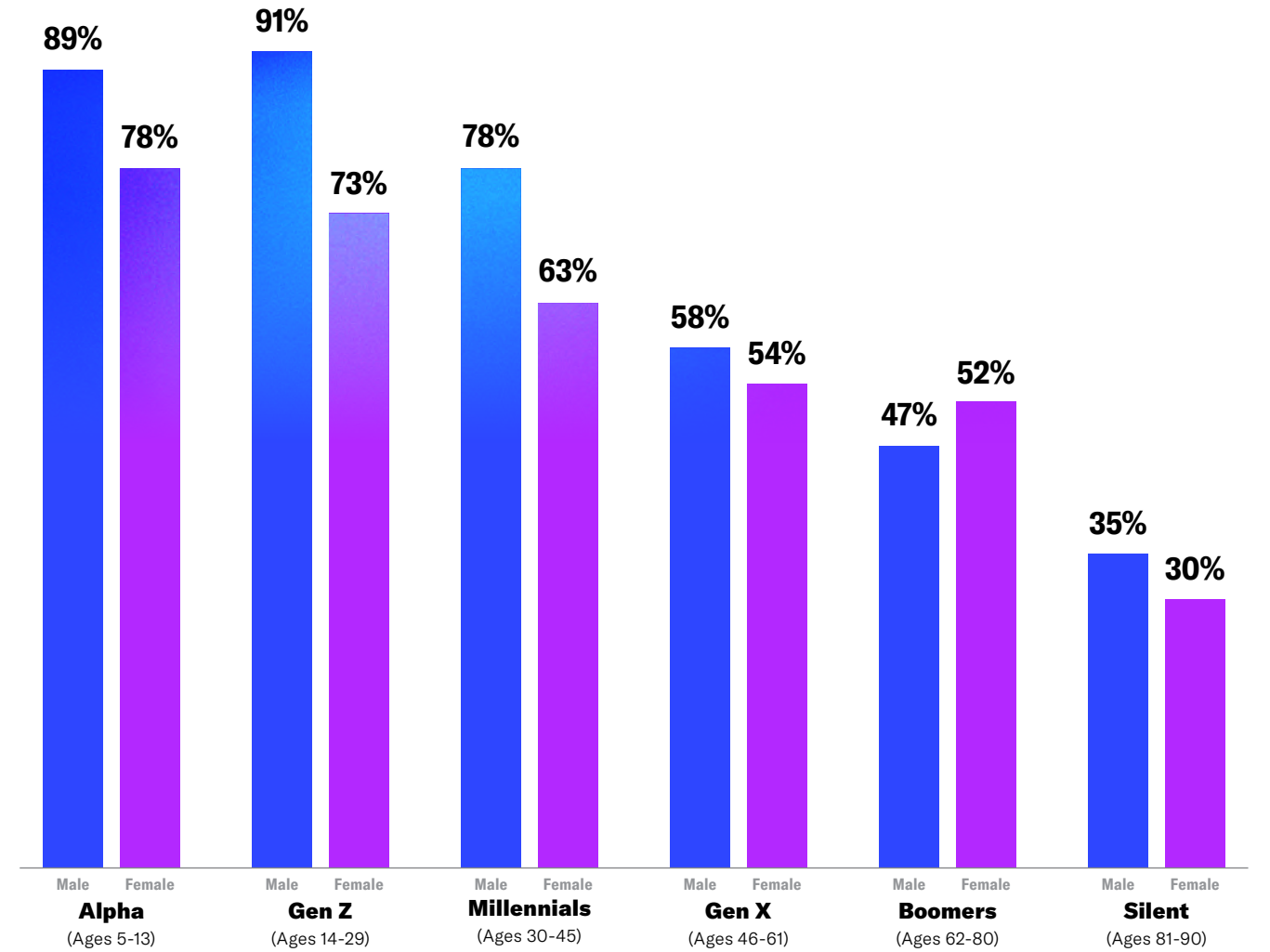
11%

No

87%

2% did not wish to answer

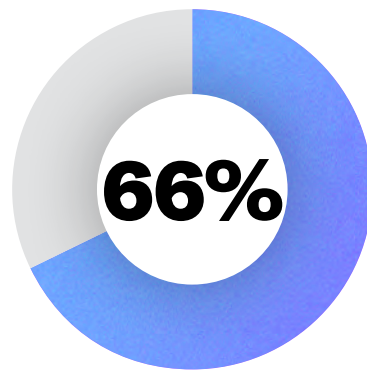
**Percentage Who Play Video Games 1+ Hours Per Week  
Generation by Gender**



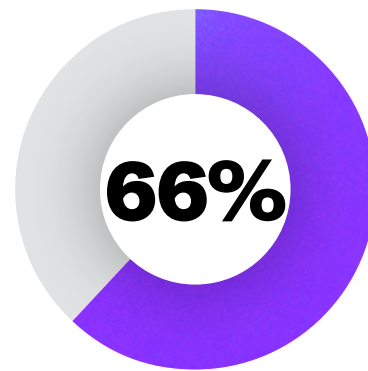
The top two reasons that Americans play video games are to relax and to have fun. Older generations also play to keep their minds sharp.

**Motivations for Playing Video Games**

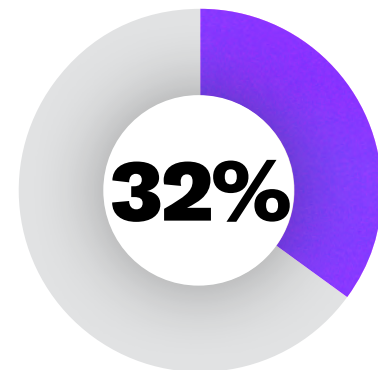
*Among total players age 18+*



**Pass the time or relax**



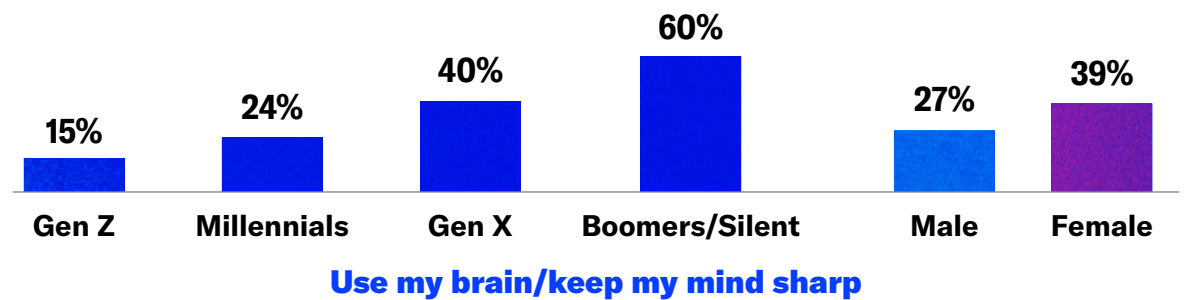
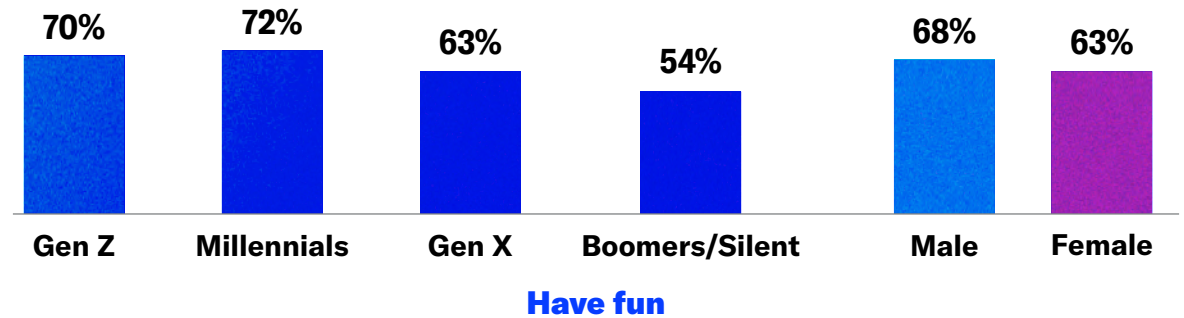
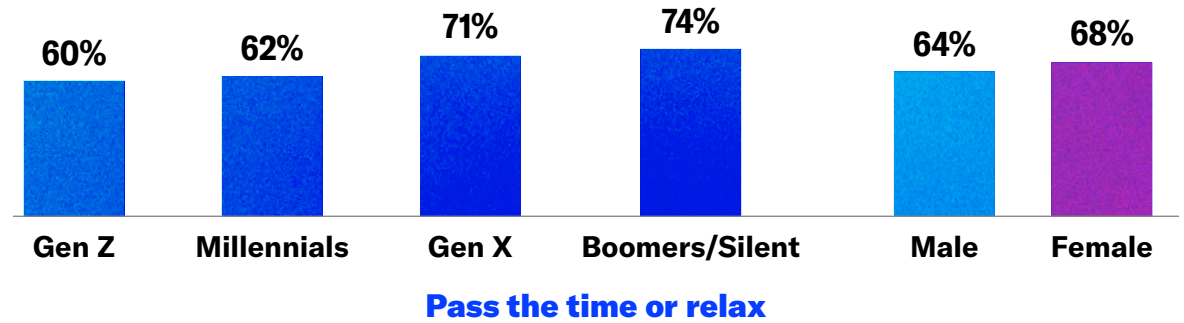
**Have fun**



**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+

	Percentage agree	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+

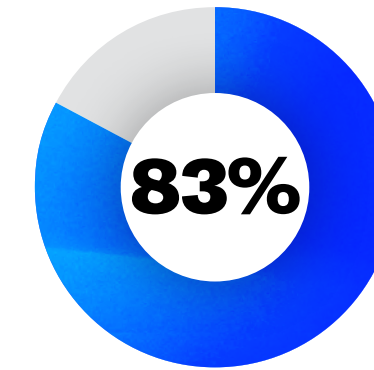
	Percentage agree	Players	Non-Players
Problem-solving skills	76%	86%	60%
Teamwork & collaboration skills	67%	77%	50%
Adaptability and resilience	58%	69%	38%
Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math (STEAM) skills	53%	64%	36%
Communication skills	52%	63%	33%
Inclusive attitudes towards different groups 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

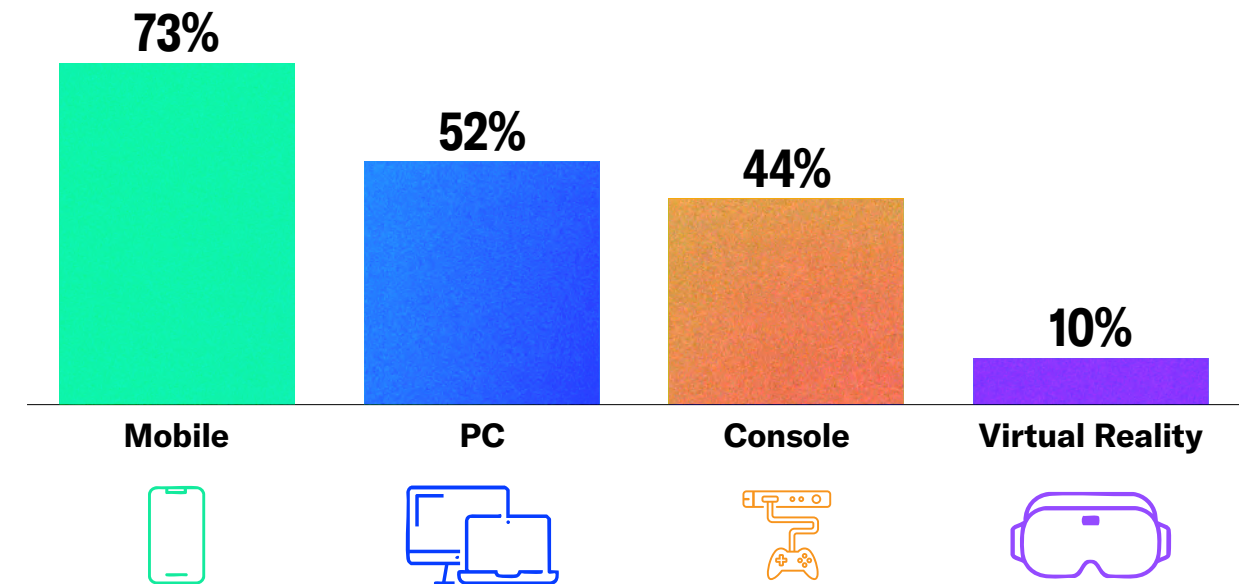
Among total players age 8+

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



**83%** of U.S. households have played at least one video game device in the past 12 months

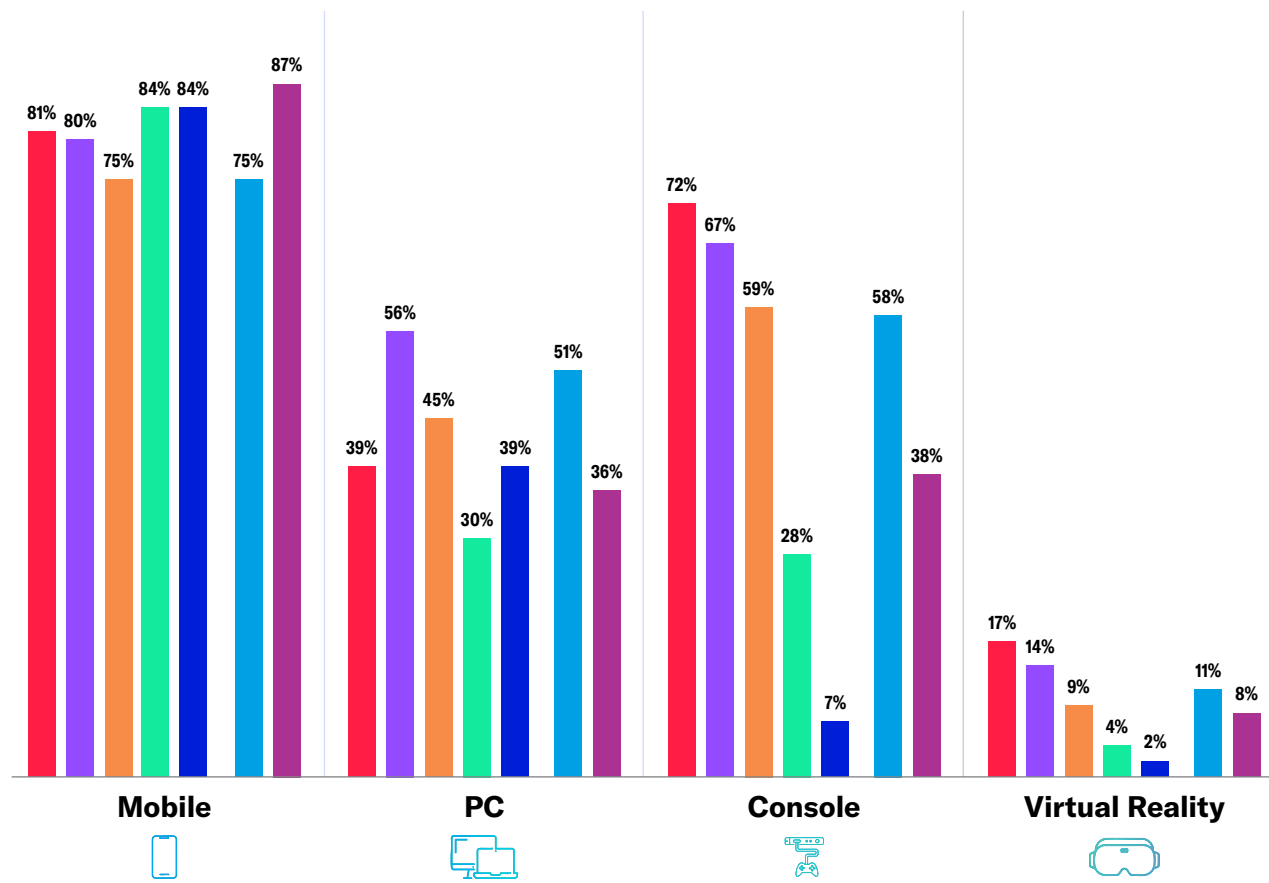
### Platforms Played Among Total U.S. Households



### Video Game Platforms Played Among Individual Players

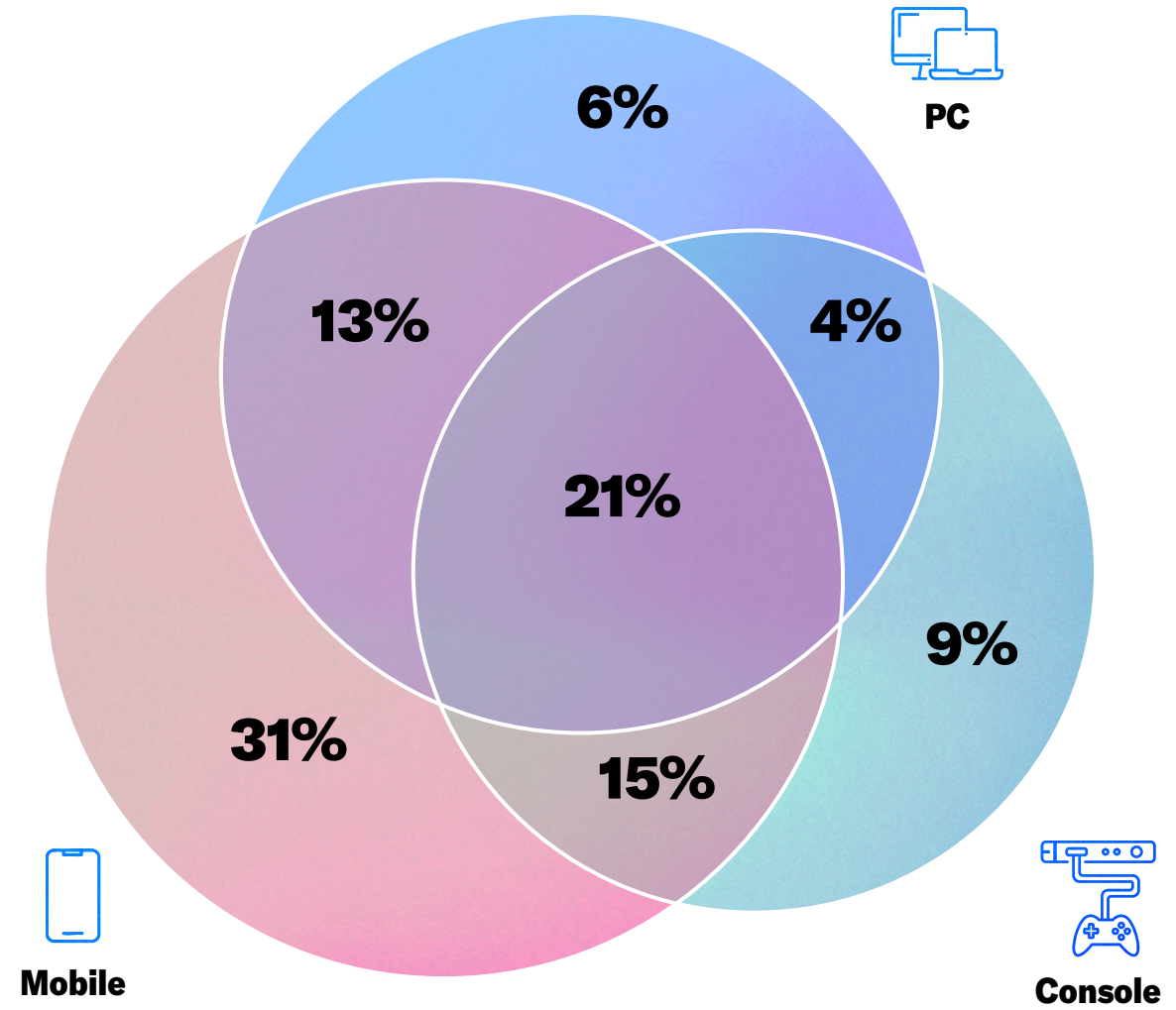
Among total players age 8+

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.**

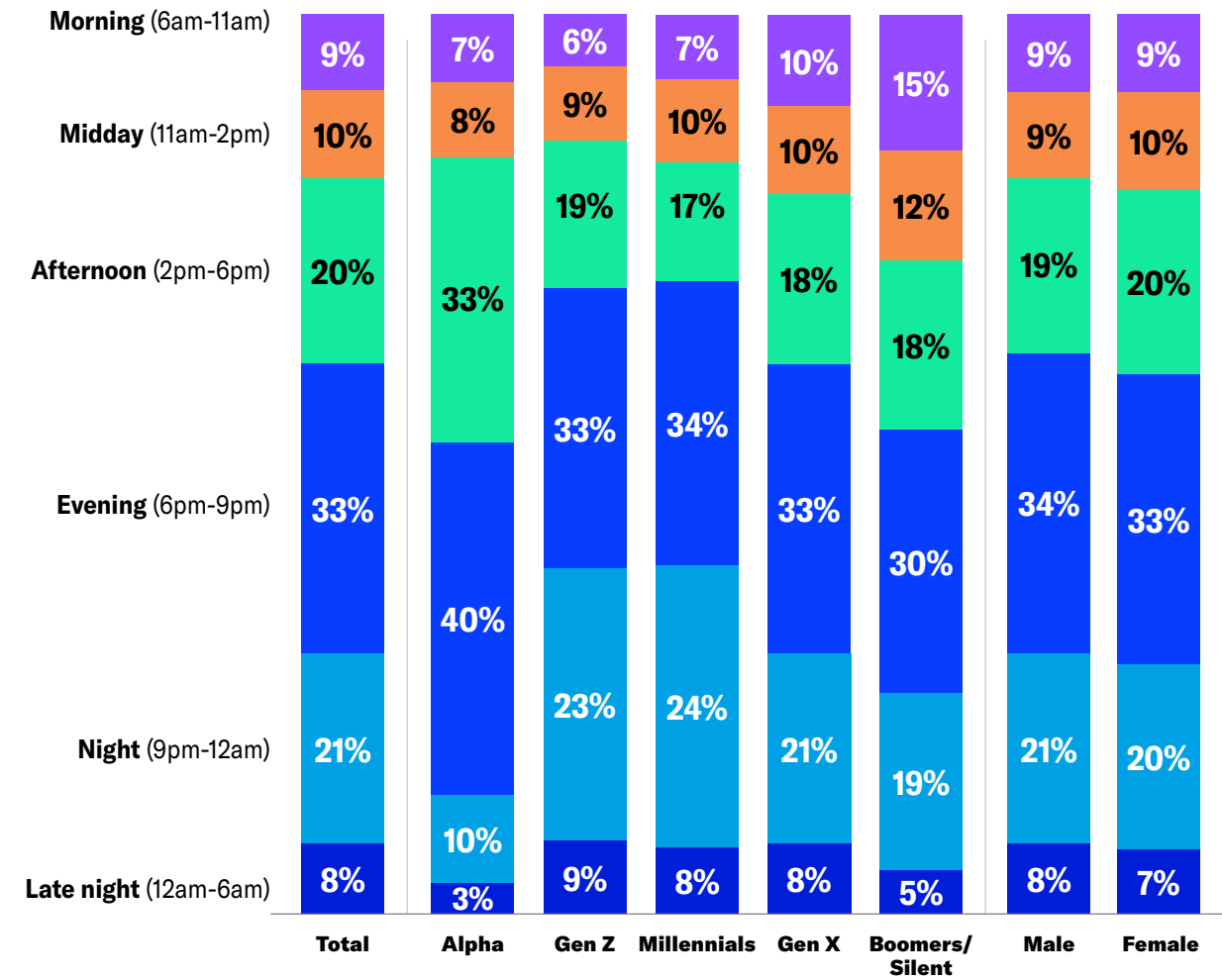
**Share of Playing Time by Day of the Week**

*Among total players age 8+*

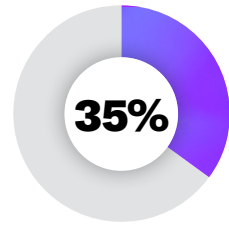
		Alpha	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers/Silent	Male	Female
Monday	11%	9%	11%	11%	11%	13%	11%	11%
Tuesday	11%	9%	11%	11%	11%	13%	11%	11%
Wednesday	11%	9%	11%	11%	12%	13%	11%	11%
Thursday	11%	9%	11%	11%	12%	14%	11%	12%
Friday	16%	16%	17%	16%	16%	15%	16%	16%
Saturday	22%	27%	24%	23%	21%	18%	22%	23%
Sunday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

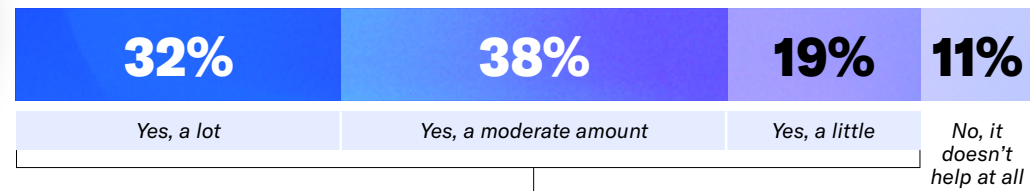
Among the 35% of players age 18+ who play sports

	<b>Basketball</b>	<b>23%</b>
	<b>Soccer</b>	<b>14%</b>
	<b>Football</b>	<b>10%</b>
	<b>Tennis</b>	<b>6%</b>
	<b>Golf</b>	<b>6%</b>

**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!

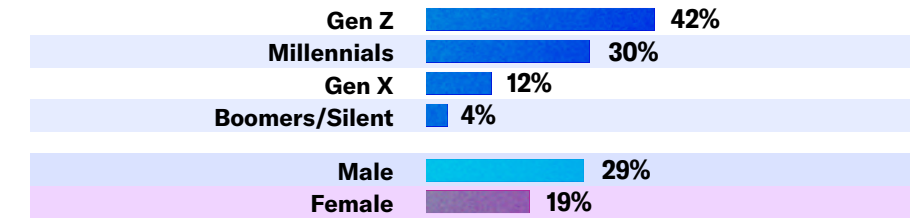


Players are finding that the video games they love can lead them to a new show or soundtrack, while other forms of entertainment can introduce them to a new game.

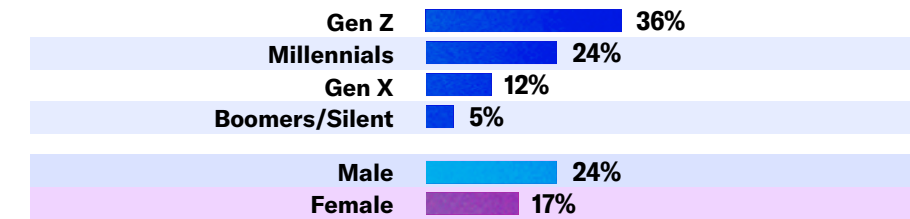
**Past Year Video Game Discovery**

Among total players age 18+

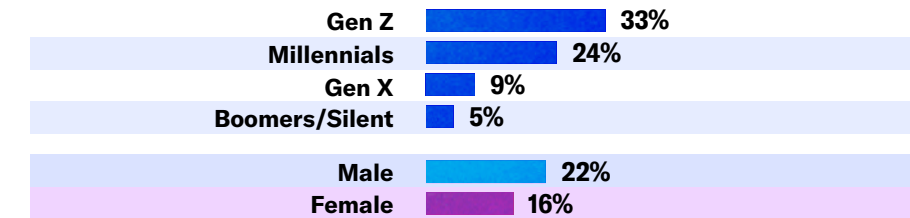
**24%** Discovered a new song because of a video game I played



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

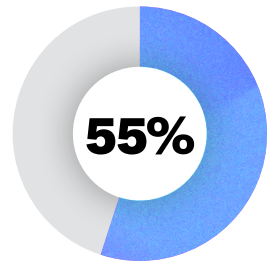


**19%** Discovered a video game because of a TV show or movie I watched

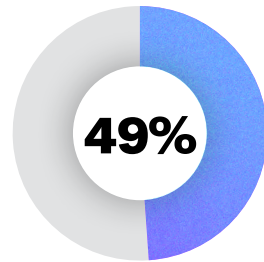


# The social value of games is undeniable.

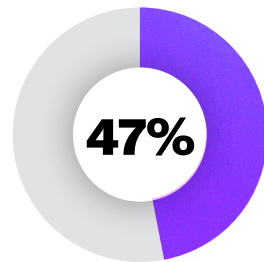
## Total Players Age 18+:



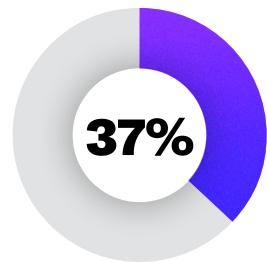
say games make lasting memories



say games help them stay connected to friends and family



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

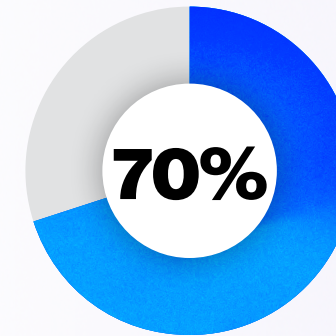


have met a good friend, spouse, or significant other through video games

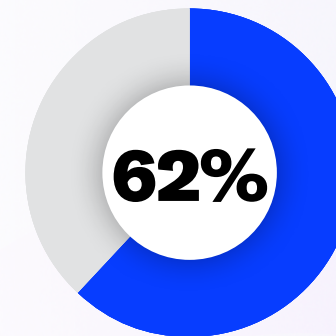


say there is a video game for everyone!

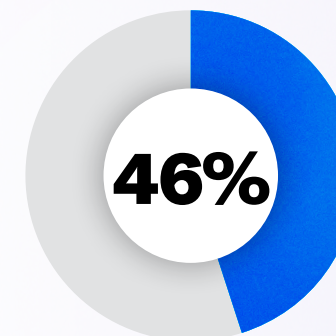
# Games bring people together.



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



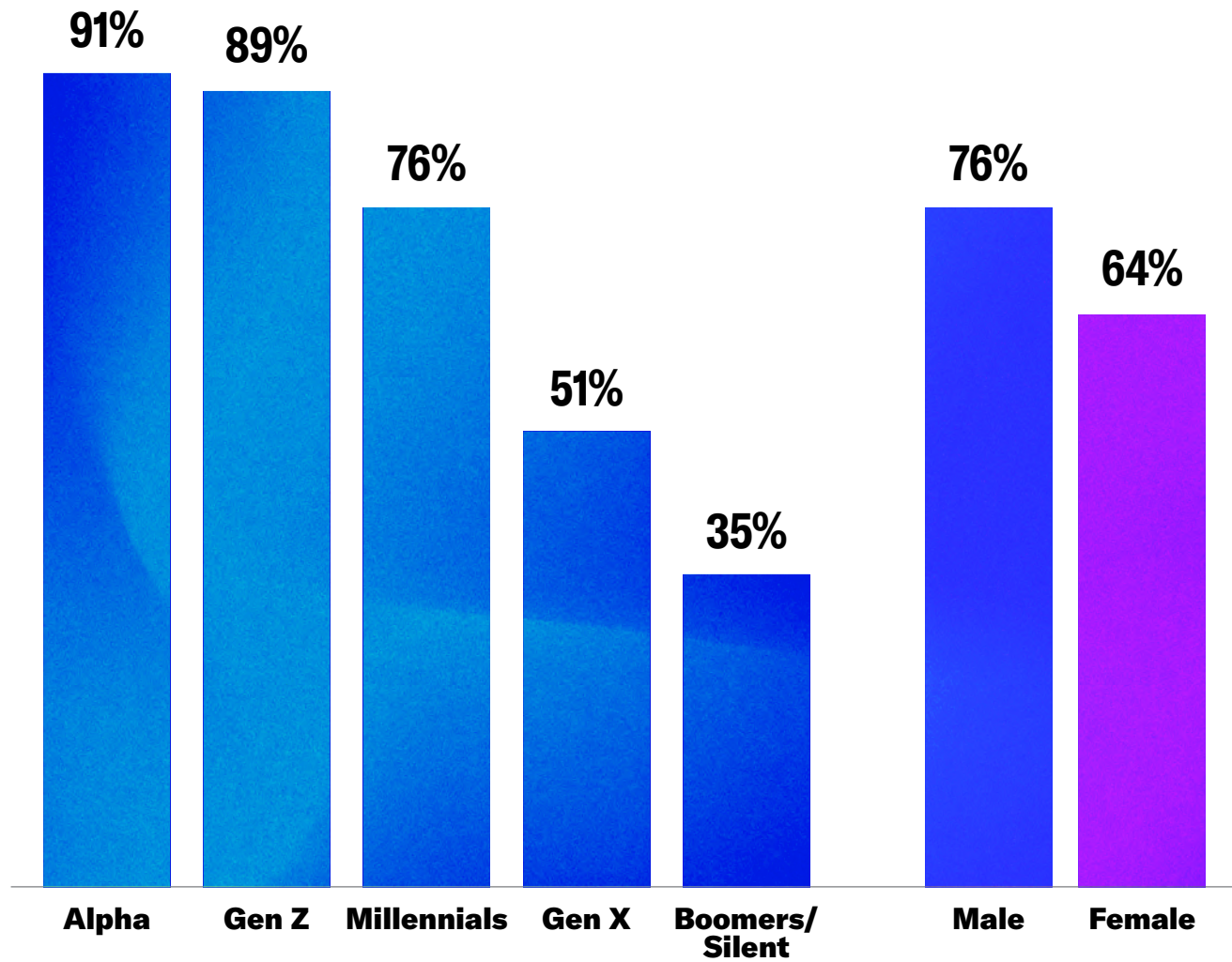
of those players age 8+ play video games online with friends they know in person



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

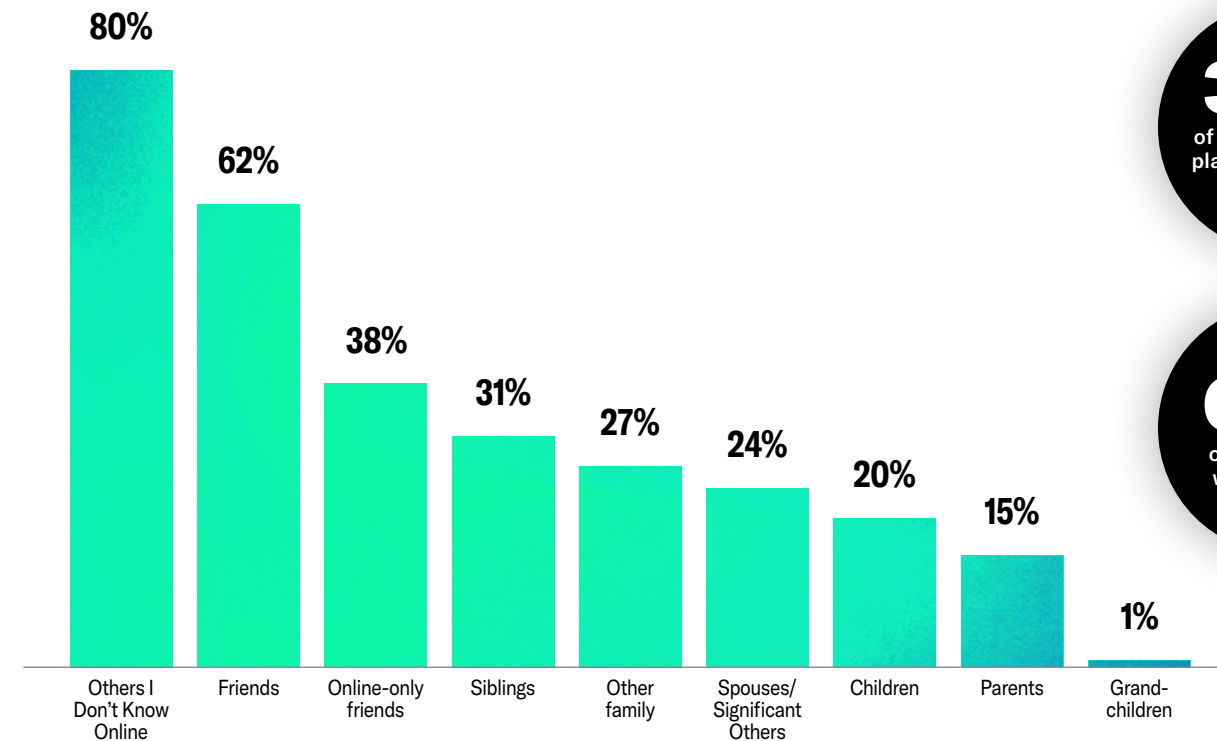
Among total players age 8+



### Of those who play with others...

#### Who Do Players Typically Play With?

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

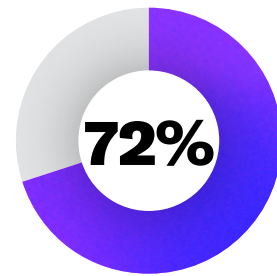


**50%**  
of Gen Alpha plays with their parents

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

**69%**  
of parents play with their kids

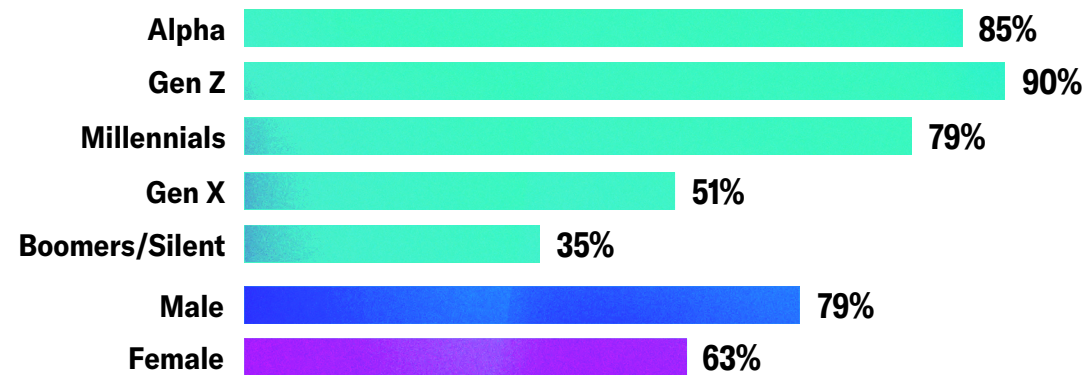
## In-game communication helps players improve their gameplay and foster a sense of community.



72% 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

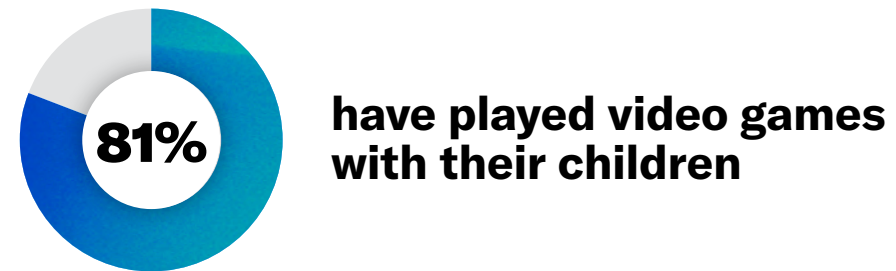
Among total players age 8+ who communicate online

- 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.



and of those who do:



**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

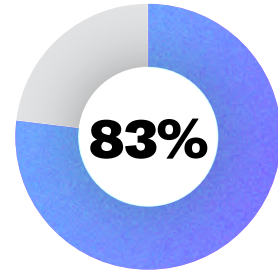
**2**

Video games teach their kids skills

**3**

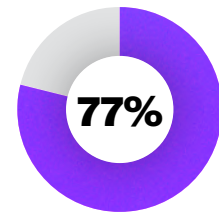
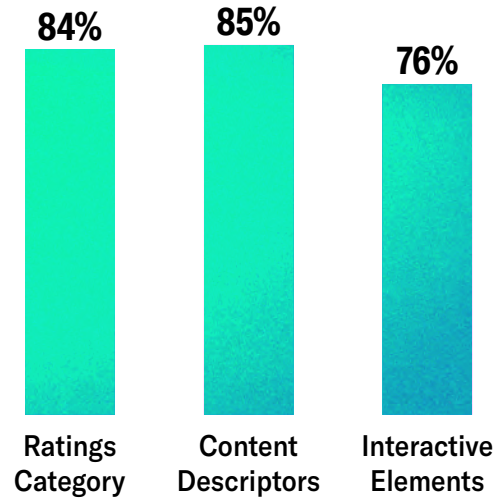
They enjoy playing together as a family

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

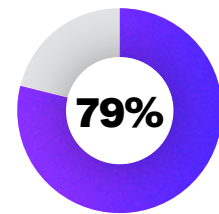


**of parents whose kids play video games say that they are aware of ESRB ratings**

**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**

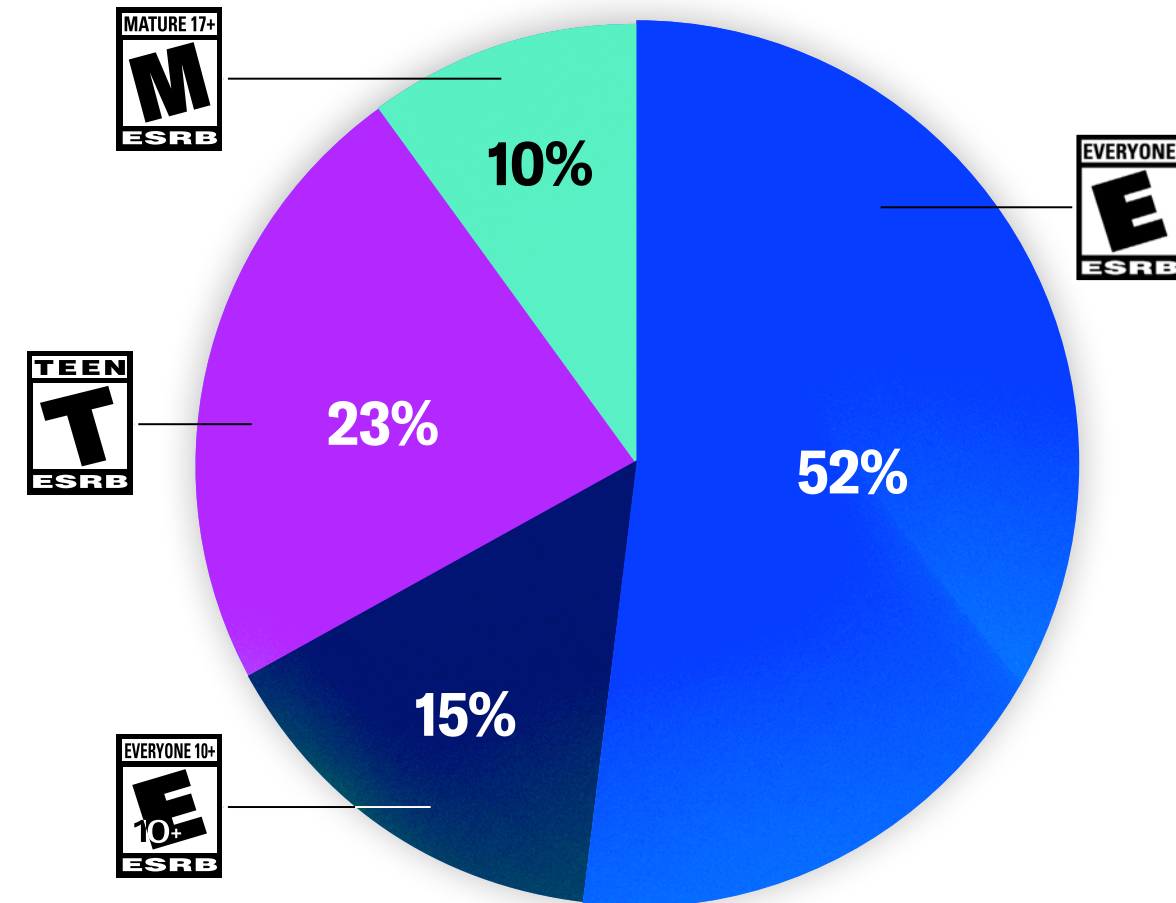


**of parents say they use parental controls on a video game device**

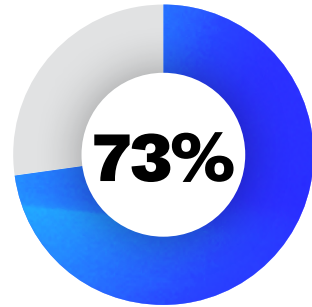
Source: ESRB

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

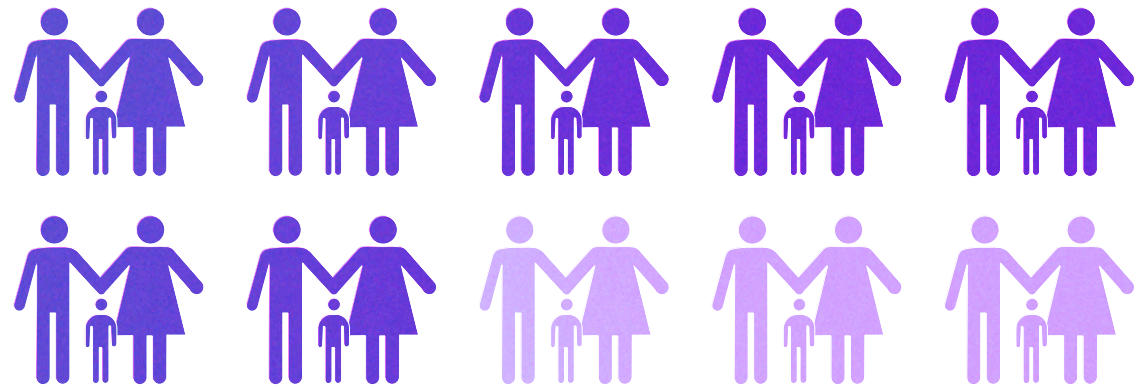
**ESRB Ratings Assigned in 2025**



*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.**

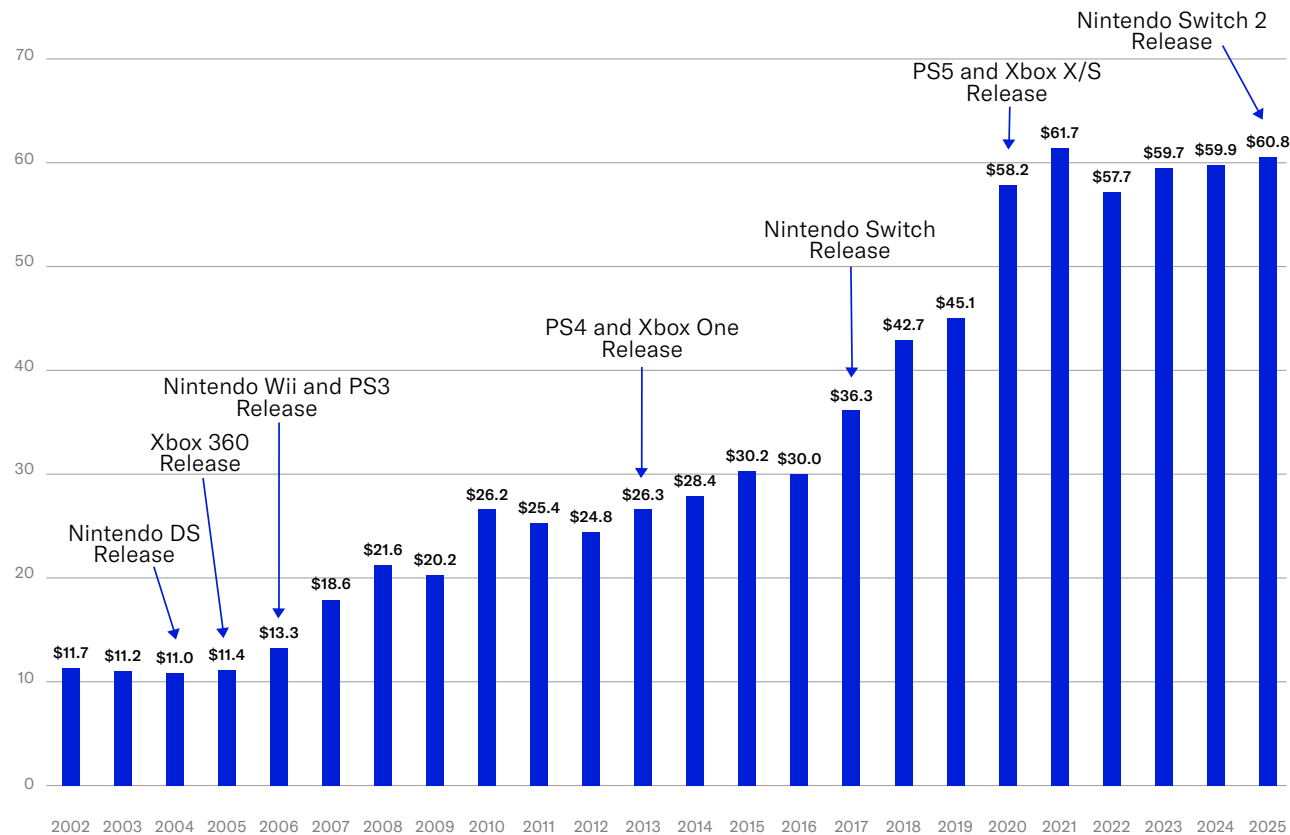
**Total Consumer Spending on Video Games in 2025**

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)



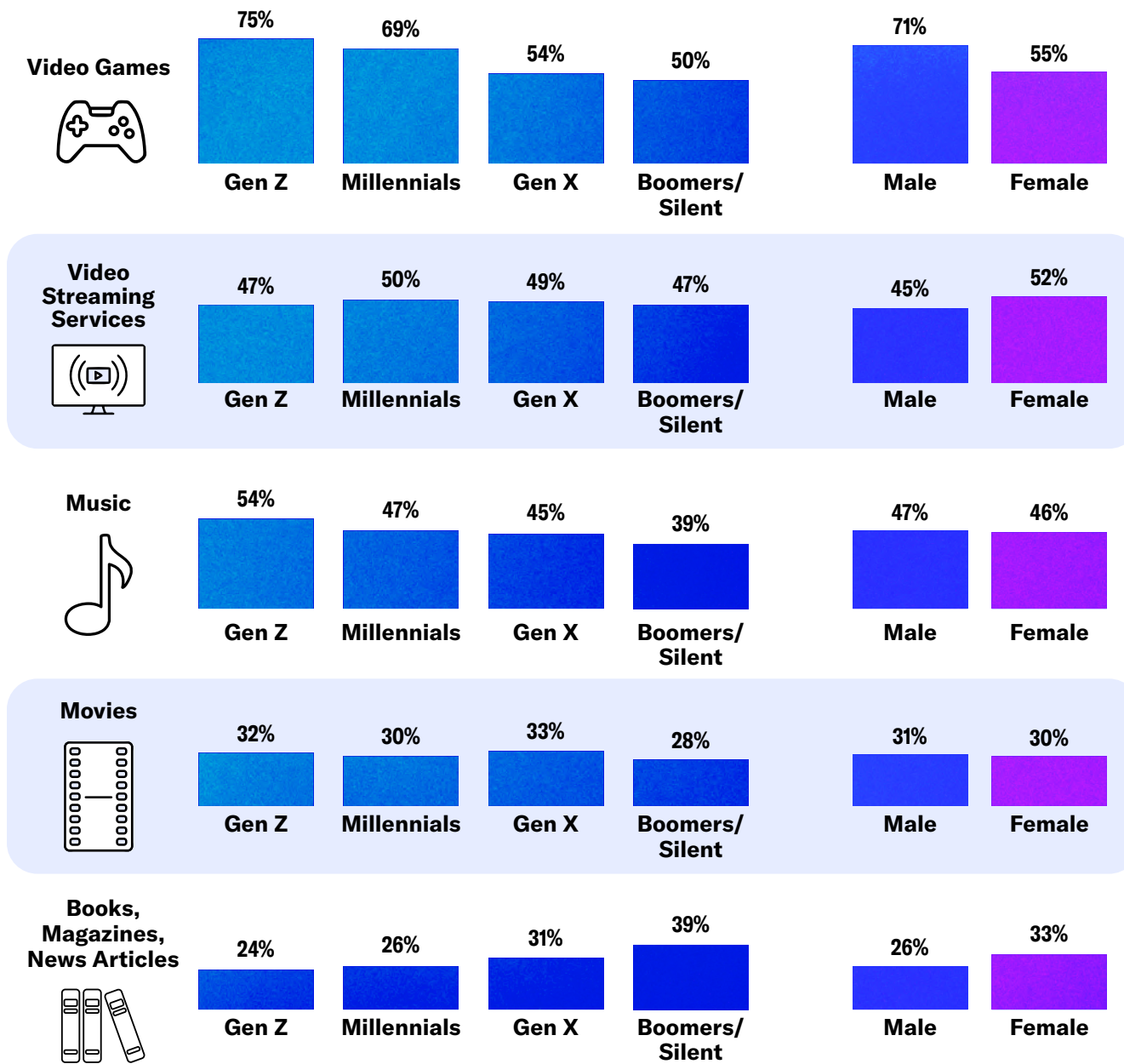
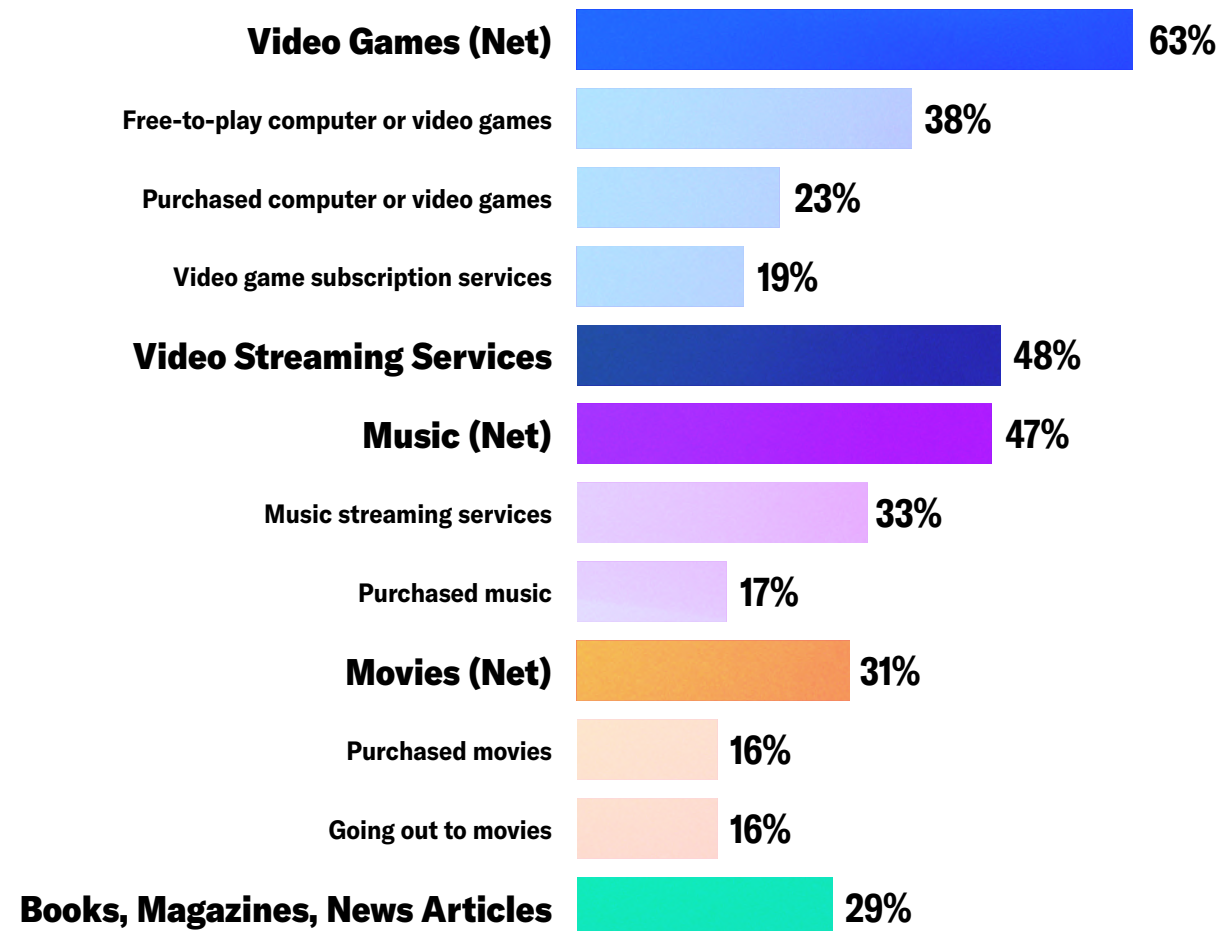
**Top Games in the United States in 2025**

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.

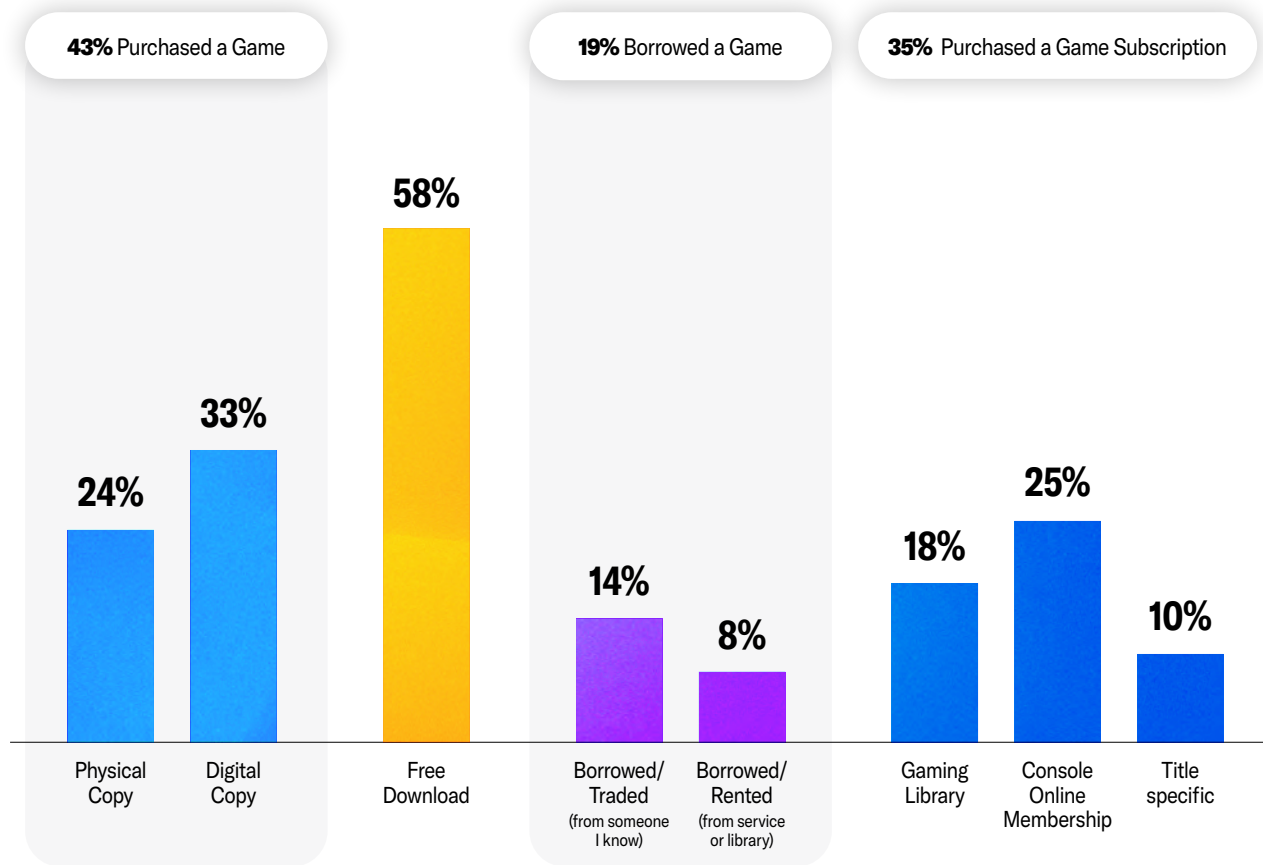
## Entertainment with the Most Value for the Money

Percentage agree – among total players age 18+

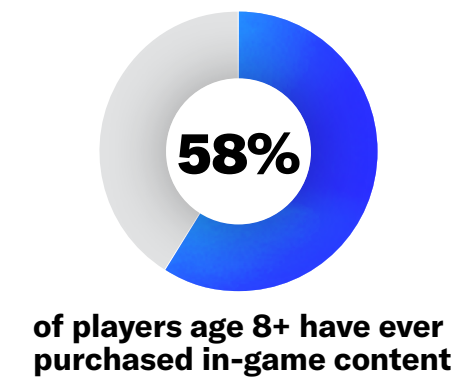


### How Players Acquired Games in the Past 12 Months

Among total players age 8+



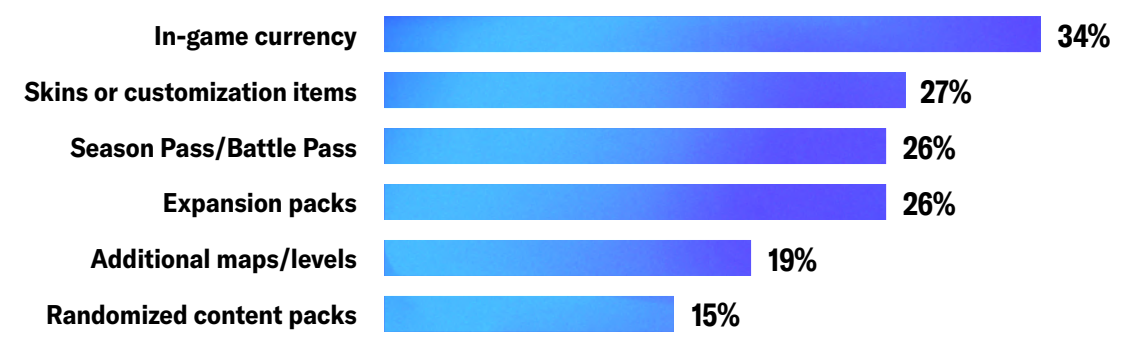
From cosmetic items to downloadable content, players increasingly embrace in-game purchases as a way to personalize and enhance their playing experience.



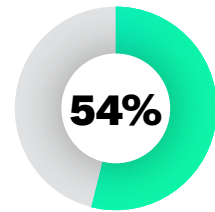
Alpha	69%
Gen Z	78%
Millennials	67%
Gen X	41%
Boomers/Silent	22%
Male	65%
Female	50%

### Types of In-Game Content Purchased

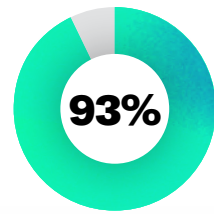
Among total players age 8+



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



54% of parents have purchased in-game content for their children



93% 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.

- 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



**Entertainment Software Association**  
[theESA.com](http://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](http://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.

**Circana**  
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Circana is a leader in providing technology, AI, and data to fast-moving consumer packaged goods companies, durables manufacturers, and retailers seeking to optimize their businesses. Circana's predictive analytics and technology empower clients to measure their market share, understand the underlying consumer behavior driving it, and accelerate their growth. Circana's Liquid Data® technology platform is powered by an expansive, high-quality data set, and intelligent algorithms trained on six decades of domain expertise. With Circana, clients can take immediate action to future-proof and evolve their growth strategies amid an increasingly complex, fast-paced, and ever-changing economy.

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**YouGov**  
[business.yougov.com](http://business.yougov.com)

YouGov is a global research data and analytics group. Our mission is to offer unparalleled insight into what the world really thinks and does. With operations in the Americas, Mainland Europe, UK and Asia Pacific, we have one of the world's largest research networks.

Above all, YouGov is powered by reality. That stems from a unique panel of millions of registered members across 64 markets, encapsulating some 18 million shopping trips and millions of interconnected data points. Our unique approach to recruiting and engaging with our panel, combined with our state-of-the-art technology platforms, enables us to deliver real-world, real-time insights that lead to better decision-making and a competitive advantage for our clients.

As innovators and pioneers of online market research, we have a strong reputation as a trusted source of accurate data and insights. Testament to this, YouGov data is regularly referenced by the global press, and we are consistently one of the most quoted market research sources in the world. To learn more, please visit [yougov.com](http://yougov.com).

**Sensor Tower**  
[sensortower.com](http://sensortower.com)

Sensor Tower is a global provider of digital intelligence solutions, empowering companies to understand consumer behavior and market performance across mobile apps, digital platforms, and gaming ecosystems. Headquartered in San Francisco, Sensor Tower's insights are trusted by more than 2,500 enterprises worldwide.

For more information, visit [sensortower.com](http://sensortower.com).



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