



Power of Play

2025 GLOBAL VIDEO GAMES REPORT



Methodology

The global survey was conducted by AudienceNet, gathering 24,216 responses across 21 countries on six continents: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Participants were aged 16-65+, and all qualified as active gamers, defined as playing video games for at least one hour per week via console, PC/laptop, tablet, mobile, or VR. Quotas and screening criteria ensured a minimum of 1,000 active gamers per country. All respondents were recruited via professionally accredited consumer research panels.

AudienceNet is a fully-accredited global consumer research company, currently conducting nationally representative research in 52 countries. As a Market Research Society (MRS) Company Partner, AudienceNet is bound by the MRS Code Of Conduct, as well as GDPR in relation to the collection and handling of consumer research data.

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PRESENTED BY



Introduction

Around the world, video games are seen as fun and entertaining. After all, “game” is right there in the name.

Those of us who work in the video game industry, however, see video games in a brighter light. We regularly talk to players who have found **social communities** - and even life partners - through a shared interest in playing video games. We hear from doctors and patients who use video games as a life-changing form of **treatment and therapy**. We see how playing together brings families closer, creating opportunities for connection that cuts across generations. We watch professional esports athletes and streamers who discovered they can convert a hobby into a **successful career**. And we’ve heard from players around the world who believe that video games are more than just fun – they are **powerful**.

The video game industry has long been at the **forefront of innovation**, redefining not just the boundaries of play but also revolutionizing how entire industries **reach consumers, train workforce, and drive business transformation and growth**. Video games also sit at the **epicenter of culture**, introducing billions of players to music, shows, and movies, and giving them a chance to engage with their favorite brands and celebrities. In many cases, playing video games allows players to **continue sports and hobbies** after the glory days are physically behind them.

Yet, despite the reality that video games are a cultural, business, and societal force that have long transcended entertainment, stubborn stereotypes about games – and the people who love to play them – persist. It’s time that the world embraces the **power of play**.

In our second iteration of the global *Power of Play* report, trade associations representing the video game industry around the world

came together to create one of the largest surveys ever conducted of video game players. Speaking with 24,216 players (ages 16 and older), we asked people across 21 countries – Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States – why they play, how they play, and the perceived benefits of play.

We confirmed that **having fun** is the top reason the world plays video games and learned that video games help players **feel less stressed** and help them **get through difficult times**. Players also recognize that video games **develop skills** such as **problem-solving, teamwork, adaptability, and critical thinking**.

Across the world, video games are appreciated as a vehicle to build **positive and lasting connections with children, family, and friends**, but also viewed as a space to find **new relationships** in an increasingly isolated world.

The benefits of playing video games are not just felt and shared by those who love to play them; there is a growing body of academic research challenging the prevailing stereotypes about video games, consistently supporting the conclusion that video games **enhance cognitive development, build emotional resilience, support social and mental health, and foster learning and development**.

The report that follows includes findings from the 24,000+ player survey, as well as the conclusions from peer-reviewed, rigorous studies that validate the positive sentiments and benefits of play shared by billions around the world.

Taken together, the research affirms the true **power of play**.

A Global Perspective on Video Games

24,216

 total respondents worldwide

Survey of active (weekly) video game players ages 16+

21 countries across 6 continents

Nationally representative samples

When findings are referred to as global throughout, it refers to the results of the 21 countries detailed here.



AFRICA

EGYPT: 1,027
NIGERIA: 1,082
SOUTH AFRICA: 1,283



EUROPE

UNITED KINGDOM: 1,002
FRANCE: 1,047
GERMANY: 1,012
ITALY: 1,021
SPAIN: 1,006
SWEDEN: 1,016
POLAND: 1,072



ASIA

CHINA: 1,501
INDIA: 1,501
JAPAN: 1,049
SAUDI ARABIA: 1,076
SOUTH KOREA: 1,005
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: 1,018



NORTH AMERICA

CANADA: 1,007
CANADA: QUEBEC: 515
MEXICO: 1,073
UNITED STATES: 1,554



SOUTH AMERICA

BRAZIL: 1,348



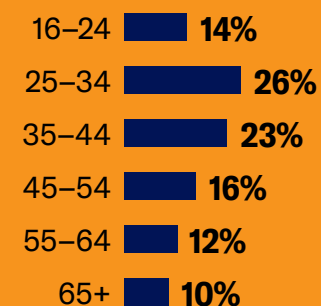
AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA: 1,002

The Global Video Game Player

Ages of Players

Among total players ages 16+



Average Age

41

Player Gender



48% Female
51% Male

1% selected non-binary/
prefer not to say

Top Three Reasons for Playing Video Games



To have fun



Stress relief/relaxation



To keep my mind sharp/
exercise my brain

Playing with Others



With other people,
in-person

17%

28%

With other people I know in
real life, online

22%

30%

With people I have not met in
real life, online

25%

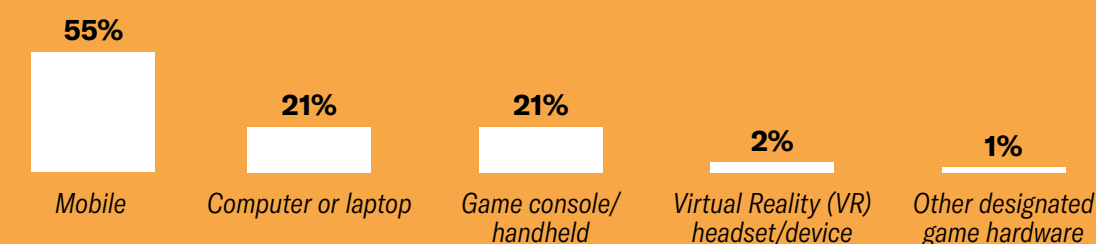
30%

By myself

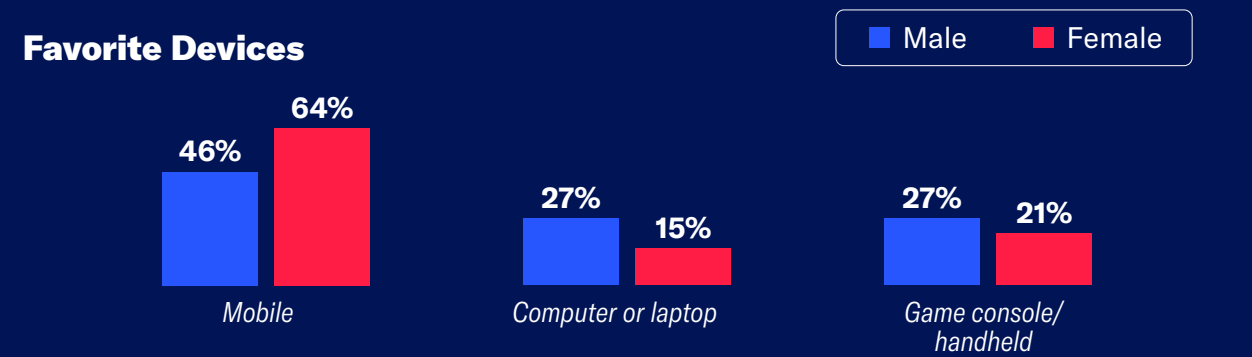
29%

59%

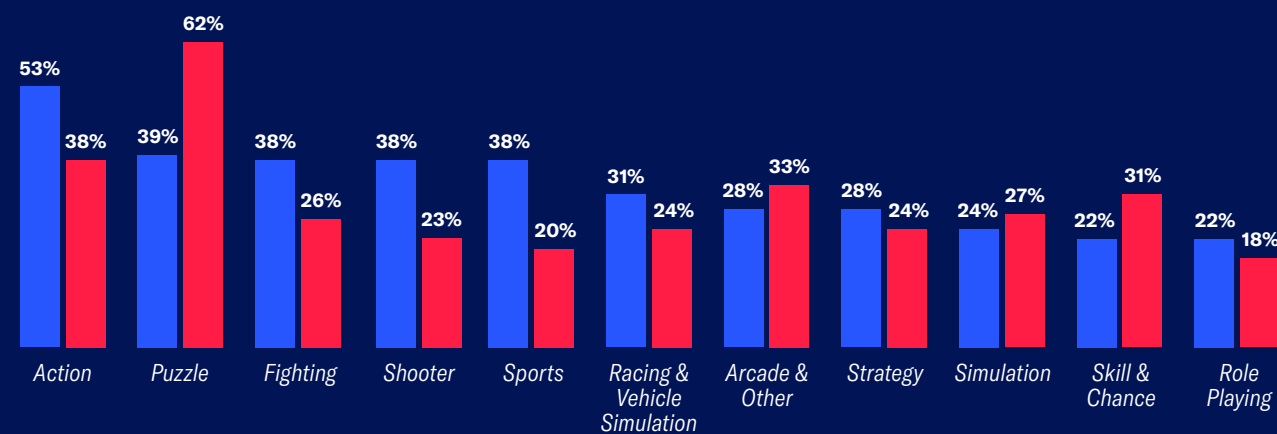
Favorite Devices



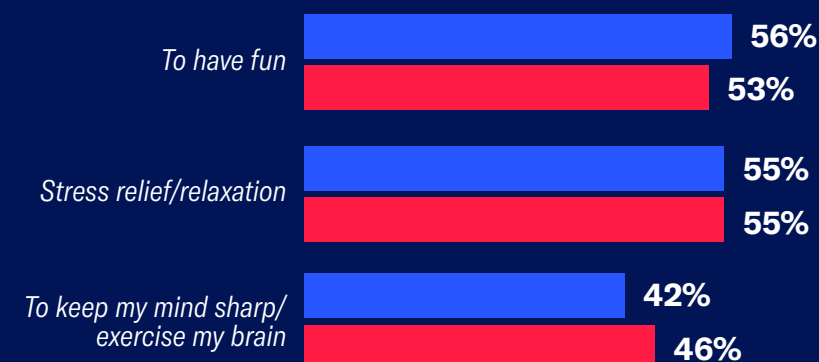
Global Perspective: Spotlight on Gender



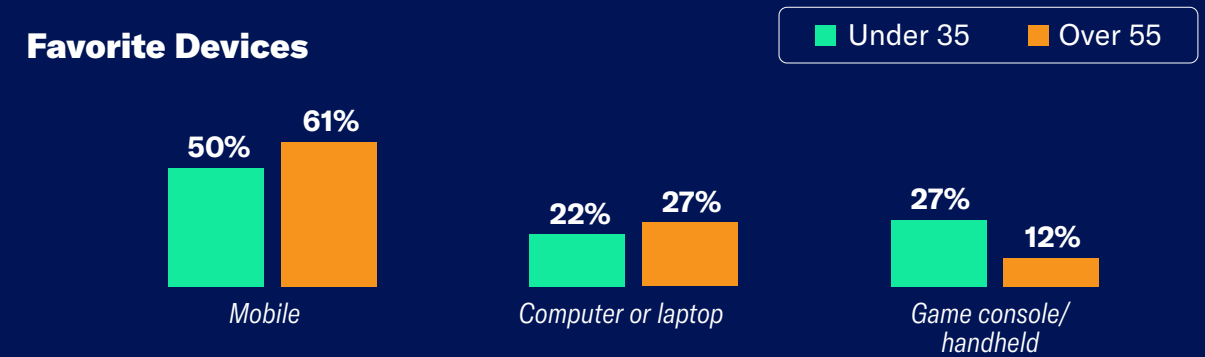
Preferred Genres



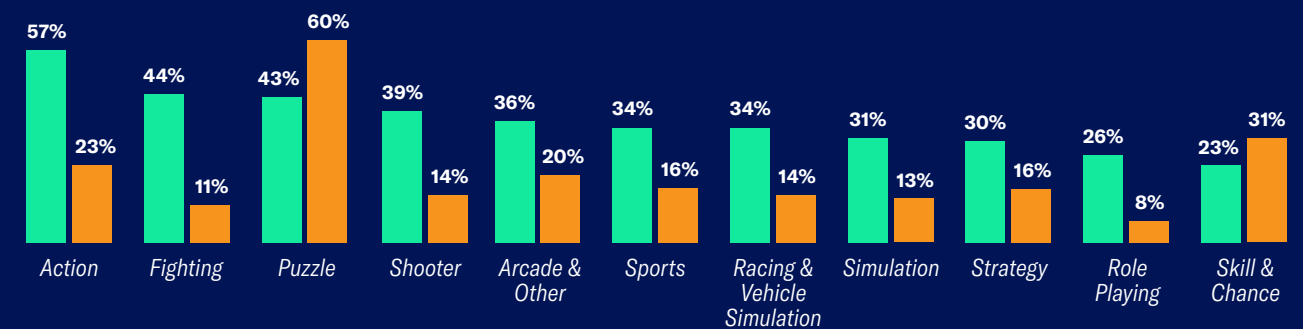
Top Three Reasons for Playing Video Games



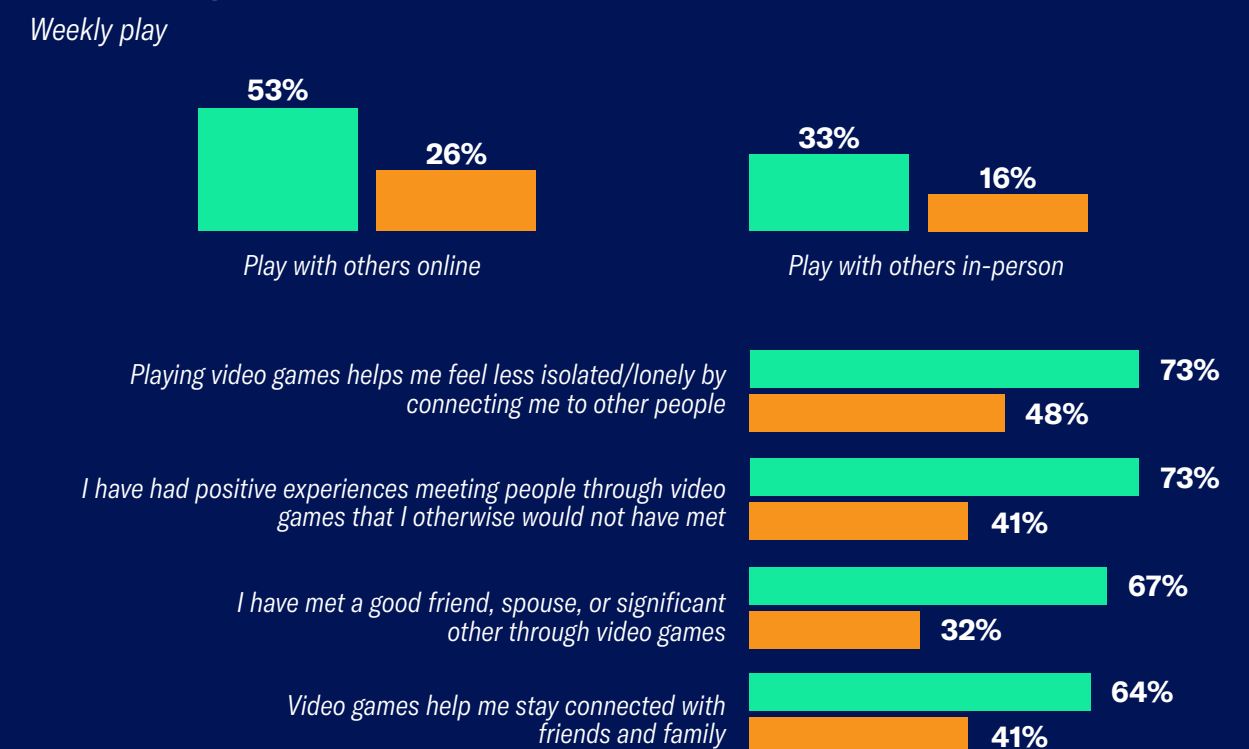
Global Perspective: Spotlight on Age



Preferred Genres



Connecting with Others



Global Perspective: The Benefits of Gameplay

Across the world, players agree that video games...



81%

Provide mental stimulation



80%

Provide stress relief



78%

Create accessible experiences for people with different abilities



73%

Help me feel happier



72%

Provide me with an outlet from everyday challenges



71%

Introduce people to new friends and relationships



70%

Help me feel less anxious



64%

Help me feel less isolated/lonely by connecting me to other people

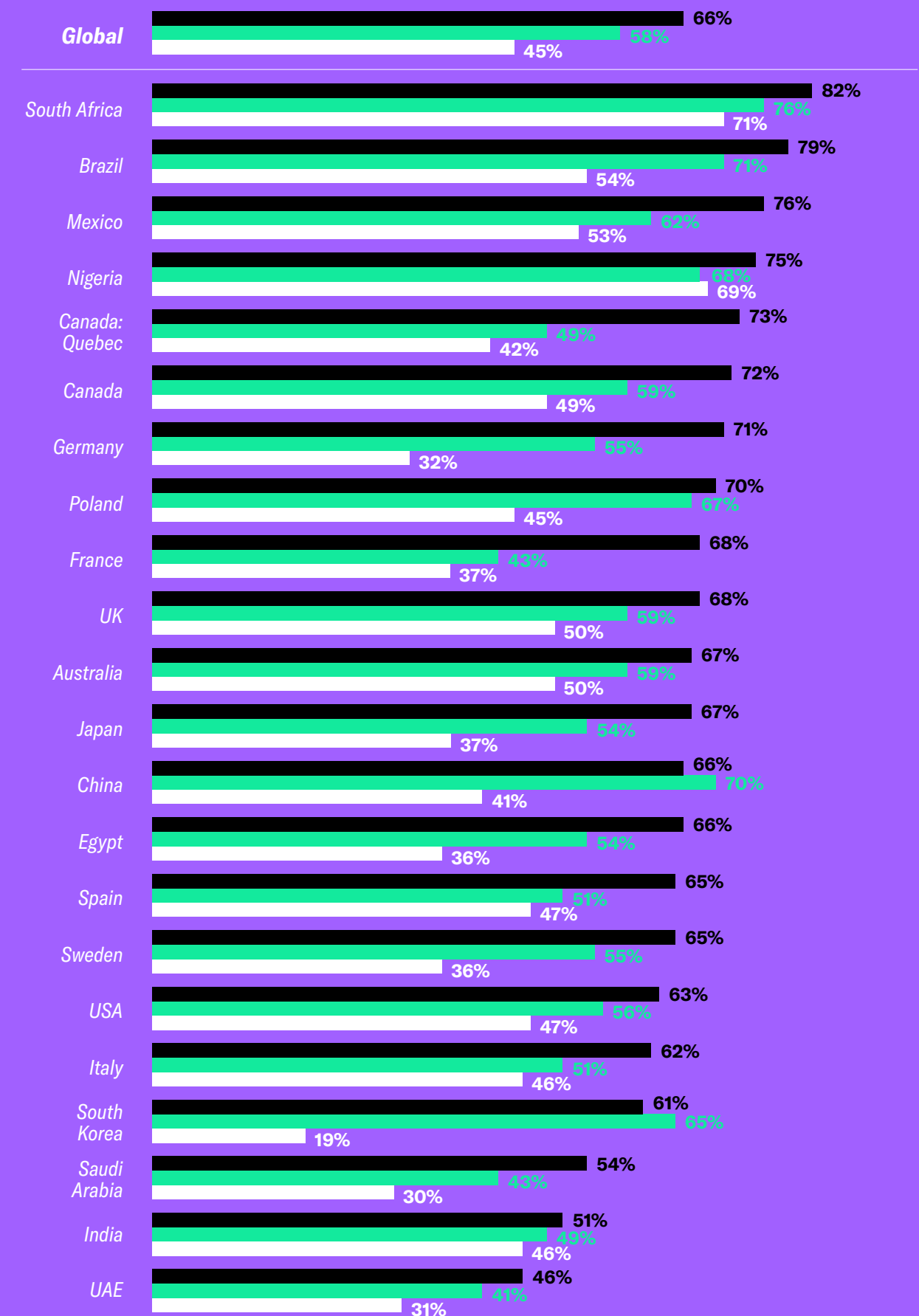


62%

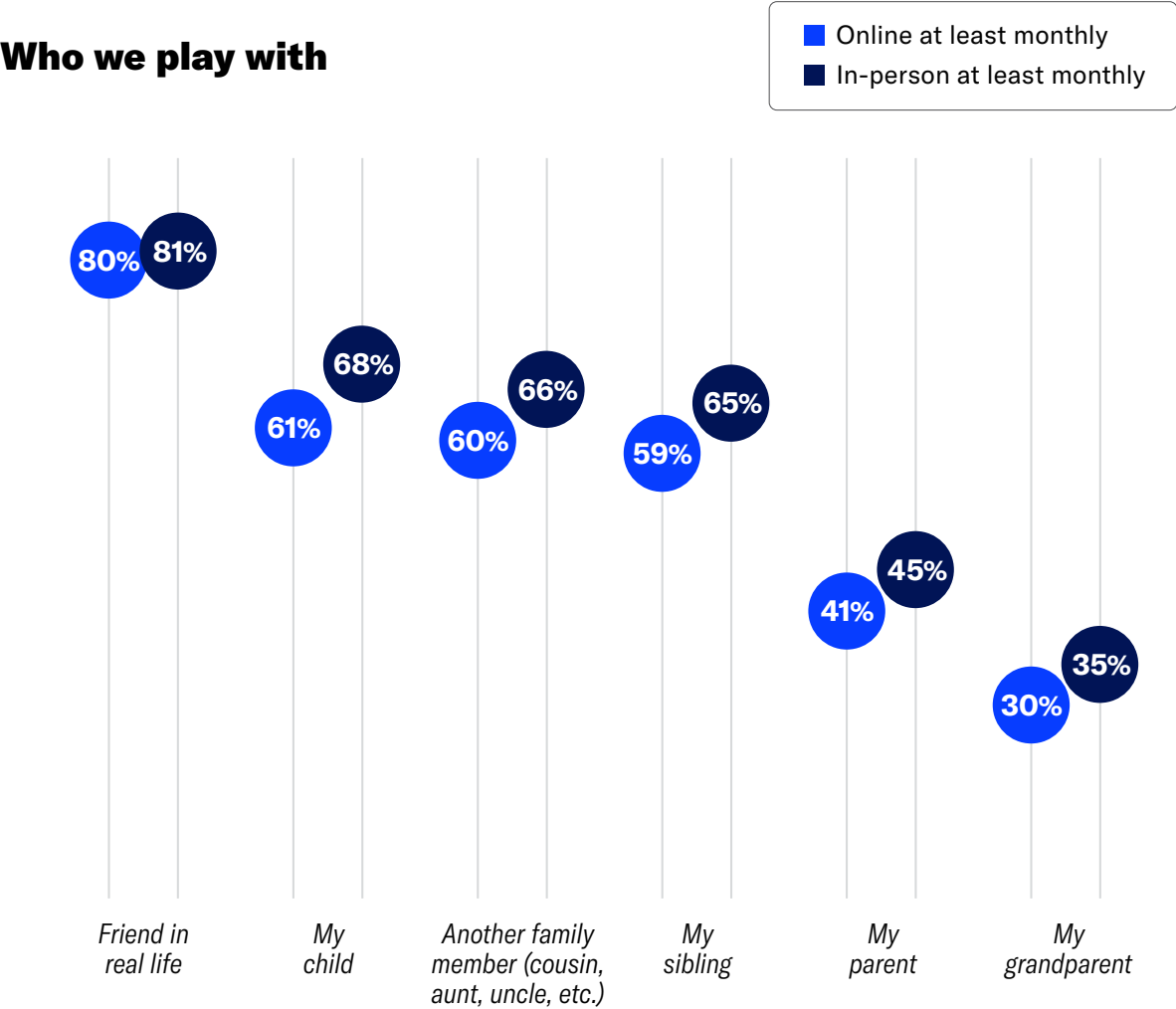
Have helped me get through difficult times in my life

Top Reasons for Playing

- To have fun
- Stress relief/relaxation
- To keep my mind sharp/exercise my brain

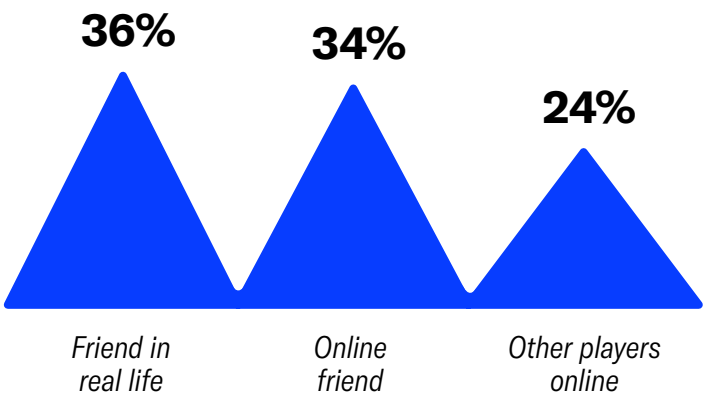


Global Perspective: Video Games Connect People



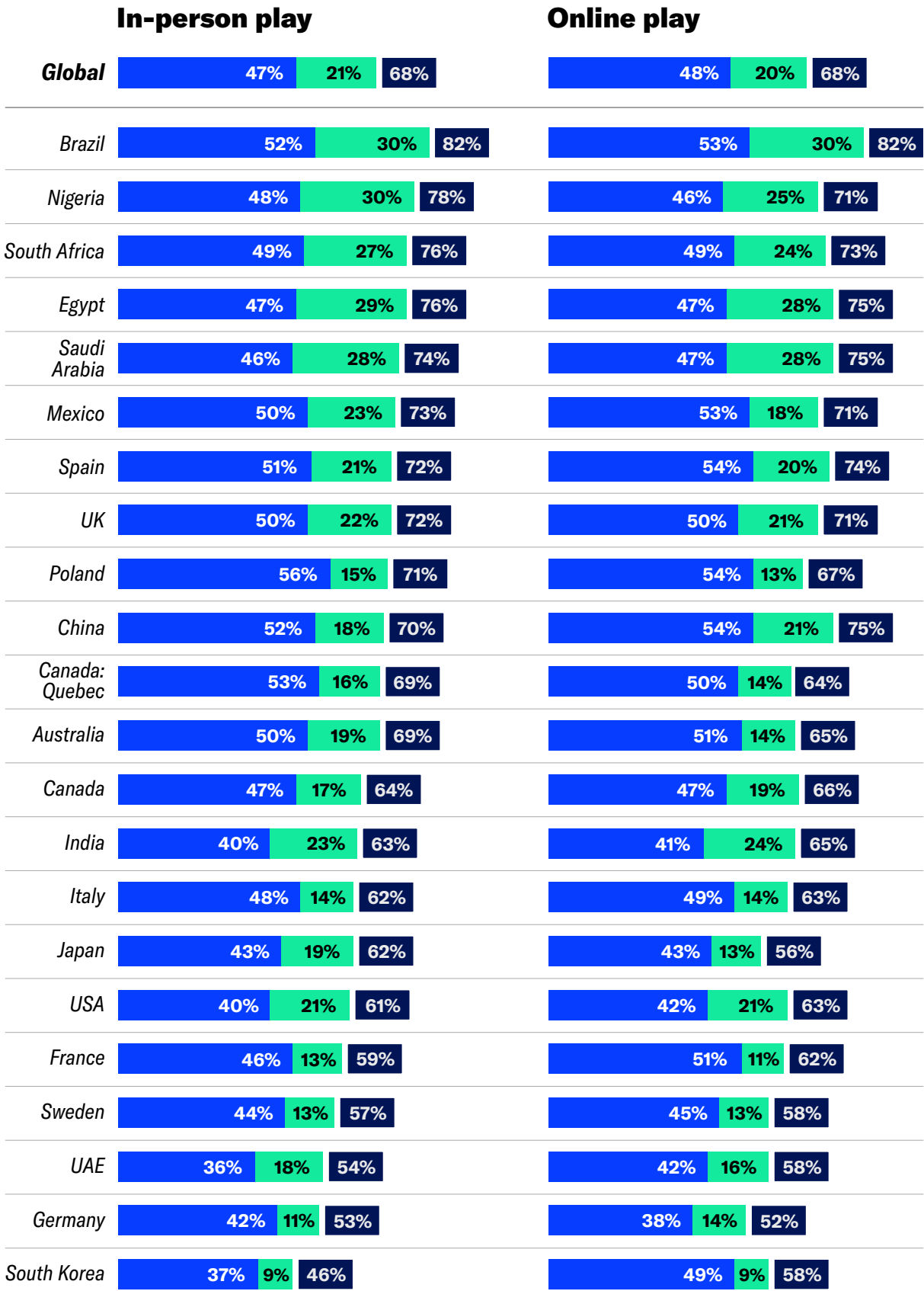
Playing with non-family online

For those who play at least weekly



Playing with others is a positive experience

- Positive experience
■ Extremely positive experience
■ Net positive



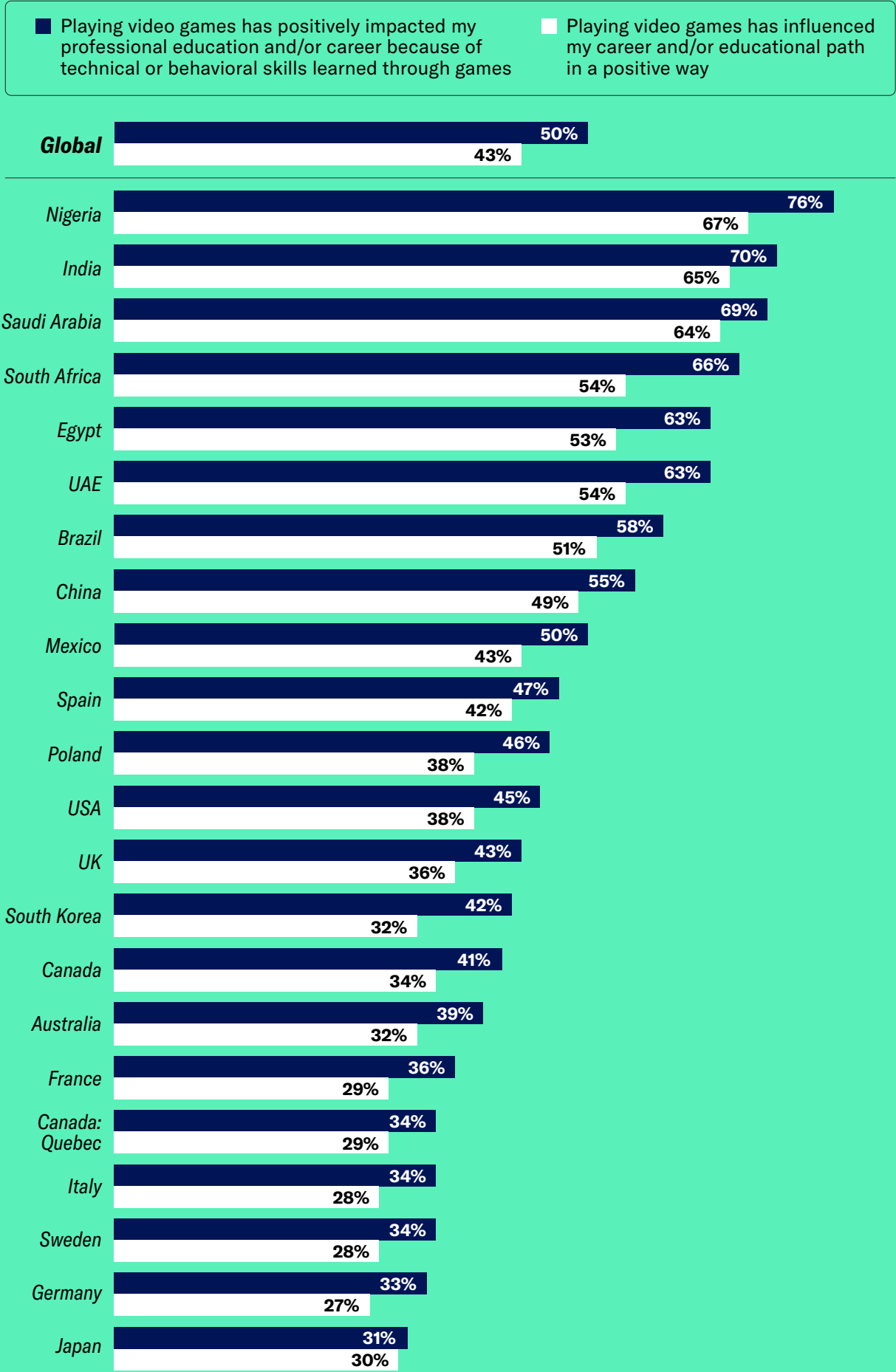
Global Perspective: Video Games Improve Skills

Creativity and problem-solving emerge as video games' top skill boosters

Global agreement that games can improve...

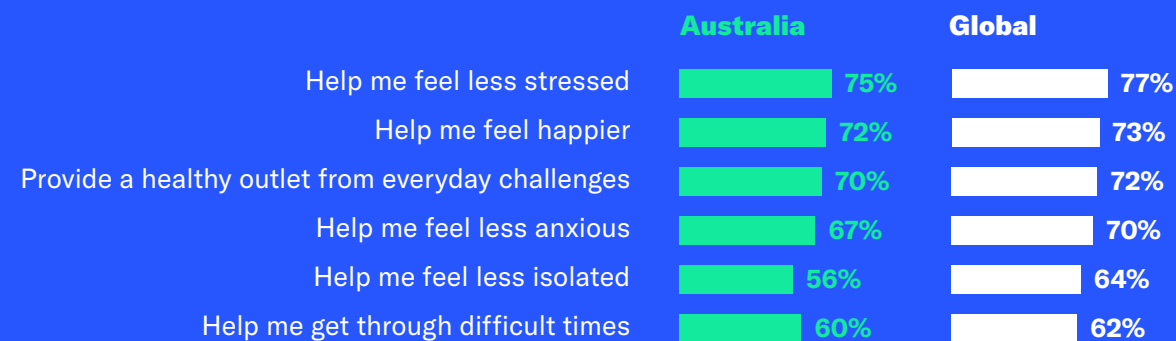


Video games as a career catalyst



Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



43% of parents in Australia said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for Australia



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do

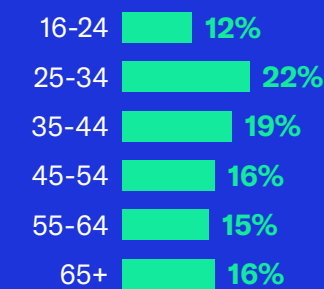


Australia

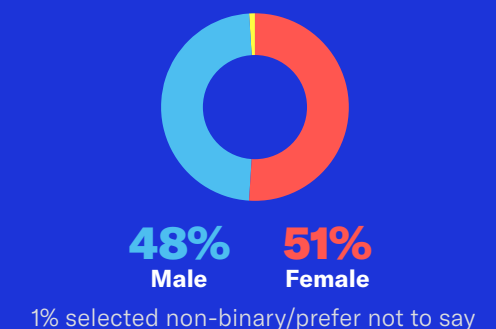
1,002 Respondents

Ages of Players

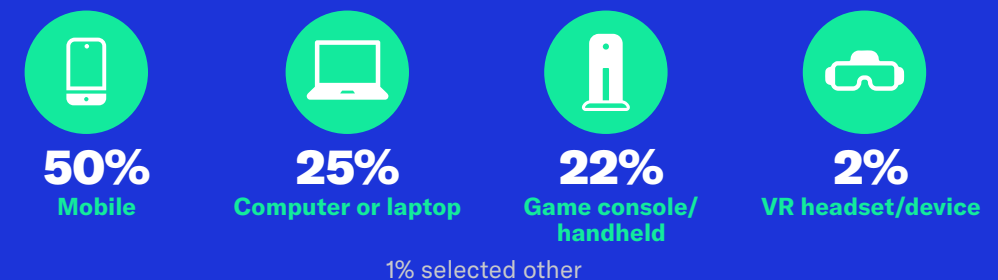
Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender

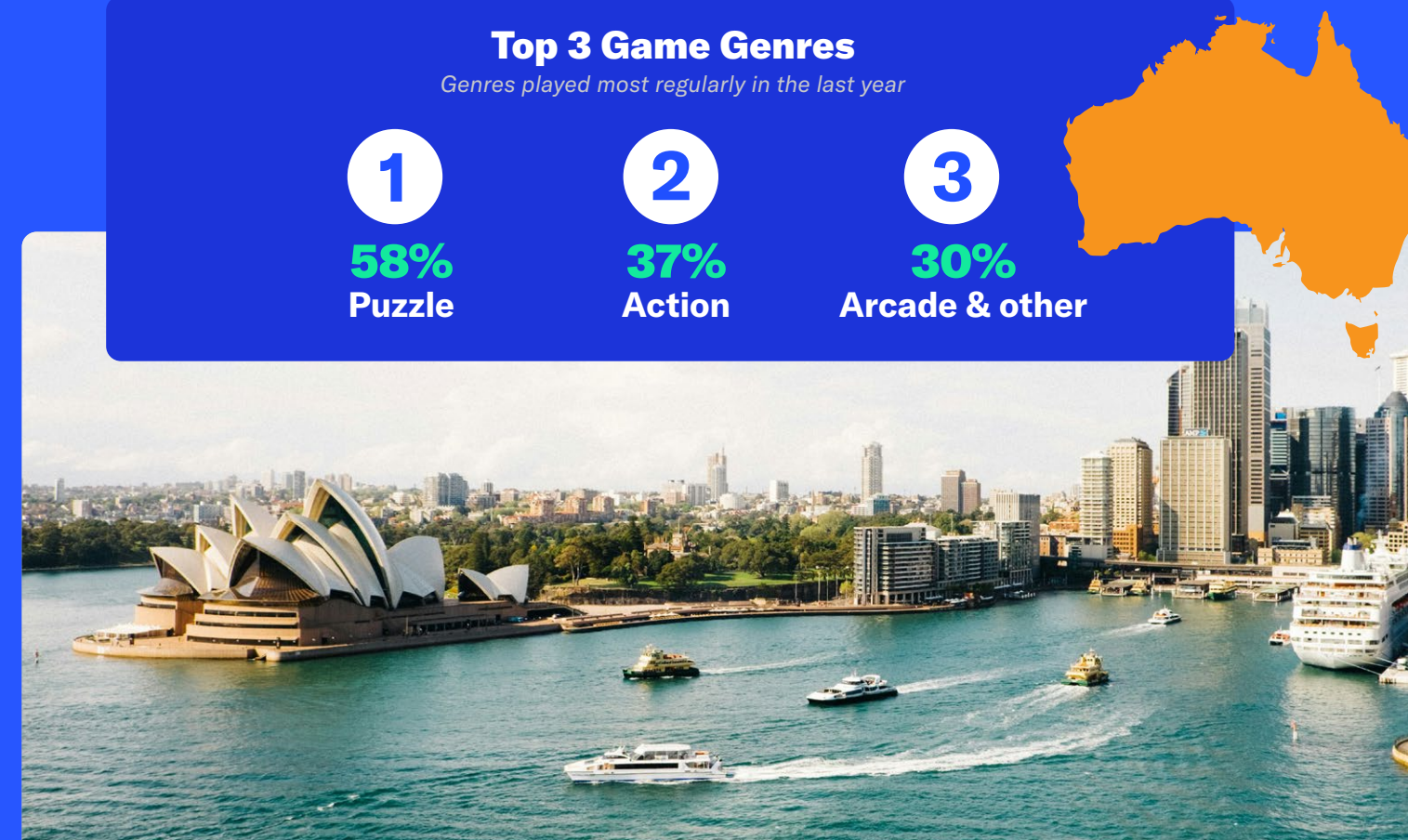


Favorite Devices



Top 3 Game Genres

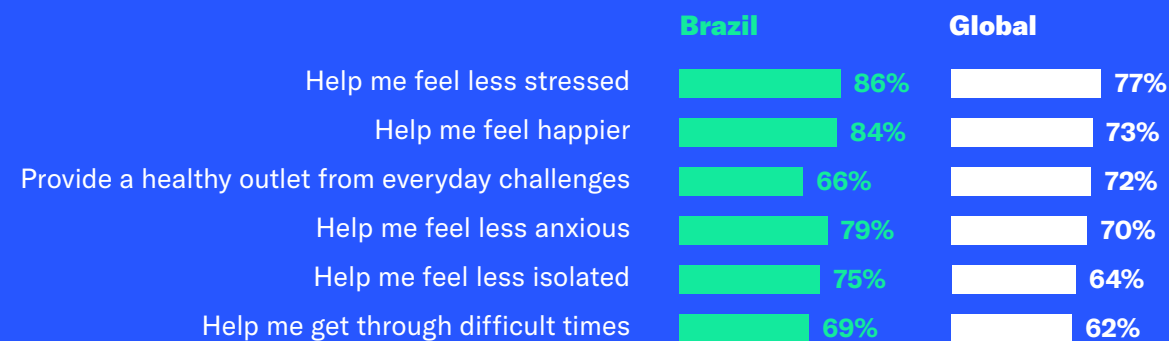
Genres played most regularly in the last year



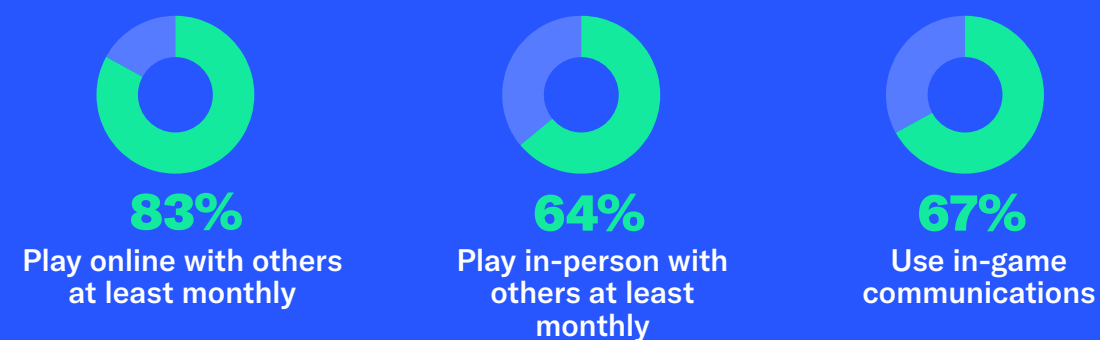
Brazil

Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people

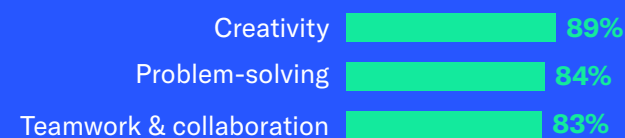


66% of parents in Brazil said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

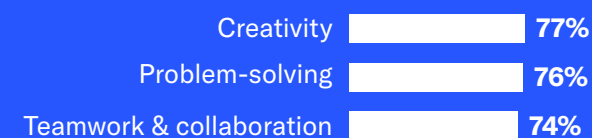
Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for Brazil



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way

Brazil	Global
51%	43%

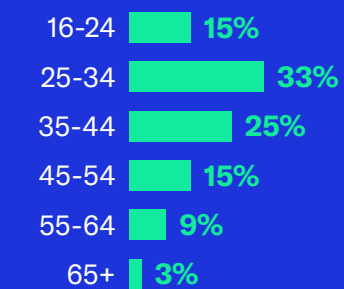
Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do

Brazil	Global
76%	64%

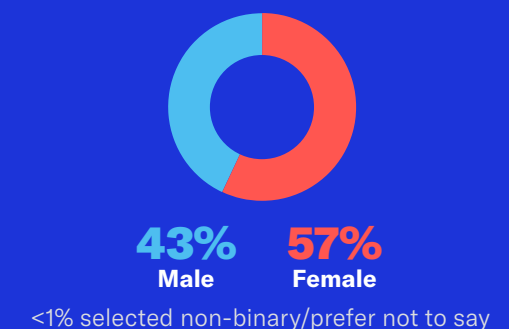
1,348 Respondents

Ages of Players

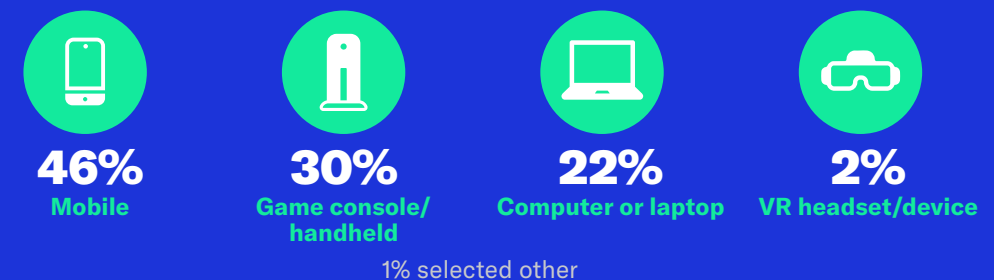
Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender

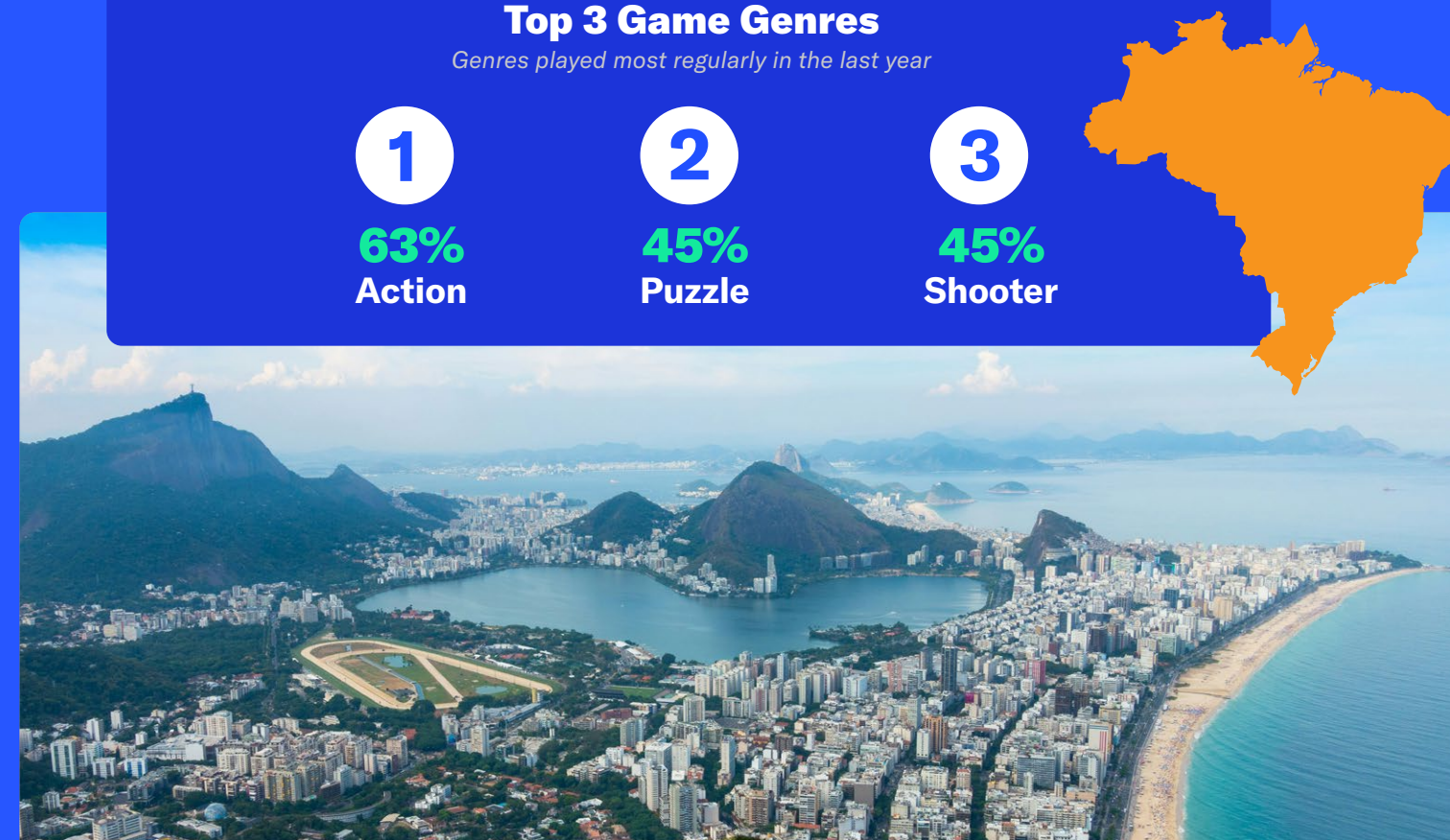
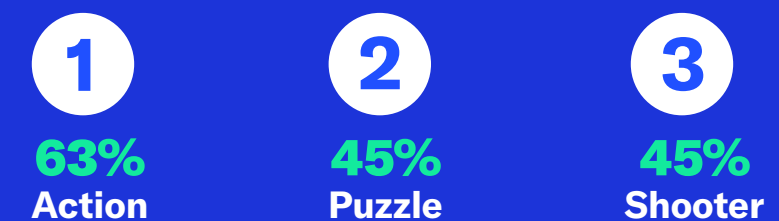


Favorite Devices



Top 3 Game Genres

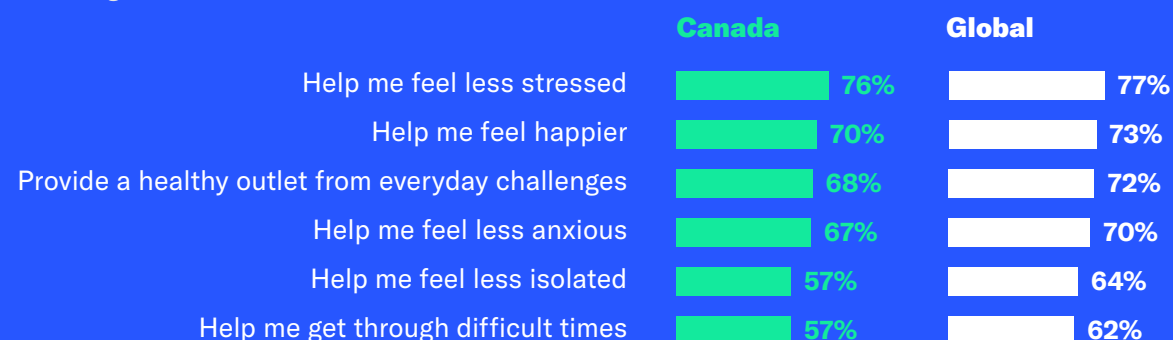
Genres played most regularly in the last year



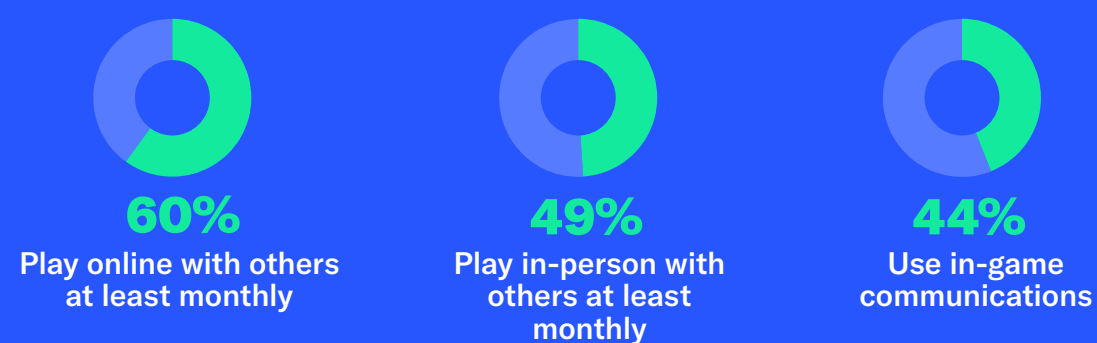
Canada

Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



45% of parents in Canada said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for Canada



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



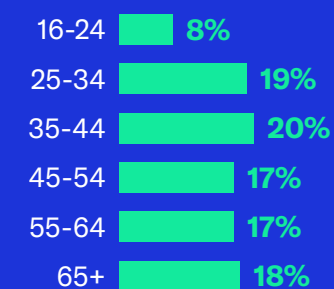
Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do



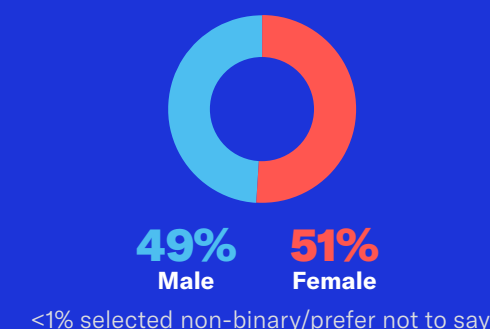
1,007 Respondents

Ages of Players

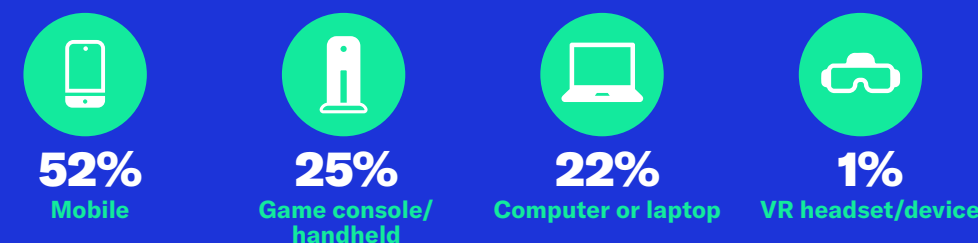
Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender

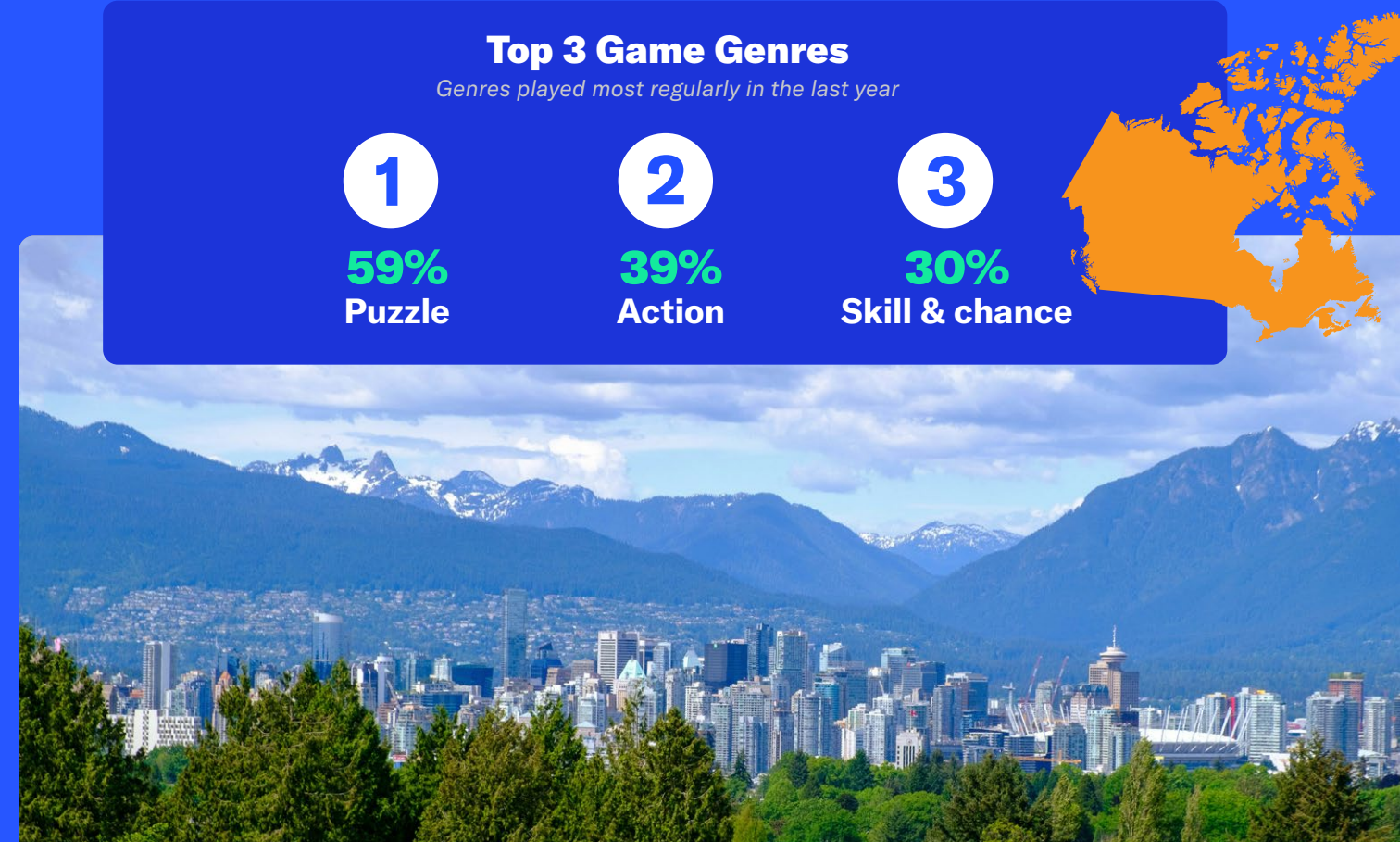


Favorite Devices



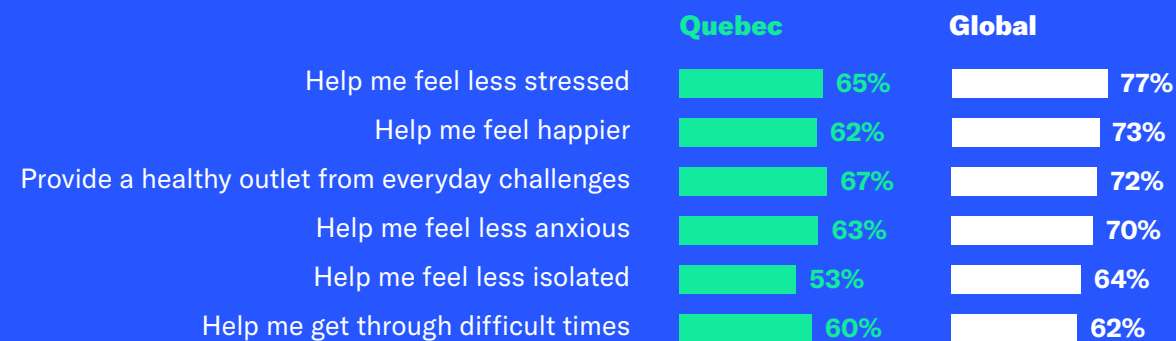
Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year

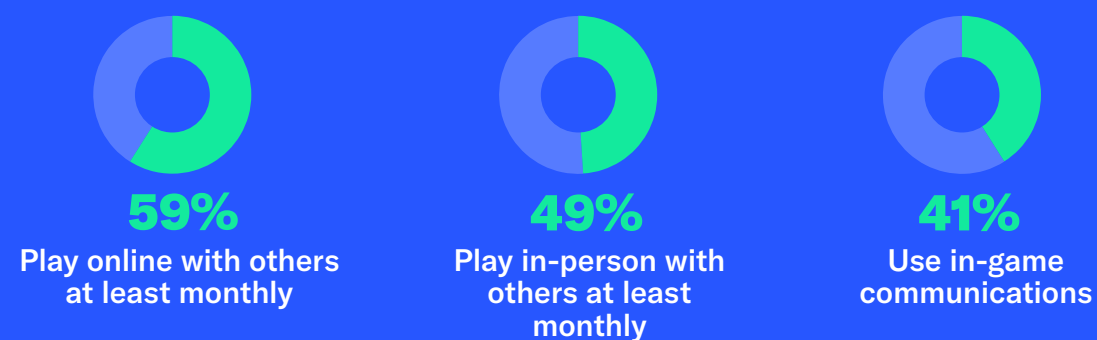


Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



37% of parents in Quebec said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

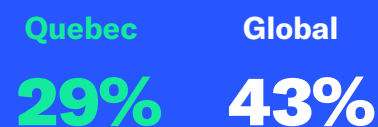
Top Three for Quebec



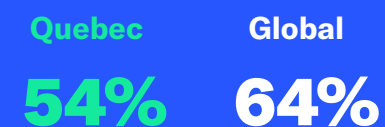
Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do

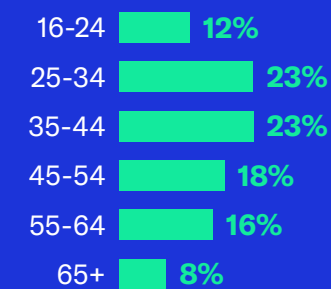


Canada: Quebec

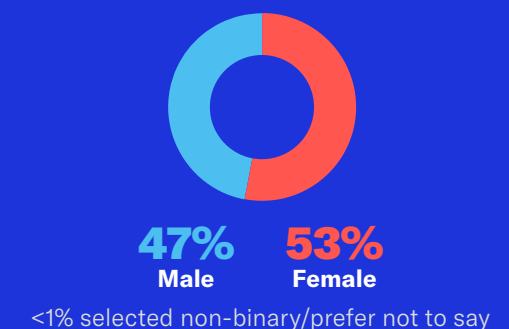
514 Respondents

Ages of Players

Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender



Favorite Devices



58%
Mobile



21%
Game console/
handheld



19%
Computer or laptop



2%
VR headset/device

Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year

1

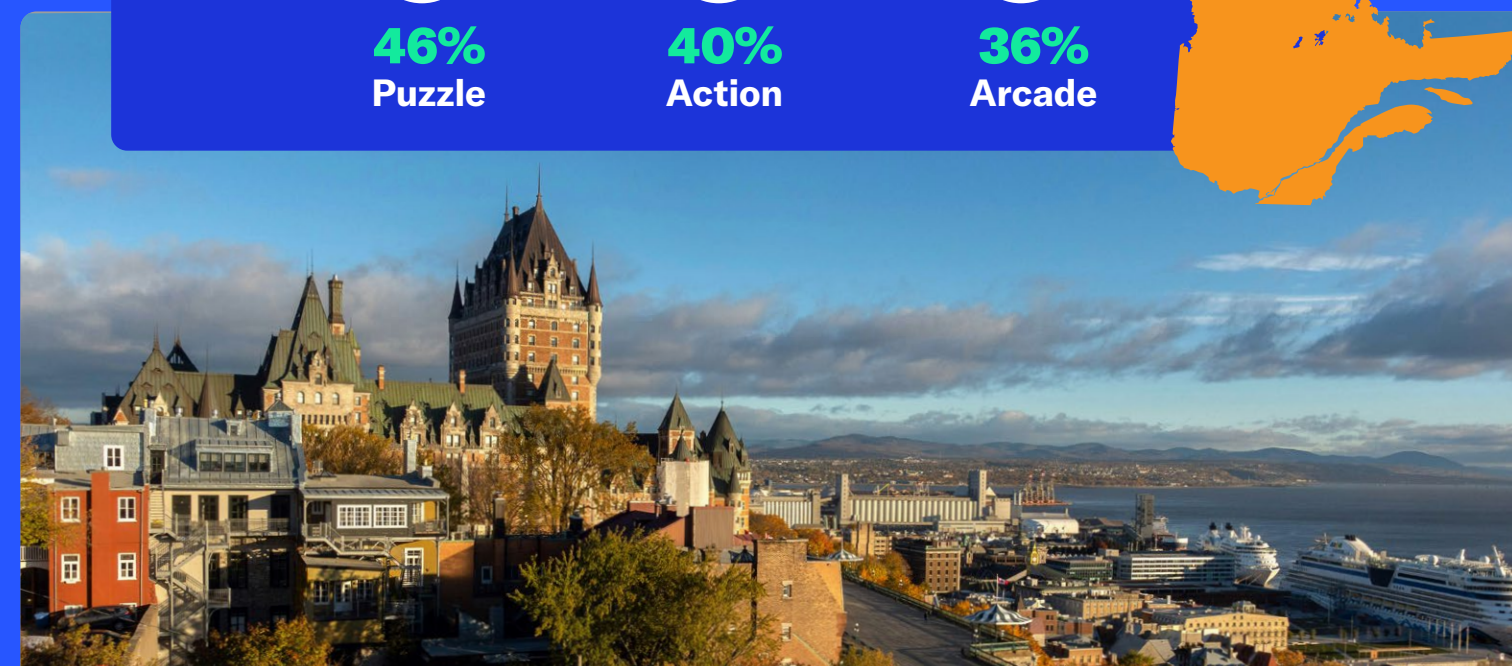
46%
Puzzle

2

40%
Action

3

36%
Arcade



China

Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



66% of parents in China said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

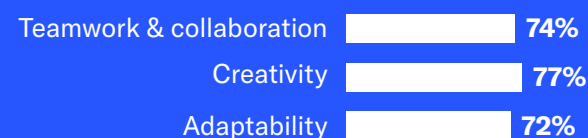
Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

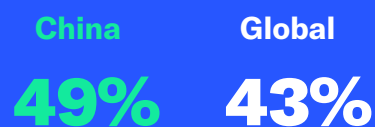
Top Three for China



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



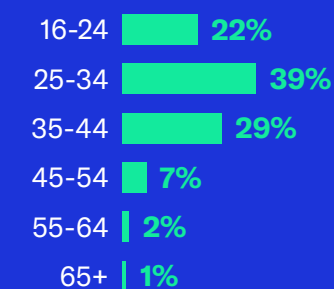
Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do



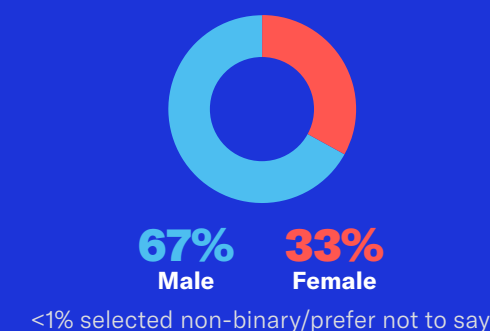
1,501 Respondents

Ages of Players

Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender



Favorite Devices

50%
Mobile37%
Computer or laptop11%
Game console/
handheld2%
VR headset/device

Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year

1

57%
Action

2

53%
Shooter

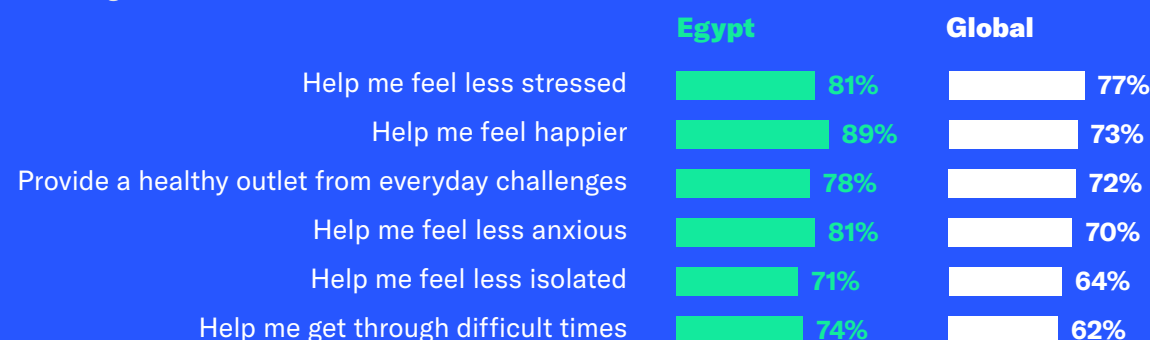
3

43%
Role playing

Egypt

Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people

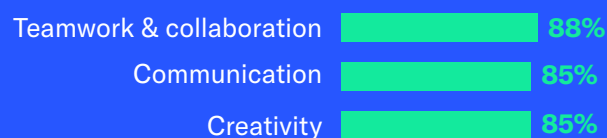


68% of parents in Egypt said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

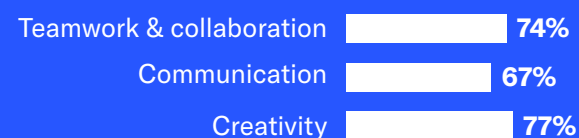
Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for Egypt



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way

Egypt	Global
53%	43%

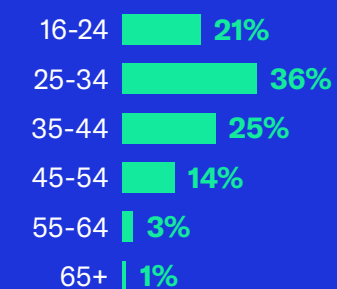
Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do

Egypt	Global
79%	64%

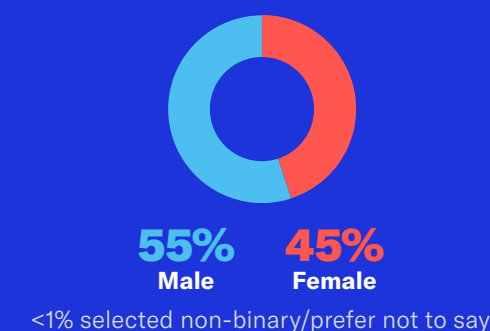
1,027 Respondents

Ages of Players

Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender

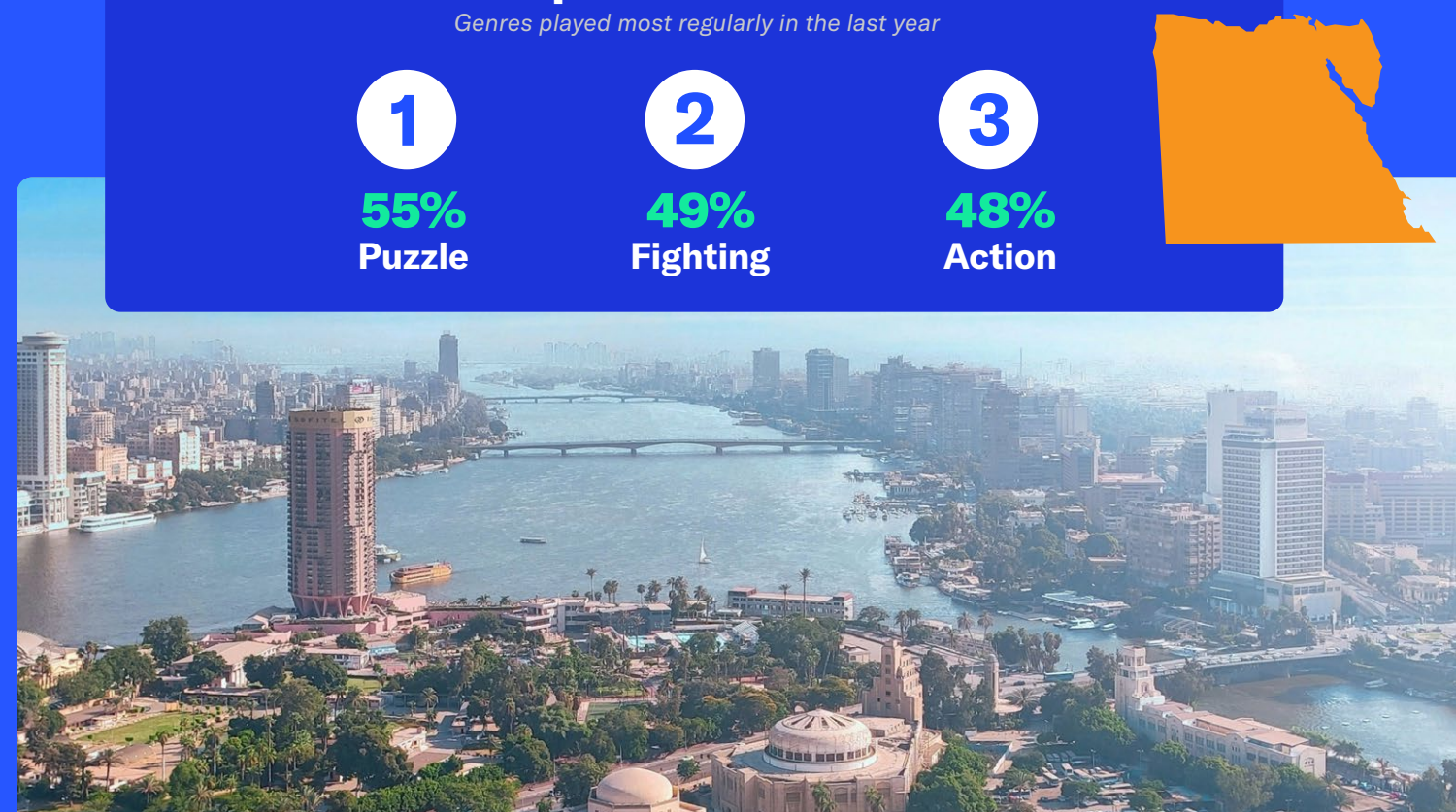


Favorite Devices

**67%**
Mobile**19%**
Computer or laptop**11%**
Game console/
handheld**2%**
VR headset/device

Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year

1**55%**
Puzzle**2****49%**
Fighting**3****48%**
Action

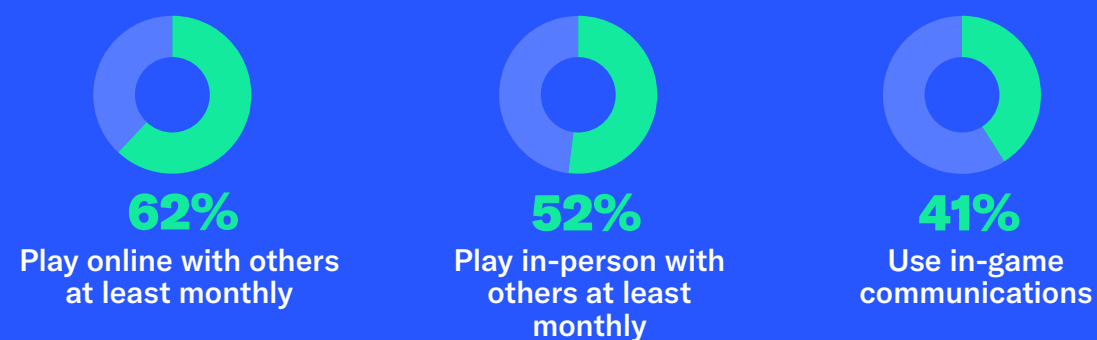
France

Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



43% of parents in France said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for France



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



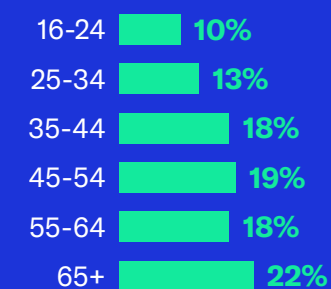
Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do



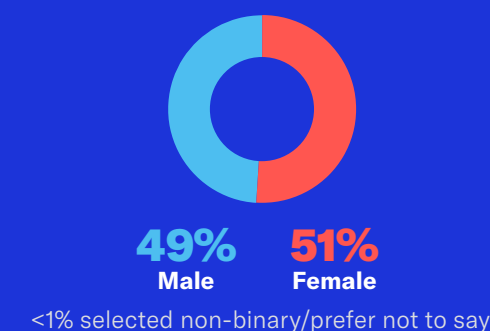
1,047 Respondents

Ages of Players

Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender



Favorite Devices

54%
Mobile25%
Game console/
handheld19%
Computer or laptop2%
VR headset/device

Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year

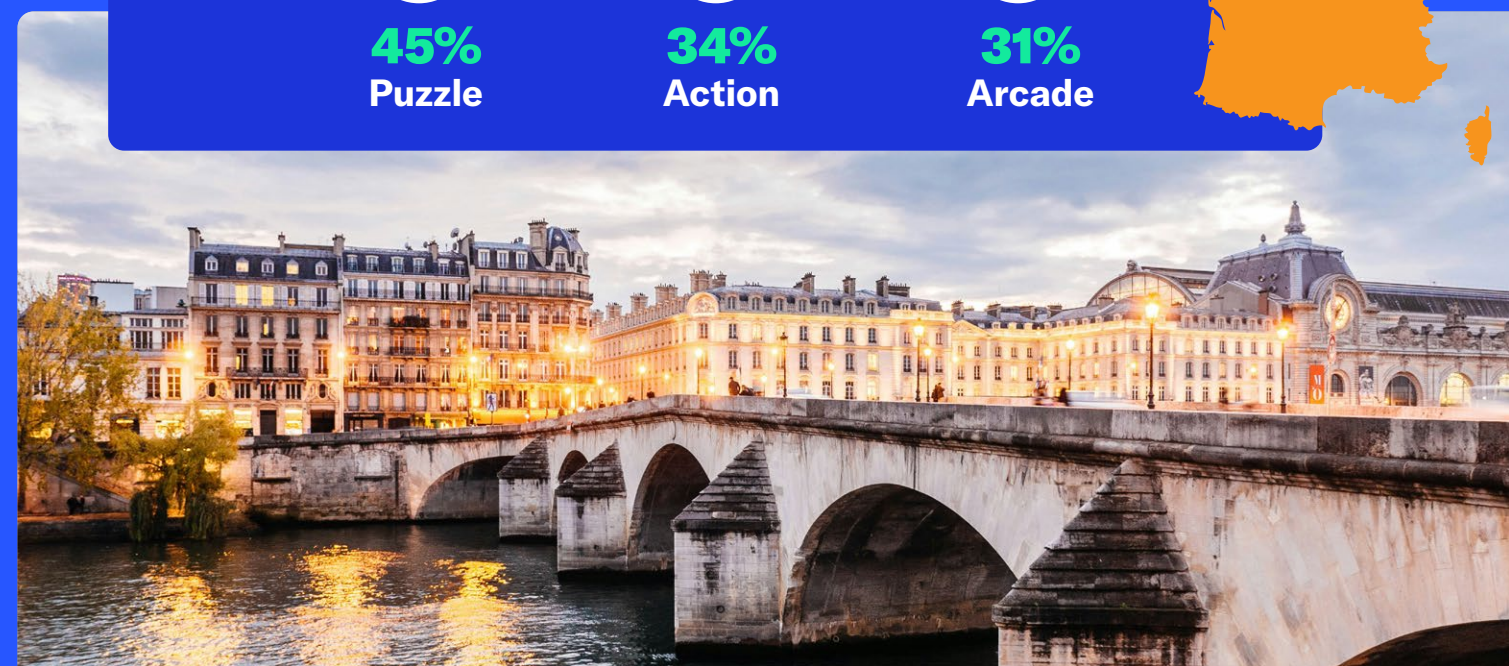
1

45%
Puzzle

2

34%
Action

3

31%
Arcade

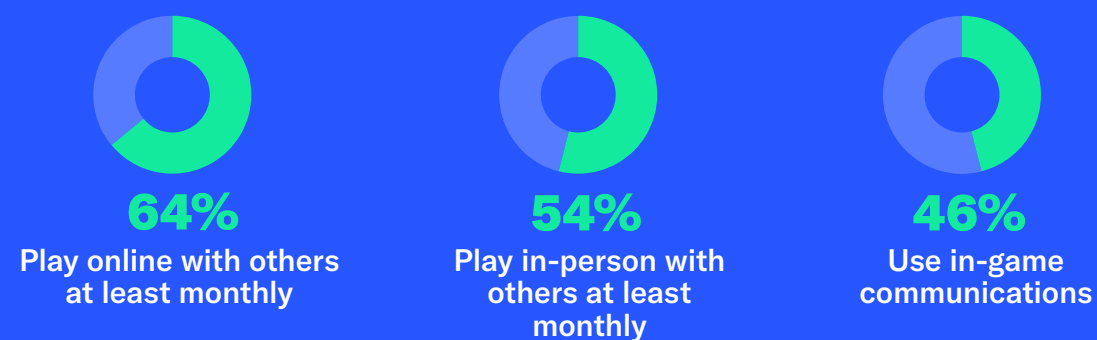
Germany

Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



37% of parents in Germany said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for Germany



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



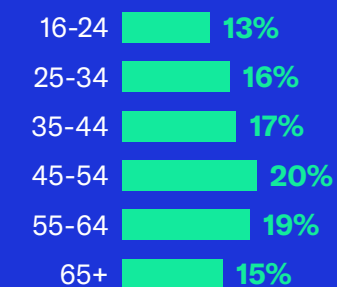
Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do



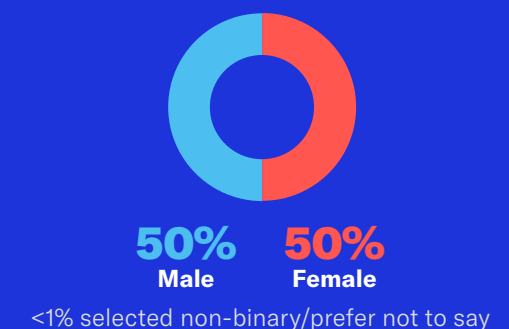
1,012 Respondents

Ages of Players

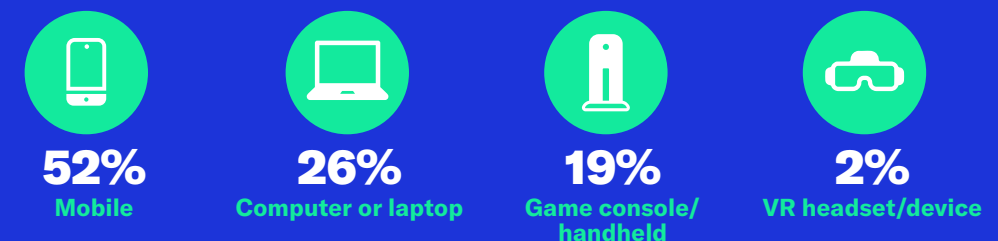
Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender

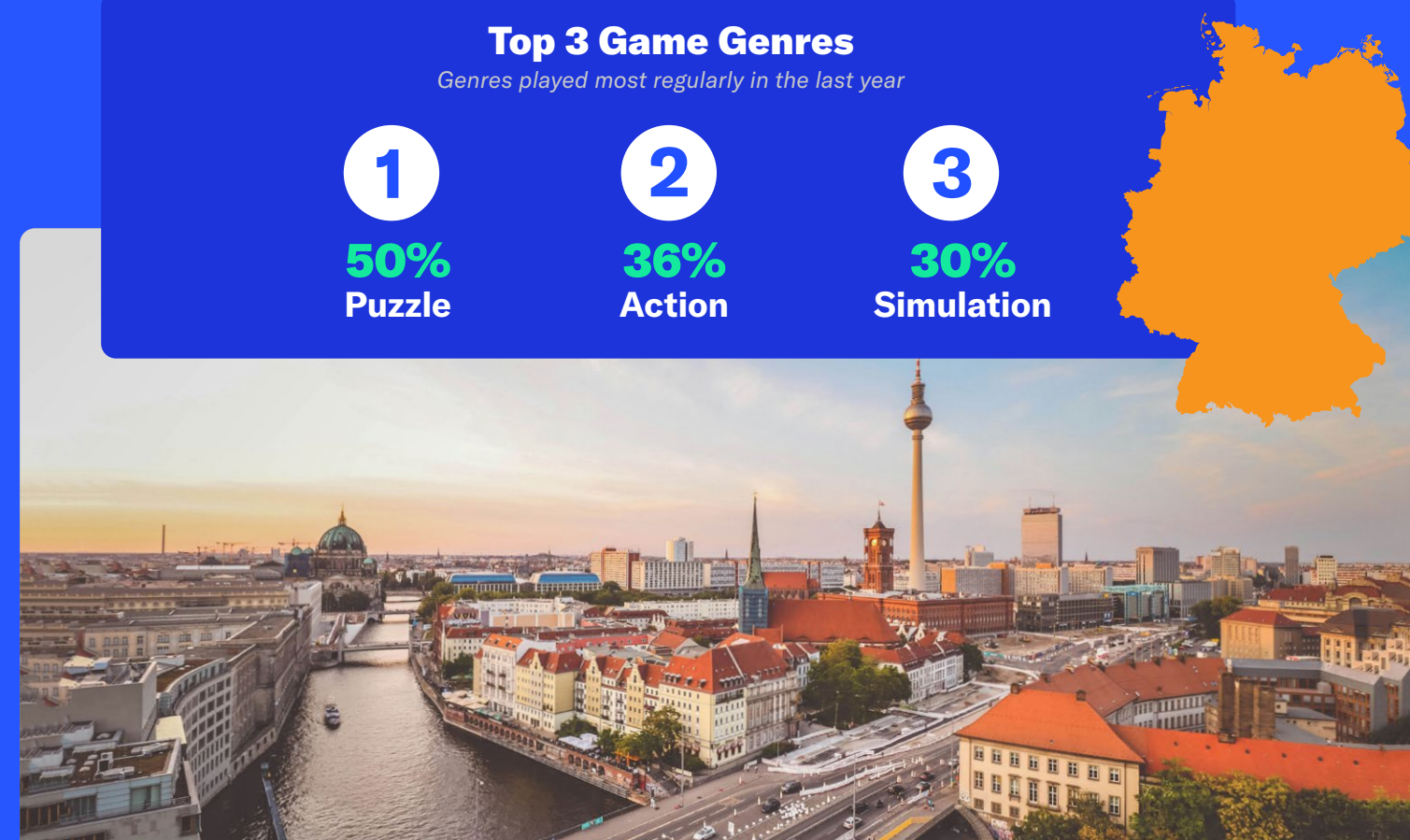


Favorite Devices



Top 3 Game Genres

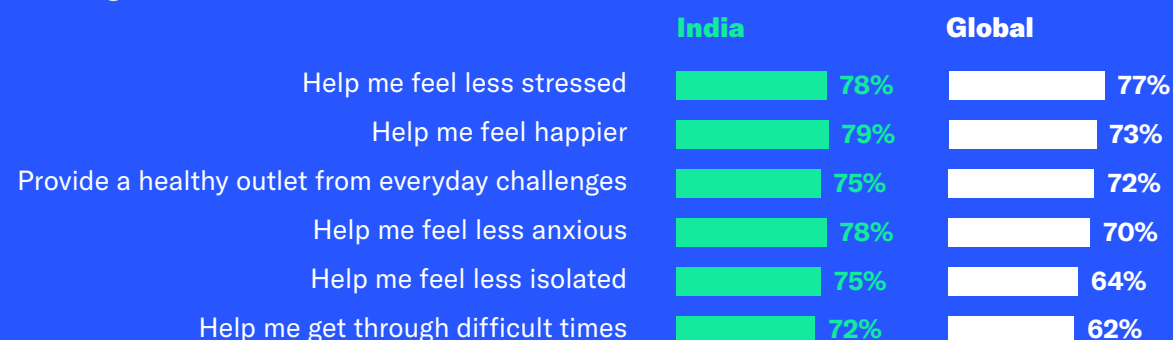
Genres played most regularly in the last year



India

Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people

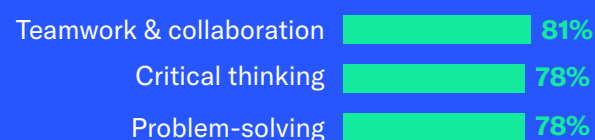


67% of parents in India said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

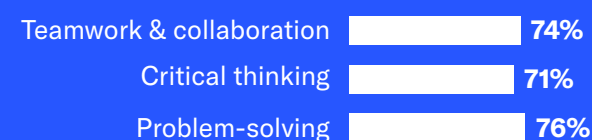
Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for India



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



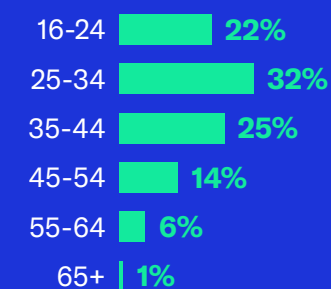
Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do



1,501 Respondents

Ages of Players

Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender



51% Male
48% Female

1% selected non-binary/prefer not to say

Favorite Devices



59%
Mobile



19%
Computer or laptop



16%
Game console/
handheld



4%
VR headset/device

1% selected other

Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year

1

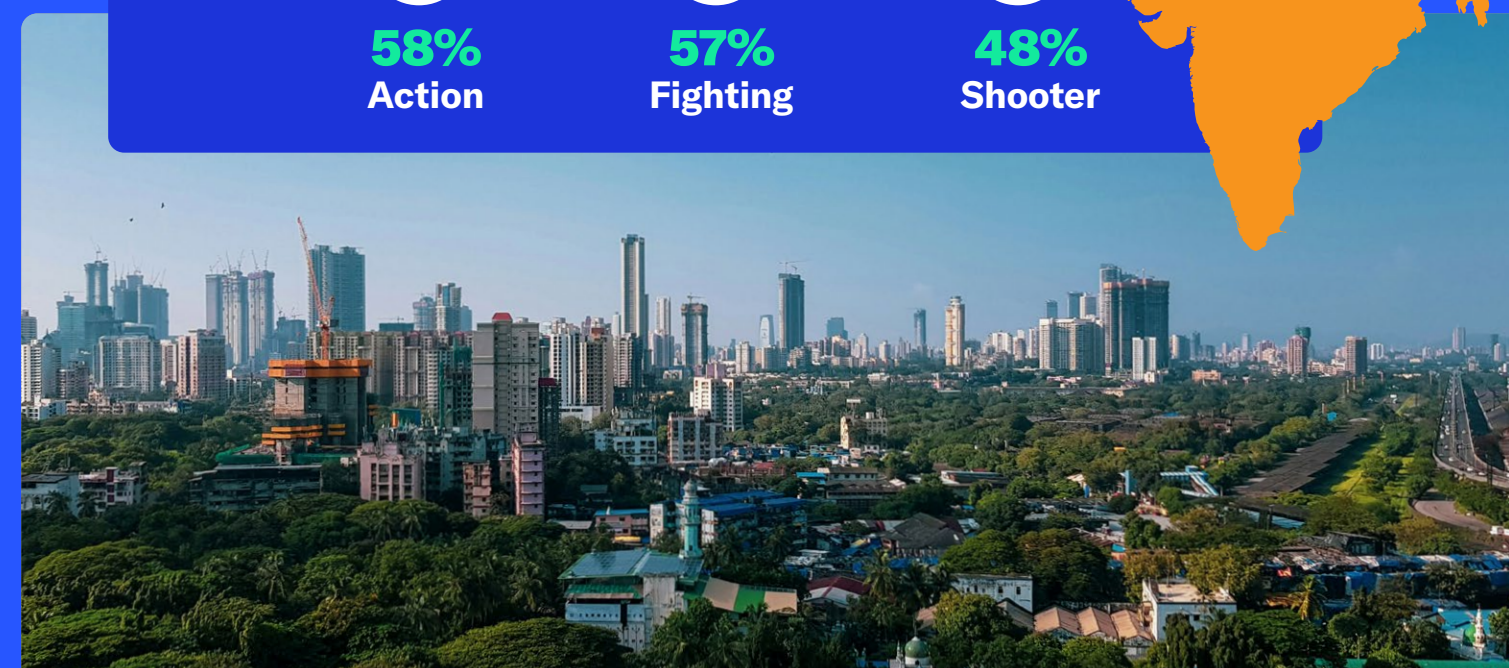
58%
Action

2

57%
Fighting

3

48%
Shooter



Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



39% of parents in Italy said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do

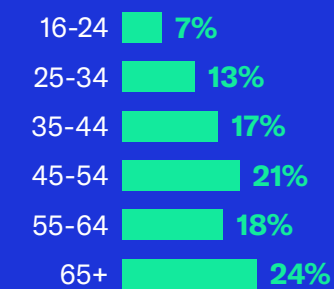


Italy

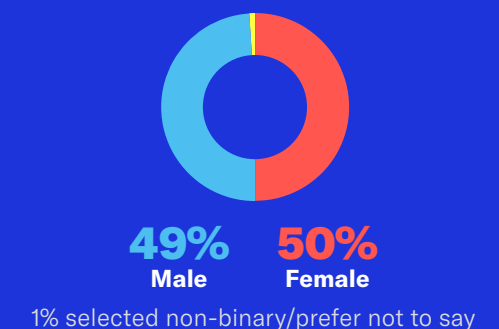
1,021 Respondents

Ages of Players

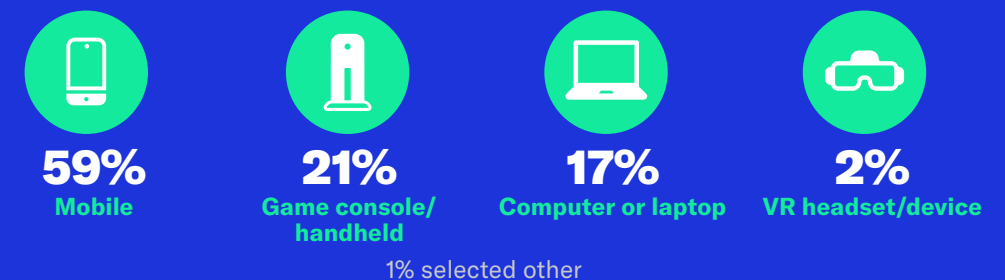
Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender

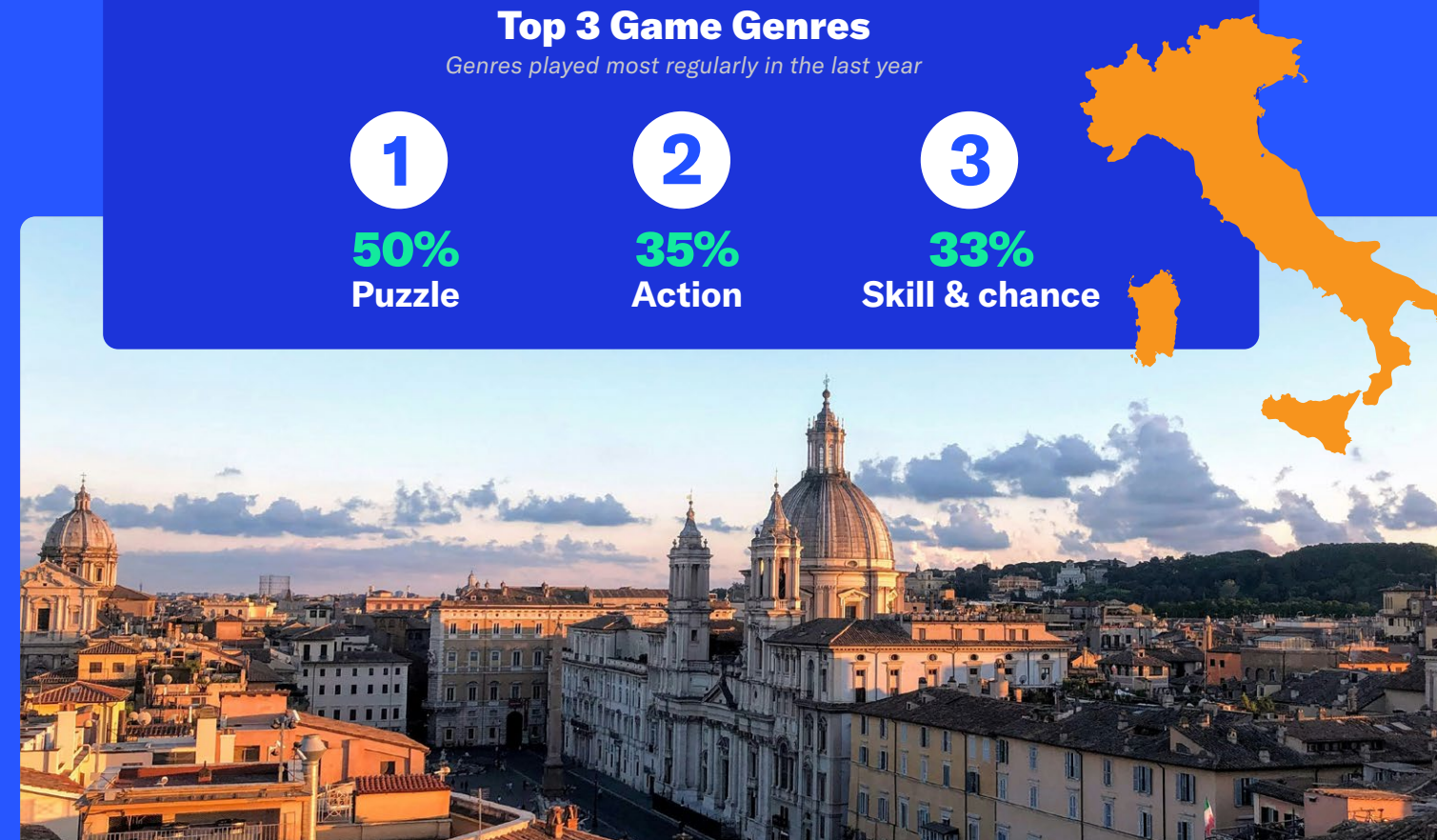


Favorite Devices



Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year



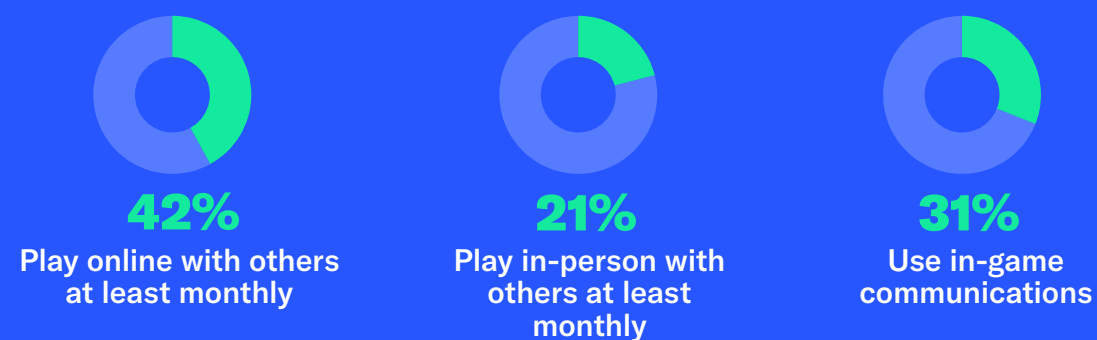
Japan

Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



34% of parents in Japan said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

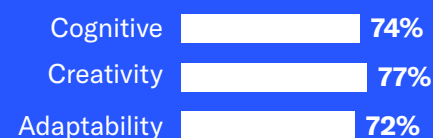
Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for Japan



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



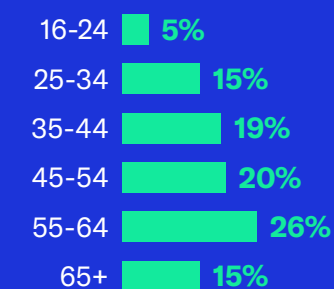
Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do



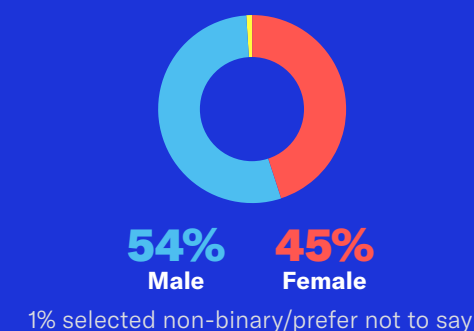
1,049 Respondents

Ages of Players

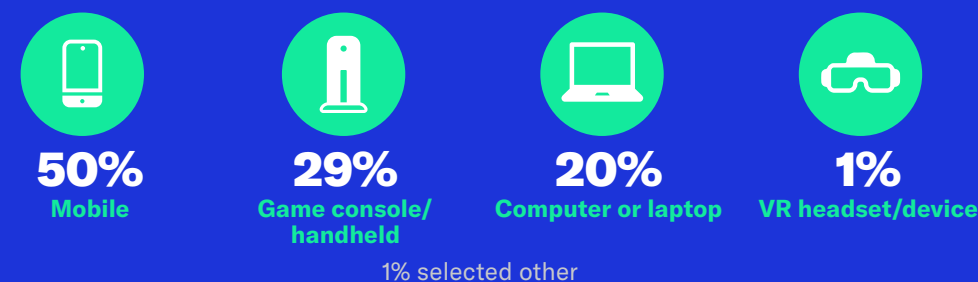
Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender



Favorite Devices



Top 3 Game Genres

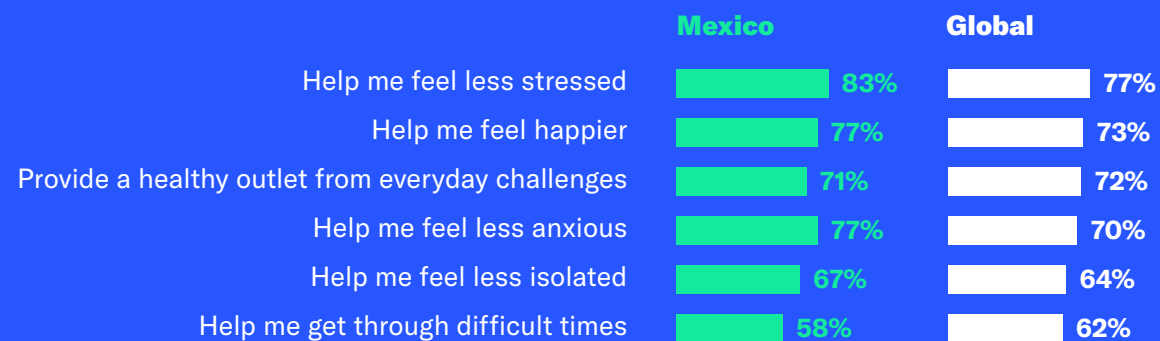
Genres played most regularly in the last year



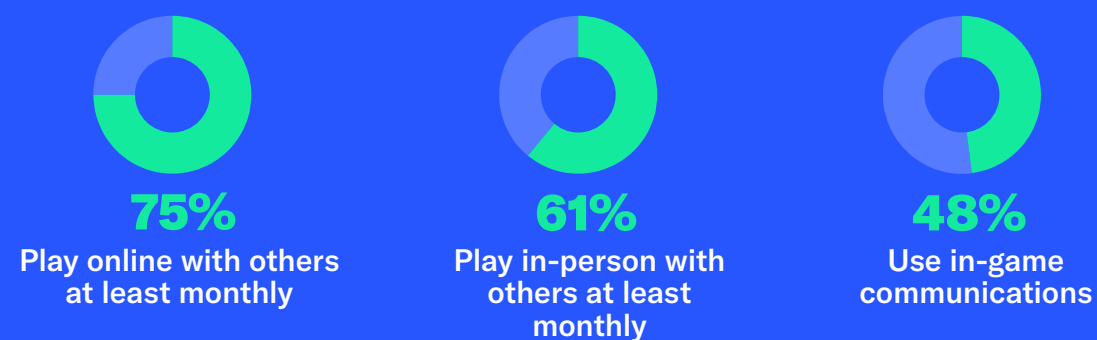
Mexico

Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people

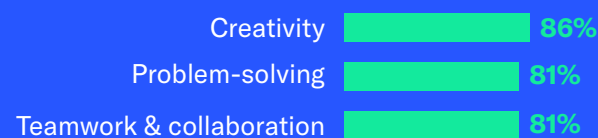


61% of parents in Mexico said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

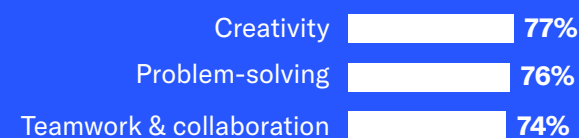
Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

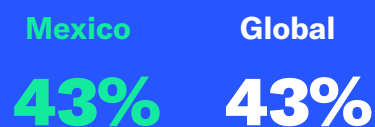
Top Three for Mexico



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



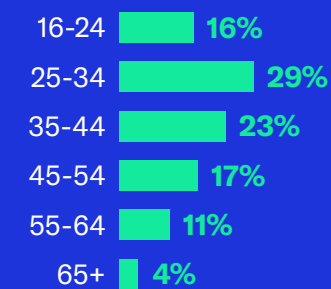
Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do



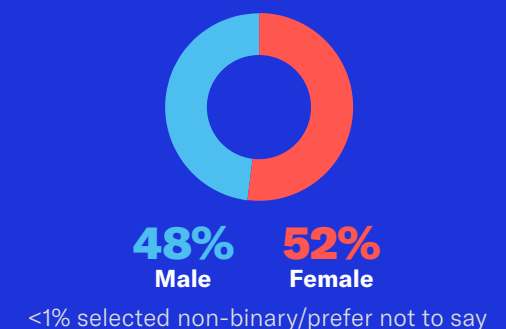
1,073 Respondents

Ages of Players

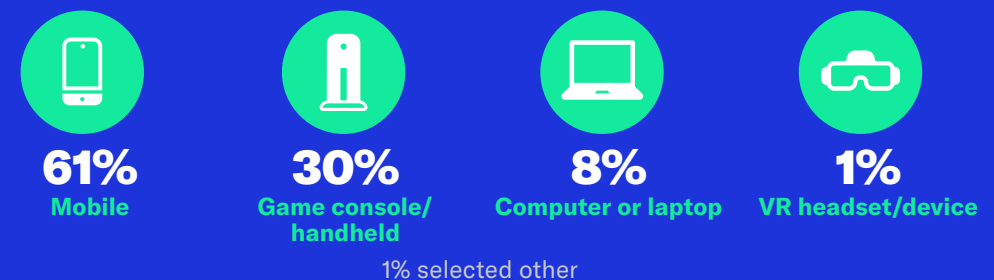
Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender

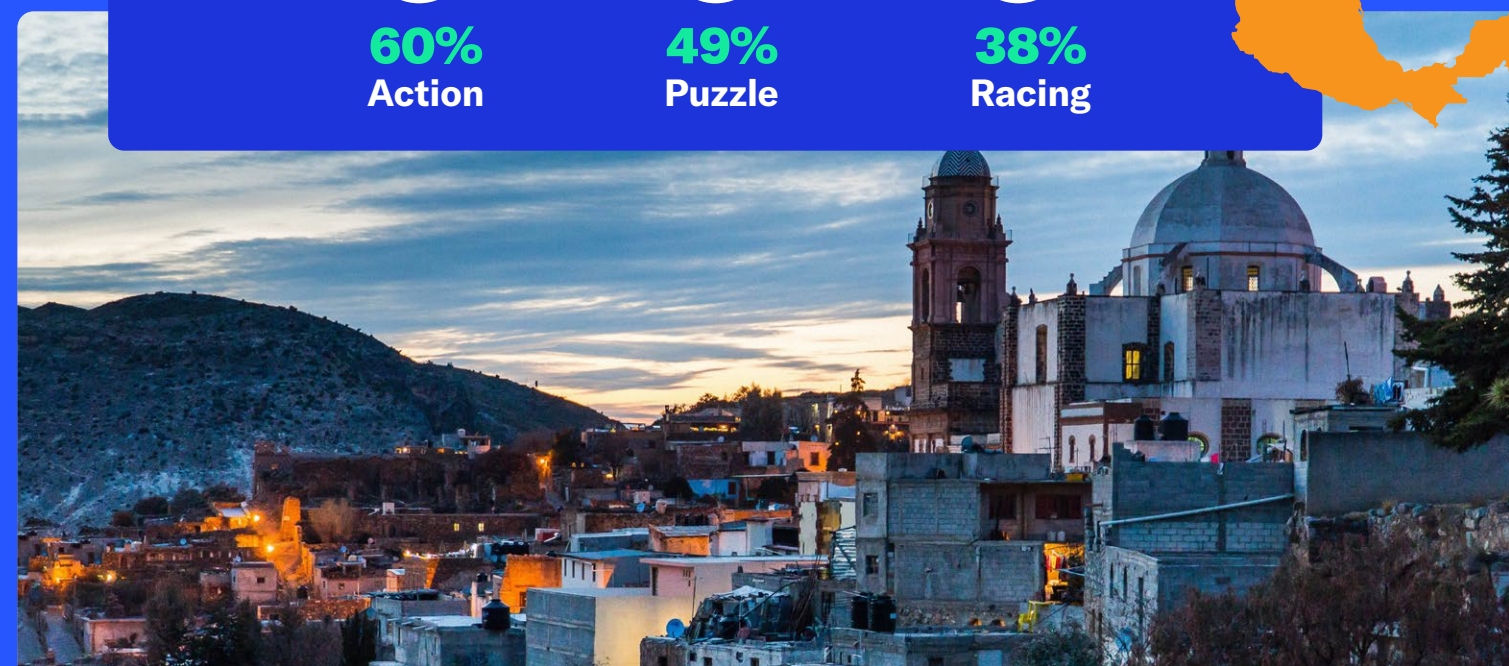


Favorite Devices



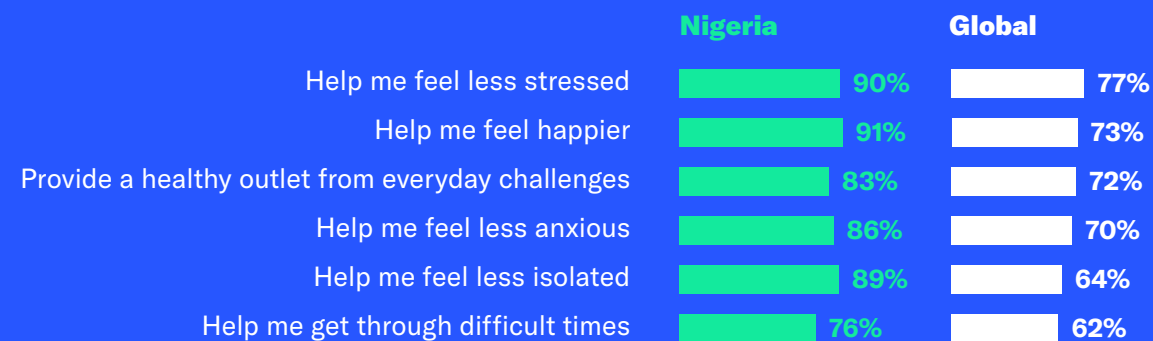
Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year

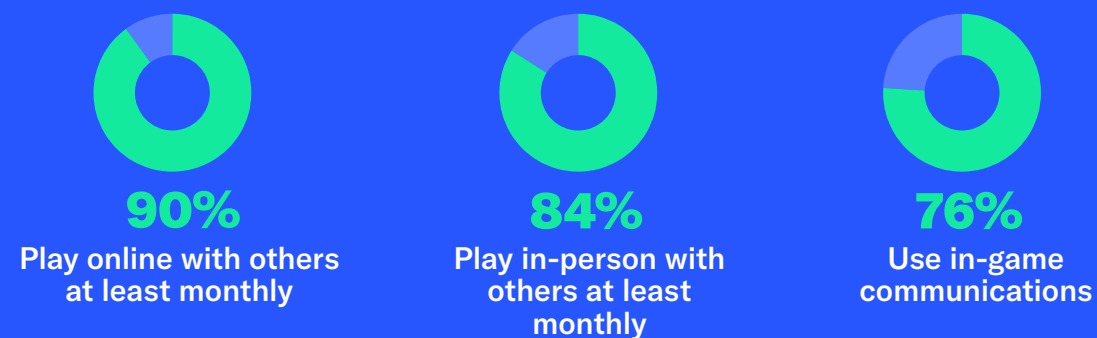


Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



78% of parents in Nigeria said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for Nigeria



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do

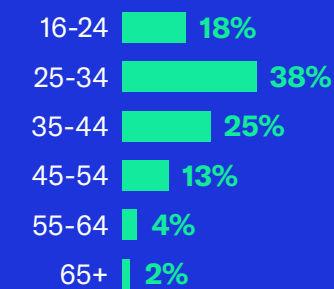


Nigeria

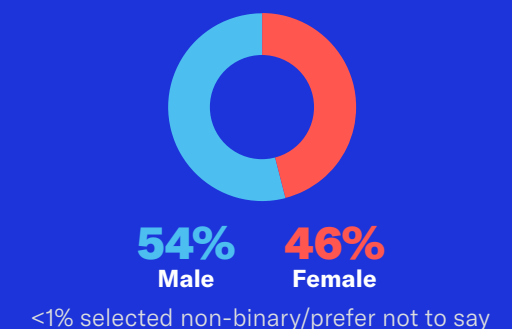
1,082 Respondents

Ages of Players

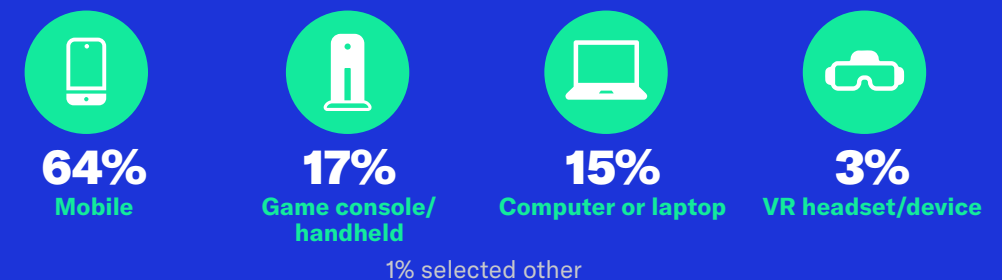
Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender

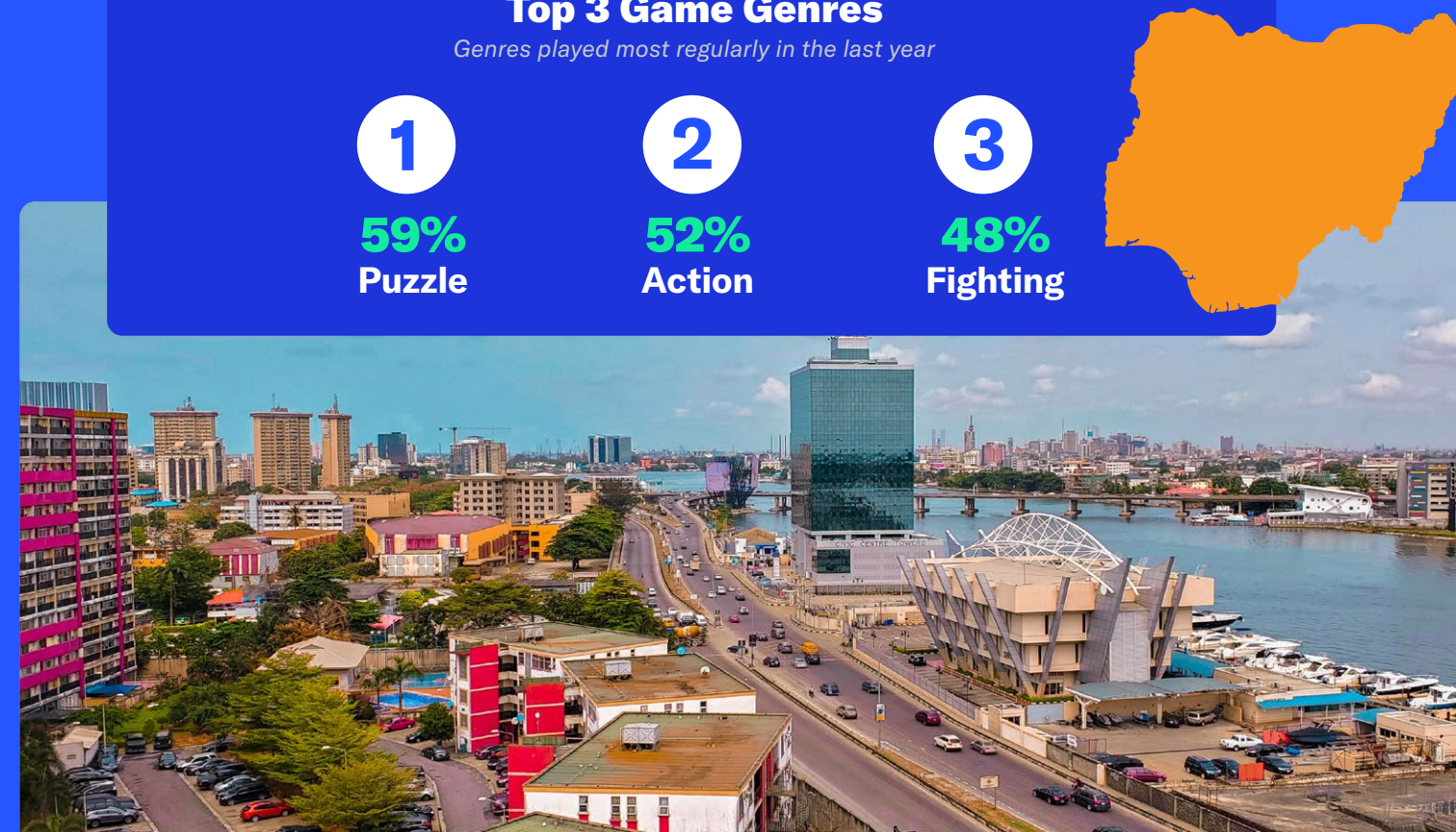


Favorite Devices



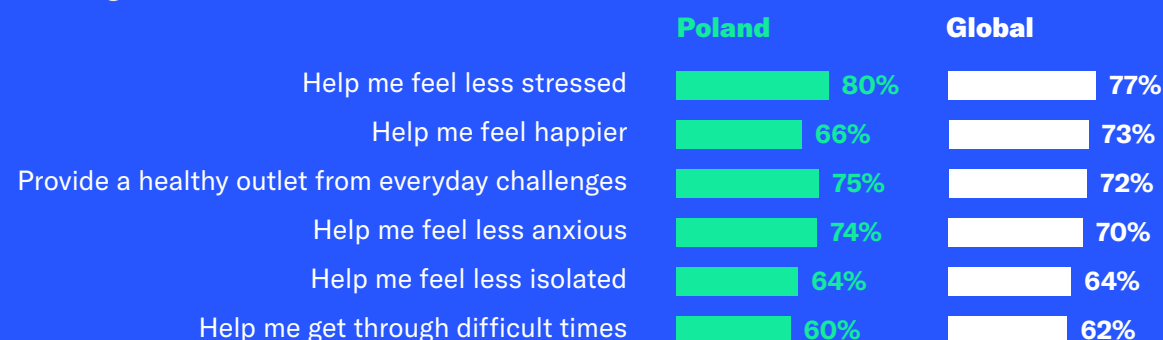
Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year

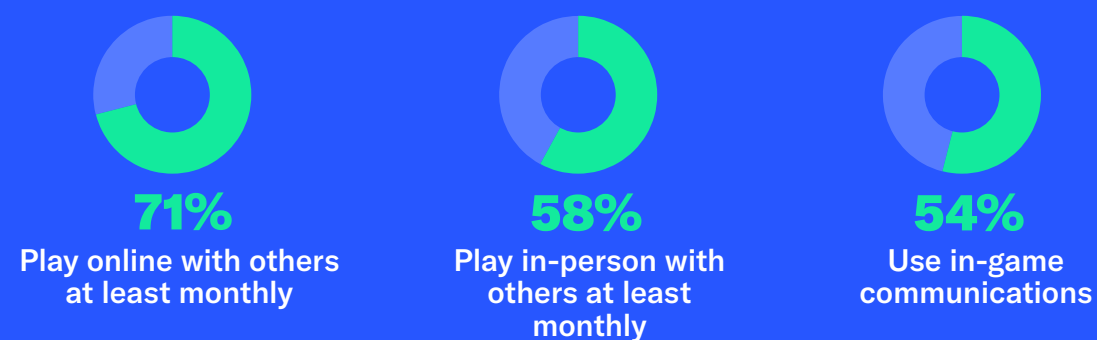


Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



52% of parents in Poland said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

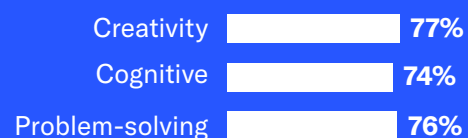
Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for Poland



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do

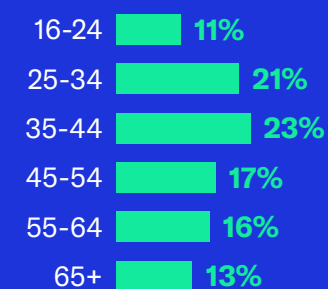


Poland

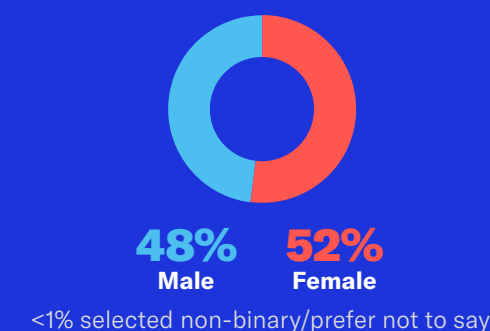
1,072 Respondents

Ages of Players

Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender

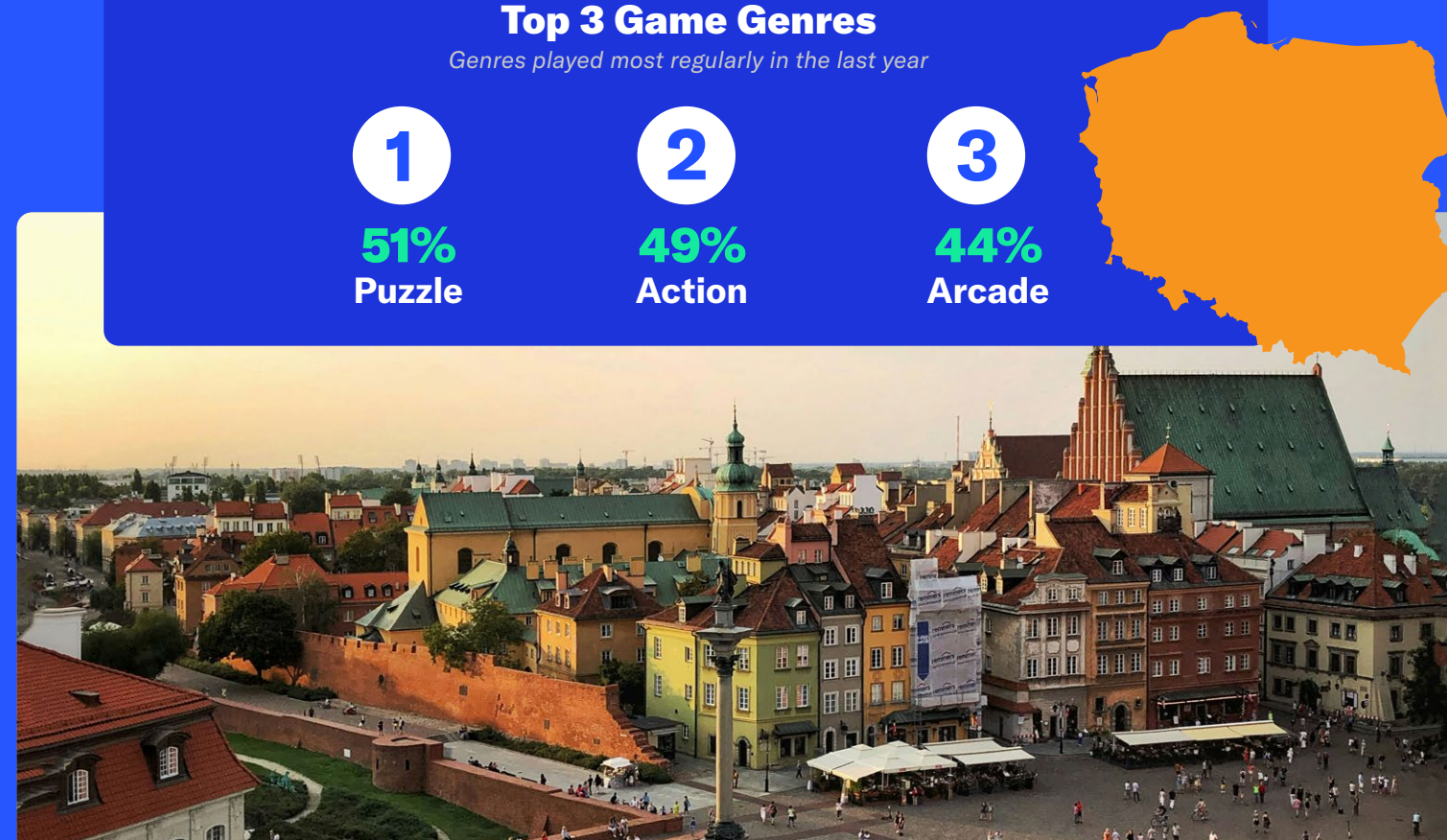


Favorite Devices



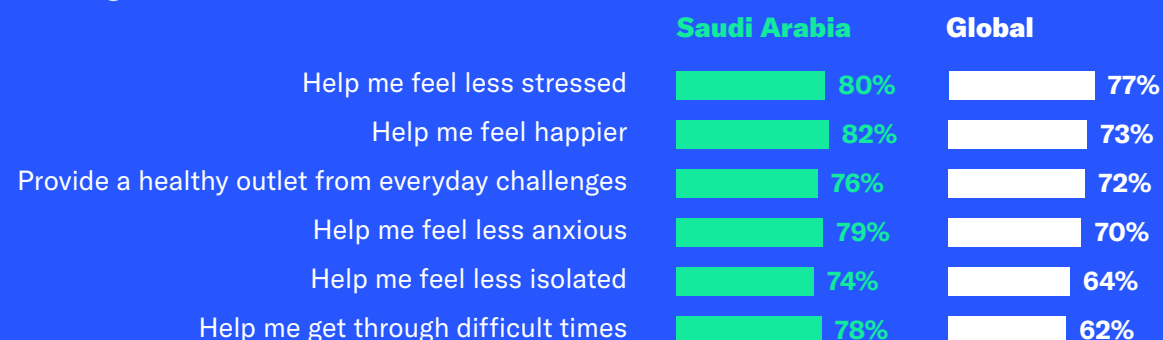
Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year

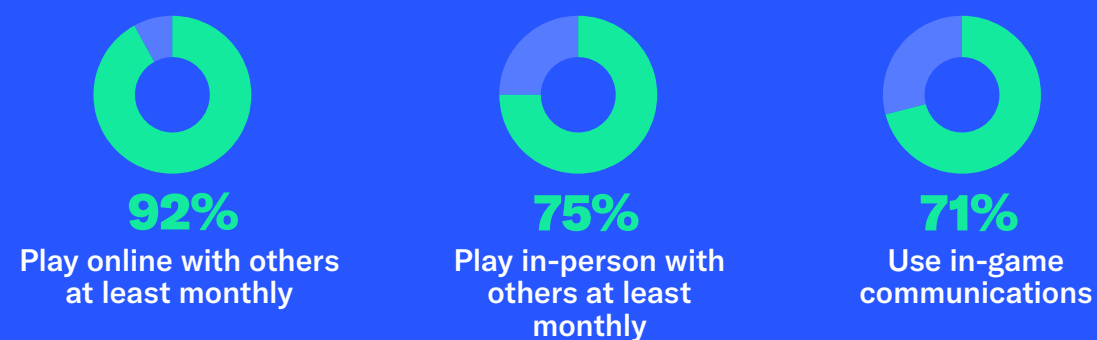


Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people

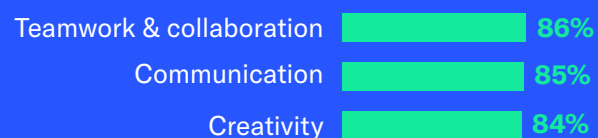


73% of parents in Saudi Arabia said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

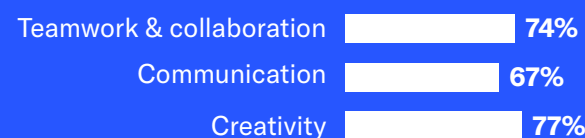
Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

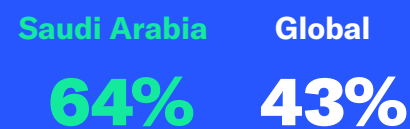
Top Three for Saudi Arabia



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do

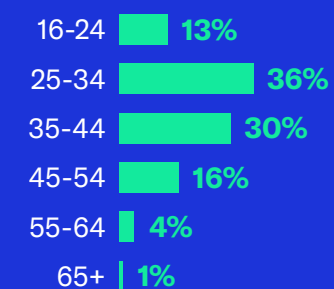


Saudi Arabia

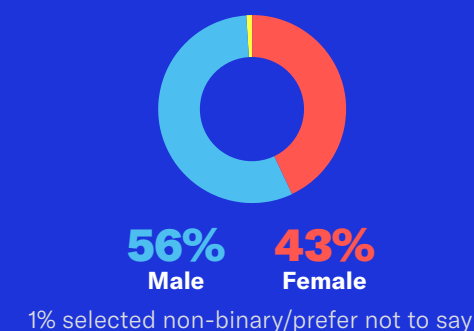
1,076 Respondents

Ages of Players

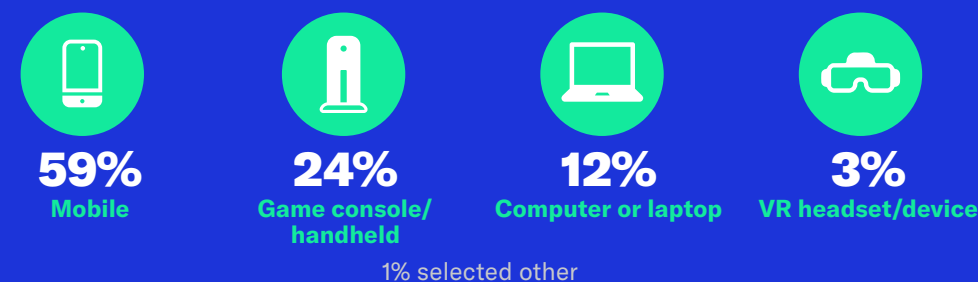
Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender

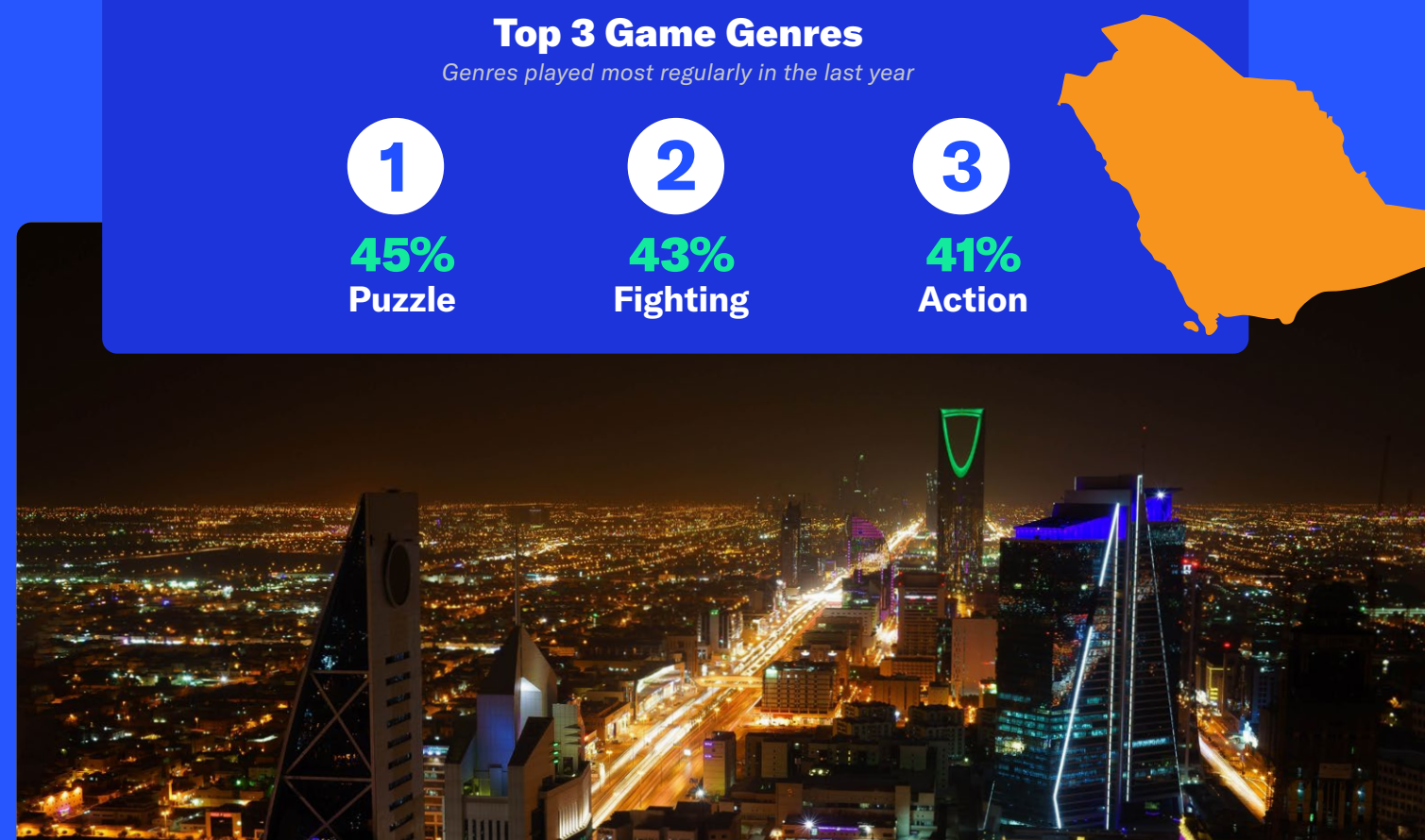
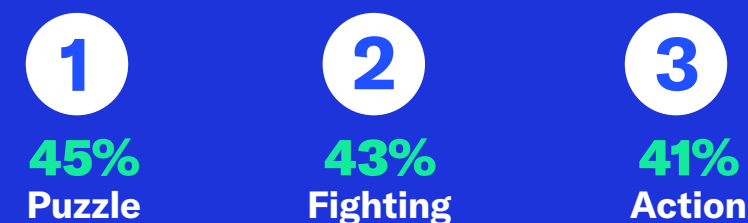


Favorite Devices



Top 3 Game Genres

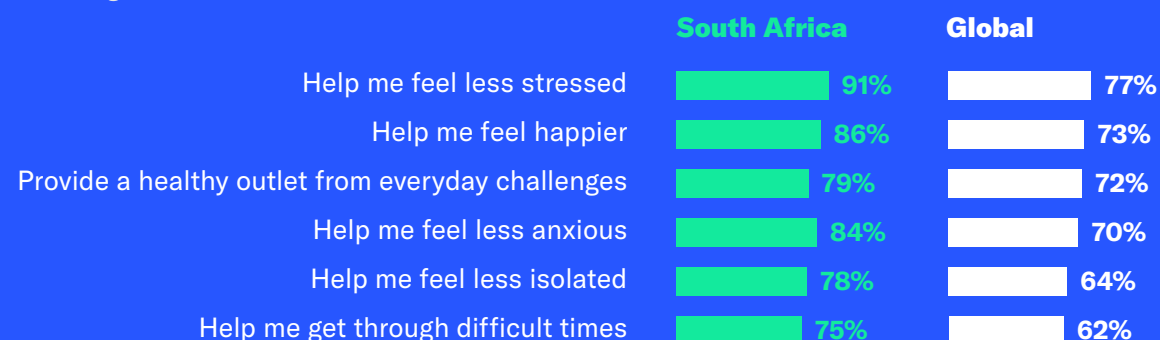
Genres played most regularly in the last year



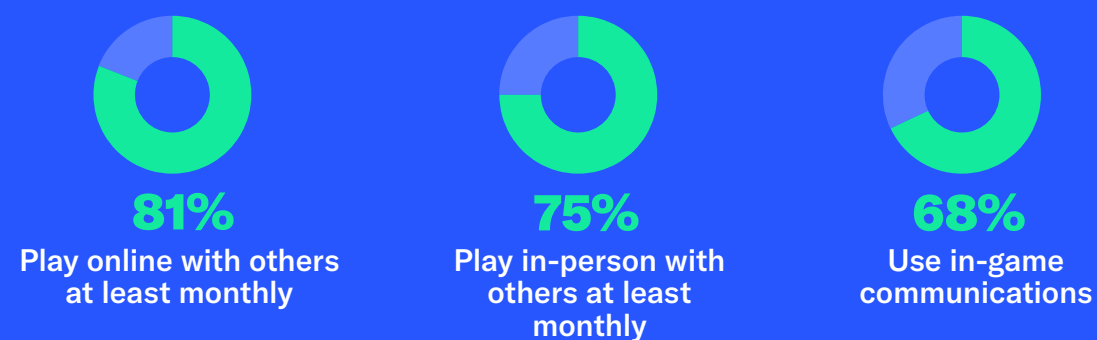
South Africa

Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



72% of parents in South Africa said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

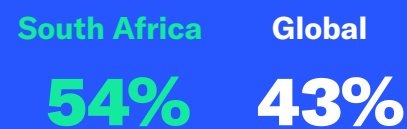
Top Three for South Africa



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



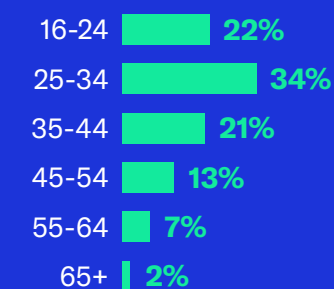
Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do



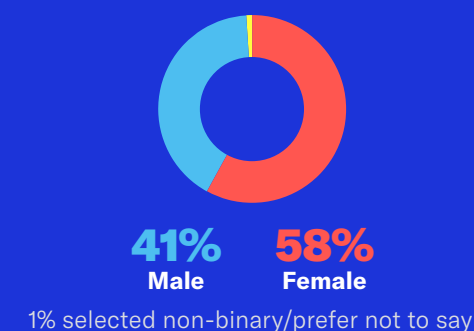
1,283 Respondents

Ages of Players

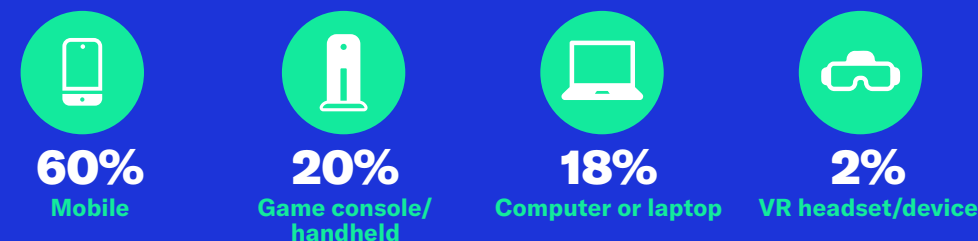
Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender

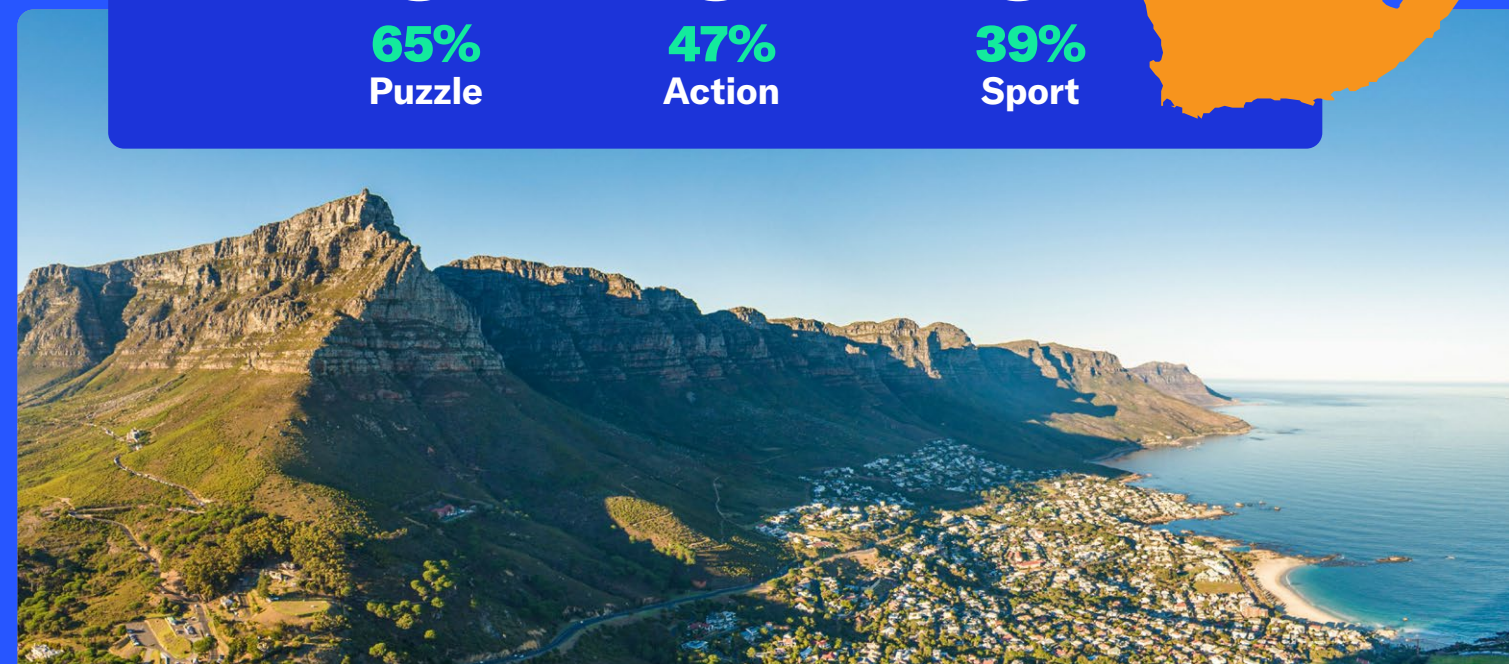


Favorite Devices



Top 3 Game Genres

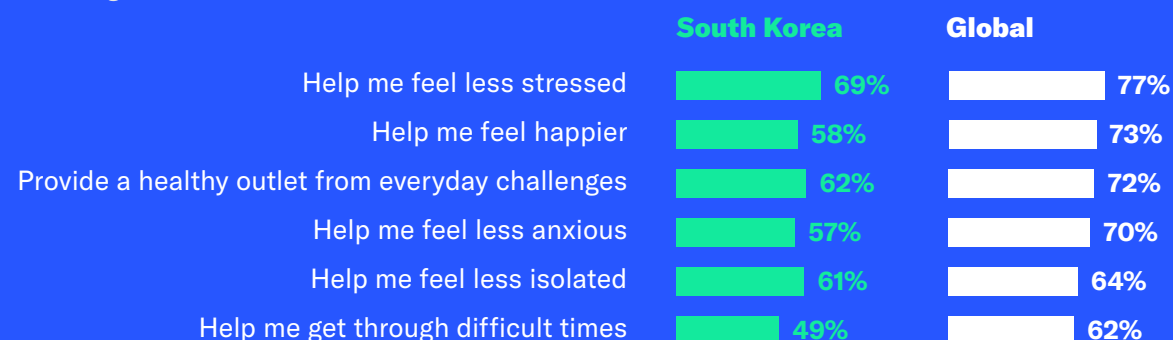
Genres played most regularly in the last year



South Korea

Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



51% of parents in South Korea said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

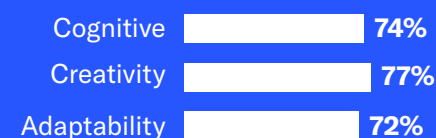
Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for South Korea



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



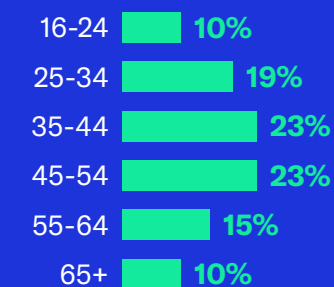
Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do



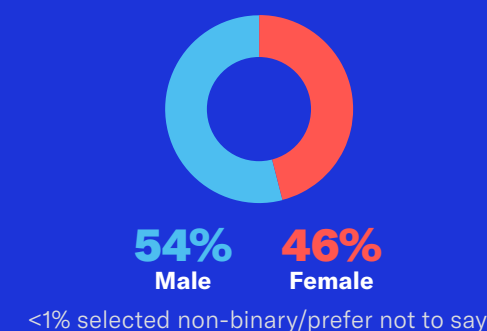
1,005 Respondents

Ages of Players

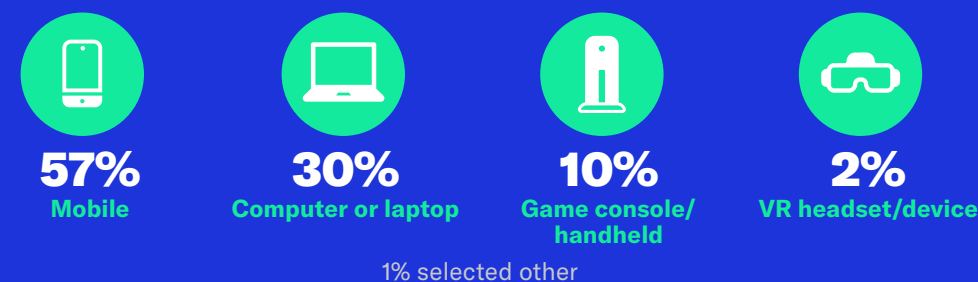
Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender



Favorite Devices



Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year



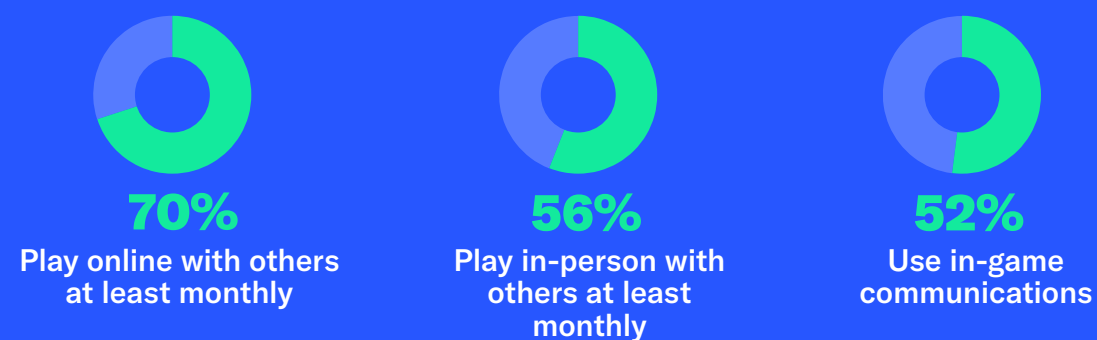
Spain

Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



53% of parents in Spain said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for Spain



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



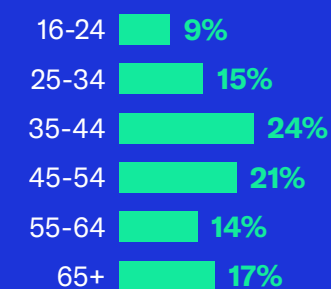
Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do



1,006 Respondents

Ages of Players

Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender



50% Male
49% Female

1% selected non-binary/prefer not to say

Favorite Devices



49%
Mobile



30%
Game console/
handheld



19%
Computer or laptop



2%
VR headset/device

1% selected other

Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year

1

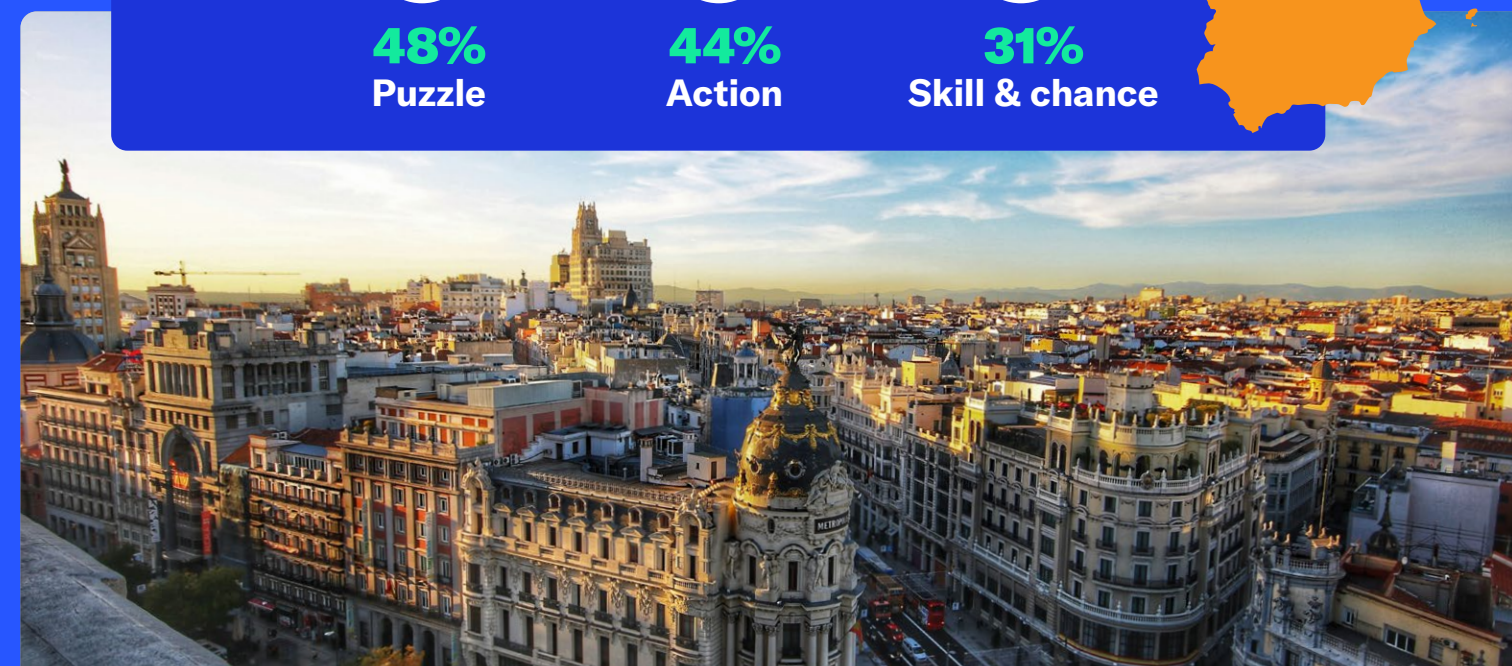
48%
Puzzle

2

44%
Action

3

31%
Skill & chance



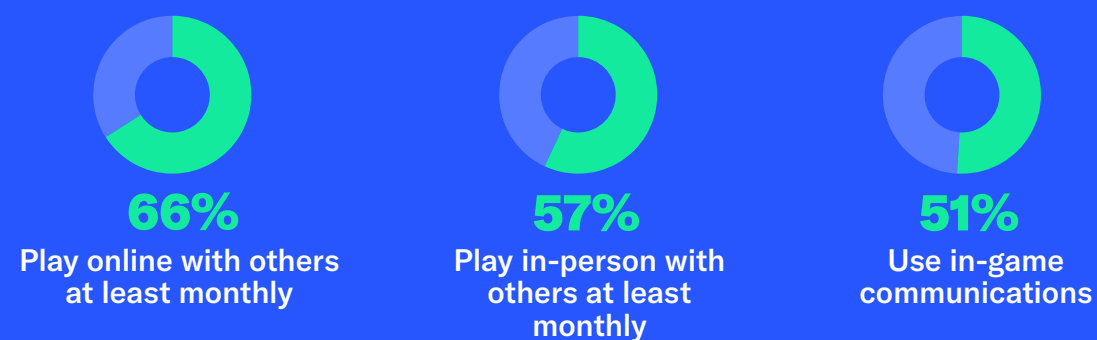
Sweden

Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



41% of parents in Sweden said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for Sweden



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



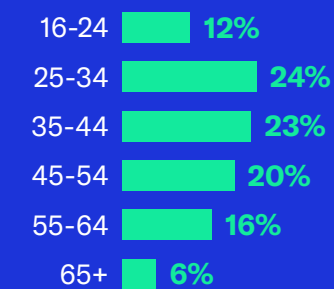
Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do



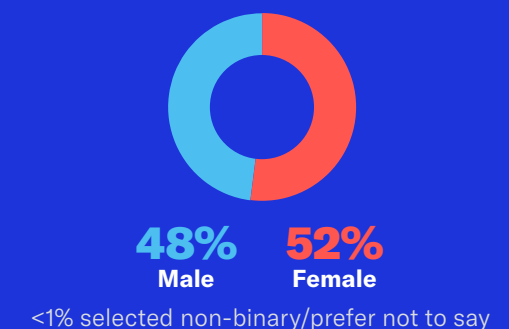
1,016 Respondents

Ages of Players

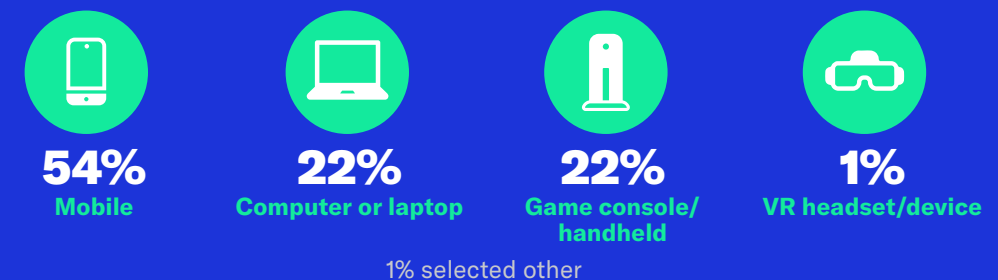
Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender



Favorite Devices



Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year



Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people

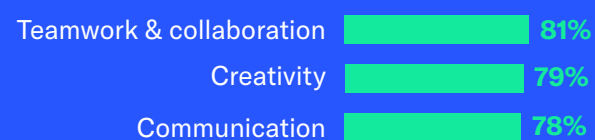


65% of parents in the UAE said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

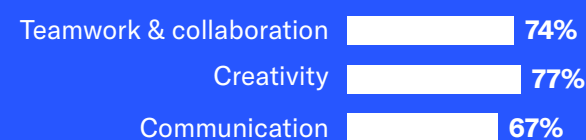
Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for the United Arab Emirates



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do

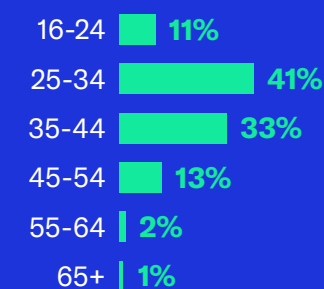


United Arab Emirates (UAE)

1,018 Respondents

Ages of Players

Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender



63% Male
35% Female

2% selected non-binary/prefer not to say

Favorite Devices



47%
Mobile



30%
Game console/
handheld



16%
Computer or laptop



6%
VR headset/device

1% selected other

Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year

1

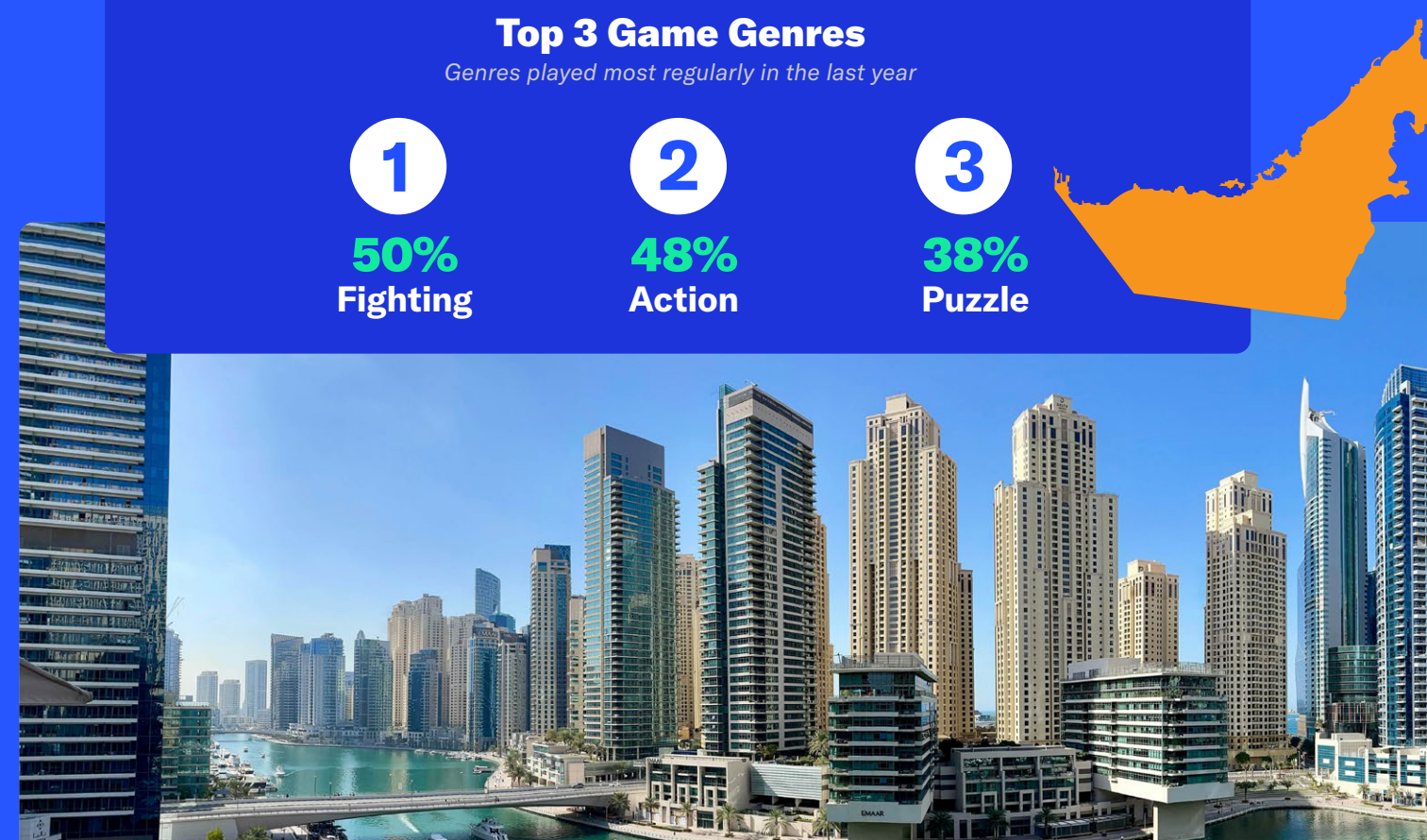
50%
Fighting

2

48%
Action

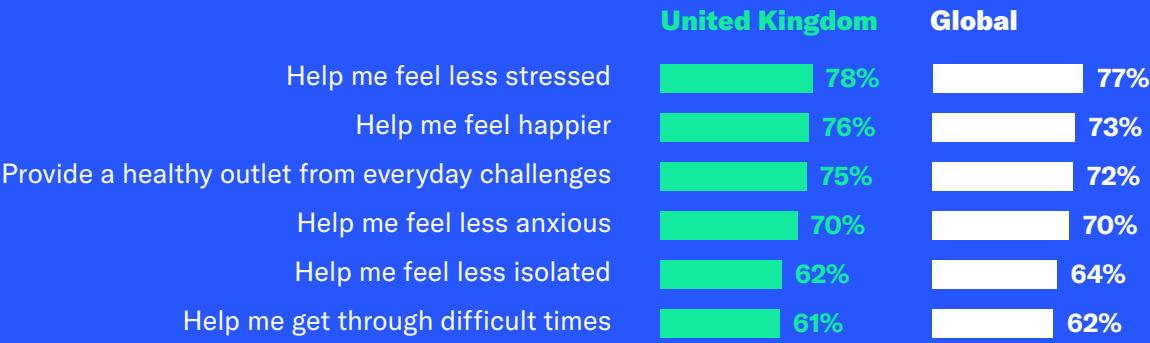
3

38%
Puzzle



Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



54% of parents in the United Kingdom said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

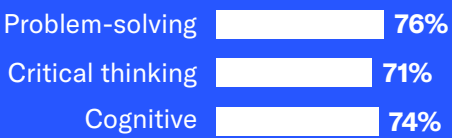
Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for the United Kingdom



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do

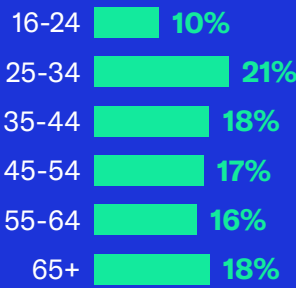


United Kingdom

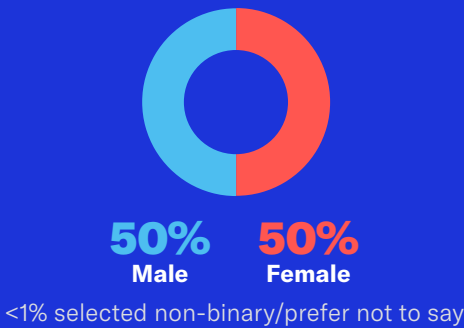
1,002 Respondents

Ages of Players

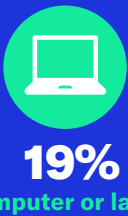
Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender



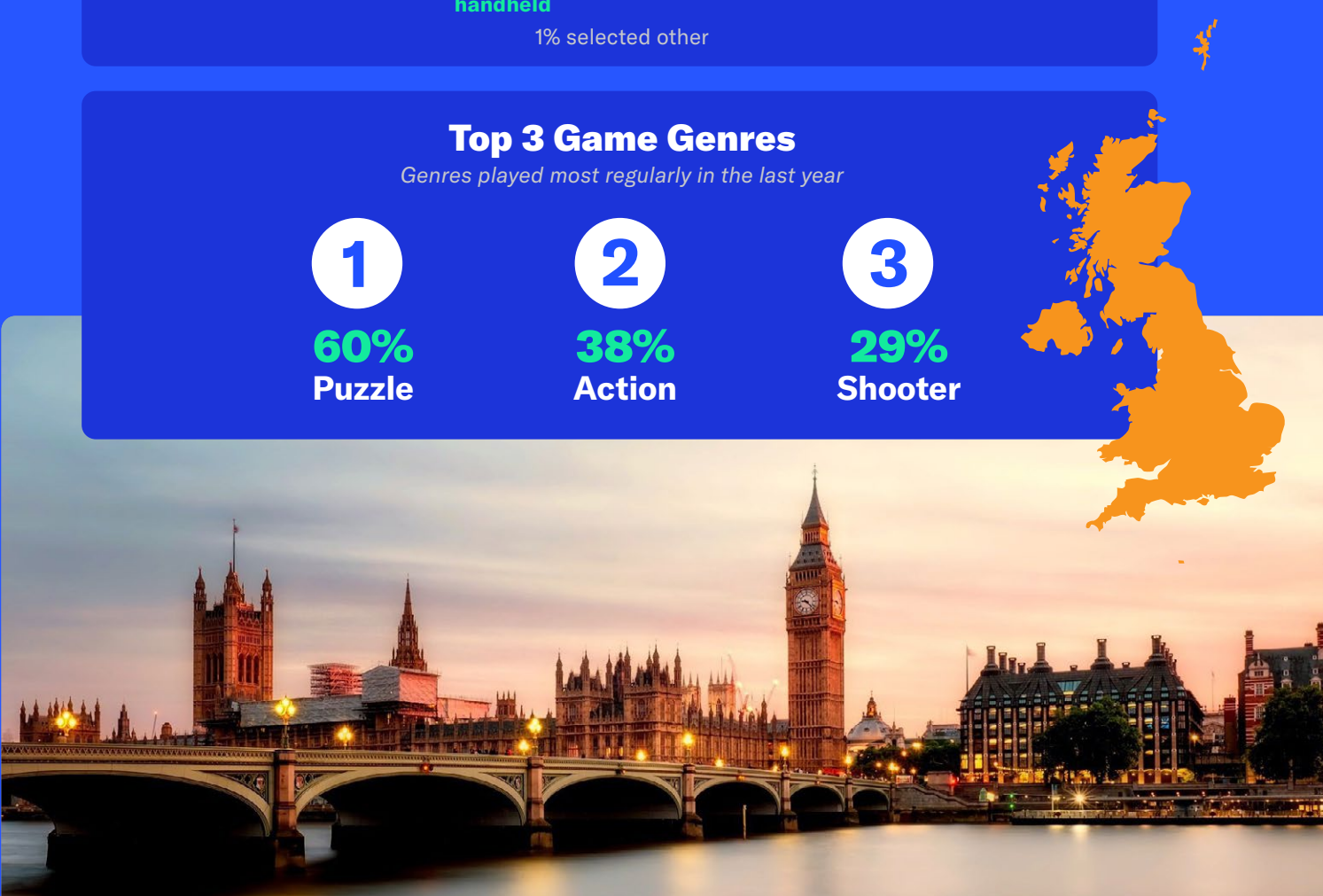
Favorite Devices



1% selected other

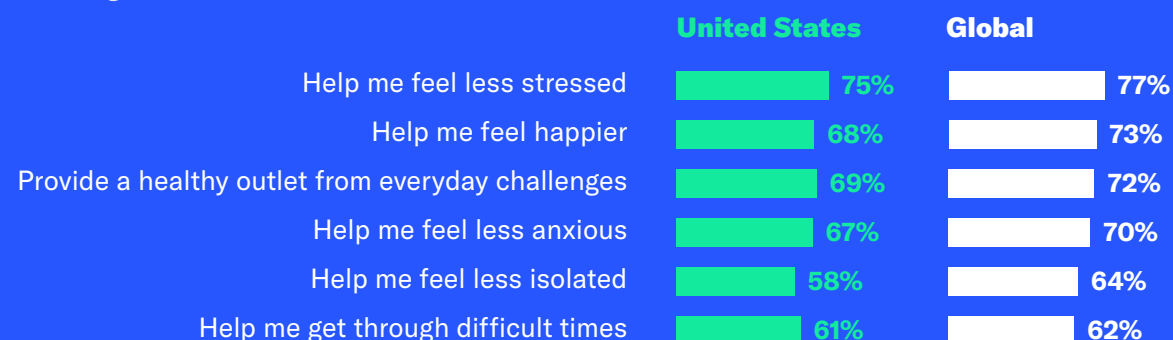
Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year



Video games as a tool for mental resilience

Video games...



Video games connect people



47% of parents in the United States said playing video games has positively impacted their relationship with their children

Video games improve skills

Players agree that video games can improve...

Top Three for the United States



Global Comparison



Influenced my career and/or educational path in a positive way



Allows me to continue or pursue a hobby or interest that I wouldn't otherwise be able to do

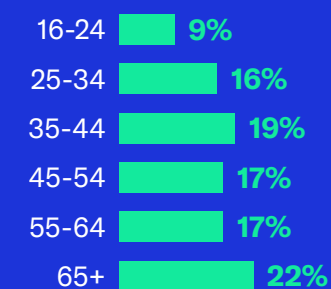


United States

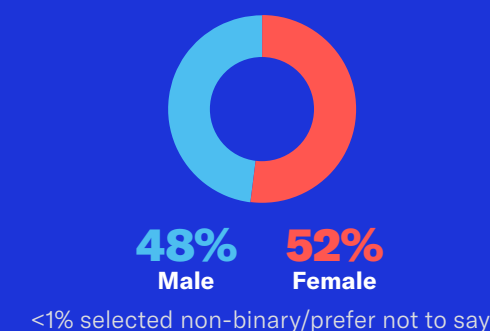
1,554 Respondents

Ages of Players

Among total players ages 16+



Player Gender



Favorite Devices



54%
Mobile



22%
Computer or laptop



21%
Game console/
handheld



2%
VR headset/device

1% selected other

Top 3 Game Genres

Genres played most regularly in the last year

1

53%
Puzzle

2

37%
Action

3

32%
Skill & chance



Academic & Scientific Research

2025 Power of Play Report

Decades of scientific research about the impact of video games on people and society reveals a wide range of benefits. For kids, video games can enhance cognitive development by improving problem-solving and spatial reasoning skills, while building emotional resilience, increasing classroom engagement and learning, and relieving stress. In fact, studies show how video games strengthen social connections, support mental health and well-being, and build valuable skills across all age groups. In addition, video games are increasingly used to enhance real-world performance in healthcare, aviation, space exploration, business, and even with professional athletes. Beyond these benefits, video games remain an immensely popular form of entertainment, capturing the hearts and imaginations of players of all ages around the world. Read on to see what science says about the power of play.

1. Playing video games can positively affect mental health and well-being.

Vast research exists identifying the myriad benefits of playing video games on mental health and well-being. Academics and players agree that gameplay is not only fun, but also can enhance mood, decrease stress and anxiety, help with the treatment of depression, and reduce loneliness.

Kids’ moods, development, and confidence benefit from gameplay.

A 2014 article published in *American Psychologist* summarized studies showing the positive effects of playing video games.¹ The writers—from the Behavioural Science Institute at Radboud University in the Netherlands—state that “gaming may be among the most efficient and effective means by which children and youth generate positive feelings.” They identified cognitive, motivational, emotional, and social benefits tied to video games and were “particularly inspired by the potential that these games hold for interventions that promote well-being, including the prevention and treatment of mental health problems in youth.”

In a 2020 article co-authored by leading psychology professors from Villanova and Stetson Universities, the researchers write that “video gameplay gives gamers the chance to develop

techniques for dealing with conflict, working out various resolutions, interacting with their friends, and experiencing different emotions.” They suggest that these opportunities help explain “why gamers tend to be more satisfied with their lives and experience fewer conduct problems, peer troubles, and emotional issues than youths who do not regularly play video games.”²

A series of studies published in 2024 known as the Responsible Innovation in Technology for Children (RITEC) project assessed the potential for digital games to contribute to children’s well-being.³ In one of the studies, Dr. Jan L. Plass, founding director of the Consortium of Research and Evaluation of Advanced Technology in Education (CREATE) Lab at New York University, led experimental research involving *Lego Builder’s Journey* and *Rocket League* with children ages eight through 12 years old in the U.S., Chile, and South Africa. According to the report, children who formed more social connections while playing games experienced greater improvements in well-being over time. Dr. Plass concluded that the results “provide converging evidence that digital play can support children’s well-being by allowing them to meet specific psychological needs, including the need to connect with their peers, which can result in positive well-being outcomes over time.”

In a companion RITEC study, researchers collected data using equipment, including heart rate sensors and eye tracking software, and matched it to human emotions associated with well-being. In providing a “comprehensive range of empirical evidence,” the researchers assert that digital games support children in experiencing and regulating emotions, feeling connected to others, and managing social connections.

“Overall, we found strongest support for the potential of digital games to positively influence children’s sense of autonomy and competence, their ability to understand and regulate emotions, and to form and manage relationships, as positive impacts on these aspects of well-being were evidenced across all three studies.”

Mental health benefits are not limited to children.

The introduction of exergames like Nintendo’s *Wii Sports* influenced further research into how video games—both active and non-active—can support mental well-being across different populations. A study examining *Wii Tennis*, for example, showed gameplay was found to reduce symptoms of depression in older adults – sometimes even more effectively than traditional exercise.⁴

A 2020 study in Singapore took this premise a step further by exploring how the way people play matters. Older adults who played multi-player exergames reported feeling less lonely and experienced an even greater drop in depression compared to those who played alone, highlighting the social nature of video games and related benefits.⁵

Researchers at Oxford University studied the impact of playing a video game on mood among more than 8,000 players. Their findings published in 2024 “corroborate what qualitative research and reports from video game players around the world have long suggested: people feel good playing games.” The study noted that the impact surpassed mood improvements reported from watching television, reading, and shopping.⁶

The powerful role of video games in enabling social connection was even more pronounced during the COVID-19 lockdown. A June 2020 study among players ages 16+ conducted by researchers at the University of Glasgow identified seven ways that video games positively affected players during the early days of the pandemic, including providing mental health benefits, stress relief, a means of escape, cognitive stimulation, feeling of control, a sense of normalcy, and a source of social connection.

“Playing video games has had a positive effect on players’ perceived well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. Games have provided an enjoyable means of maintaining social contact, and a stress-relieving and mentally stimulating escape from the effects of lockdown. While these findings are generally supported by prior research, it is notable that the public perception of video games has not entirely caught up with the available evidence.”⁷

Video games have also shown effectiveness at helping military veterans reassimilate after service, with a 2016 study examining how veterans used gameplay to aid in mental and behavioral health recovery.

“Veteran participants reported that video games helped not only with managing moods and stress, but also with three areas related to other aspects of recovery: adaptive coping (e.g. distraction, control, symptom substitution); eudaimonic well-being (confidence, insight, role functioning); and socializing (participation, support, brotherhood).”⁸

The researchers concluded that “video games seem to provide some veterans with a potent form of ‘personal medicine’ that can promote recovery.”

2. Video games enhance learning.

Research linking video games to cognitive development began to emerge in the late 1980s, as psychologists and educators started investigating how video games might influence attention, spatial reasoning, memory, and problem-solving.

In 2021, a review of 42 studies about *Minecraft* published in the *International Journal of Game-based Learning* concluded that the popular sandbox game is “beneficial in terms of increased motivation, language development, and academic learning in subjects such as science and history. *Minecraft* play also supported the development of social skills, including communication, sharing, collaboration, and leadership.”⁹

A 2024 study among university students found that digital educational games enhanced engagement, fueling their motivation to learn.

“Immersive environments amplify this effect, offering students a dynamic way to connect with educational content [...] Practically, these findings underscore the significance of digital educational games and the digital environments in schools to enhance student’s motivation for learning.”¹⁰

Additionally, a 2022 study by researchers at the University of Geneva showed that playing action video games helped children improve their reading skills. Scientists worked with 150 Italian students ages eight to 12 to assess the ability to use action video games to train different executive functions utilized while reading. The team found a “seven-fold improvement” in the children’s ability to maintain focus.

“Even more remarkably, the research team observed a clear enhancement in reading, not only in terms of reading speed, but also in accuracy. This improvement in literacy occurs even though the action video game does not require any reading activity.”¹¹

The team also conducted follow-up assessments and found that the improvements were sustained and that their grades significantly improved over time.

This growing body of research concludes that video games can enhance learning by stimulating motivation for learning and promoting reading and executive functioning skills. Ultimately, the immersive and interactive nature of video games can engage students in ways traditional educational methods often cannot.

3. Playing video games can provide valuable job skills.

Research also indicates that gameplay can enhance job performance by strengthening soft skills including problem-solving, leadership, and teamwork, in addition to technical skills.

A 2020 Liechtenstein study concluded that video game skills correlate to managerial skills: "...video games have been found to be able to be indicative of various skills that are professionally valuable, including persistence, problem-solving, and leadership...In fact, being adept at video games can significantly boost one's career."¹²

The same study also makes the case that game performance can be a predictor of job performance. "Our study revealed significant and positive relationships between the participants' game success and how they performed during our assessments...Accordingly, video games may not only be used to assess specific skills but could also be useful to predict performance at a more general level."

A literature review in the *Procedia Computer Science* showed that video games improve cognitive skills and decision-making in the workplace.

"Cognitive skills such as perception, attentional control, and decision-making improve when subjects were trained with video games. [...] People with professions such as nurses and doctors showed improved decision-making and risk assessment when trained with serious simulation games. High school and undergraduate students who played video games exhibit better results when given tasks related to cognitive abilities compared to students who do not play video games."¹³

4. Video games are a powerful training tool.

Video games are being used in a number of ways to train workers in high-stakes fields to build proficiency and preparedness. Research supports that video gamification and simulations provide realistic and immersive learning tools that build critical skills in controlled environments, without real-world risks.

Pioneering surgeon Richard Satava, MD, coined the term "Nintendo Surgeon" in 1992 to highlight the transformative potential of video game technology in medicine.¹⁴ Many studies followed, advocating for the use of game tools in training and supporting the premise that surgeons taught using video games can operate faster and make fewer errors.

Researchers at the University of Texas Medical Branch found that high school and college students with experience playing first-person shooter video games outperformed actual medical students on robotic surgery simulators, demonstrating superior hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills.¹⁵ Additional research performed in 2021 reaffirmed the value of video games in surgical training, noting that "a history of gaming and video game-based training were associated with improved metrics in robotic surgery and laparoscopy, respectively."¹⁶

The applications are vast and growing. Astronauts use video game technology, such as "mixed reality," to familiarize themselves with the layout and instruments of the International Space Station.¹⁷ Emergency responders use it to train for disaster response. Law enforcement leverages gameplay to train for active shooter events and tactical decision-making under stress. And the U.S. Air Force Air Education and Training Command Center uses augmented and virtual reality technology to train airmen better and faster, and to foster deeper learning.¹⁸

Use cases don't have to be life-or-death situations to be impactful. Retailers use video game-centric tools to train workers and simulate busy shopping events like holiday sales. Major sports teams use video game technology to reshape how athletes prepare mentally and tactically. And car manufacturers test vehicle performance and build prototypes using driving simulators and design visualization.

Across all of these fields, the usage and data make a compelling case: video gameplay can significantly enhance preparedness, reduce errors, increase ROI, and improve real-world outcomes.

Endnotes

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