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VIDEO GAMING
& ESPORTS

GAMING AND ESPORTS: THE NEXT GENERATION

YouGov analysis of the global video games and esports landscape

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INTRODUCTION

With the arrival of the next generation of consoles, the release of major titles such as *The Last of Us: Part II* and *Marvel's Avengers*, and new entries into the competitive multiplayer landscape such as *Valorant*, journalists and analysts predicted that 2020 would be an important year for the gaming and esports industries.

Thanks to COVID-19, they were more right than they knew.

Data from YouGov shows that on average, four in ten gamers have been playing more during the coronavirus outbreak than they were last year.

Compared to last year, how much more or less are you playing video games on any device (PC, console, mobile/tablet, etc.), during the COVID-19 outbreak?

Frequency	Australia	Germany	Singapore	UK	US
More	44%	31%	47%	43%	40%
About the same	40%	52%	32%	42%	42%
Less	11%	8%	12%	8%	11%
Don't know	5%	8%	9%	7%	7%

Beyond the pandemic, gaming's success in 2020 is an extension of its increasing significance as a force in worldwide entertainment: one with revenues that comfortably exceed those of the global film, TV, and digital music industries. Our data shows that in all but two of the 24 international markets we surveyed, a majority of consumers are gamers in some form or another.

In this white paper, YouGov combines syndicated Plan & Track data with custom research to examine this large and valuable consumer group across 24 global markets. In five of these markets, we have conducted an extended 'deep dive' survey to gain a deeper understanding of the preferences and behaviours of gamers – whether they play on mobile devices, consoles, or PCs, and whether they watch competitive *FIFA* games on YouTube or *Fortnite* streams on Twitch.

Among other things, our research explores the next generation of gaming consoles, global familiarity with gaming video content (GVC) and streaming, the evolving esports landscape, and the short and long-term impact of COVID-19.

Do you play video games or mobile games on any device?

Market	Gamers	Non gamers	Not sure
Denmark	45%	52%	4%
Norway	45%	52%	3%
France	51%	46%	3%
Sweden	51%	46%	3%
Iraq	57%	33%	10%
Malaysia	60%	36%	4%
Saudi Arabia	61%	27%	12%
Italy	62%	35%	2%
Germany	64%	33%	3%
UAE	65%	29%	6%
China	67%	27%	6%
Spain	67%	31%	2%
UK	67%	32%	1%
Egypt	68%	24%	9%
Vietnam	70%	26%	3%
Hong Kong	71%	28%	2%
India	71%	26%	3%
US	71%	27%	2%
Australia	72%	26%	2%
Singapore	76%	23%	2%
Indonesia	77%	21%	2%
Taiwan	77%	20%	3%
Philippines	80%	18%	2%
Thailand	82%	16%	2%

Platforms: Console, PC, and Mobile Gamers

While next generation consoles have dominated much of the gaming discussion over the past several months, mobile gamers are the largest gaming audience.

In every market we explored, mobile gamers – those who play on a smartphone or tablet – comfortably outnumbered console and PC gamers. Germany, for example, has twice as many mobile gamers as console gamers (47% vs. 23%).

South and South East Asian countries generally have a higher percentage of mobile gamers and a lower share of console gamers. In Thailand, just 12% play on consoles compared to 78% who use a smartphone or tablet; in India, the proportion is 12% vs. 67%.

Our data shows that the leading markets for console gamers as a proportion of population are Hong Kong (32%), Spain (29%), the US (28%), the UK (28%), and Australia (27%).

And while industry conversation tends to focus on Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo systems, our findings demonstrate that in most of these countries, PC gamers outnumber console gamers. In Taiwan and China the gap exceeds 20 percentage points.

The wider uptake of PCs could be attributed to its sheer variety of games that appeal across a broader range of genres and demographics. It is a platform that at the higher end can service demanding, graphically-intensive titles such as *Red Dead Redemption II*, competitive team-based games such as *League of Legends*, and pre-installed mainstays such as *Solitaire* and *Minesweeper*.

Companies targeting these markets should bear in mind relative populations.

Gamers by platform

Market	Mobile	Console	PC
Norway	36%	18%	18%
Denmark	39%	9%	15%
France	41%	18%	23%
Sweden	41%	18%	22%
Germany	47%	23%	33%
Iraq	51%	10%	17%
Saudi Arabia	52%	20%	22%
UK	52%	28%	25%
Malaysia	56%	14%	28%
Spain	56%	29%	33%
UAE	57%	21%	28%
Australia	58%	27%	37%
Egypt	58%	14%	34%
Italy	58%	24%	23%
US	59%	28%	32%
China	61%	16%	45%
Hong Kong	63%	32%	34%
India	67%	12%	34%
Taiwan	71%	26%	46%
Indonesia	72%	15%	37%
Singapore	72%	21%	33%
Philippines	77%	13%	44%
Thailand	78%	12%	34%

What kind of games do PC gamers play?

	Germany	US	UK
Pre-installed games (such as *Solitaire*, *Hearts*, *Minesweeper*)	31%	39%	27%
Games that are played for free online through a gaming or social networking website (such as *Armor Games*, *Pogo*, *Farmville*)	49%	49%	30%
Games that need to be installed or downloaded (such as *League of Legends*, *Minecraft*, *World of Warcraft*)	65%	59%	75%

How often do smartphone gamers play?

We asked smartphone gamers – those who play on mobile devices excluding tablet computers – in each market how often they play and categorised them as:

- **Light gamers:** who play for less than one hour a week
- **Moderate gamers:** who play for 1 - 10 hours a week
- **Heavy gamers:** who play for 10 to 25 hours a week
- **Heavy+ gamers:** who play for over 25 hours a week

Moderate gamers account for over half of smartphone players in every country.

There is more variation in other markets: China and Taiwan, for example, have the lowest proportion of Moderate gamers (52% China; 54% Taiwan) and the highest proportion of Heavy+ smartphone gamers (15% in both markets). China also has the highest proportion of Heavy smartphone gamers (22%) and has the second-lowest proportion of Light gamers (10%).

As a general rule, markets where Heavy and Heavy+ gamers are overrepresented have correspondingly low proportions of Light smartphone gamers.

Smartphone gamer level by market

Market	Light	Moderate	Heavy	Heavy+
Thailand	8%	64%	20%	8%
China	10%	52%	22%	15%
Taiwan	11%	54%	19%	15%
Vietnam	12%	61%	19%	9%
Indonesia	13%	63%	16%	6%
Philippines	14%	56%	17%	12%
Hong Kong	15%	57%	20%	8%
Egypt	17%	56%	17%	7%
India	17%	65%	13%	3%
Malaysia	17%	61%	15%	6%
France	18%	65%	14%	3%
Spain	18%	66%	13%	3%
Iraq	19%	59%	13%	5%
Italy	19%	62%	15%	3%
Saudi Arabia	19%	57%	17%	4%
UAE	19%	60%	16%	3%
Singapore	20%	58%	15%	5%
US	20%	56%	18%	5%
Australia	22%	60%	15%	2%
Germany	22%	63%	11%	3%
Sweden	22%	58%	14%	2%
UK	25%	60%	12%	2%
Denmark	26%	58%	11%	1%
Norway	26%	62%	8%	1%

Gaming, gaming video content and esports in the US

Marketers should not assume that gamers, those who watch game streams, and esports fans will always neatly overlap. Though gaming is the common denominator, many players do not engage with esports or gaming video content (GVC); equally, enjoying a game streaming service does not mean that a player will necessarily engage with esports.

YouGov's tools allow us to profile gamers, those who engage with streaming services, and those who engage with esports to see how they map onto each other.

Looking at these three groups in the US, seven in ten (71%) consumers are gamers, while 47% are gamers who do not engage with GVC or esports. A quarter (25%) engage with GVC in some form or another; interestingly, a small portion (2%) of this audience engages with GVC alone and do not game – indicating that watching others play games is becoming a legitimate pastime in itself.

The game streaming audience (25%) outnumbers esports fans (7%) by more than three to one, while the majority of esports fans (6%) also engage with GVC.

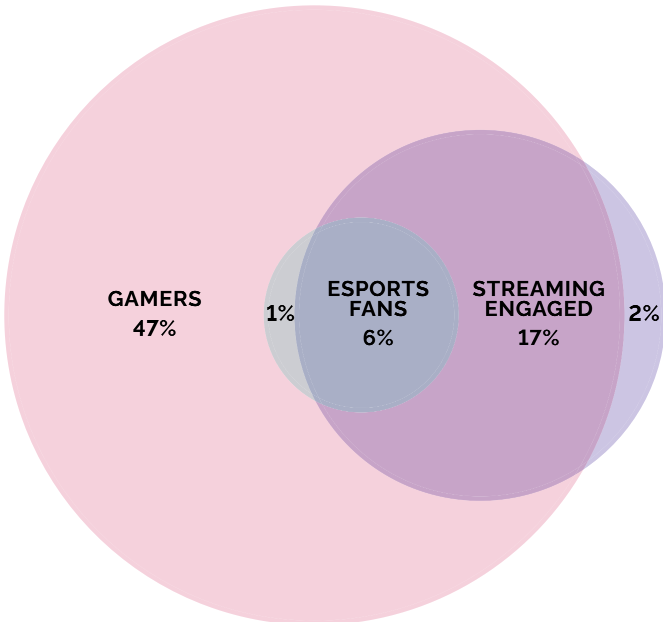
Given esports fans' motivations for following the competitive gaming scene, it's not surprising that in the US all esports fans are gamers in some form.

Games, game streaming, and esports engagement in the US

1. Gamers (71%)
Play games on any platform

2. Streaming engaged (25%)
Watch and/or stream gaming video content (GVC)

3. Esports fans (7%)
View and/or attend esports events, or regularly follow esports



Broadly speaking, GVC viewers are a larger group than esports fans among the markets in this study. In many cases, the former group is more than twice the size of the latter group – and (unlike the US) in some instances it even amounts to a majority of gamers. As a rule, esports audiences are larger in countries with a larger GVC audience.

While overlap between the two groups varies, we can see a few high-level trends across certain regions. In Anglosphere markets (Australia, UK, US), the esports audience is more likely to represent a significant minority of the GVC audience; by contrast, a clear majority of GVC fans also engage with esports in East Asian and South East Asian countries – where GVC engagement tends to be highest.

PLAYSTATION, XBOX, AND THE NINTH GENERATION OF GAMING CONSOLES

In the past 20 years, three console manufacturers – Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo – have dominated the global market. While Nintendo occupies its own distinct place in the industry, Sony and Microsoft have been consistently in direct competition.

November 2020 will see both brands release new consoles, marking the beginning of the ninth generation of console gaming. Focusing on five key markets, this chapter explores whether consumers are more likely to buy a new Sony or Microsoft console at this early stage.

Also highlighted within are some crucial differences between Sony's and Microsoft's consoles and the respective approaches they are taking to the ninth generation of gaming.

SONY: PLAYSTATION 5/ PLAYSTATION 5 DIGITAL EDITION

The **PlayStation 5** ($499 USD) is considered an evolution of Sony's strategy for the PlayStation 4 – which outperformed the Xbox One during the eighth generation thanks to its line-up of exclusive games, more powerful hardware, and competitive pricing.

So while the new system is more powerful than the PS4 and Sony's marketing has touched on its improved capabilities, the company's strategy has largely focused on the console's game library – with new entries in the PlayStation-only *Horizon*, *God of War*, and *Spider-Man* franchises taking centre stage at its recent brand showcases.

The **PlayStation 5 Digital Edition** ($399 USD) has the same specifications as the PS5 – but it comes without a disc drive.

A digital-only high-end console was less viable a generation ago (to the point where, in 2013, a requirement for an internet connection was enough to stoke controversy) but the market has changed. Industry data has shown that digital sales have grown over the PS4's lifespan, and this has created a space for a fully discless console.

This will benefit consumers in the short-term – the PS5 Digital Edition costs less upfront than the PS5. But as Sony does not share revenue from digital sales with physical retailers, it also benefits from a consumer group that cannot buy physical games (including lower-priced pre-owned games).

Both consoles are expected to be backwards compatible with most titles in the PS4 library, but they are not expected to offer the same level of compatibility with games from earlier generations.

MICROSOFT: XBOX SERIES X/ XBOX SERIES S

The **Xbox Series X** ($499 USD) has more advanced graphical capabilities than the PS5: with 12 teraflops to Sony's 10.28, it has been marketed as the most powerful console ever made. In several countries, it is retailing at the same price as the disc-based version of Sony's console.

The **Xbox Series S** ($299 USD) has less powerful hardware and is unable to play games in 4K – but it is available at a significantly lower price point.

Both Xbox consoles will offer extensive backwards compatibility, supporting all Xbox One games (except those that require the Kinect Sensor) and a wide range of games from earlier generations.

While *Halo Infinite*'s delay has robbed the Series X | S of a major launch title, it and many more games are on the way. Following criticism over the Xbox One's lack of exclusive titles, Microsoft has made a number of notable acquisitions to bolster its library. These include Obsidian Entertainment, Double Fine Productions, and perhaps most notably, Zenimax Media/Bethesda Softworks – a major publisher that operates six studios and owns popular franchises such as *The Elder Scrolls*, *Fallout*, *Doom*, and *Wolfenstein* (among others). Whether these franchises will also arrive on other platforms remains to be seen.

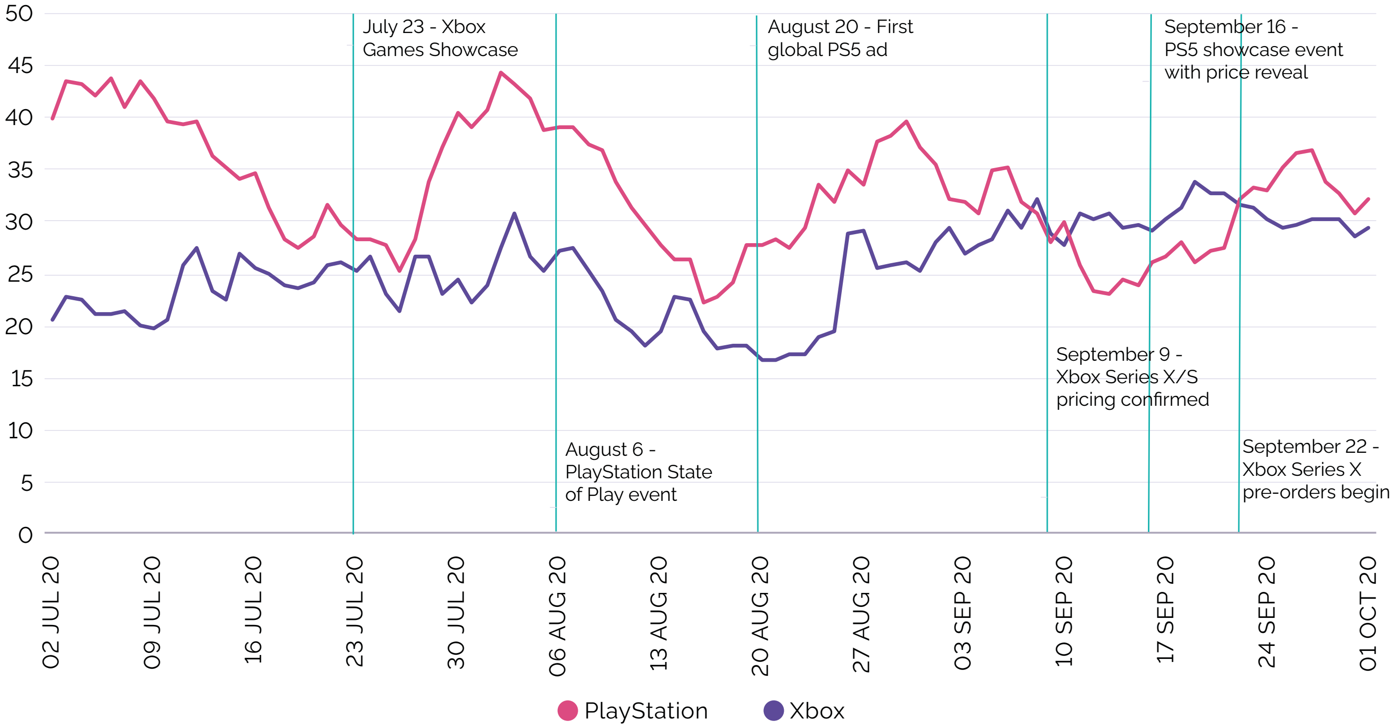
To bolster its offering to customers further, Microsoft has also announced that every first-party game it publishes will be available on its Game Pass subscription service – which offers access to a large library of first and third party games for a flat monthly fee – from Day 1. It is a move that signifies the company's intent to move away from its "console wars" with Sony and towards pulling customers into the overall Microsoft ecosystem – regardless of the system they choose to play on.

PS5 holds an advantage among early ninth gen adopters

YouGov BrandIndex's daily tracking of consideration for the PlayStation and Xbox brands suggests that Microsoft's move away from the "console wars" narrative could be to its benefit. There is evidence to suggest that while PlayStation actively benefits from its own events, Xbox's marketing has recently been more likely to negatively affect its competitor than it is to benefit the console itself.

PlayStation vs. Xbox consideration scores among US console owners - July - October 2020

When you are in the market next to purchase a consumer electronics product, from which of the following would you consider purchasing? (%)



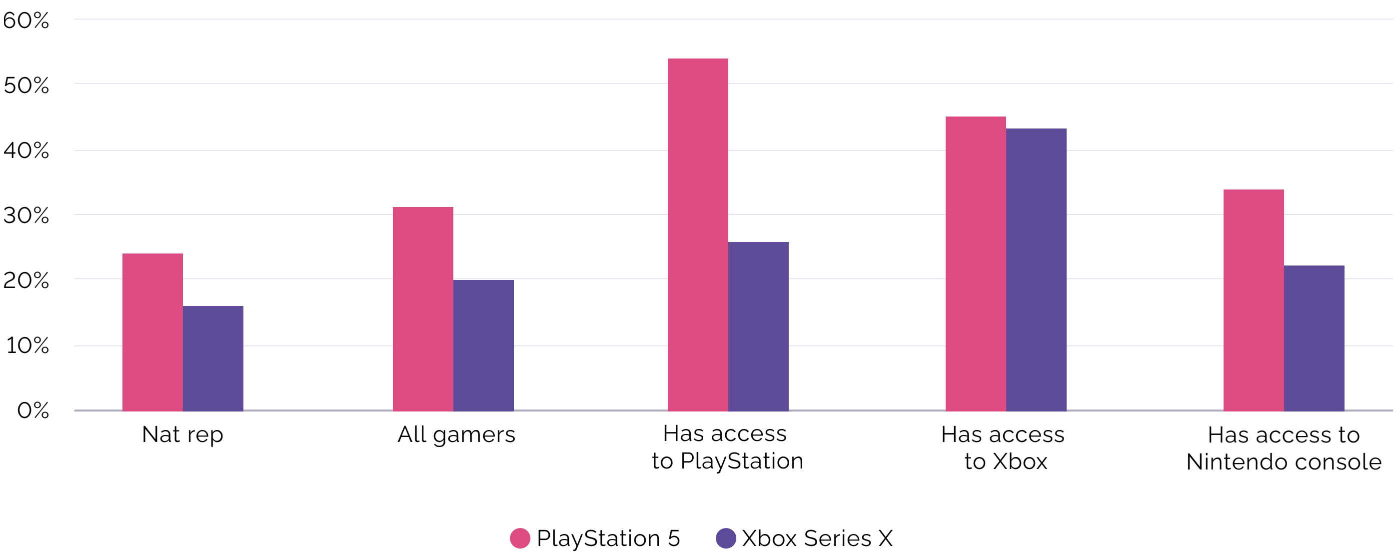
Initially, we surveyed consumers about their intent to purchase either the PS5 or the Xbox Series X before Microsoft announced the Series S. Our data indicated that, at least where the higher-end consoles SKUs are concerned, Sony has the early advantage in several markets. (survey data was collected before Microsoft announced the Series S version and price).

PlayStation's lead from the eighth generation appears set to carry through to the ninth in Australia. There is an eleven percentage point gap between gamers who are likely to buy a PS5 (31%) and those who are likely to buy an Xbox Series X (20%).

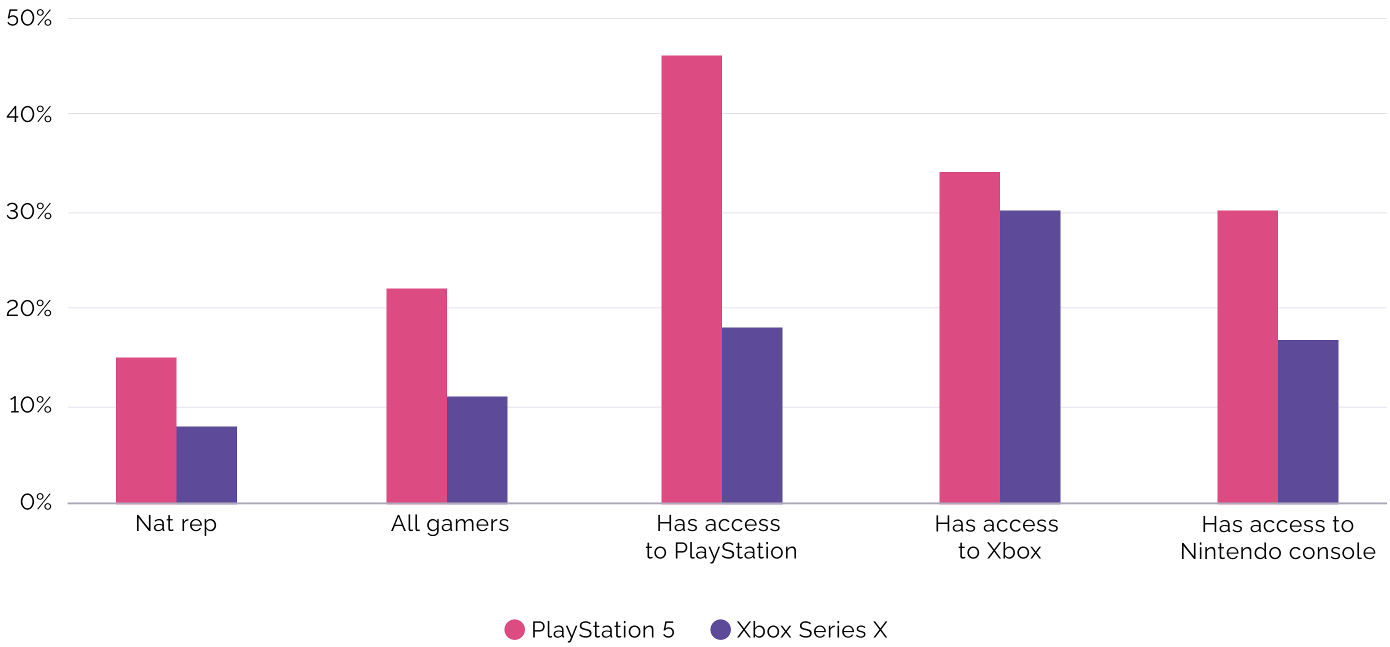
Our data shows that as well as retaining much of its current customer base in the early stages of the next generation, PS5 is also gaining traction among those with access to an Xbox.

Australia: Net likelihood to buy a PS5 or Xbox Series X in the 12 months after launch

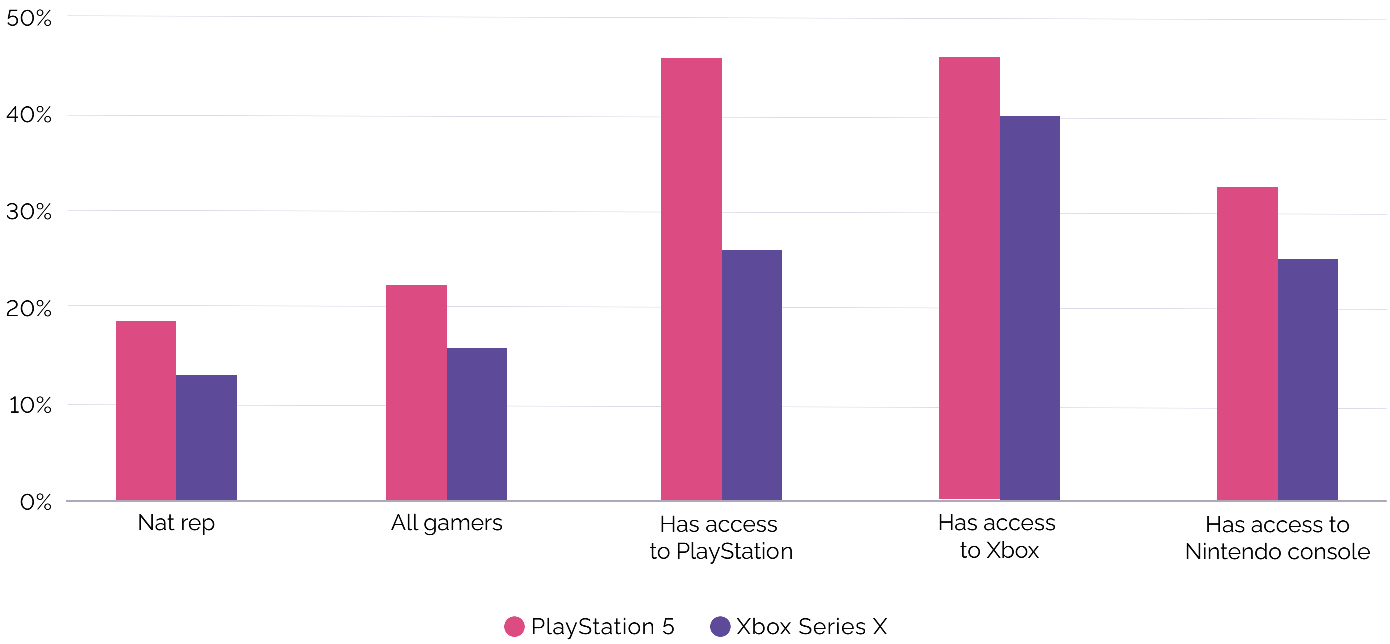
Sony has recently announced it will be launching its newest PlayStation, the PS5, at the end of 2020. Microsoft has also announced that it will be launching its newest Xbox 'Series X' in November 2020. How likely are you to buy the new PS5 or the Series X within 12 months of launch? (% who answered "Very/Somewhat likely")



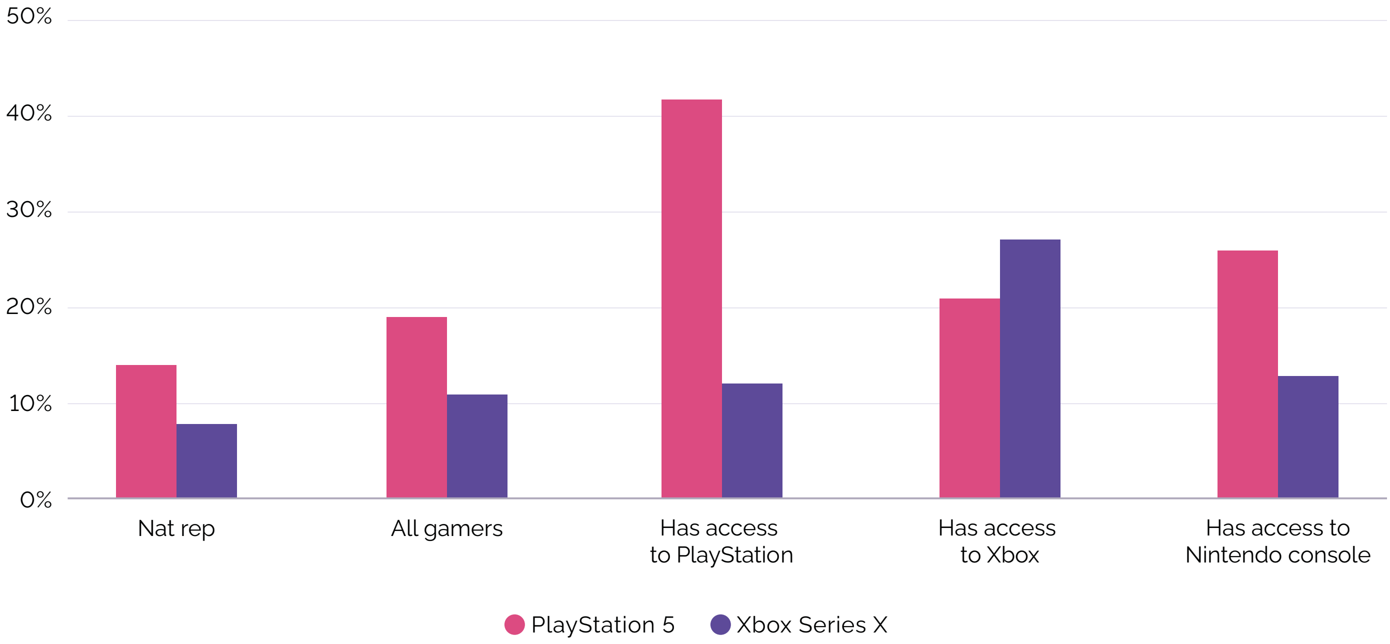
Germany: Net likelihood to buy a PlayStation 5 or Xbox Series X in the 12 months after launch



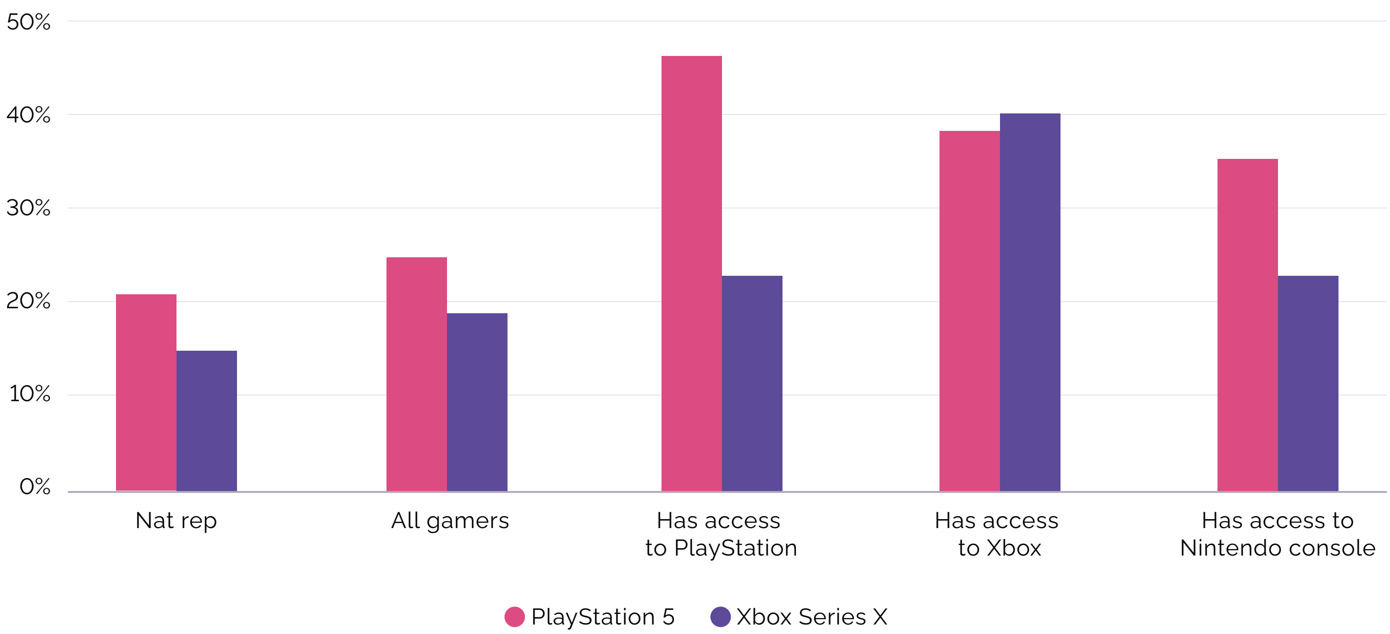
Singapore: Net likelihood to buy a PlayStation 5 or Xbox Series X in the 12 months after launch



UK: Net likelihood to buy a PlayStation 5 or Xbox Series X in the 12 months after launch



US: Net likelihood to buy a PlayStation 5 or Xbox Series X in the 12 months after launch



While the extent of the gap varies, the PS5 holds a consistent lead over the Xbox Series X in the other markets where we conducted an extended survey: Germany, Singapore, the UK, and the US.

Interestingly, the country where loyalty to Xbox is stickiest between the eighth and ninth generations is the UK, the only market where Xbox users show a preference for the Series X over PS5.

Series S drives increased consideration of Xbox overall

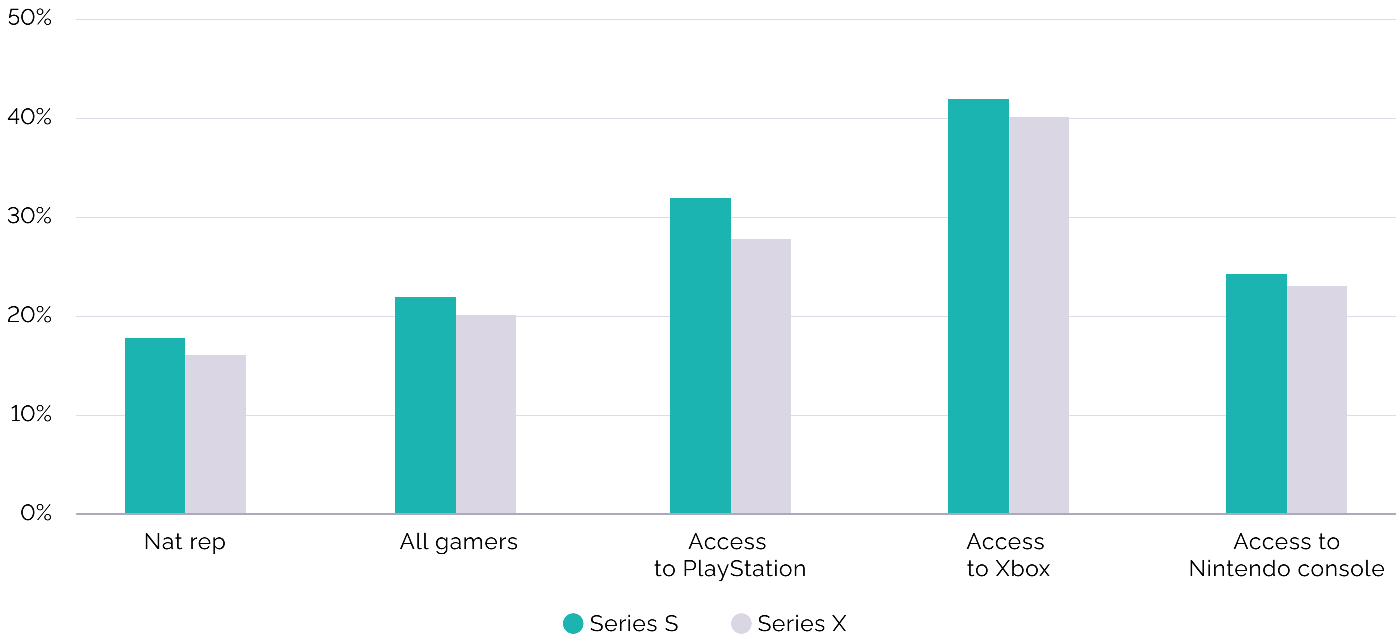
Despite PlayStation 5's lead across the higher-priced ninth gen systems, Microsoft still has reason to be optimistic about its prospects for the next generation.

While the PS5 and PS5 Digital Edition are essentially two versions of the same console – separated by a disc drive – the more expensive Series X and the more price conscious Series S are different systems with different capabilities (and price points). Both will play the same games, but they are expected to appeal to more differentiated consumer groups.

Australia: Net likelihood to buy an Xbox Series X|S (after being informed of the consoles' prices)

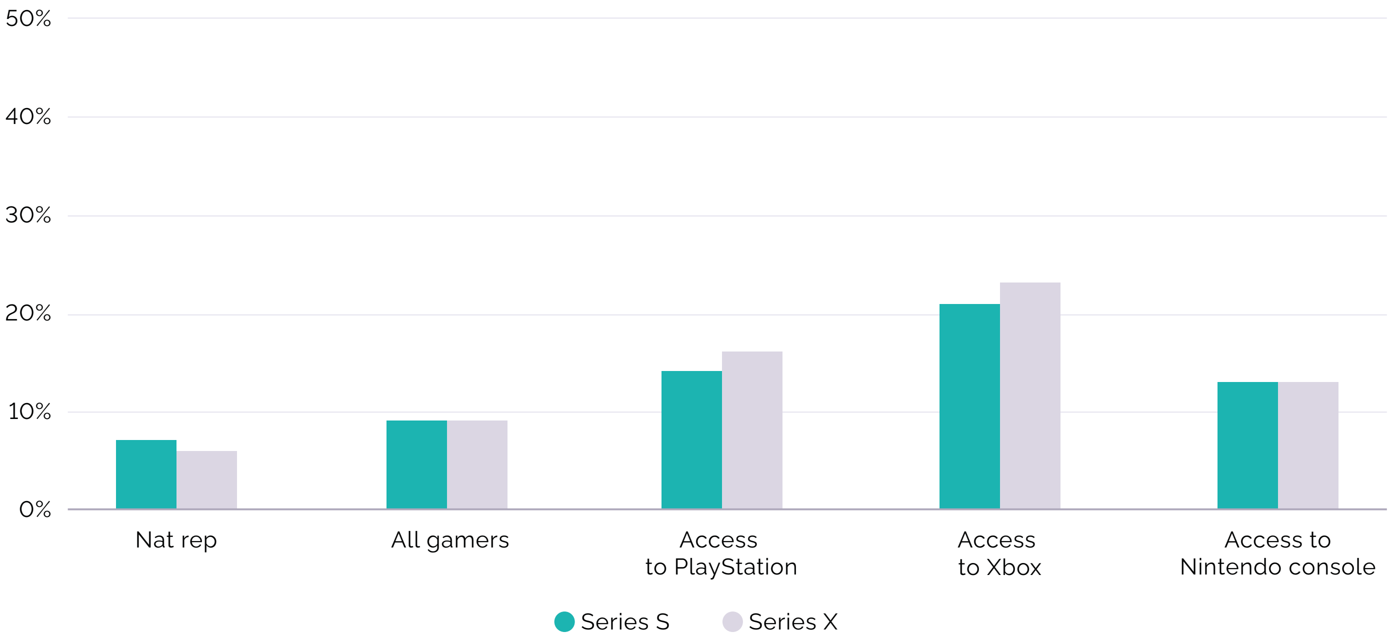
Microsoft has announced that the more powerful Series X will be priced at Now that you know the price USD 499, how likely are you to purchase it within 12 months of its launch?

Microsoft has announced that the cheaper, less powerful Series S version of its latest console will be priced at USD 299. Now that you know the price, how likely are you to purchase it within 12 months of its launch? (% who answered Very/Somewhat likely)

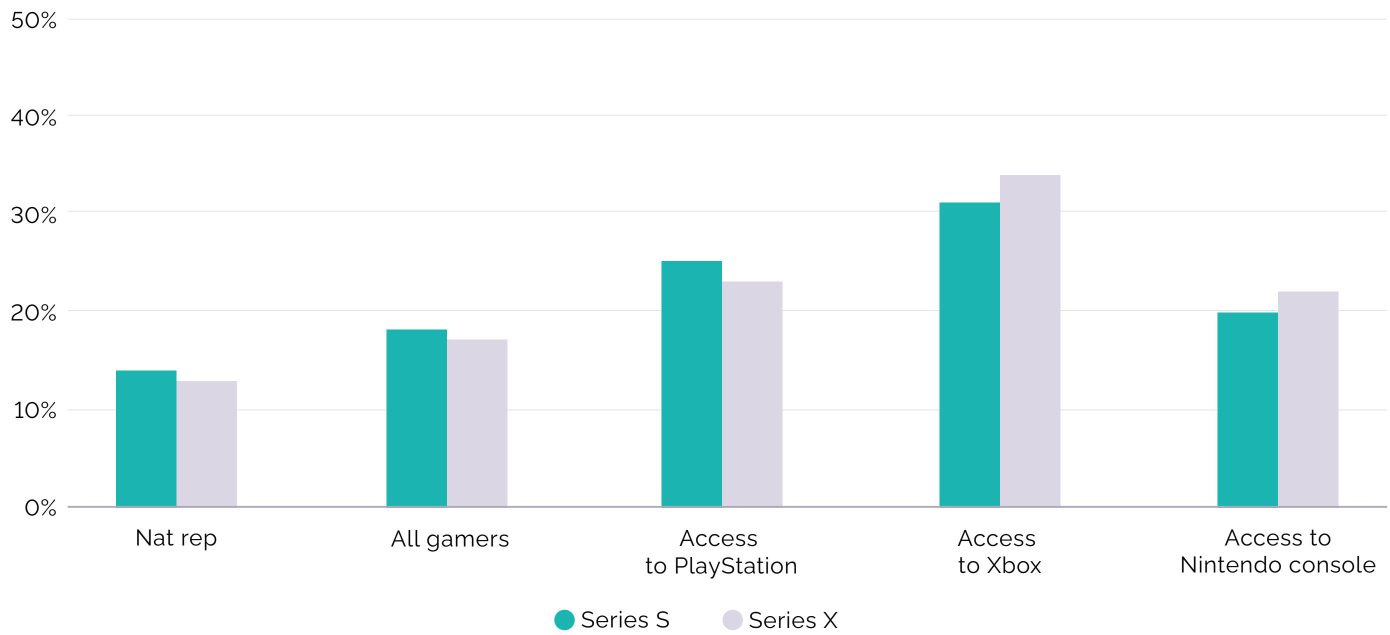


Consumers certainly appear to appreciate having the option. When Australians are informed of the respective capabilities and prices of the Series X and Series S, the Series S holds a small but consistent advantage in preference. In other markets, however, the more expensive console has a slight lead especially among current Xbox owners. But for the most part, there is a relatively even split between the two systems.

Germany: Net likelihood to buy an Xbox Series X|S (after being informed of the consoles' prices)



US: Net likelihood to buy an Xbox Series X|S (after being informed of the consoles' prices)



With the launch SKUs for PlayStation vs. Xbox being more differentiated than we've seen in the past, this November and holiday period will provide a peek into the current console gamer's psyche. What reigns most important to this consumer? Brand? Price? Game library? Power?

Add in the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on gaming time but also disposable income, and we are entering a console launch period unlike any we've seen before. Our data suggests Sony will benefit from the momentum it earned during the eighth generation as we move into the ninth, but Xbox is primed to capitalize on a more budget-aware consumer who in previous generations may not have purchased this early in the console cycle.

GAMING VIDEO CONTENT AND STREAMING

Over the past decade, gaming video content (GVC has developed its own distinct online subculture, and even its own celebrities. Millions of viewers follow their favourite YouTube, iQiyi and Twitch streamers as they offer commentary on *Fortnite*, assume different roles in *Overwatch*, or play through *Dark Souls III* using a jury-rigged toaster – among many other things.

For an important sub-section of players, watching video games online has become as much of a pastime as gaming itself.

This chapter explores the general awareness of GVC streaming, how viewers engage with streaming platforms, and the demographics of people who consume GVC content.

Which gamers are aware of streaming platforms?

Our data shows that awareness of streaming platforms among gamers varies heavily from market to market. Twitch, YouTube Gaming, and Facebook Gaming are the services gamers are most likely to be familiar with, while InstaGib TV and Caffeine have low familiarity overall, but higher levels of awareness in countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

As a general theme, Twitch awareness among gamers is higher in Western markets, while YouTube and Facebook's gaming sub-sites likely benefit from halo awareness of their parent brands.

Streaming platform awareness by market among gamers

Market	Twitch	YouTube Gaming	Facebook Gaming	InstaGib TV	Caffeine
Iraq	14%	40%	42%	7%	3%
Egypt	15%	39%	53%	10%	8%
India	16%	59%	50%	9%	5%
Vietnam	19%	74%	69%	11%	6%
Denmark	20%	17%	8%	2%	1%
Hong Kong	20%	43%	35%	6%	4%
UAE	21%	51%	51%	9%	9%
Indonesia	21%	72%	46%	7%	5%
Thailand	22%	68%	61%	10%	5%
France	22%	23%	14%	2%	3%
Italy	25%	29%	18%	4%	7%
Malaysia	25%	58%	64%	6%	4%
Saudi Arabia	26%	44%	38%	15%	11%
Singapore	28%	39%	32%	3%	4%
Philippines	28%	66%	80%	3%	4%
Germany	28%	26%	19%	1%	2%
Taiwan	30%	56%	52%	10%	5%
Sweden	31%	26%	12%	3%	2%
Norway	33%	29%	13%	2%	2%
Spain	34%	39%	24%	2%	2%
Australia	35%	36%	31%	5%	5%
US	37%	32%	27%	3%	5%
UK	37%	25%	16%	1%	1%

Streaming engagement across global markets

The proportion of gamers who actively engage with streaming platforms – those who watch videos, upload their own content, or both – varies greatly from market to market.

YouTube Gaming

YouTube Gaming has significantly higher engagement than any of its major rivals in many of our 24 markets.

Its advantage is particularly pronounced in Southeast Asia. In this region, higher levels of awareness have translated into higher levels of engagement. The region accounts for YouTube Gaming's top four markets by engagement: Vietnam (64%), Indonesia (58%), Thailand (49%) and Malaysia (48%).

Twitch

Twitch's engagement at a global level may be lower than YouTube Gaming, but in some regions it has a distinct advantage.

In Scandinavia, for example, it enjoys higher uptake than YouTube and Facebook Gaming.

In the UK and US more are aware of Twitch than they are of any other platform, and this advantage carries through to relative engagement, with Twitch being more commonly used by gamers in these markets.

Of note, Twitch has more recently set its sights on expansion into Southeast Asia, where it has to date had a more limited on-the-ground presence - so the gaming world will be watching closely to see if its success in the West can be replicated on the other side of the globe.

Facebook Gaming

As a relative newcomer in a space where companies such as Microsoft – which shut down its "Mixer" live-streaming service in June 2020 – have struggled, Facebook Gaming has lower engagement than YouTube Gaming in every market, and lower engagement than Twitch in every market except Egypt (25% vs 15%), Iraq (18% vs. 12%) and Malaysia (17% for both).

This data may have implications for brands looking to market their products and services in these markets. In the Philippines, for example, there is higher than average engagement across every service – so a multi-platform approach may lead to greater rewards.

Streaming platform engagement among gamers

Market	Twitch	YouTube Gaming	Facebook Gaming
India	12%	49%	12%
Iraq	12%	34%	18%
France	12%	10%	4%
UK	13%	6%	2%
Hong Kong	14%	29%	7%
Sweden	15%	10%	2%
Germany	15%	12%	3%
Denmark	15%	12%	3%
Egypt	15%	31%	25%
Indonesia	16%	58%	8%
Italy	16%	16%	3%
Malaysia	17%	48%	17%
Singapore	17%	21%	8%
US	17%	12%	5%
Australia	17%	16%	4%
Vietnam	18%	64%	14%
UAE	19%	41%	13%
Thailand	19%	49%	11%
Norway	20%	10%	2%
Philippines	22%	46%	20%
Spain	22%	15%	5%
Saudi Arabia	25%	38%	14%
Taiwan	25%	41%	10%

Australia's game streaming fans

Who watches streamed gaming video content? It depends on the market and the platform.

Australia, for example, is a rapidly growing market in the streaming and esports scenes in the APAC region – but also one more Westernised than other countries in the same group.

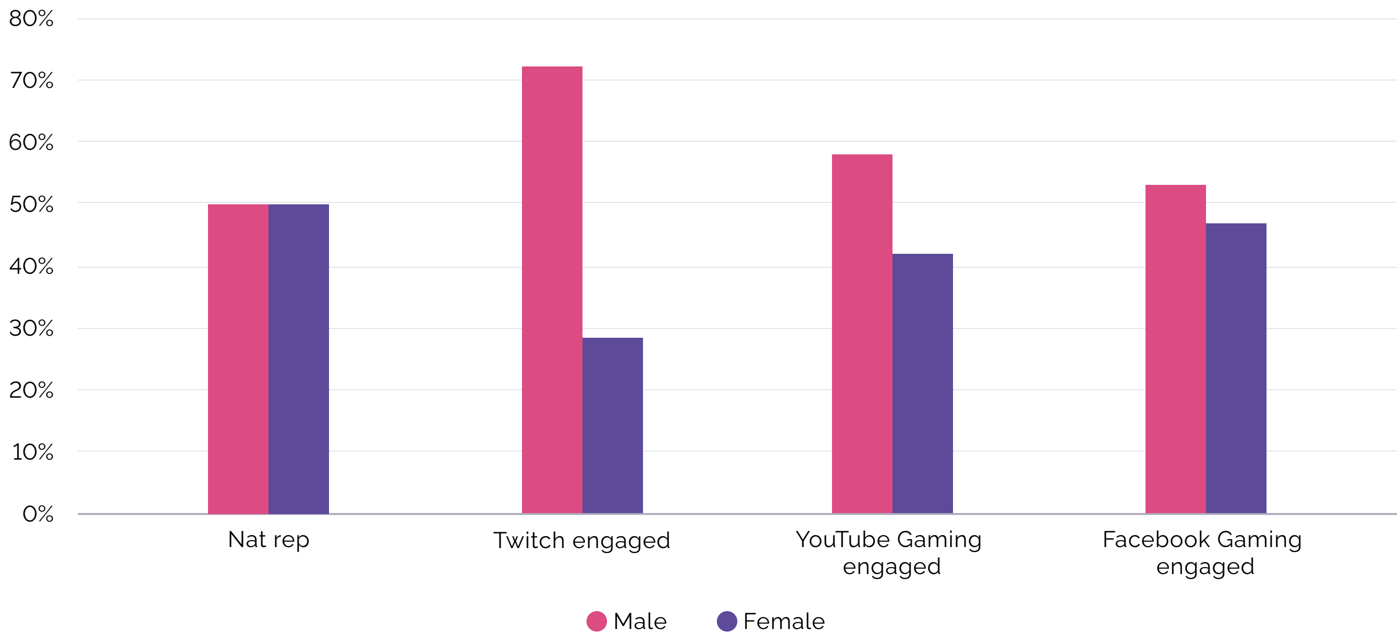
Looking at the demographics of Australian game streaming viewers reveals that Twitch's audience skews strongly male, with more than seven in ten viewers being men (72%), compared to six in ten YouTube Gaming viewers (58%) and just over half of Facebook Gaming viewers (53%).

Twitch also commands the highest proportion of its audience being in the 18-24 (31%) and 25-34 age groups (42%), while Facebook Gaming has the greatest proportion of viewers in the 25-34 (30%) and 35-44 (35%) brackets.

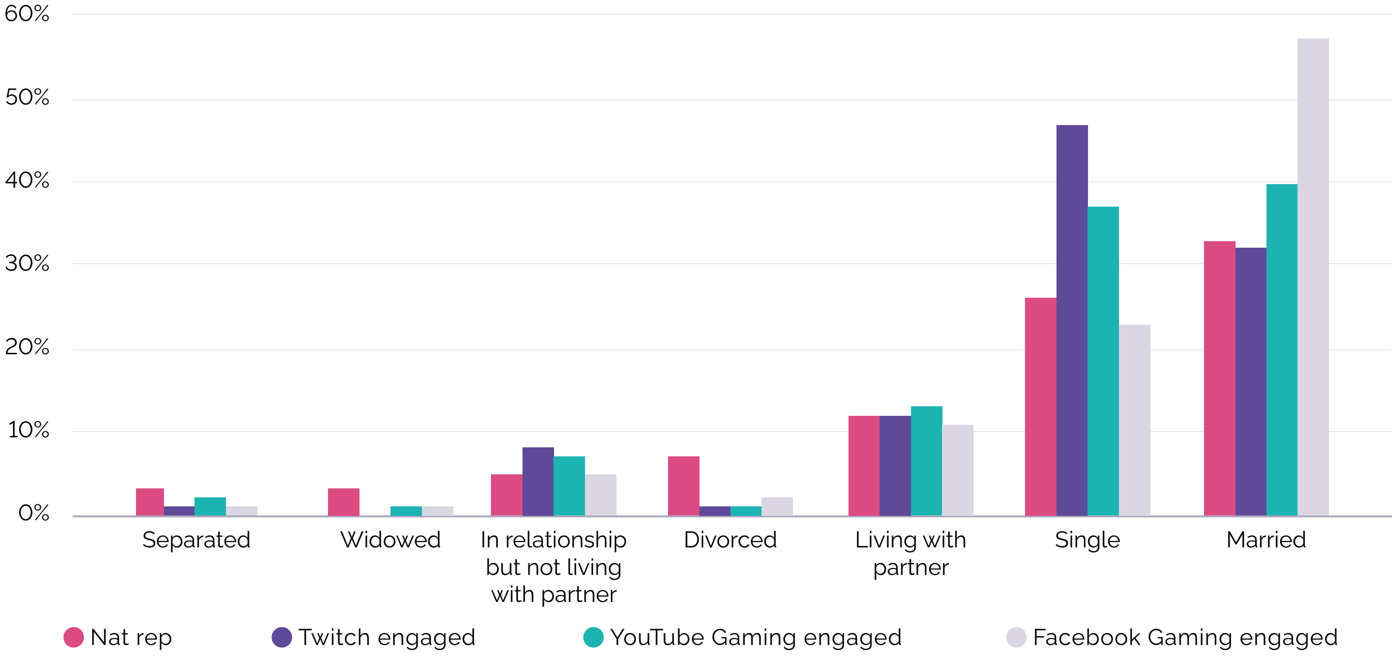
Twitch's viewers are also most likely to be single (47%) and least likely to be married (32%), while the reverse is true for Facebook Gaming (57% married; 23% single). YouTube Gaming fans are in between the two (40% married; 37% single).

A relevant buyer persona for the average Australian Twitch viewer might therefore look like a single, 25-year old man – while a relevant persona for a Facebook Gaming fan could be a married 40-year old man or woman.

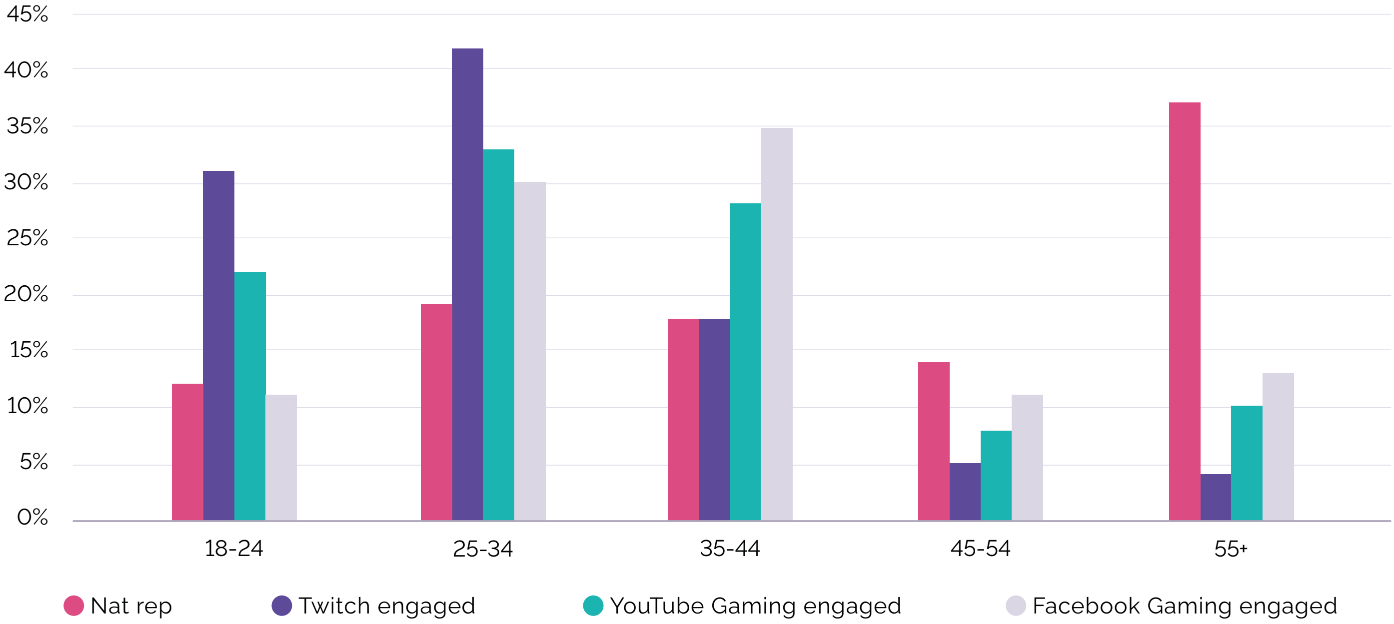
Australia: Game streaming fans by gender



Australia: Game streaming fans by marital status



Australia: Game streaming fans by age group



THE GLOBAL ESPORTS MARKET

Video game competitions are not a new phenomenon: Nintendo has held occasional World Championships since 1990, and informal Quake and Counter-Strike tournaments have been mainstays of multiplayer gaming for decades.

Today, esports is a multi-million dollar industry with its own sponsors, leagues, and competitors. Formalized league and tournament structures attracted major investment from within and outside the industry, driven by the attractiveness of the audience's demographics and the ever-growing influence of gaming on youth culture. More recently, the traditional sport world has also entered esports in a big way - for example, English soccer teams have even signed professional FIFA players to represent them in international competitions, and the NBA has built its own league for the popular *NBA2K* franchise.

But for all that esports has grown in recent years, it is still unfamiliar territory for many consumers – and in that sense, it continues to represent an untapped opportunity for marketers and even gaming companies - around the globe. This chapter focuses on consumer attitudes towards esports across 24 different markets.

Esports familiarity across the globe

A major obstacle - or from another angle, opportunity - for esports as a commercial endeavour is the simple fact that many consumers still do not know what they are.

We asked consumers "which of the following best describes esports (also known as eSports or e-sports)?" with the answer options being:

1. **Competitive video gaming, primarily in the form of organized/professional events**
2. Playing sports video games
3. Coverage of sports highlights/recaps
4. Never heard of esports

The first answer is the correct one and the responses show that levels of familiarity with esports vary greatly from market to market.

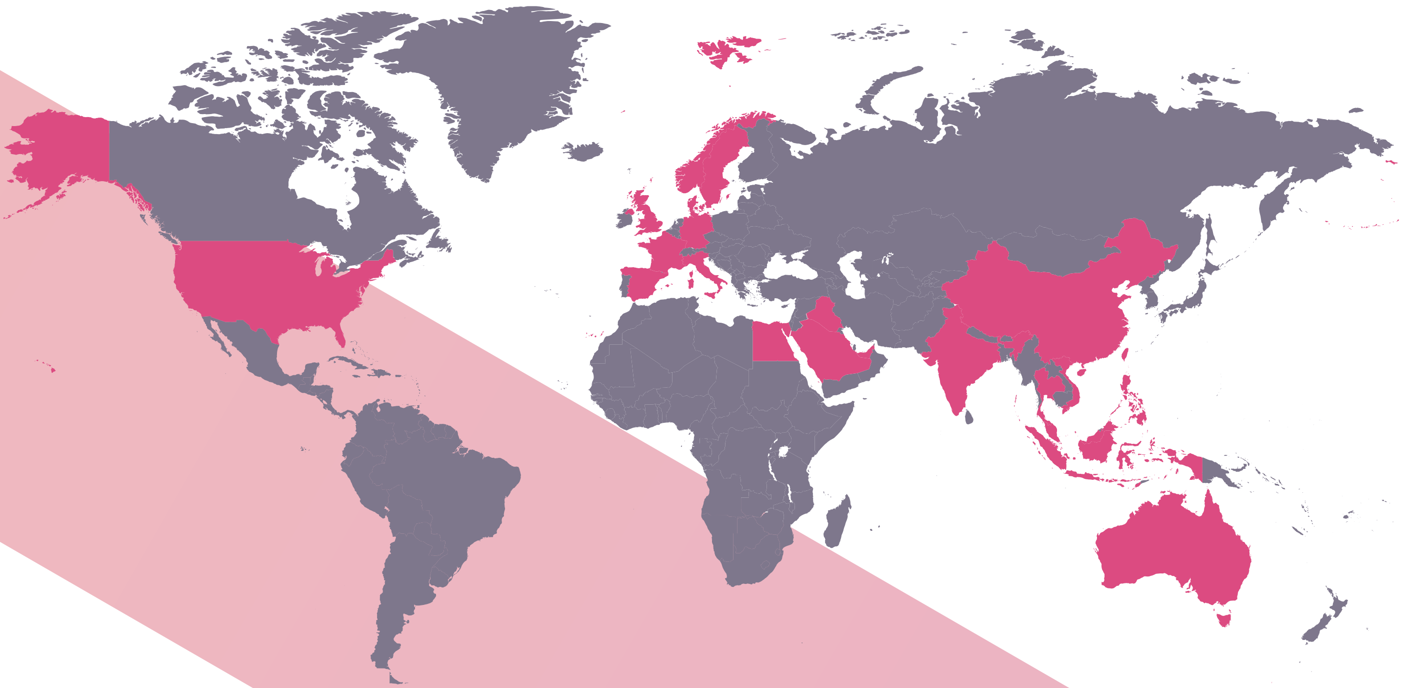
Broadly speaking, consumers in East Asia tend to have the greatest familiarity with it, with seven in ten people in China (72%), Taiwan (71%) and Hong Kong (70%) giving the correct answer.

This is perhaps due to a more established cultural affinity for gaming culture and esports within the region. In countries such as South Korea – which is not featured in this study – team-based *Starcraft* tournaments have been running for almost 20 years.

On the lower end of the scale, countries in the Middle East tend to be less familiar with esports: in Iraq (26%), the UAE (26%) and Saudi Arabia (31%), three in ten consumers chose the correct definition.

Nevertheless, more than a quarter of consumers across all nations are familiar with esports. This suggests that, regardless of its relative familiarity, it has a growing foothold on the public consciousness, although there may be more esports rights holders and game publishers can do to build awareness in many of these markets.

Esports familiarity by market



Market	Esports familiarity
Iraq	26%
UAE	26%
Italy	28%
Egypt	30%
India	31%
Saudi Arabia	31%
France	33%
Spain	33%
US	34%
UK	37%
Vietnam	37%
Australia	40%

Market	Esports familiarity
Germany	42%
Norway	42%
Singapore	46%
Philippines	48%
Sweden	51%
Malaysia	52%
Thailand	54%
Indonesia	57%
Denmark	67%
Hong Kong	70%
Taiwan	71%
China	72%

Are gamers familiar with esports?

Even gamers do not necessarily know what esports are in all markets. In many markets, especially in the West, this in part due to more casual and mobile gamers, who represent a large and significant group of players – but one also less familiar with esports.

In the US, for example, fewer than two in five (38%) gamers can define esports correctly while the figure in France, (41%), Spain (41%) and the UK (44%) is only slightly higher.

Two regions' gamers have much higher familiarity with esports. In Scandanavia, the figures range from 58% in Norway to 63% in Sweden and 75% in Denmark. However, the greatest familiarity is in the East Asian markets of Taiwan (76%) and China (79%).

The data suggests that developing an esports offering may first need to educate prospective customers – even committed gamers – before they can effectively introduce and scale their esports initiatives.

Esports familiarity among gamers

Market	Esports familiarity among gamers
UAE	33%
Iraq	34%
Italy	36%
India	36%
Egypt	36%
Saudi Arabia	38%
US	38%
France	41%
Spain	41%
Australia	43%
UK	44%
Vietnam	45%

Market	Esports familiarity among gamers
Germany	48%
Singapore	51%
Philippines	53%
Thailand	58%
Norway	58%
Malaysia	60%
Sweden	63%
Indonesia	65%
Hong Kong	72%
Denmark	75%
Taiwan	76%
China	79%

Esports engagement across global markets

Among our 24 markets, higher awareness of esports usually corresponds to higher engagement – but not always.

If high familiarity countries like China tend to be more active (79% aware; 47% engaged with esports in the past 12 months), the rest of the table looks somewhat different.

Denmark and Sweden, for example, are the top performing European countries in terms of esports familiarity. However, when it comes to esports engagement they rank closer to the bottom (8% Sweden; 10% Denmark). This suggests that if most know what esports are, the industry itself has only penetrated a small part of its overall potential audience.

In the Philippines, consumers demonstrate upper-mid-range levels of familiarity (53%) – but over-perform in terms of engagement (36%). Here the gap between knowing what esports are and interacting with them in some form or another is just 12 percentage points. Compared to a market like Taiwan, where three-quarters (76%) are aware but just 38% are engaged, it appears Filipinos are more likely to embrace these competitions – once they know about them.

When it comes to the games themselves, those in the multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) genre, such as *League of Legends*, and those in the first-person shooter (FPS) genre, such as *Call of Duty*, are consistently popular among esports fans in most markets. However, some nuances exist. For example, in Australia sports titles tend to attract more attention in the esports scene.

Esports engagement by country

Market	Esports engaged
UK	6%
Germany	7%
France	8%
US	8%
Sweden	8%
Norway	8%
Denmark	10%
Australia	11%
Italy	13%
Iraq	16%
Singapore	17%
Spain	17%

Market	Esports engaged
UAE	19%
Egypt	20%
Saudi Arabia	21%
India	22%
Hong Kong	25%
Malaysia	29%
Vietnam	30%
Philippines	36%
Taiwan	38%
Thailand	39%
Indonesia	40%
China	47%

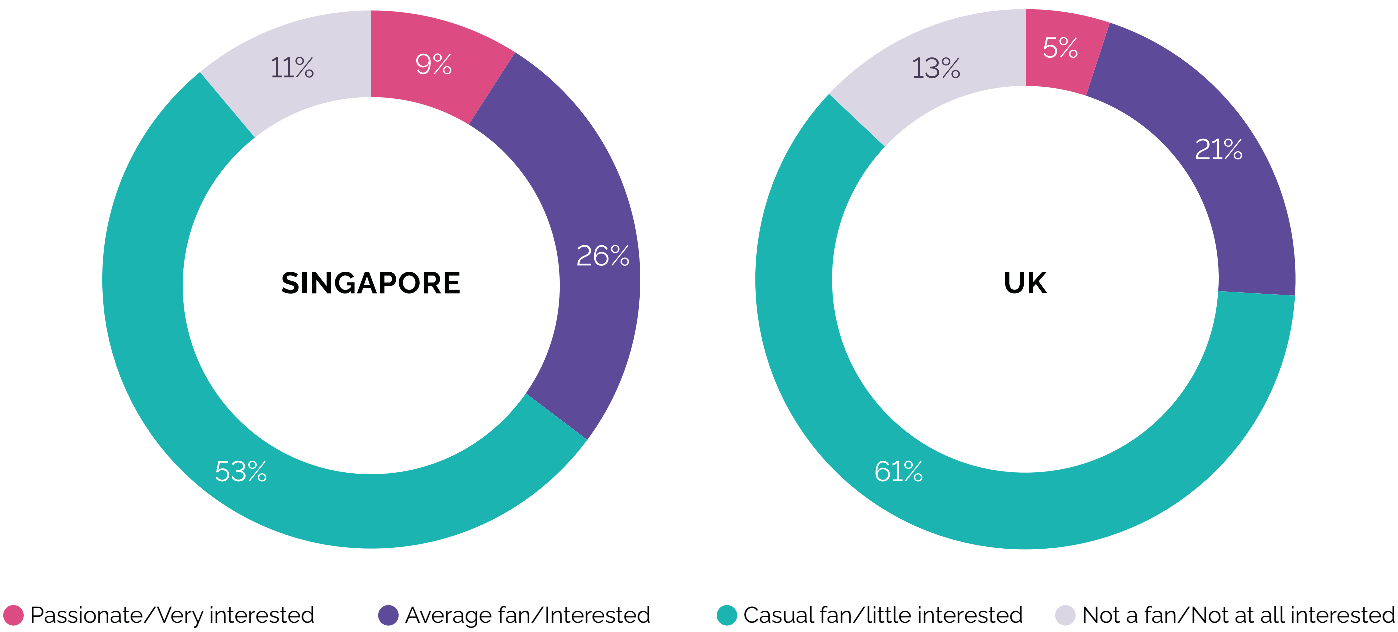
Esports fans in Singapore and the UK

Comparing those who have engaged with esports in Singapore and the UK – two very different markets in terms of their gaming and esports landscapes – illustrates some of the commonalities in each country.

Casual viewers – those who say they have a little interest in esports – make up a substantial majority in both countries (53% Singapore; 61% UK), with average/interested viewers making up the second largest group (21% UK; 26% Singapore). Singapore has a higher proportion of passionate fans than the UK (9% to 5%), while both countries have a similar proportion of people who have engaged with esports at some point but are simply not interested (11% Singapore; 13% UK).

It's a similar story across our other deep dive markets, with casual fans making up the majority and the average group being a distant second. The question for marketers, then, is how to take casual fans to the next level – and how to turn those with a middling level of interest into passionate devotees.

How interested are you in esports?



How do esports fans respond to marketing and sponsorship?

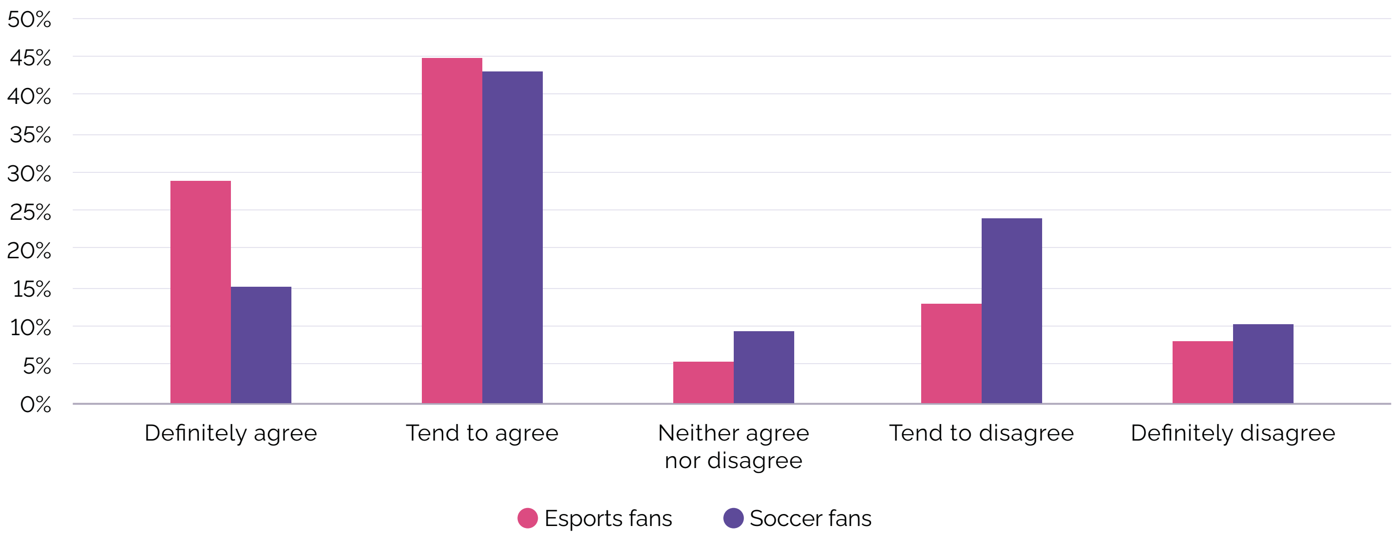
Looking at German esports fans - a passionate and well-established audience driven by a strong legacy of PC gaming in the market - reveals some key information about their attitudes towards marketing and advertising. A comparison to fans of Germany's most popular sport, soccer, suggests esports can provide brands opportunities to engage a receptive, yet also discerning, audience.

YouGov Profiles data shows that esports fans are more likely than soccer fans to notice the sponsors of events that they watch (74% vs 58%).

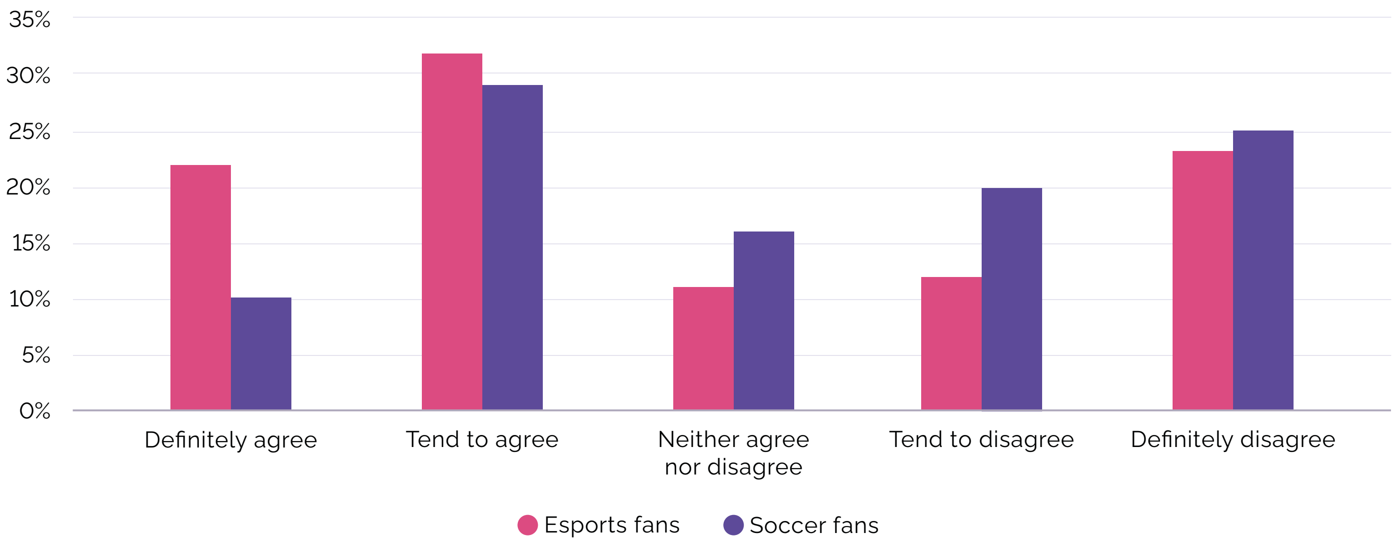
More importantly, while four in ten soccer fans (39%) are likely to agree that they love it when their favourite team has cool sponsors, this rises to over half (54%) of German esports fans.

This preference has commercial implications for brands looking to target German esports fans. Sponsorship is so important to them that over half (53%) agree that if a company sponsors their team, they will buy its products – compared to three in ten (31%) of soccer fans.

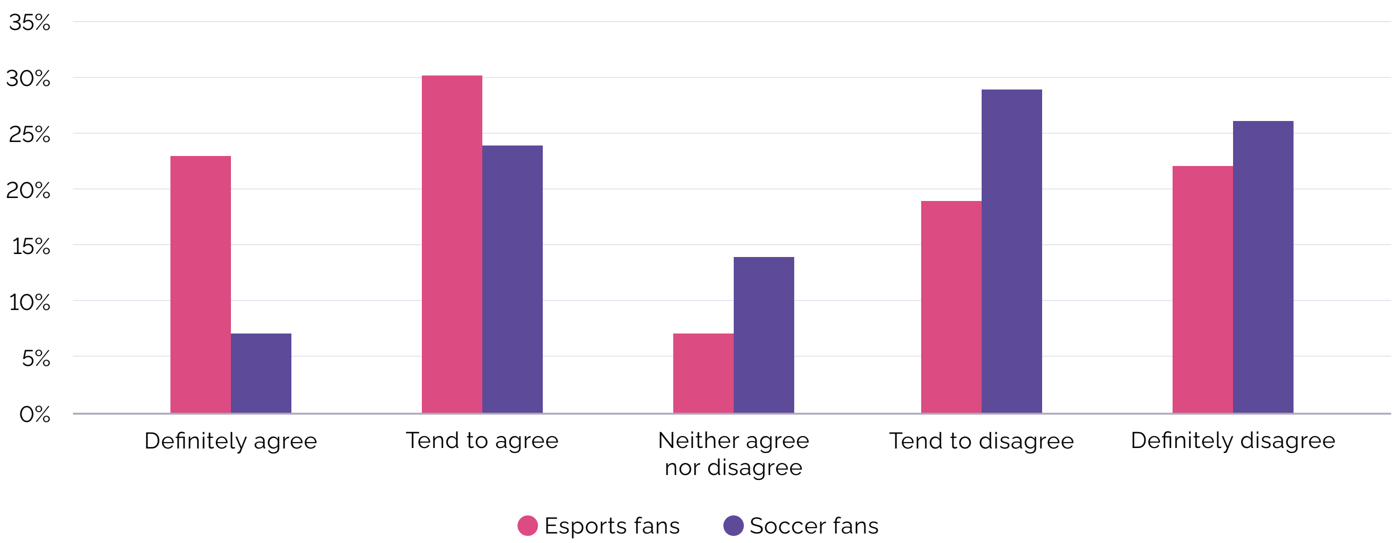
Germany: "I notice who's sponsoring the sporting events I see"



Germany: "I love seeing that my favorite team has cool sponsors"



Germany: "If you sponsor my team, I buy your products"

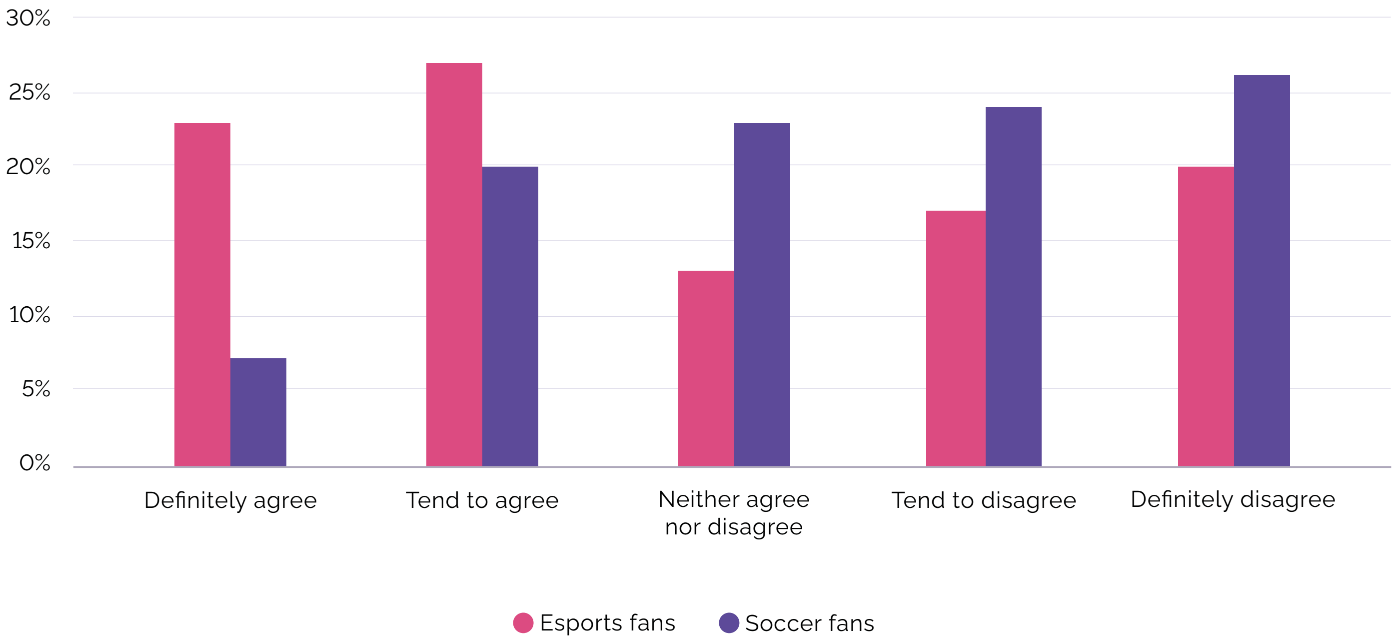


German esports fans: marketing and advertising attitudes

There may even be benefits to developing ongoing sponsorships with esports teams in the vein of Liverpool's long-standing partnership with Standard Chartered or Real Madrid's deal with Emirates Airlines.

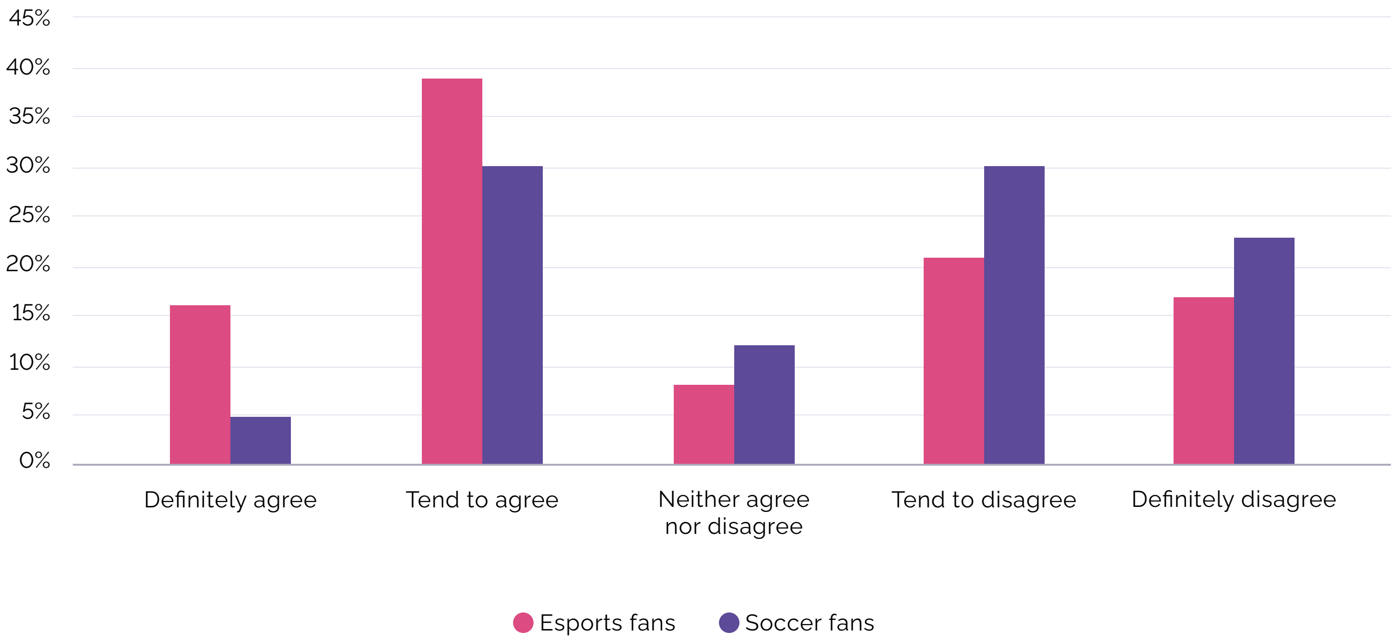
Fans of video game competitions are more likely to like brands that stick to sponsoring one team. Multi-team sponsorship has become a more prevalent approach by brands in esports in recent years; however, among German esports fans, this could in fact be potentially diluting positive sentiment among an individual team's followers.

Germany: "I like brands that stick to sponsoring one team"



Outside of specific partnerships, German esports fans are more likely to find personalised advertising appealing – and to think that brands need to find innovative ways to market themselves and their products. Generic, one-size-fits-all promotional materials and campaigns will therefore have limited appeal compared to more user-centric content.

Germany: "I'm more likely to engage with advertisements that are tailored to me"



DEEP DIVE: HARDCORE GAMERS IN THE US

In *Grand Theft Auto V* – one of the best-selling video games of all time – Rockstar Games portrayed a supporting character as unhealthy, obnoxious, slovenly, socially maladjusted, badly parented and entirely without prospects.

They did so with a simple cultural shorthand: they presented him as a hardcore gamer.

There is a persistent stereotype of *"hardcore gamers"* which researchers describe as revolving around *"four themes: (un)popularity, (un) attractiveness, idleness, and social (in)competence."* The researchers also found evidence to suggest that these negative characterizations have become personally endorsed as accurate representations of the online gaming community."

In this chapter, we explore the demographics, attitudes, and behaviours of "hardcore gamers" in one of, if not the, most significant global gaming markets - the United States. Teenagers, while an important part of the hardcore gaming audience, are outside the scope of this study, which focuses on adults.

How we defined “hardcore gamers”

YouGov has defined “hardcore gamers” in the US as those who spend 21+ hours a week playing video games on a console or PC. The casual gaming audience – those who play largely on smartphones or tablets, and those who play mobile games such as *Bejeweled*, music games such as *Guitar Hero*, and party games such as *Mario Party* – have been excluded.

Instead, we have focused on consumers who personally play games in one or more of the following genres:

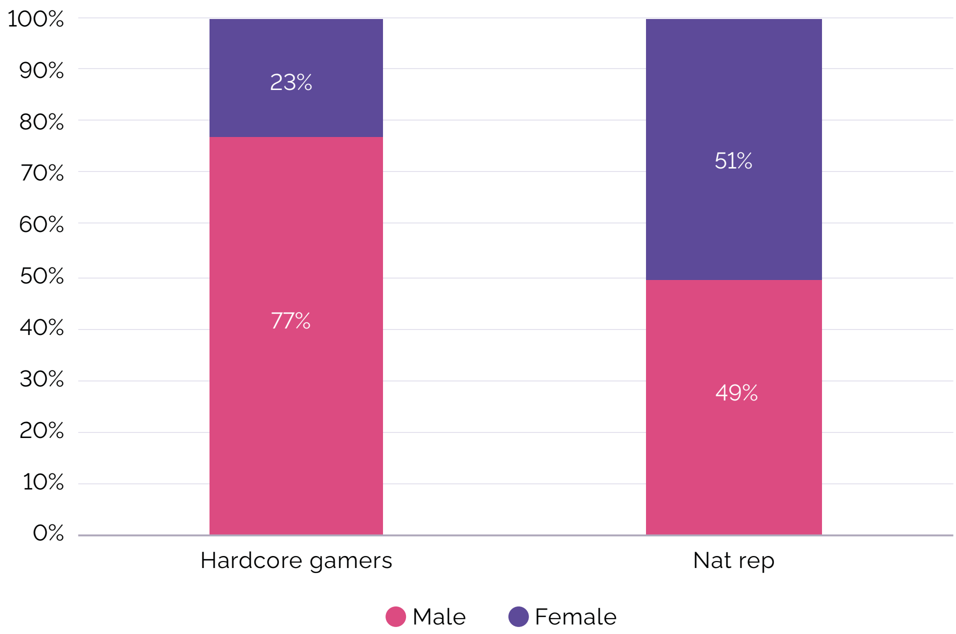
- **Action/Adventure** – i.e. *God of War, Red Dead Redemption II*
- **Battle Royale** – i.e. *Fortnite, PlayerUnknown's BattleGrounds*
- **Fighting** – i.e. *Super Smash Bros., Street Fighter*
- **First Person Shooters** – i.e. *Battlefield, Call of Duty*
- **Horror** – i.e. *Silent Hill, Resident Evil*
- **Indie** – i.e. *Celeste, Undertale*
- **MOBA** – i.e. *League of Legends, Dota 2*
- **Massively Multiplayer Online Roleplaying Games (MMORPGS)** – i.e. *World of Warcraft, Guild Wars 2*
- **Racing** – i.e. *Need for Speed, Forza Motorsport*
- **Simulation** – i.e. *The Sims, Harvest Moon*
- **Sports** – i.e. *FIFA, Madden*
- **Strategy/Puzzle** – i.e. *Starcraft II, Command & Conquer*

Overall, this group amounts to 2.5% of the US 18+ population – or around six million American adults.

Who are America's hardcore gamers?

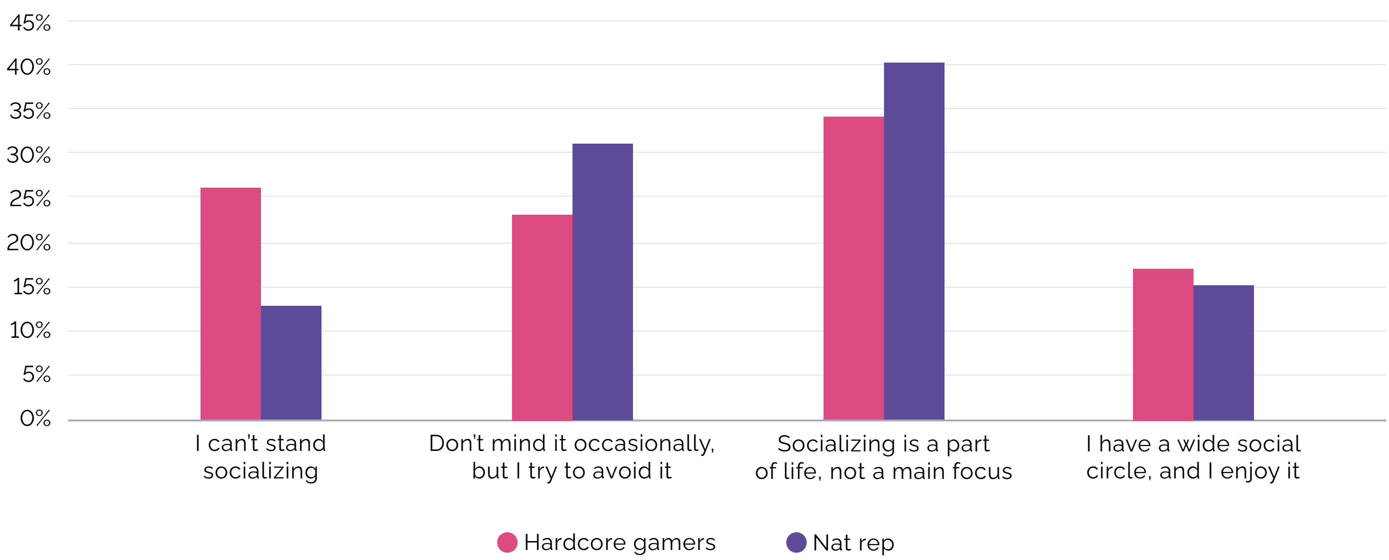
YouGov Profiles data indicates that three quarters (77%) of hardcore gamers are male.

US: Hardcore gamers by gender



Two-thirds (65%) are aged 18-45 and do not have children compared to just three in ten (30%) of the US public. Looking at their attitudes towards socialising, they're also more likely than the population as a whole to avoid it and they also do not enjoy doing it.

US: Hardcore gamer social attitudes



However, in other ways, they do not adhere closely to the stereotype. While most are men, still around a quarter (23%) are women. And, far from being asocial loners, they're more likely than the general public to say they have a wide social circle.

If some of these statements appear contradictory, they may simply reflect the diversity of this group's attitudes.

American hardcore gamers are more interested in sports than the US public

Despite the stereotype, hardcore gamers have wide interests outside of their consoles and PCs.

In fact, just one in three (34%) say they are not interested in any sports versus half (49%) of the US public. This love of sports extends to the major leagues. The most popular sports among hardcore gamers are the NBA (24% compared to 11% of Americans) and the NFL (23% vs. 21%).

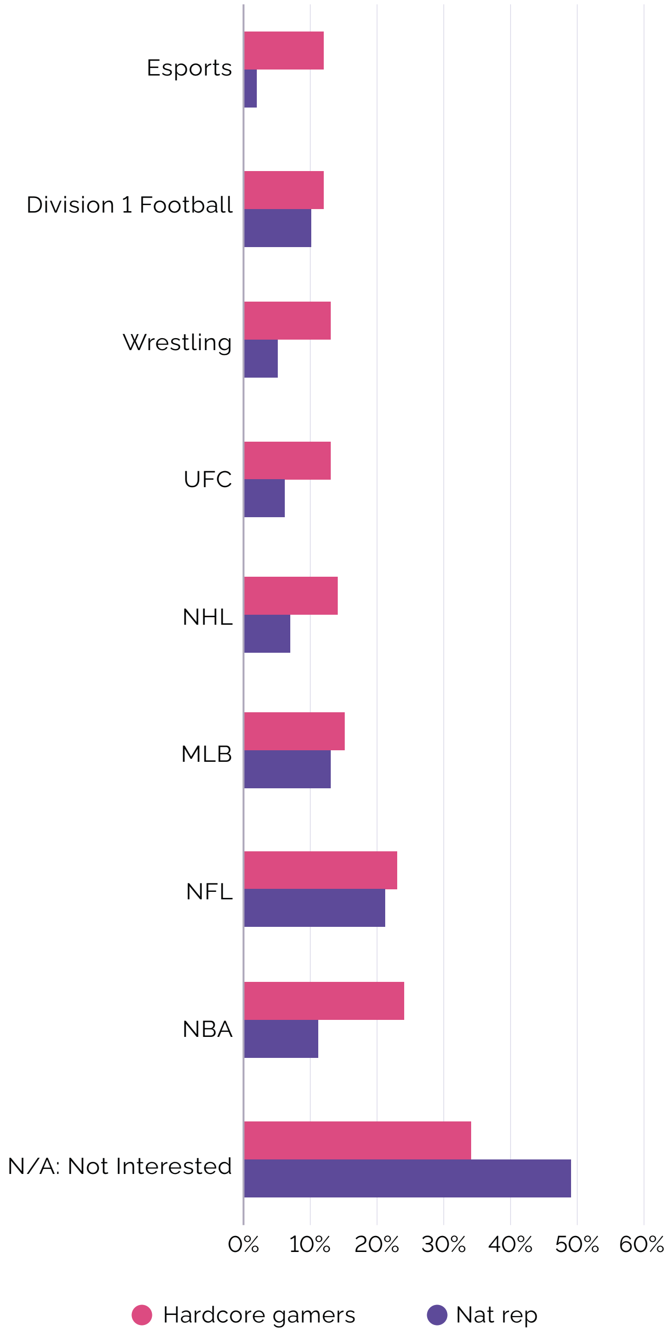
This group are twice as likely to cite UFC (13% hardcore gamers; 6% Americans) and wrestling (13% hardcore gamers; 5% Americans) as sporting interests. Some 44% say they're passionate about the FIFA World Cup compared to a fifth (20%) of the wider country, and more intuitively they are also significantly more likely to follow esports (12% vs. 2% of Americans).

They're also more likely than the general population to have a passion for sports. When presented with the statement "cycling is my passion", two in five (58%) agree compared to just 14% of the US public. When presented with a similar statement about tennis, a third (33%) agree against 12% of Americans overall.

This is not to say that, beyond their consoles and PCs, America's hardcore gamers have no niche interests at all. YouGov Profiles data also reveals that this group are more favourable towards technology – to the point where six in ten (58%) say there is a technological solution to all of humanity's problems compared to just three in ten (30%) Americans overall. A majority also say they "strongly support" net neutrality (55% vs. 37% of the US public), while 46% want to buy a wearable next to 17% of the US public overall.

Given the scope of hardcore gamers' interests, brands targeting this audience may certainly benefit from running marketing campaigns focused on top game streaming sites. But they could also see real commercial gains from advertising during *Monday Night Football, WWE RAW*, or the FIFA World Cup Finals.

US: Sporting interests

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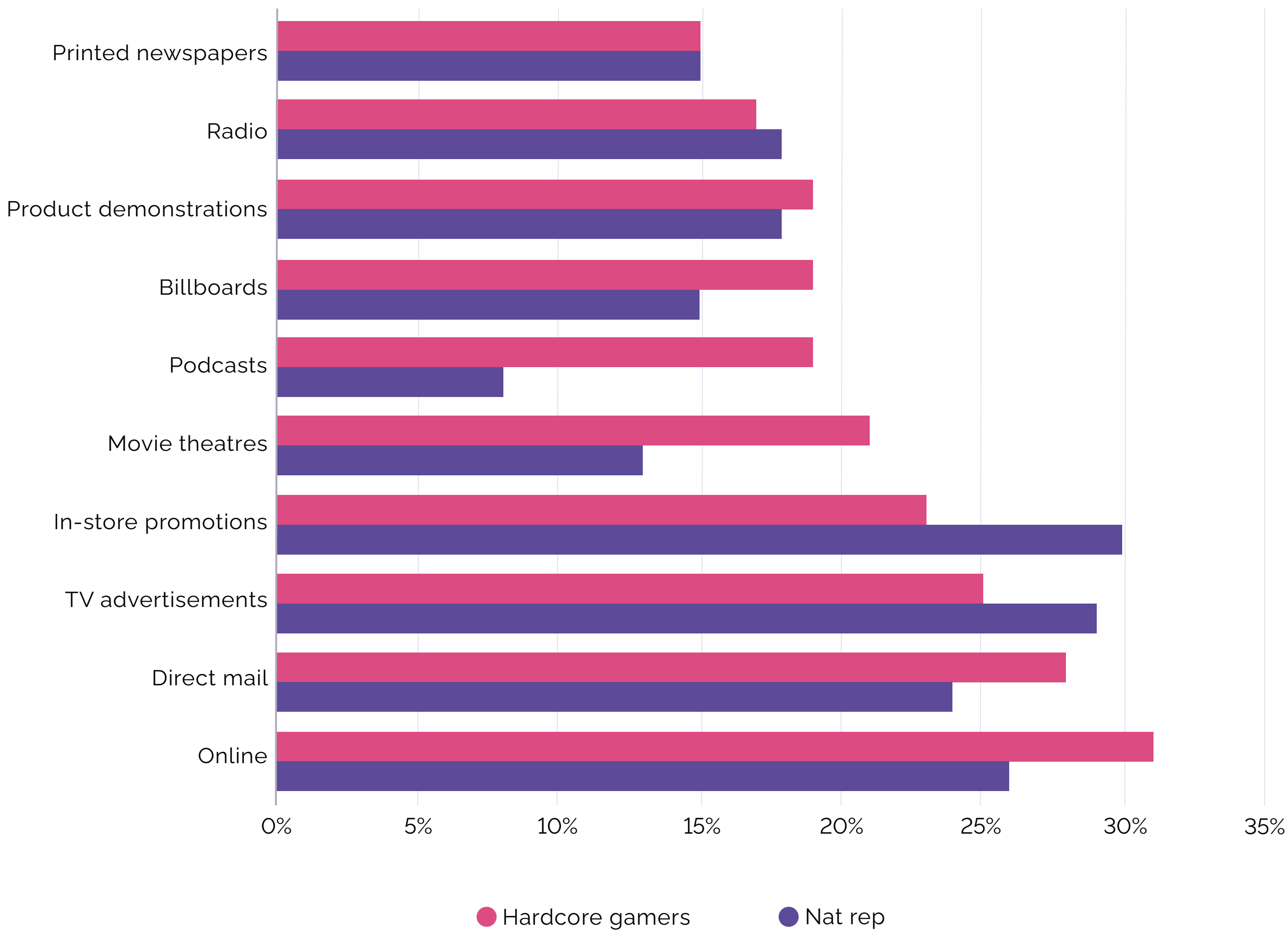
Reaching hardcore gamers in the US

Brands targeting this group on Twitch or YouTube with pre-roll or mid-roll ads could run into an awkward obstacle: most of America's hardcore gamers are using ad-blockers. Seven in ten (69%) of this group have installed the software compared to 47% of the US public. This is one of the reasons sponsorship has become a popular brand activation for esports - brands can integrate directly into broadcasted and VOD content to ensure reach and exposure.

Advertising through online channels will still be a key way to reach hardcore gamers, as they prefer this kind of engagement to any other – but it may be worth exploring other mediums. Though not as technologically advanced, direct mail (their second most favoured channel) can still be a powerful tool: almost three in ten hardcore gamers like it, and ad-blockers cannot stop it. TV advertisements could also be effective.

US: Preferred forms of advertising



And while COVID-19 has disrupted visits to the cinema, this group is more likely than the average American to enjoy theatrical advertising. If and when movies and audiences return to theatres around the country, the cinema may be a useful channel for brands looking to reach this audience.

Hardcore gamers are also more than twice as likely to listen to podcasts, with their favourite ones being:

- **The Joe Rogan Experience**
- **TED Radio Hour**
- **BBC Global News**

COVID-19 AND THE FUTURE OF GAMING

In the five markets where we conducted a 'deep dive' study, a plurality of gamers said they have been gaming more during the coronavirus pandemic vs. the same time last year. But while it may be easy to think of the COVID-19 period as an opportunity for developers and publishers – who, in the absence of other entertainment options, may have had something close to a captive audience this year – it has had disadvantages.

The COVID-19 crisis has resulted in a number of game delays: 343 Industries has postponed *Halo Infinite* to 2021, leaving Microsoft without a marquee launch title for its new range of consoles; major companies have announced layoffs; and if the virus leads to a downturn in global consumer spending, HD video games and gaming systems may become more of an extravagance for households that have become suddenly more cash-strapped than they were before.

What will gaming look like after COVID-19?

	Australia	Germany	Singapore	UK	US
I believe gaming will be stronger and more relevant than ever before	24%	22%	30%	24%	22%
I believe gaming will return to its previous level of importance in society	43%	19%	35%	44%	42%
I believe gaming will be less relevant as the world realizes there are things more important in life	16%	42%	18%	13%	12%
Don't know	18%	17%	17%	19%	23%

That said, the industry is one of a handful that has had reason to be cheerful during this crisis, and this is reflected in the attitudes of gamers. While German players are more pessimistic – 42% say gaming is likely to become less relevant when the COVID-19 outbreak passes – every other nation's players are more likely to believe that gaming will either return to its previous level of importance or exceed it.

But if the future of the worldwide industry is not certain, what is certain is that games are still coming out while movies are being delayed, concerts are being postponed, and sports stadiums are sitting empty. As the ninth generation begins, the medium has assumed a more prominent role in global cultural life than ever before. If it can keep up its current momentum, it's poised to take on even greater significance.

"Despite the ongoing pandemic, we continue to see strong demand for esports content, including online events, professional leagues, and recurring programming. We anticipate even greater activity across the esports landscape in the coming quarters as more institutions begin to recognize esports as a meaningful opportunity to capture the minds and hearts of a young and engaged community – something YouGov's profiling data highlights on a global level. Vindex's deep investment in technology has allowed us to adapt quickly and to continue to service our clients and partners, even in the most challenging of environments. Data that allows us to closely monitor the impact of our strategy will be key to our ongoing success and growth."

Mike Sepso, *CEO*, Vindex

COVID CASE STUDY: MINECRAFT

Daily tracking data from YouGov BrandIndex shows that *Minecraft's* US player numbers surged following the onset of the pandemic. On April 9, 2020, its Current Customer penetration (those who have played the game in the past 30 days) reached a peak of 9.7, suggesting that almost one in ten American adults booted up the game over the previous month, coinciding with the start of COVID-driven lockdowns in the US.

Minecraft: Current Customer penetration among US adults - August 2019 - September 2020

Have you played any of the following video games in the past 30 days?

Younger gamers drove much of this: in April and May, those aged 18-24 accounted for a quarter (23%) of all players; 25-34s – the next largest group – made up only 8%.

There is evidence to suggest that children (who are excluded from our samples for this survey in all markets) may have driven a significant part of the game's success during the initial phase of the pandemic. While the average Current Customer score for non-parents is 5.6, this nearly doubles to 10.3 for parents. This may have been driven by both work and play - various accounts of teachers using *Minecraft* as a way to virtually engage students have been noted during the spring lockdown months.


MINECRAFT

THE NEXT LEVEL

For businesses with brands relevant to gaming and its expanding audience, the industry presents many opportunities. What was once a niche hobby is now a multi-billion dollar entertainment juggernaut; it is also (indirectly) one of the world's major sports.

Our study shows that gaming and esports – and their respective audiences – vary heavily from region to region and market to market. Making the most of their opportunities means understanding that:

1. Gamers, streaming viewers and esports fans are diverse groups with diverse interests.

Gamers are not a homogenous bloc and marketers cannot assume they will automatically be interested in – or even familiar with – esports or online streaming. Just as *Bejeweled* players engage in a different way to the *Tekken* or *Elder Scrolls* player, German, Danish, Iraqi and American gamers should be treated as separate audiences – as should Light, Moderate, Heavy, and Heavy+ gamers, or mobile players versus those who opt for consoles or PCs.

Esports vs. game streaming fans are also distinct consumer groups, with the overall streaming audience larger than the subset of gamers who view/follow esports across all markets.

2. Sony and Microsoft are approaching the future of gaming in distinct and deliberate ways.

In every one of the five 'deep dive' markets we surveyed, the premium version of Sony's PlayStation 5 looks more attractive to expected early adopters than Microsoft's Xbox Series X. While this is in part an extension of the company's success with the PS4, longer-tail adoption of both systems will serve as a referendum on the two manufacturers' increasing strategic and philosophical differences for gaming ecosystems and experiences.

Sony is betting that its first-party franchises will convince gamers to make the jump to the PS5: a traditional high-end console. Microsoft is emphasising software and subscriptions – and from the point of view of some analysts, is seemingly unconcerned about outselling its rival. It is also targeting a broader consumer group: the Xbox Series X is for the gamer who wants a top of the line system that plays the latest titles in 4K and 120-frames-per-second – while the Xbox Series S targets those who want next-gen titles as cheaply and conveniently as possible. Given the relatively even split between the two Microsoft systems in terms of purchase intent, this strategy may prove effective in bringing gamers who typically adopt new consoles later in their lifecycle into next-gen gaming much sooner.

3. Esports fans are highly attuned to marketing and promotions - often for benefit, but also with discernment.

Our study shows that esports familiarity and engagement is far from uniform across the countries in our study. The industry has evolved at different times and paces in different areas around the globe - which while complicated for marketers to learn and understand, also provides opportunities for brands to engage in a variety of ways and markets within the sector.

In deep dive markets such as Germany, fans pay attention to marketing and advertising just as football fans have opinions about their club's kit manufacturer or shirt sponsor. In fact, our data gives reason to believe that esports fans are more likely to notice sponsorship - but with increased reach also comes increased risk if executions are not thoughtful, tailored, and topical for this audience.

While professional sports were suspended for months, esports and virtual sports partially bridged the gap. Can they keep this momentum up as conventional sports return and consumers around the world resume a more 'normal' daily routine?

Whether they do or not, recent history speaks to the increased legitimacy of esports as an athletic competition: one with its own leagues, teams, and stars – and its own sponsorships, partnerships, and merchandise. It also suggests that fans will reward brands that get their marketing right - and remember those that don't.

4. COVID-19 has changed the game.

Consumers have been gaming more during the coronavirus pandemic. With people around the world spending more time at home – unable to meet friends, go to the cinema, or in some cases leave the house at all – gaming has taken on fresh significance as both a way to spend extra leisure time and an alternative way to socialize, virtually.

Titles such as *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* and *Ring Fit Adventure* have offered players new ways to socialise, exercise, and keep the boredom of lockdown at bay.

With the next few years likely to feature major announced and unannounced releases from Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo (as well as a range of third-party publishers) it's clear that the major manufacturers are committed to building on their current success even further. Additionally, streamers, rightsholders, and esports organizations globally have risen to the challenge during the pandemic, creating compelling content that has engaged a larger audience in gaming than we've ever seen before. With new systems, titles, and events on the horizon, the confluence of audience and content gives us reason to believe gaming will continue to ride high moving into 2021.

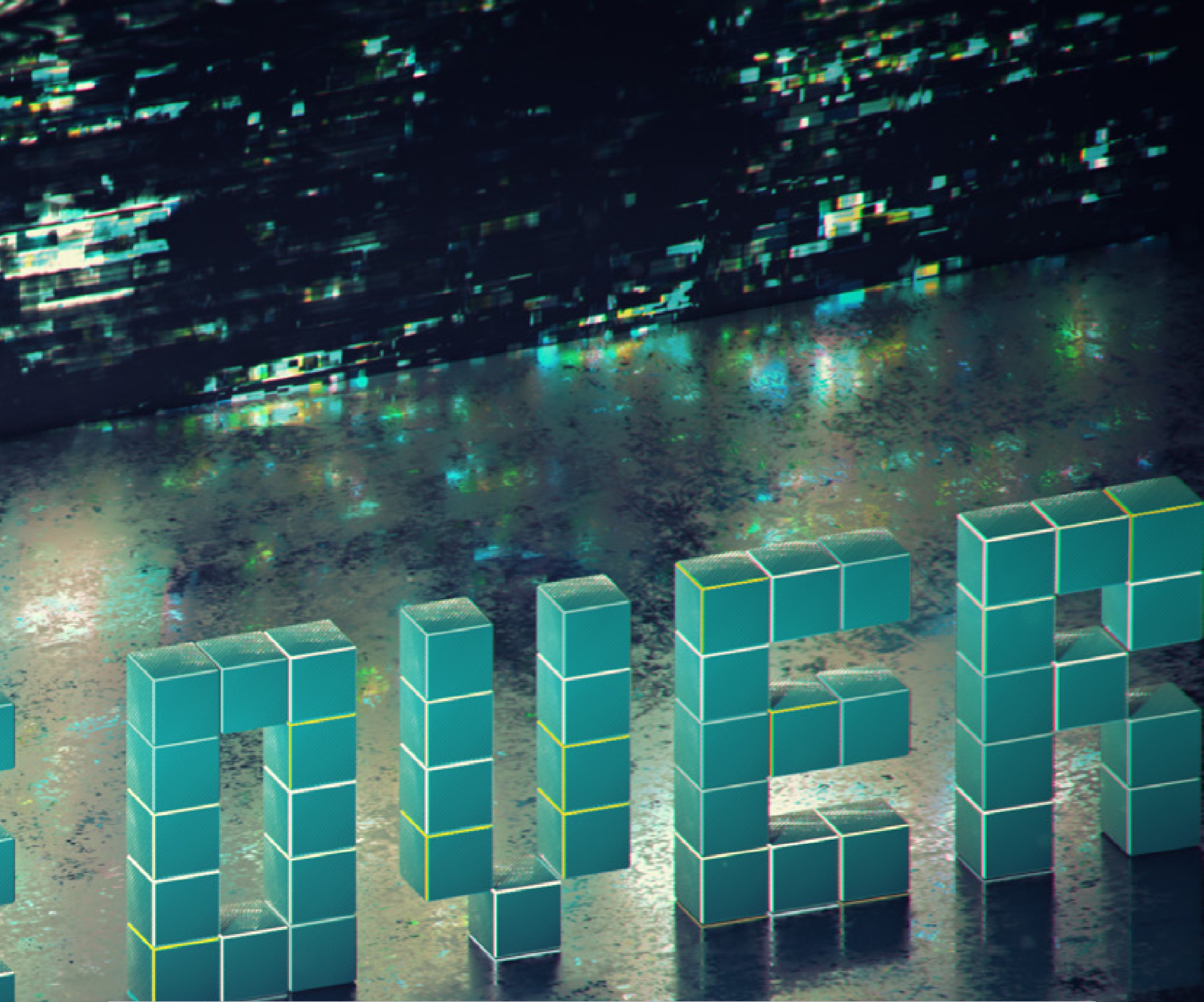
However they turn out, in the context of a crisis that has forced other industries to indefinitely suspend operations, on the face of it video gaming appears to be on firm footing - and is ready to embrace its new jumping off point.

OUR DATA

For this study, YouGov combined data from our leading syndicated tools, YouGov Profiles and YouGov BrandIndex - which together form our YouGov Plan & Track suite that enables brands, rightsholders, broadcasters, agencies, and more to make informed decisions about the trajectory of their businesses.

Apart from Iraq (sample size 502), every market surveyed reached a minimum sample size of 1,000. Fieldwork was conducted in September 2020.

Region	Country	Sample type	Sample size
APAC	China	Online rep	1005
	Hong Kong	Online rep	1028
	Indonesia	Online rep	2031
	Malaysia	Online rep	1075
	Philippines	Online rep	1057
	Thailand	Online rep	2079
	Taiwan	Online rep	1019
	Singapore	Nat rep	1053
	Australia	Nat rep	1046
	Vietnam	Online rep	1099
INDIA	India	National urban rep	1003



Region	Country	Sample type	Sample size
MENA	Egypt	Online rep	1004
	Iraq	Online rep	502
	Saudi Arabia	National urban rep	1002
	United Arab Emirates	Nat rep	1039
EUROPE	France	Nat rep	1026
	Italy	Nat rep	1017
	Germany	Nat rep	1001
	UK	Nat rep	2082
	Spain	Nat rep	1007
SCANDINAVIA	Denmark	Nat rep	1223
	Norway	Nat rep	1008
	Sweden	Nat rep	1021
NORTH AMERICA	USA	Nat rep	1027

YouGov

ABOUT YOUGOV

YouGov is an international research data and analytics group headquartered in London. Our data-led offering supports and improves a wide spectrum of marketing activities of a customer-base including media owners, brands and media agencies. We work with some of the world's most recognised brands.

Our line of products and services includes YouGov BrandIndex, YouGov Profiles, YouGov Omnibus, YouGov Custom Research, YouGov Crunch and YouGov Direct.

With over 9 million panellists across 44 countries, YouGov's market research covers the UK, USA, Europe, the Nordics, the Middle East, and Asia-Pacific. Our panellists come from all ages, socio-economic groups, and other demographic types – allowing us to create nationally and internationally representative online samples of consumers.

For more information, visit us at **yougov.com**

YouGov is a global provider of analysis and data generated by consumer panels in 44 markets. As the market research pioneer of Multilevel Regression with Poststratification (MRP) for accurate predictions at a granular level, our data consistently outperforms others on accuracy, as concluded by Pew Research. Combine that with our advanced analytical technology, powered by crunch.io, and we are able to generate the most accurate, complete, and dynamic portrait of the world.