

# 2020 ESSENTIAL FACTS

About the Video Game Industry



entertainment<sup>®</sup>  
software  
association

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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.



# FOREWORD

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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).

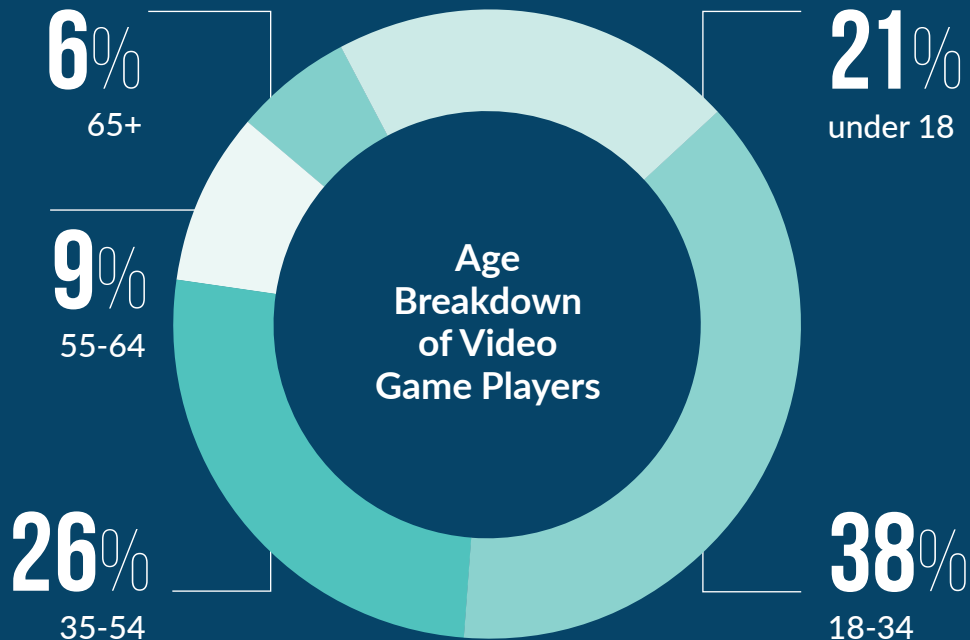
Video games help to connect us, and 65 percent of players say they play with others online or in person. More than half of parents (55 percent) say they play games with their children, and 92 percent pay attention to the games their child plays.

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.



**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



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**

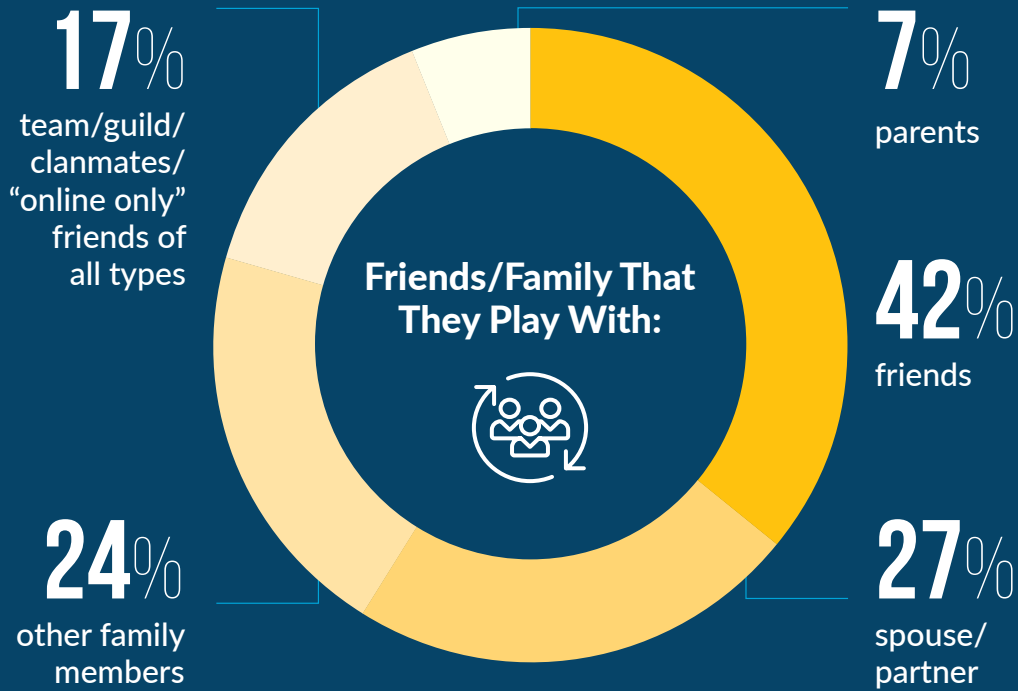
Across all players:  **59%** are male  **41%** are female

# WHY WE PLAY

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



**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



**40%**

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

**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

# HOW WE PLAY

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)

**9%**

25+ years

**21%**

1-5 years

Years Spent  
Playing Video  
Games

**25%**

15-24 years

**29%**

6-14 years





# PROFILES OF VIDEO GAME PLAYERS

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.

# FAMILIES

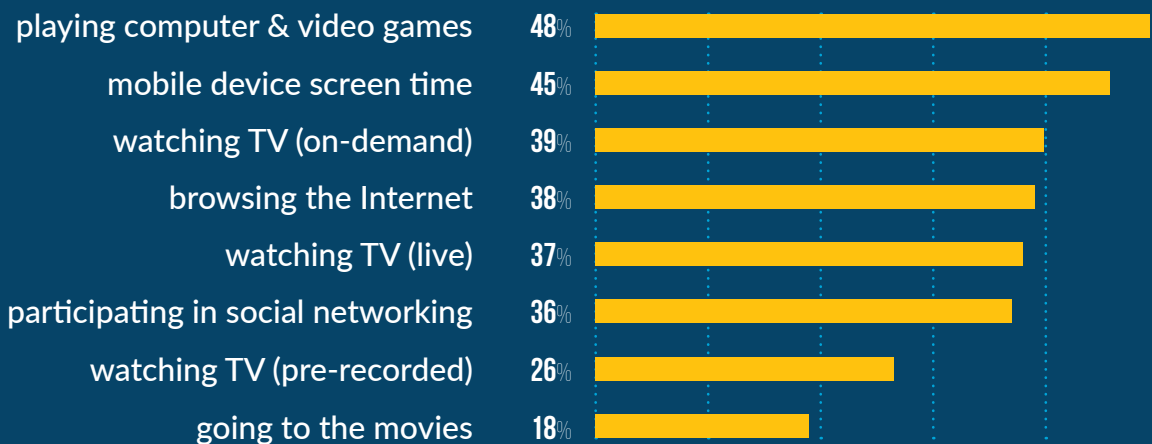
## FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

From education to family game night, parents know that video games have a positive impact on their lives and their families.

### Among Parents with Children Who Play Video Games Regularly



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



\* 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



## AGES 18-34

**It's About More Than Fun**

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**



# 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**



A close-up photograph of a man with a dark beard and short hair, smiling broadly while holding a video game controller. He is wearing a light blue polo shirt. The background is a blurred brick wall. The lighting is warm, with a mix of orange and blue tones. A yellow semi-transparent box is overlaid on the bottom left of the image, containing text.

# 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

# AGES 65+

## Play Never Ends

Whoever said video games were only for the young? Seniors are increasingly embracing play as a way to connect and stay mentally sharp.



# ESA PARTNERS

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## ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE ASSOCIATION | [THEESA.COM](http://THEESA.COM) • [@THEESA](https://twitter.com/THEESA)

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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## ESA FOUNDATION | [ESAFFOUNDATION.COM](http://ESAFFOUNDATION.COM) • [@ESA\\_FOUNDATION](https://twitter.com/ESA_FOUNDATION)

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.

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## ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD | [ESRB.ORG](http://ESRB.ORG) • [@ESRBRATINGS](https://twitter.com/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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To learn more, visit [theESA.com](http://theESA.com), email at [info@theESA.com](mailto:info@theESA.com), and follow us on Twitter [@theESA](https://twitter.com/theESA)

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Nacon Gaming USA  
Natsume, Inc.  
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