

NEW ZEALAND

PLAYS

25



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FOREWORD

by Professor Jeffrey Brand

The 2025 New Zealand Plays report is the 9th in a series of studies that we have published since 2010. The purpose of this research has been to provide evidence and encourage conversation about who among us plays video games, why we play, how we play and what we think of this dynamic and often breathtaking medium.

For one-and-a-half decades, we have seen the rapid maturation of the video games audience. While the early reports in this series surprised many in our community that video games were so popular – and the typical player was an adult – today the reality that video games are not only popular, but that they are popular for everyone at every age has been well documented through this research. We have long argued that video games give rise to digital fluency. The digital economy is flourishing, if not because of video games creating capacity, then at least in part because they contribute. We have also argued that the technologies underpinning video games has been an important part of innovation, giving rise to new capabilities.

Trends we have been surprised by this year include the bias toward cooperative play among younger players and competitive play by older players. We have been impressed by parents' clarity about controls, ratings, and the value of games for their children's learning. Compared with other countries, parents in New Zealand have more positive attitudes toward the benefit of game play, generally, compared with non-parents. It also seemed from quantitative and qualitative findings that social interactions and creativity are both motivations for and outcomes from video game playing. Finally, we are sensitive to evidence that the number of us who play video games and the amount of time we spend playing them are limited by the natural amenity and outdoors lifestyle in New Zealand, and by the practical value that is discovered when New Zealand Plays.

Key findings

77%
of parents have
rules around play

Over
65%
of parents are aware
of family controls and
in-game controls

73% of New Zealand
households have
2 OR MORE GAME DEVICES
with the most popular being a console

81% UP FROM
79%
of all New Zealanders
play video games

47%
FEMALE

81%

of parents play
with their children to
connect as a family



The average age of video
game players in New Zealand is

36 YEARS

80% of all players in
New Zealand are
AGED 18+

New Zealanders play games to...



76% 
of New Zealanders
play video games with others

 **27%**
of New Zealanders have made
new friends through playing games

New Zealanders play games for
mental wellbeing to assist in:

1. Managing stress
2. Managing depression and anxiety
3. Building resilience



New Zealand video game players'
TOP GENRE CHOICES:



1. ACTION/ADVENTURE
2. PUZZLE
3. BOARD AND CARD

NEW ZEALAND PARENTS...

...play games with
children because:

1. Games are a fun way for the family to connect
2. Games provide a way to spend time together
3. A child asks their parent to play games with them



...let their children play
games because:

1. Children enjoy playing games
2. It's a fun way to learn
3. They can improve problem solving skills

New Zealanders play games
for personal growth to:

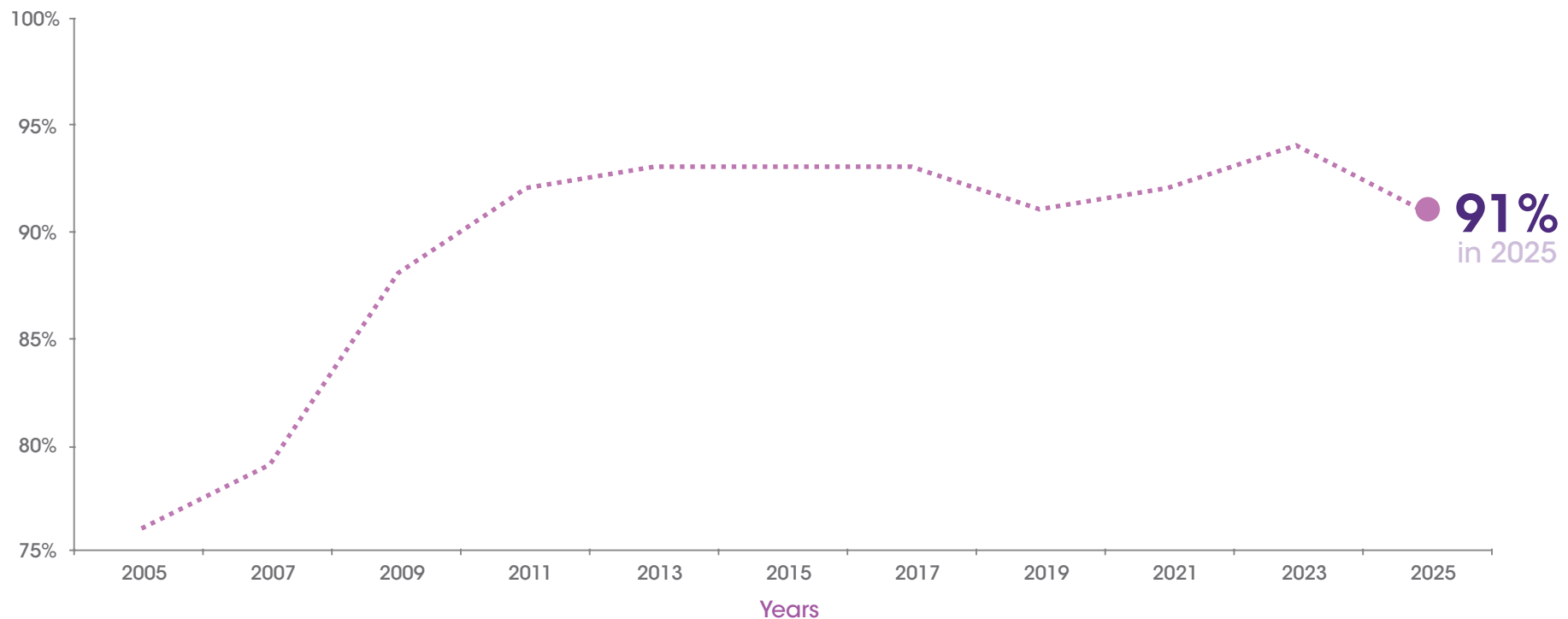
1. Bring joy
2. Create feelings of enjoyment
3. Stimulate the mind



New Zealand Plays Video Games

Game households over time

Video games are played in nine out of ten New Zealand households. A home with at least one device on which video games are played is considered a video-gaming household. Although we have reported minor variations over time due to sampling, the result has been a constant within the margin of error for the past 15 years.



81% of New Zealanders play video games

The average time they've spent playing video games is **14 years**

“

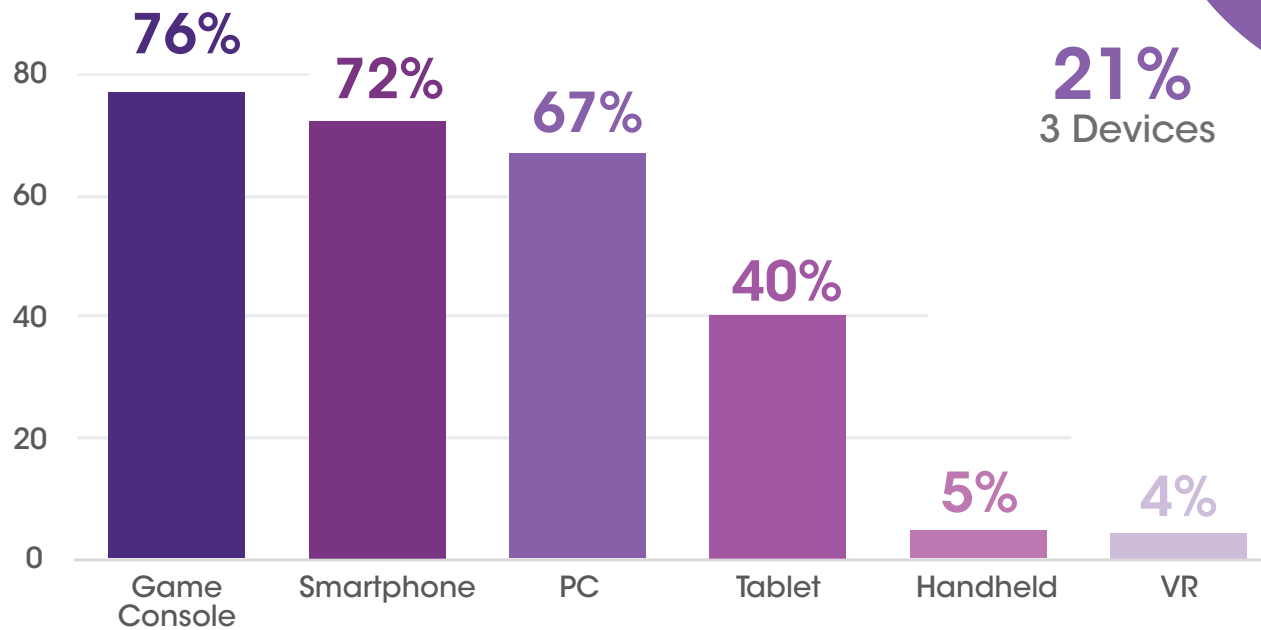
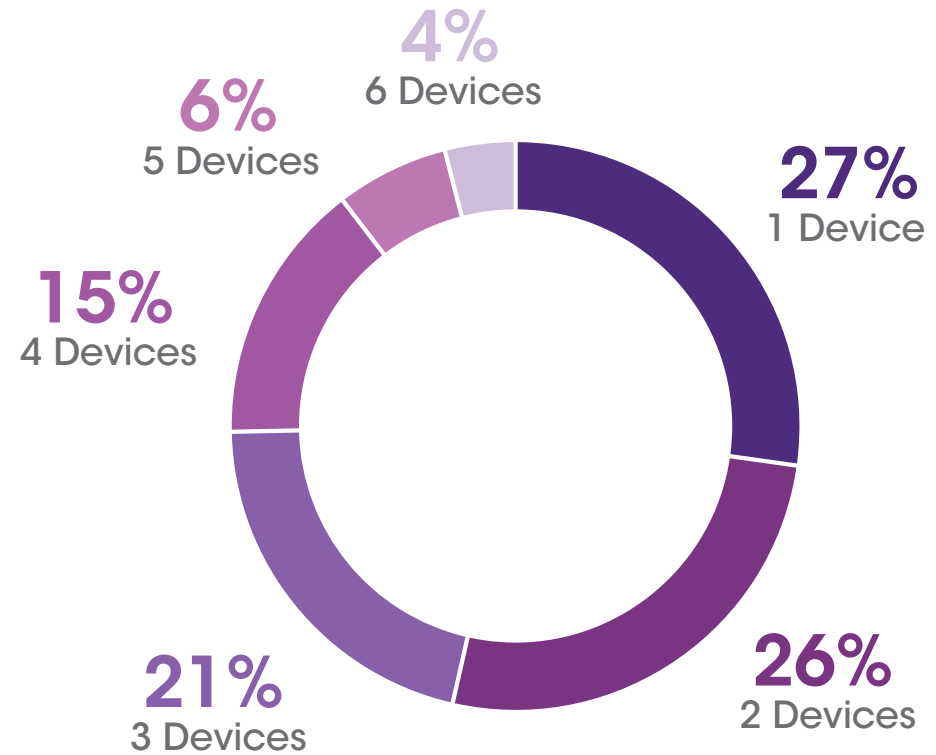
To me, play and playing games mean creativity, connection, and discovery. It's a way for people to express themselves, build relationships, and learn without pressure. Whether it's a simple game or a complex strategy one, playing brings out joy, imagination, and even valuable life skills like teamwork, patience, and problem-solving. It's not just about winning—it's about experiencing, growing, and having fun together.

”

Age 23 Female. Auckland Region.

Number of game devices per household (%)

Most New Zealand game households have two or more devices for playing video games; 46% have three or more game devices.



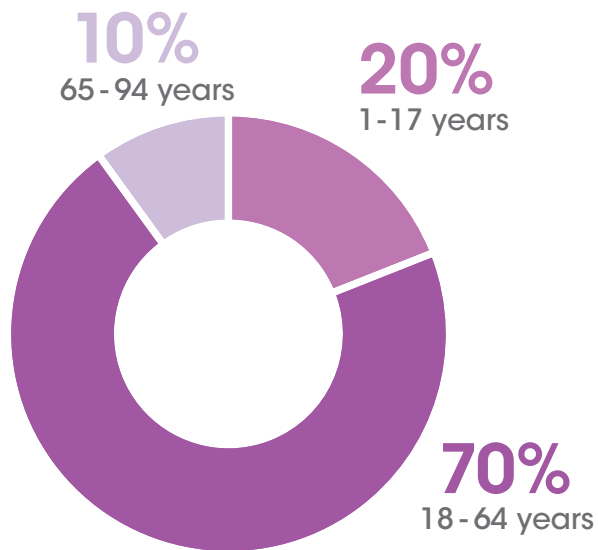
Types of game devices in households (%)

Taking all brands and platforms together, dedicated game consoles represent the largest group of devices for playing games, followed by mobile phones and PCs.

Average player age

The average age of New Zealanders who play video games has steadily risen over the years, reflecting both the growing number of players and the ageing of existing ones. However, this growth has begun to level out as players' average age draws closer to that of the broader New Zealand Population. The Average age of video game players has increased by a few months since the 2023 report, reaching

36 years in 2025.

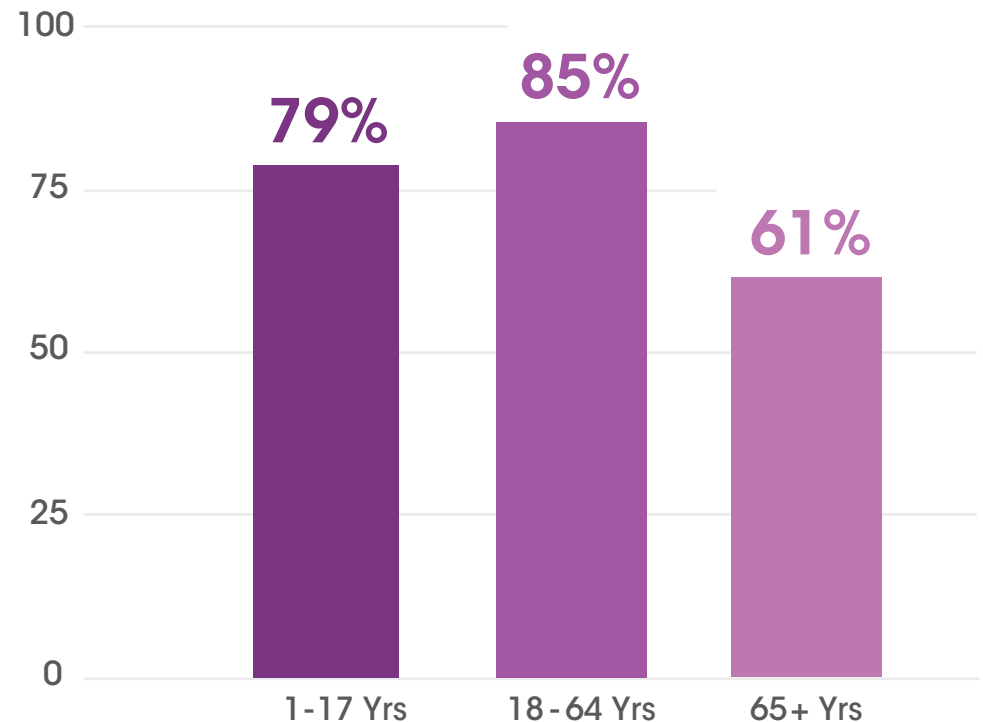


Age proportion of all players (%)

Poignantly, children are not the core audience of game players. In fact, as a proportion of all New Zealanders who play video games, 70% are working-age adults, with 20% being children and 10% being retirement-age adults.

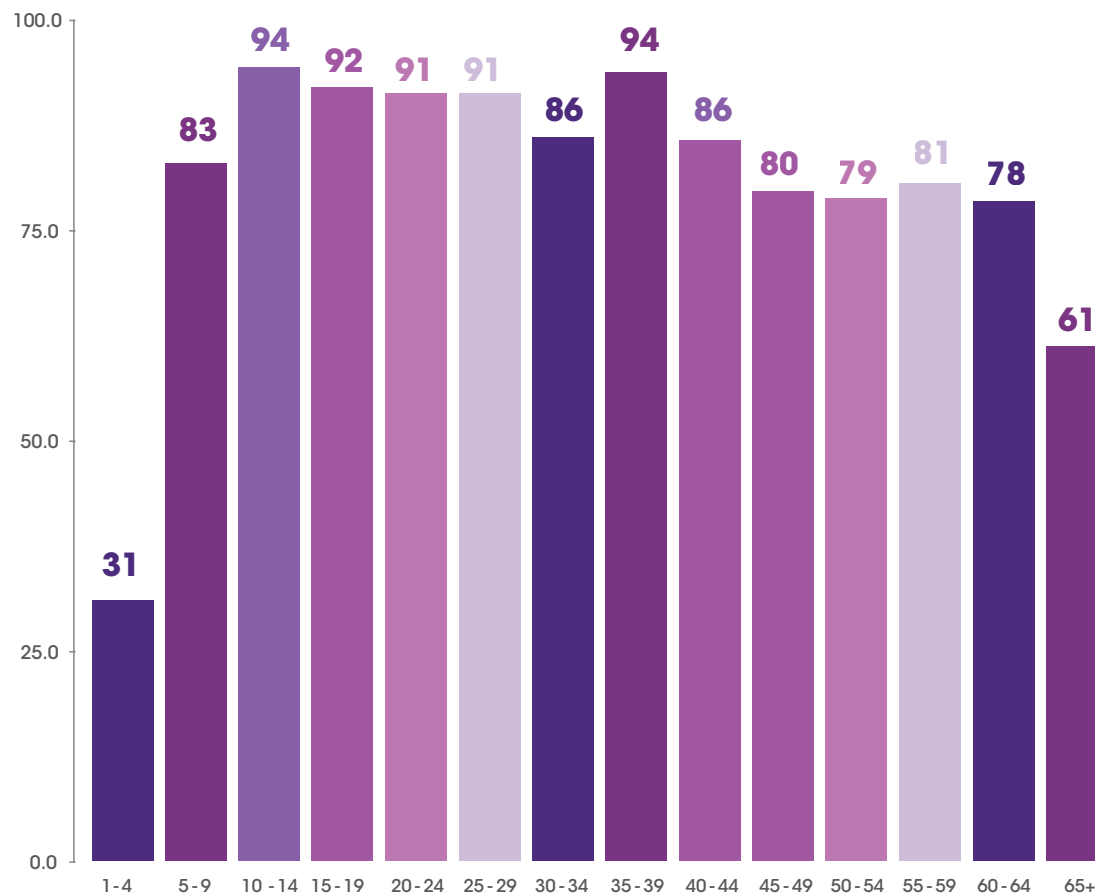
Age category of players (%)

Grouping the sample into broad age categories of children, working-age adults, and retirement-age adults shows that the age group with the highest proportion of players is working-age adults, of which 85% play. However, even 61% of retirement-age adults play.

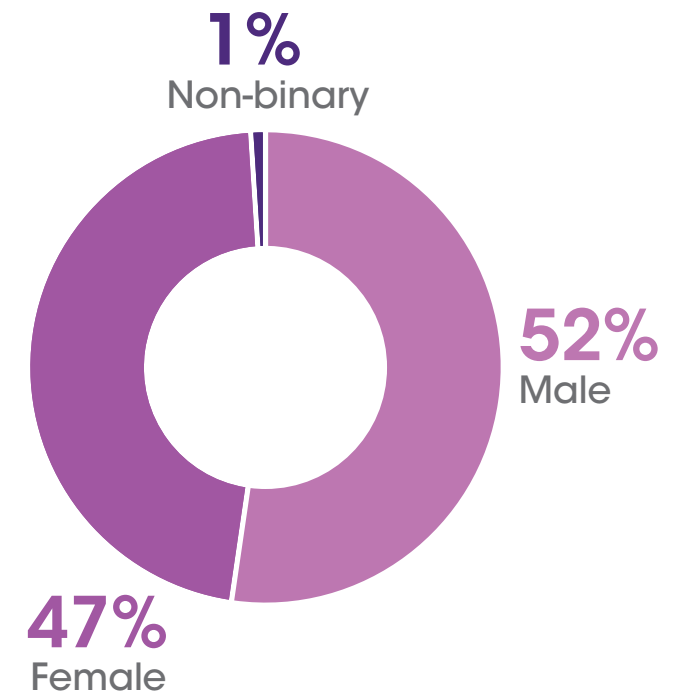


Proportion of players within age categories (%)

Broken down into Stats NZ age bands, the age group with the highest proportion of its sub-population that plays is 10-14-year-olds. Notably, more adults aged 65 and older play than children aged 1-4.



NB: Percent (%) Age Groups; *Stats NZ; All Persons; n=2151

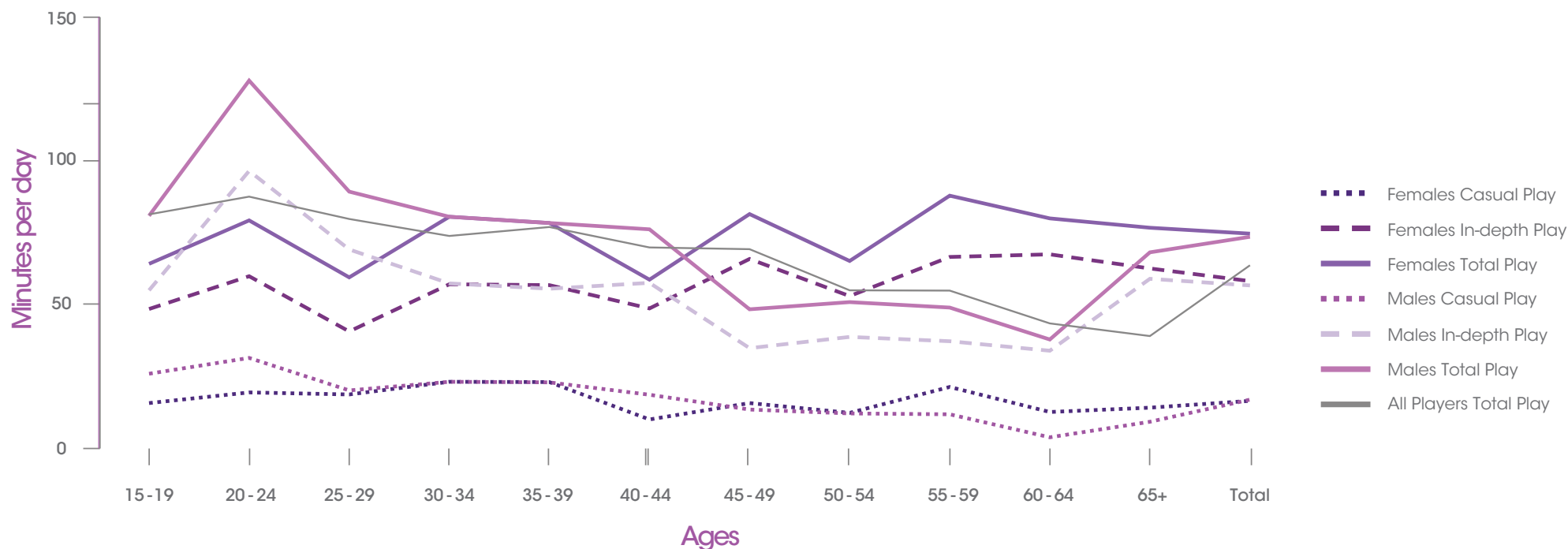


Gender proportion of all players (%)

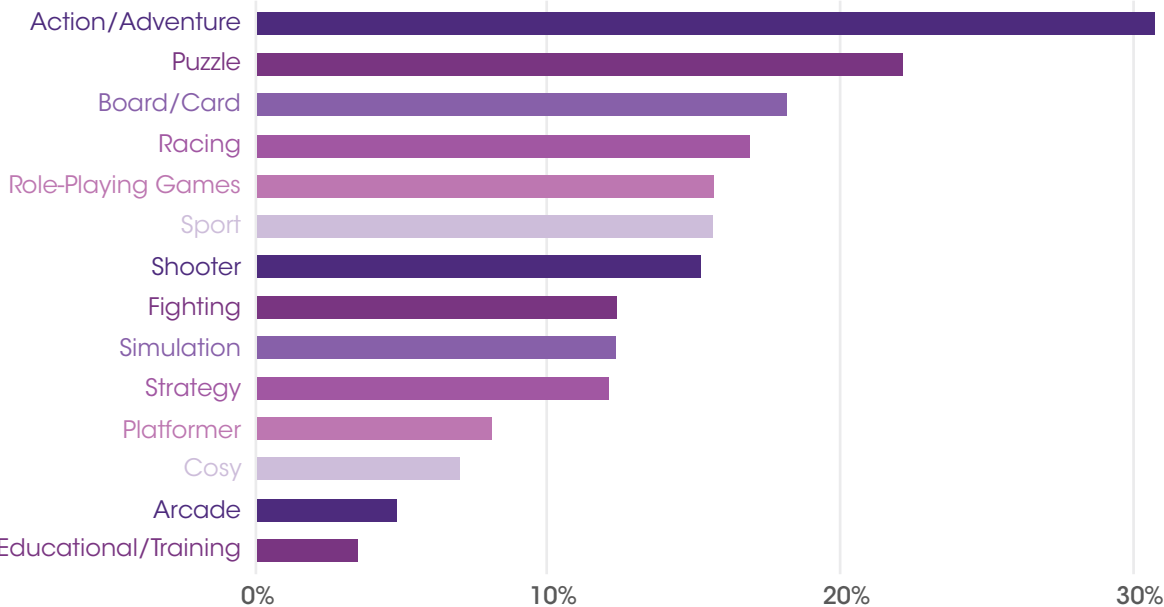
Further, of all players, 47% are female, 52% male and nearly 1% reporting non-binary identity. Again, it is notable that females are roughly half of the video game player population.

Total play time by age and gender

We have observed over many years that children and young adults spend more time playing games than older adults, calculated by observing how often and for how long they play. This year, as in previous years, the youngest adults play the most, with males spending the most time every day playing (2 hours). As in previous reports, however, women in age bands from 45-49 years and older spend more time playing than men.



Types of genres played by New Zealanders (%)



Participants were asked to identify the top three video game genres most played by them and other members of their household. Action/adventure games are the clear favourite. The genres most preferred by children and adults combined after action/adventure are puzzle, board/card, racing, and role-playing games.

Multiplayer preferences (%)

This year, we asked whether players in the household who play socially preferred to play collaborative or competitive games. Overall, 65% of New Zealanders prefer to play collaborative games.

However, the preference for competitive play increases steadily with age; while the youngest players tend to refer to cooperative games, the oldest players tend to prefer competition.

	U18	18 - 34	35 - 64	65+
Collaborative	71%	71%	62%	59%
Competitive	29%	29%	38%	41%

65%
Collaborative



35%
Competitive

The Family Experience

“

I used to connect with my sister by playing Minecraft together, me and her were not that close. So, I think that is one of the few ways video games have helped me.

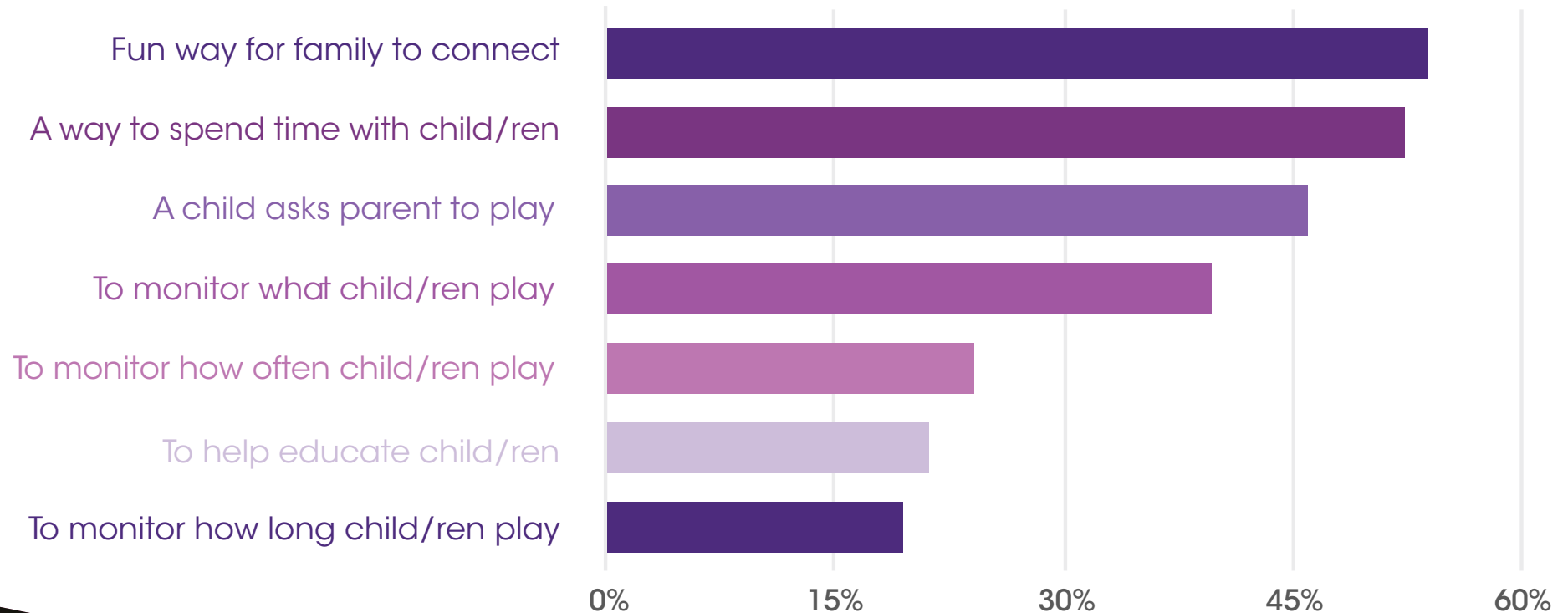
Age 18 Female. Bay of Plenty Region.

Minecraft is a game my grandchildren love. I find their minds are stimulated by being creative.

Age 55 Female. Auckland Region.

”

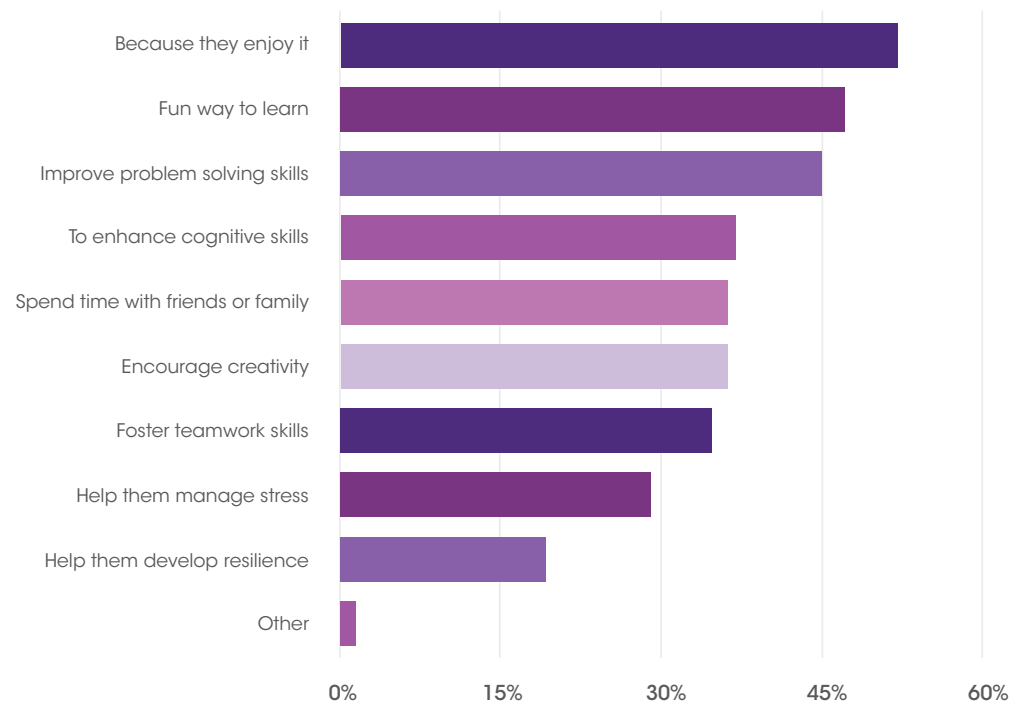
Why parents play video games with their children (%)



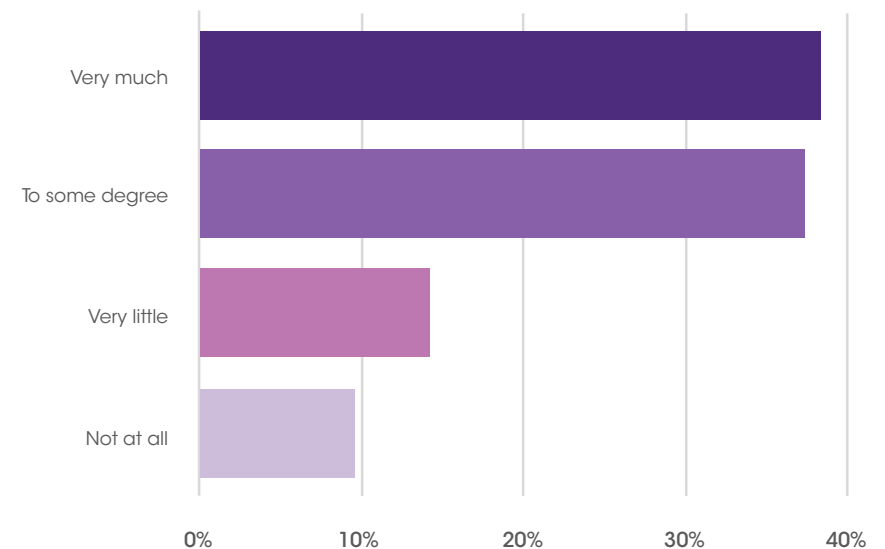
Parents report they allow their children to play video games for many reasons. Limiting their responses to the top three reasons, parents tend to cite their children's enjoyment first (52%), a fun way to learn (47%), and a way to improve problem-solving skills (45%) most frequently. However, more than 30% of parents cite fostering teamwork skills and nearly 20% say developing resilience as reasons they let children play.

As with previous years, the number one reason parents play video games with their children is that games offer a fun way for families to connect, and they create a space to spend time with their children.

Why do parents let their children play (%)



Parents use of rules for children's game play (%)

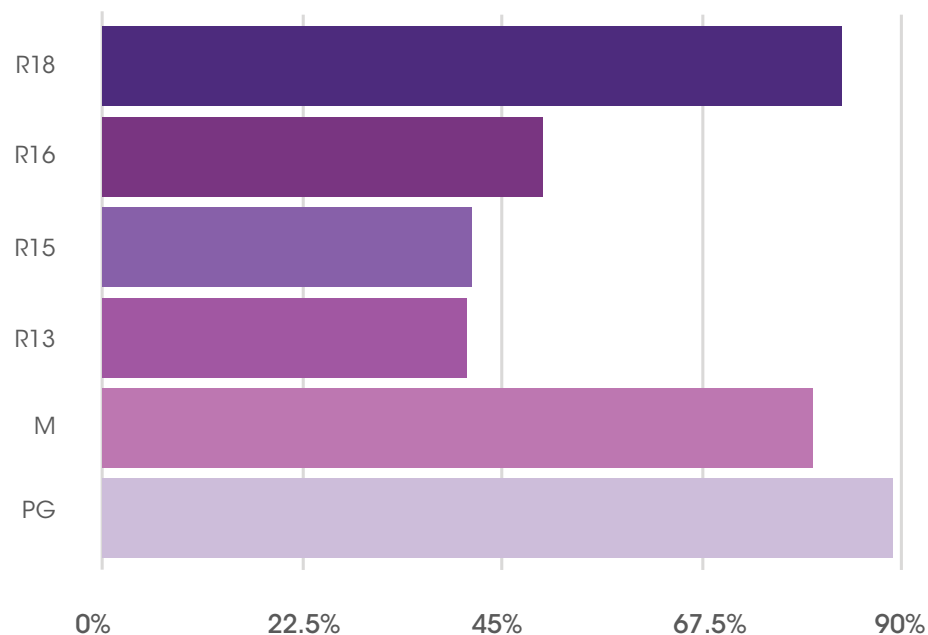


Moreover, 77% of parents say they set rules for their children's video game play, with 39% saying "very much" and another 38% saying "to some degree."

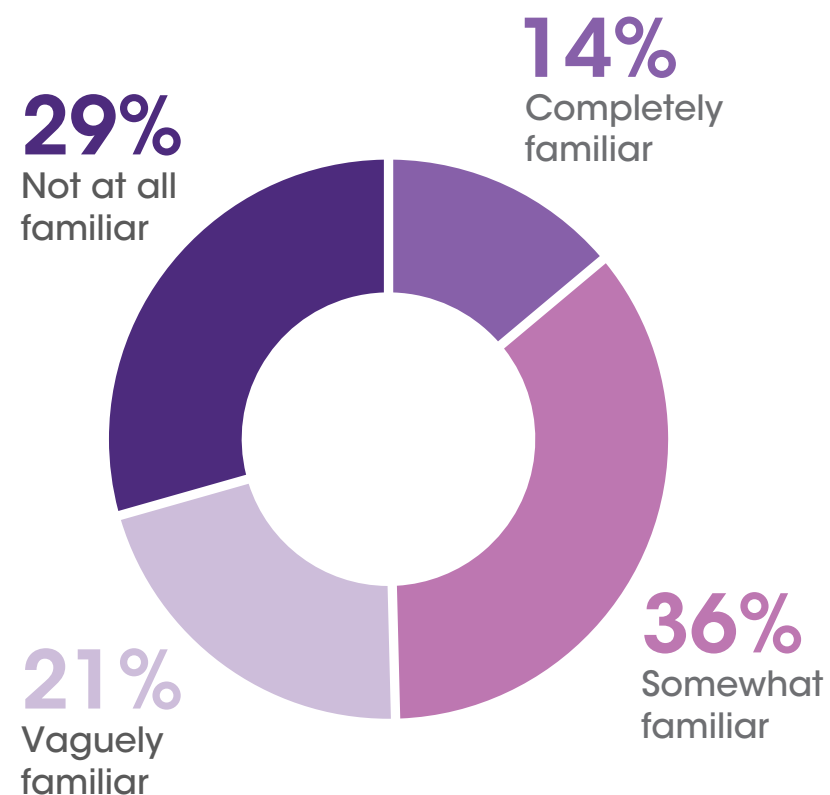
Video games have been the subject of content regulation under a national classification scheme in New Zealand for many decades. We have demonstrated consistently high levels of awareness among adults of the classification markings and their meanings. A majority of adults are able to correctly identify which classifications are legally restricted and which are not. However, the R13, R15 and R16 classifications are the least well understood.

Half of adults feel they are either completely or somewhat familiar with classifications shown on video games.

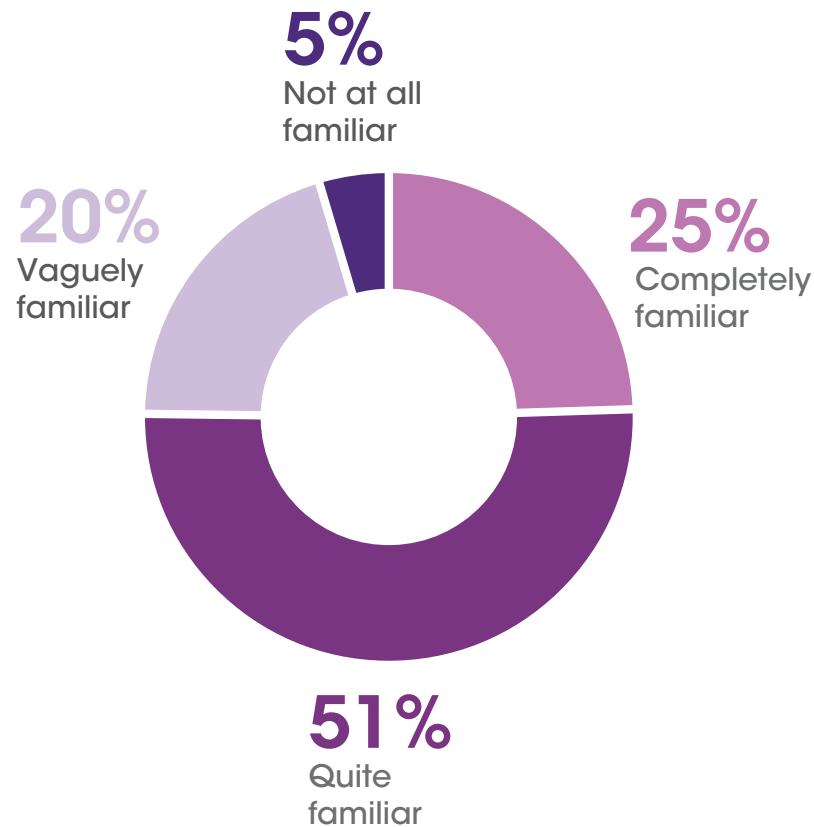
Adults correctly identifying restricted classifications (%)



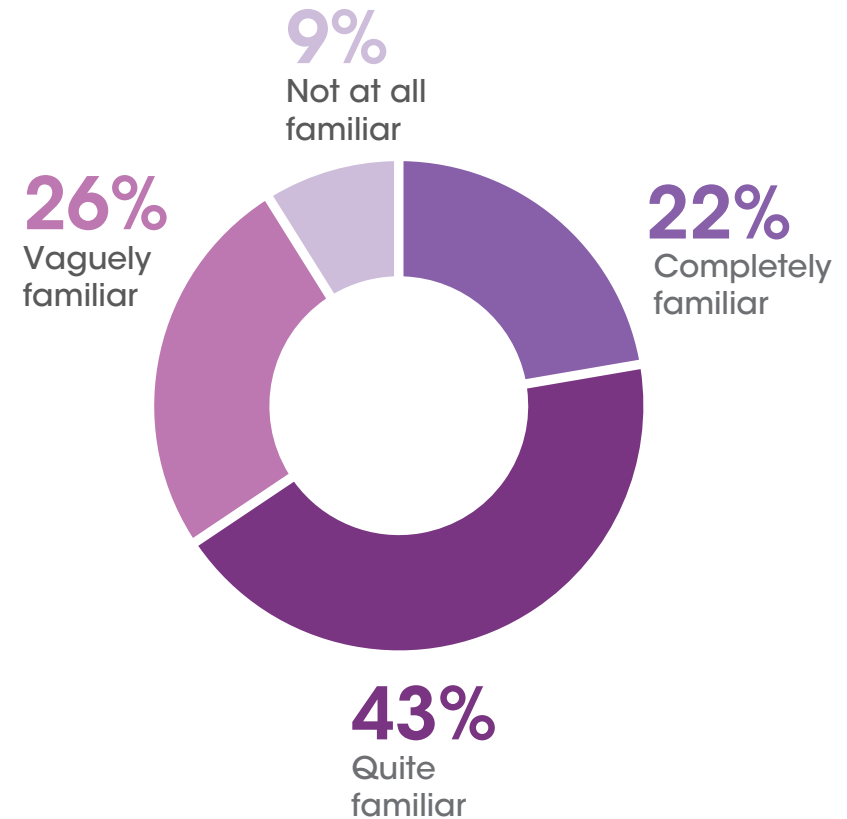
Adults' familiarity with game classifications (%)



Adults' familiarity with family controls on game devices (%)



Adults' familiarity with in-game controls (%)



However, they feel more familiar with family controls on game devices such as consoles, with over three-quarters reporting they are either completely or quite familiar.

Two-thirds of adults report they are either completely or quite familiar with in-game controls.

Why Do New Zealanders Play Games?





New Zealanders play games...
...for fun.



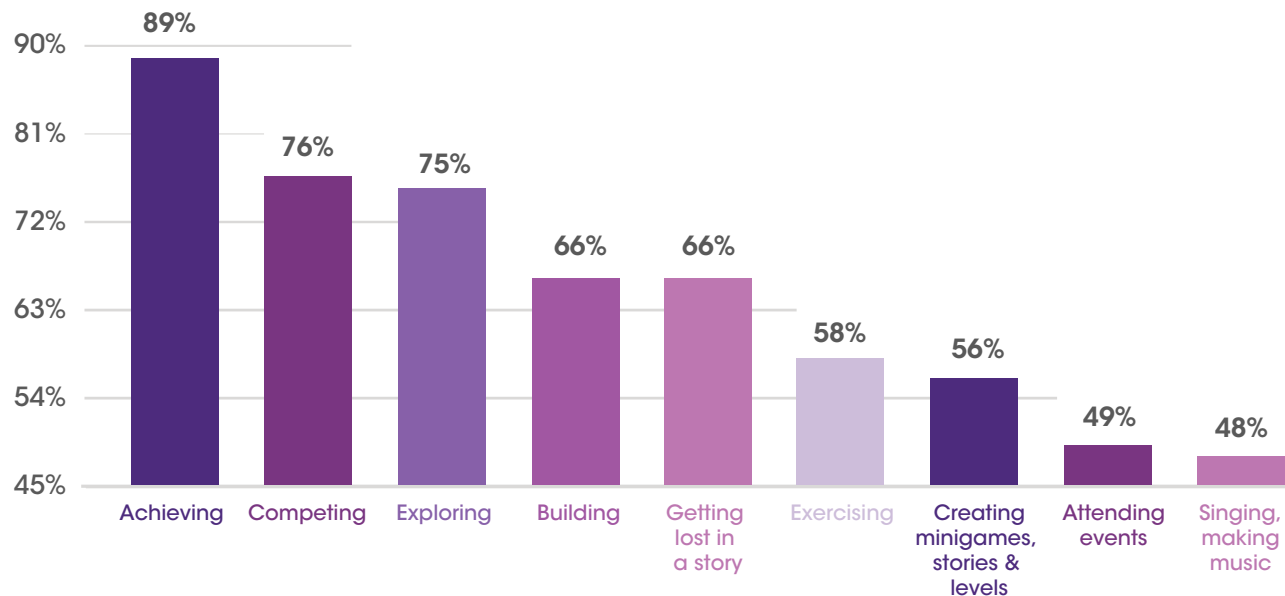
It allows me to turn off my thoughts and fall into a different world purely of fun.

Age 36 Female. Parent.
Auckland Region.



Game-related content creation objectives (%)

In addition to building and maintaining relationships video game players enjoy engaging with content creation in games to enhance their sense of achievement (89%), add to the experience of exploring (75%) and competing (76%), as well as creating new content such as building (66%) and getting lost in the story (66%) to go so far as creating minigames, stories and levels in some games (56%), among other activities.



New Zealanders' Top 5 reasons to play

1. To have fun
2. To relax and destress
3. To pass time
4. Be challenged
5. To escape



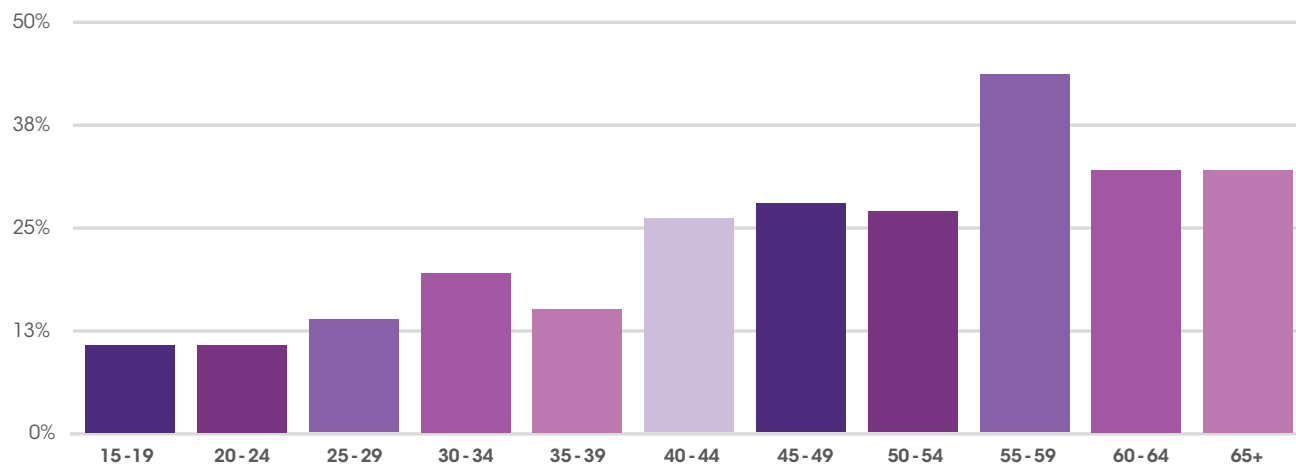
New Zealanders play games... ...for connection.

76% of New Zealanders who play video games play them socially, with others.

Evidence about the social ways in which New Zealanders play video games has busted the long-standing stereotypes about lonely and competitive play.

We have observed that social play is inversely related to age. As we age, we tend to play more solo games.

Only play games alone by age group (%)



“

Playing video games is a form of social bonding, allowing me to connect and collaborate with friends all over the world.

71 Male. Gisborne Region.

”

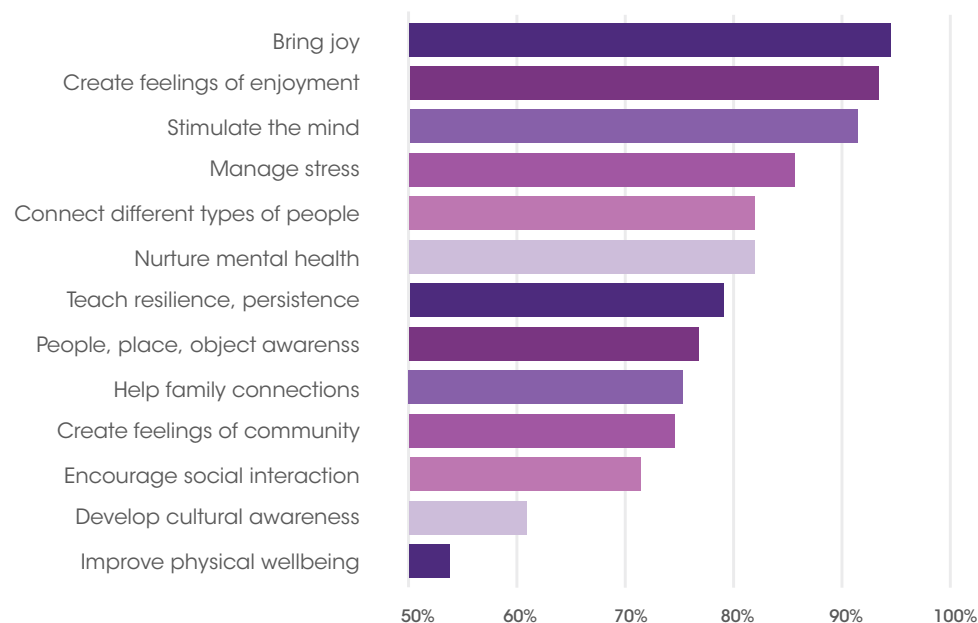


New Zealanders play games...

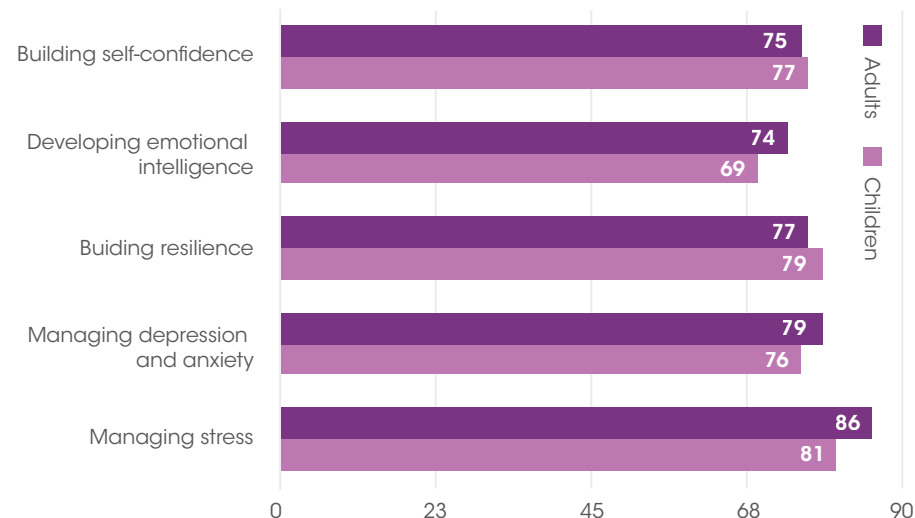
...for health & well being.

Adults in New Zealand believe that video games offer personal growth to those who play. The most obvious potential of games is to create feelings of joy (95%), enjoyment (93%), stimulate the mind (91%), connect different types of people (82%), create different types of awareness (75%) and improve physical wellbeing (54%), among other areas of personal growth.

Potential of games for personal growth (%)



Potential of games for mental wellbeing (%)



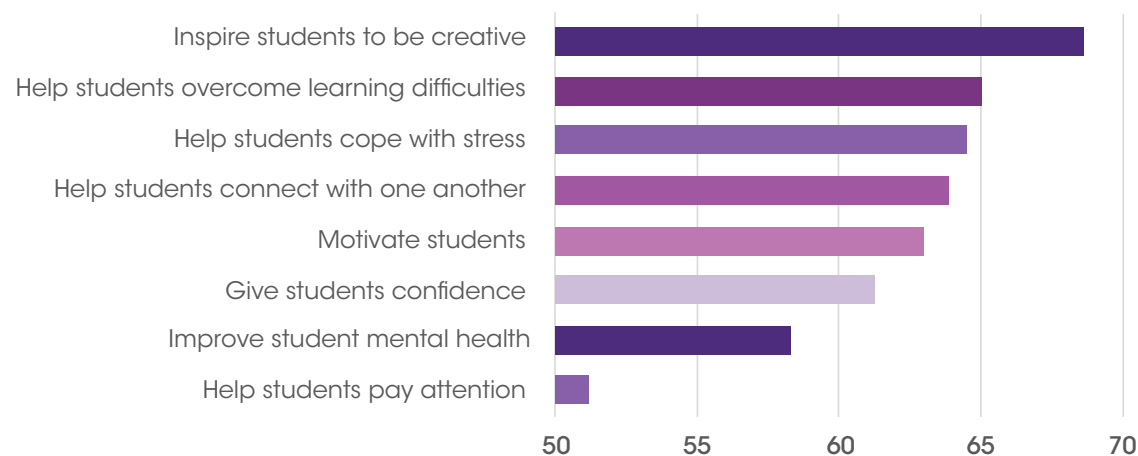
Most agree that video games have potential mental health benefits for those who play, whether they are young or old. These benefits for children and adults include stress management, resilience, building self-confidence, managing depression and developing emotional intelligence.



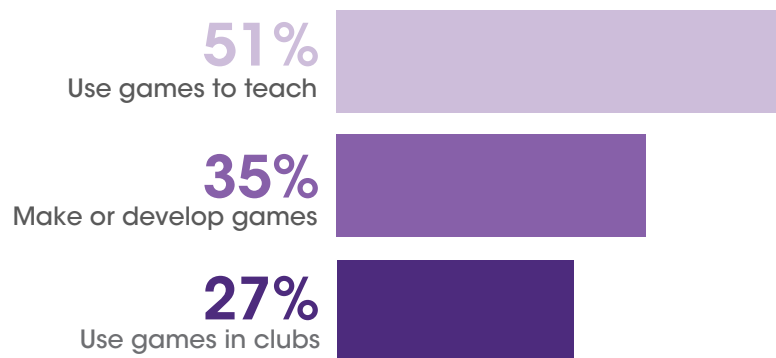
New Zealanders play games... ...for education.

Potential of games for student experience (%)

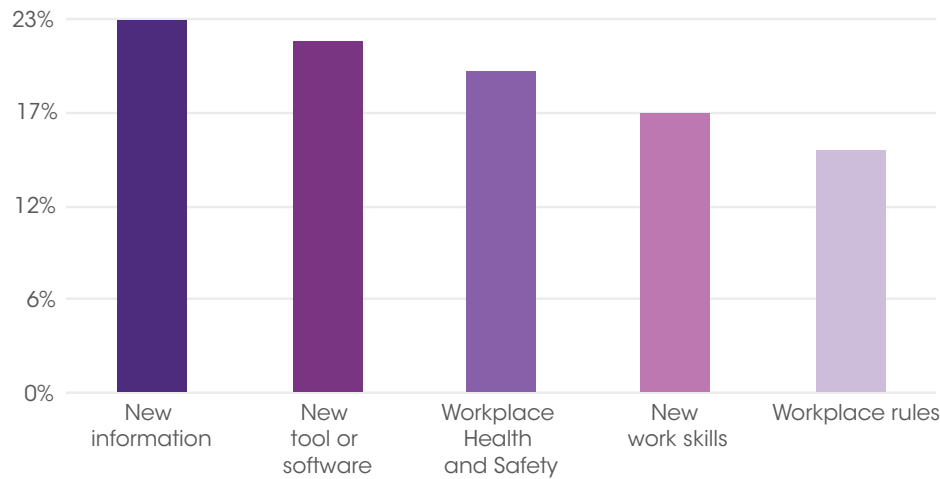
The capacity of games for learning and training extends to their potential in schools, according to most adults, regardless of whether they themselves play video games. For example, more than half to more than two-thirds believe games in schools can help all eight areas about which we asked, including: inspiring creativity, overcoming learning difficulties, coping with stress, social connection, motivating, boosting confidence, improving mental health, and paying attention.



Children using games at school (%)



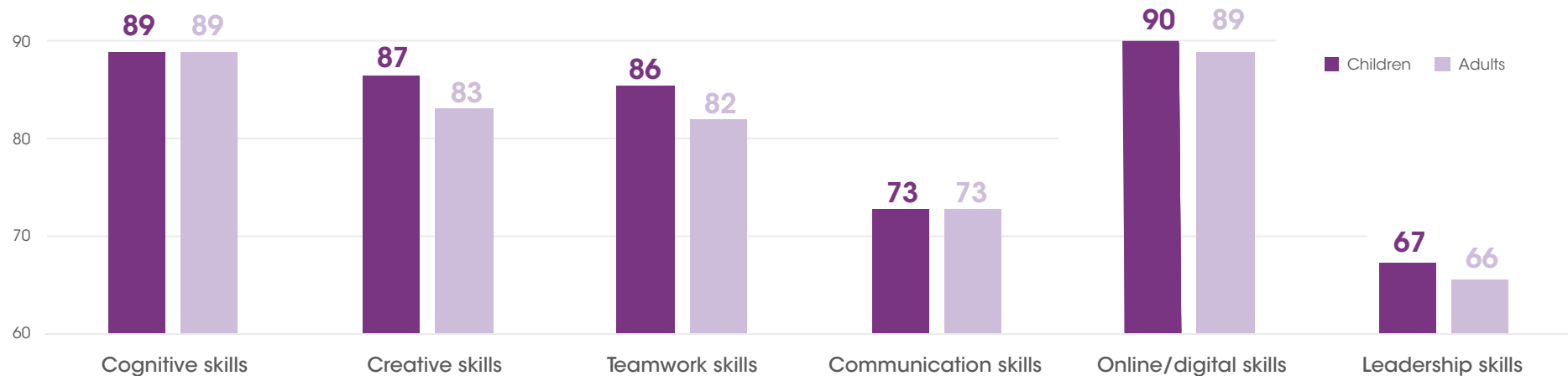
According to parents, 51% of children's schools use games to facilitate teaching, 35% include game development in the technology curriculum, and 27% have dedicated clubs for games in a variety of contexts.



Using games at work (%)

As in previous reports, the 2025 data show that games and gamification are a key part of work life with 23% of adults in New Zealand saying they have used games at work to learn new information. Overall, more than 20% have used a game environment to learn on the job.

Potential of Games for Skills Development (%)



Moreover, most adults, regardless of whether they themselves play video games, believe that games create a great environment for developing skills. However, most adults think the potential for skills development from games is greater for children than adults. Nevertheless, games were ranked positively for both age groups across all six areas for which skills development was presented, including: cognitive, digital, creative, teamwork, communication and leadership skills.

Play by the ages...

18-34



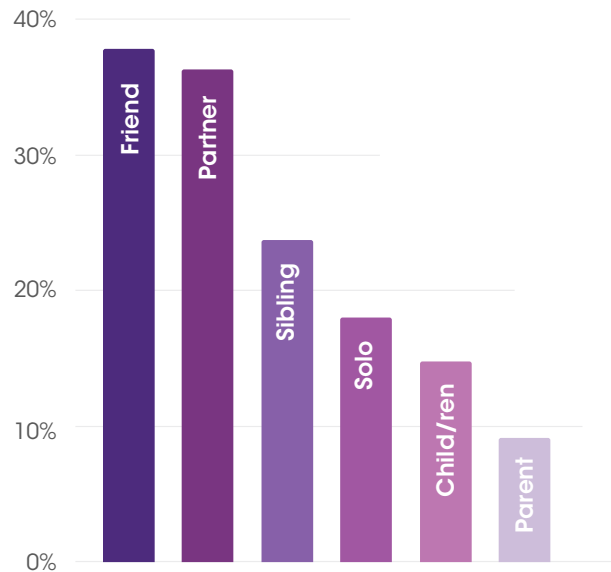
Top 5 Reasons

why 18-34 year-olds play

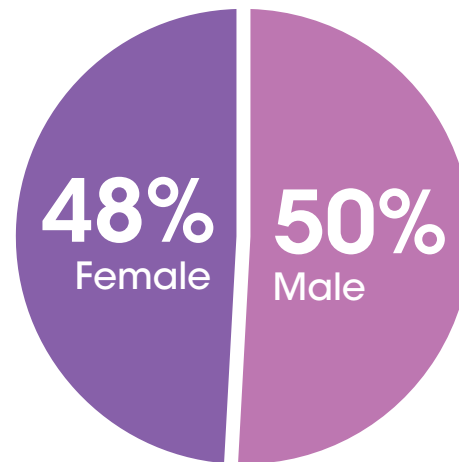
1. Have fun

2. Relieve boredom 3. Relax or de-stress

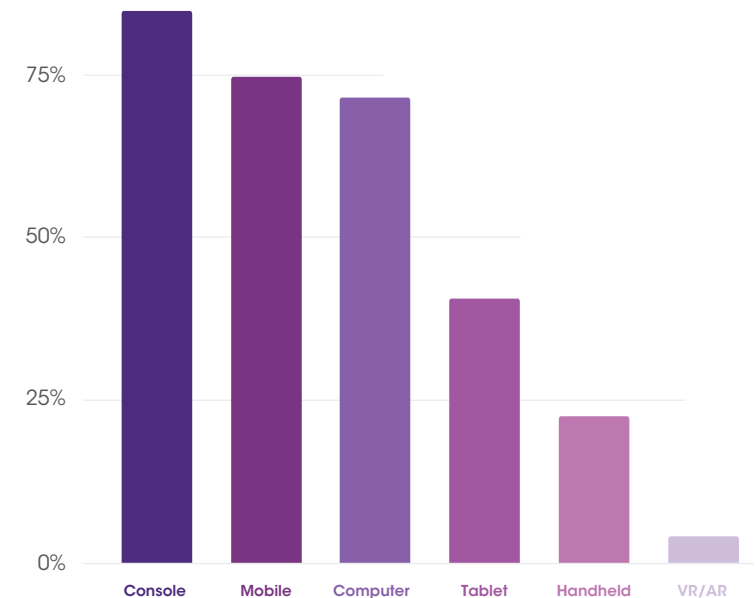
4. Have a break from daily life 5. Be challenged



Who do 18-34 year olds play video games with socially?



What proportion of 18-34 year old players are male or female?



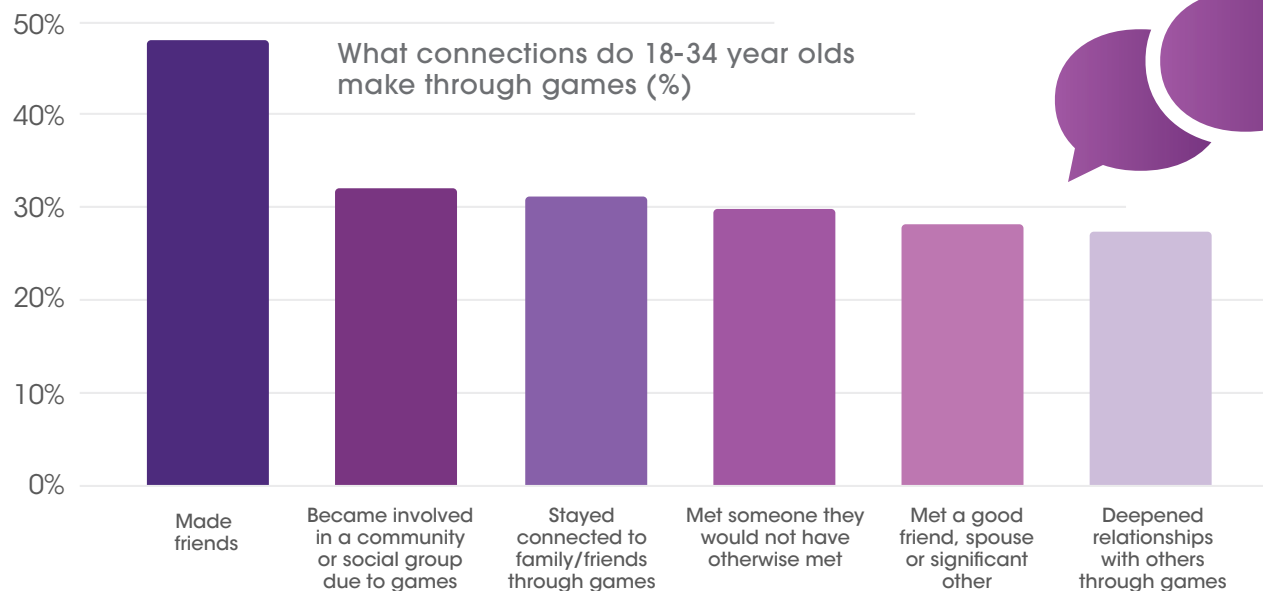
What gaming devices do 18-34 year old players have in their households?

“

A place where I can hang out with my friends and go beyond the limitations of the real world or get invested into a single player game and its story and escape reality.

Age 20 Male. Auckland Region.

”



How do 18-34 year olds prefer to play together?



Top 5 in-game activities for 18-34 year-olds

1. Achieving
2. Exploring
3. Lost in a story
4. Competing
5. Building



Top 5 game genres for 18-34 year-olds

1. Action/adventure
2. Role-playing games
3. Racing
4. Sport
5. Simulation

Play by the ages...

35-64

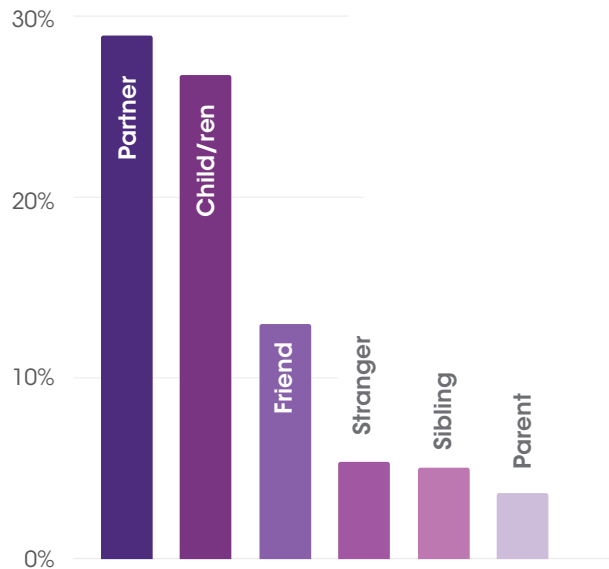


Top 5 Reasons why 35-64 year-olds play

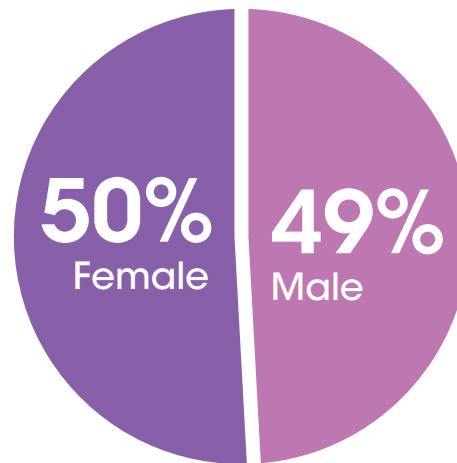
1. Have fun

2. Relax or de-stress 3. Relieve boredom

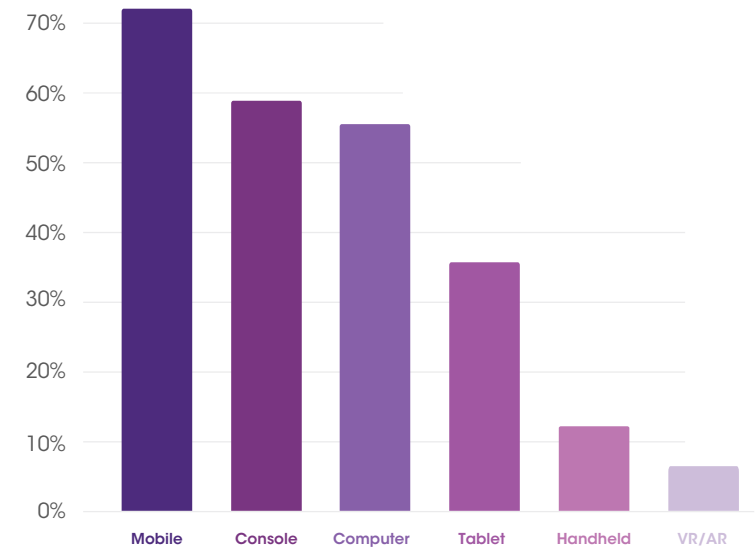
4. Have a break from daily life 5. Be challenged



Who do 35-64 year olds play video games with socially?



What proportion of 35-64 year old players are male or female?

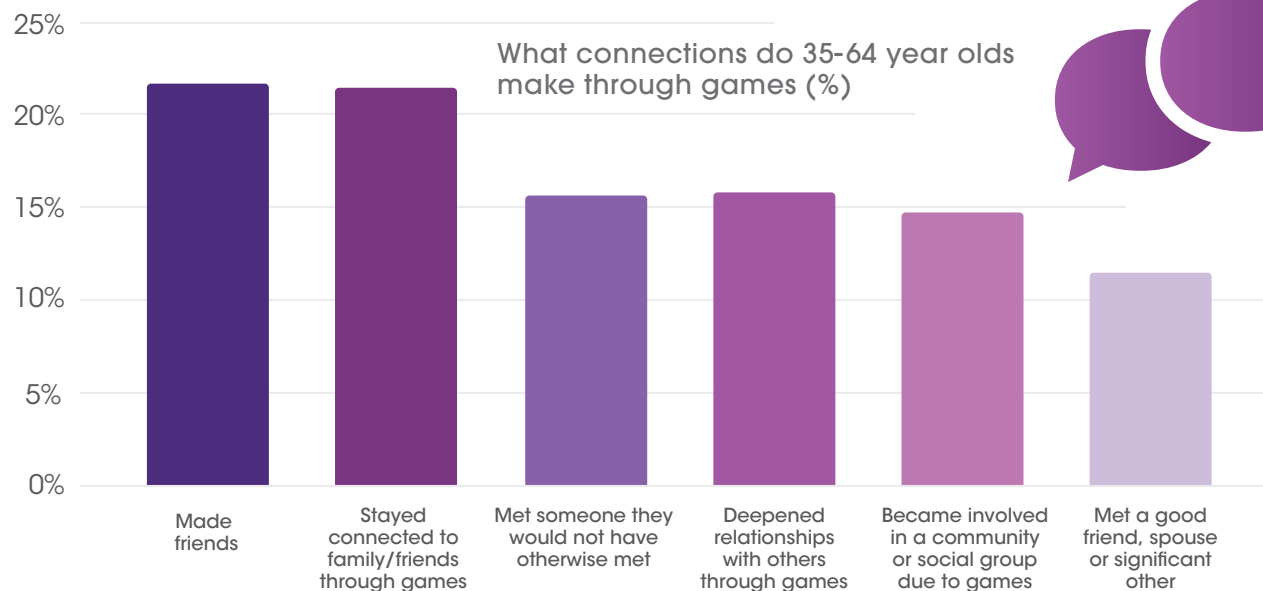


What gaming devices do 35-64 year old players have in their households?



Pokémon Go community has allowed me to get to know new people in my community. I have also now run 2 half marathons and one full marathon directly due to my fitness gained through playing Pokémon Go.

Age 45 Male. Parent. Auckland Region.



How do 35-64 year olds prefer to play together?



Top 5 in-game activities for 35-64 year-olds

1. Achieving
2. Exploring
3. Competing
4. Building
5. Lost in a story



Top 5 game genres for 35-64 year-olds

1. Puzzle
2. Board/Card
3. Action/Adventure
4. Racing
5. Shooter

Play by the ages...

65+



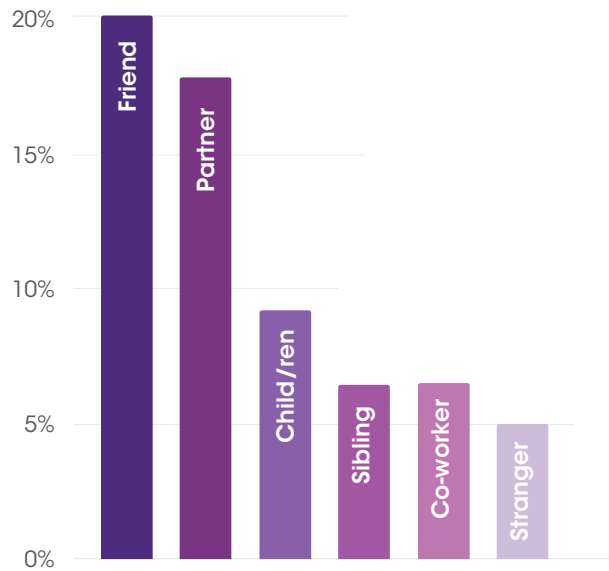
Top 5 Reasons

why 65+ year-olds play

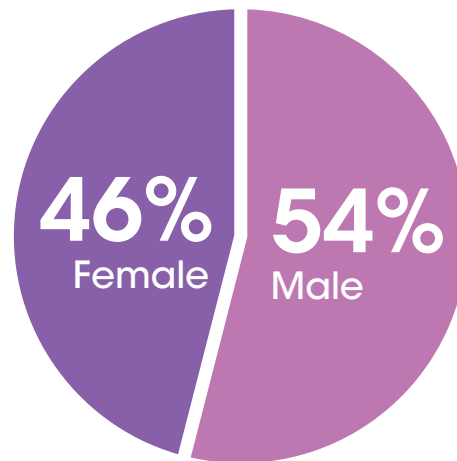
1. Have fun

2. Relax or de-stress 3. Be challenged

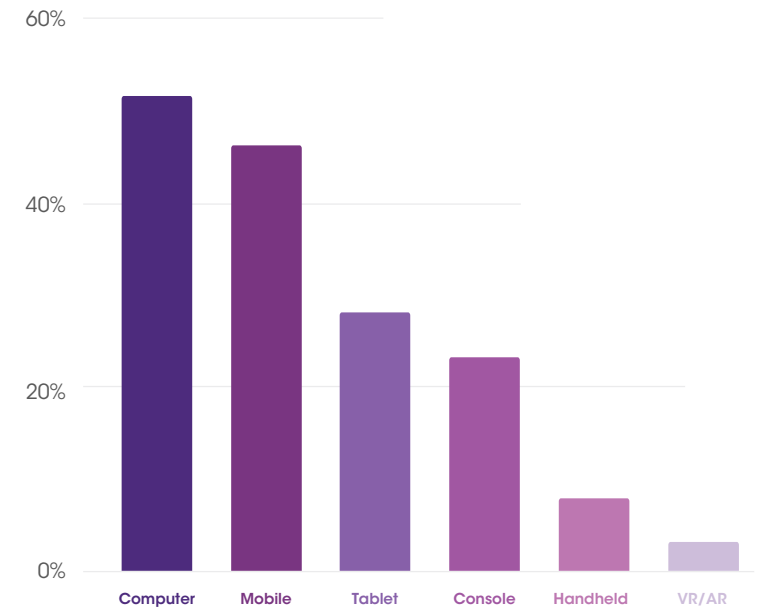
4. Relieve boredom 5. Improve mental health



Who do 65+ year olds play video games with socially?



What proportion of 65+ year old players are male or female?



What gaming devices do 65+ year old players have in their households?

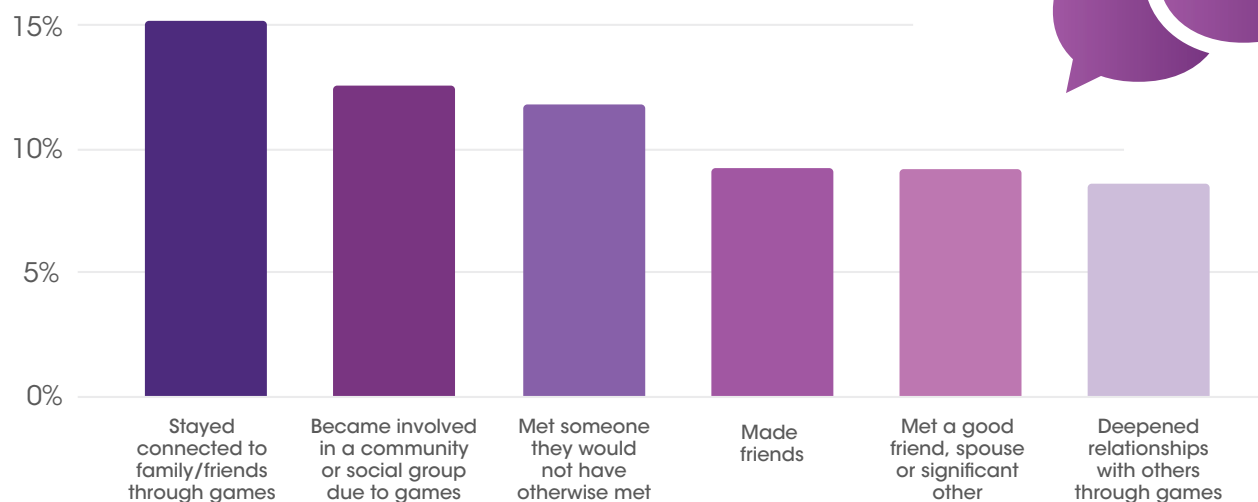


It's an outlet for my competitive spirit, driving me to achieve high scores and complete games with 100% completion.

Age 68 Female. Gisborne Region.



What connections do 65+ year olds make through games (%)



How do 65+ year olds prefer to play together?



Top 5 in-game activities for 65+ year-olds

1. Achieving
2. Competing
3. Exploring
4. Exercising
5. Lost in a story



Top 5 game genres for 65+ year-olds

1. Board/Card
2. Puzzle
3. Platformer
4. Action/Adventure
5. Role-Playing Games

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Raelene Knowles @ IGEA

Design & Layout
Mike Morphet @ Double Jump Communications

Photography
Armageddon Expo, Maria Boyadgis (p.12),

IN COLLABORATION WITH BOND UNIVERSITY

Authors

Professor Jeffrey E. Brand
jbrand@bond.edu.au
Faculty of Society and Design, Bond University

Dr Tyler Wilson
tylwilso@bond.edu.au
Faculty of Society and Design, Bond University

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bond.edu.au

METHODS, SAMPLES AND SUBSAMPLES

New Zealand Plays is a study of 820 households in New Zealand, represented by adult participants aged 18 and over who responded to over 80 questions and many response options.

Household-level statistics include demographics, household device profiles, attitudes, and knowledge questions. Parents represent 282 of the 820 household adult respondents. Data on play time (including frequency and duration, genre preferences, and common playing experiences) were drawn from adult participants and one other nominated household member (n=1,309). Age, gender and player status were drawn from the participants and all members of the household (n=1,731).

Participants were drawn randomly from the Qualtrics XM panel in May 2025; research was designed and conducted at Bond University. The margin of error is 3.5%.

Report authors have edited quotes only for grammar, spelling and punctuation but have not changed the content or meaning set by participants who shared their experiences.

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