



THE REAL SOCIAL CONNECTOR

How Gaming Drives Community, Authenticity & Engagement

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01 ___ Introduction - Gaming Is Human Nature
- 02 ___ Key Takeaways
- 03 ___ For The Love Of The Game - Delivering Positivity In A Social World
- 04 ___ Double The Fun - Supercharging Social Bonds
- 05 ___ Choose Your Own Adventure - Putting Players In Control
- 06 ___ Community Builder - Fostering Friendships Online
- 07 ___ Conclusion
- 08 ___ Appendix

INTRODUCTION

Gaming Is Human Nature

GAMING IS AN INHERENTLY SOCIAL ACTIVITY.

It is an experience made for sharing, whether through multiplayer gameplay, watching others play, or discussing strategies, achievements, and opinions.

As gaming's accessibility and popularity have increased, so has its role as a social connector. Previously, it was physical gaming arcades that served as the meeting places for gaming fans, but today much of it takes place virtually, both within the games themselves and outside of them through online forums and communities.



DESIRE FOR AUTHENTIC CONNECTION HAS NEVER BEEN STRONGER.

Understanding how gaming fosters community amongst those who play presents opportunities for meaningful engagement in an interactive and highly social environment.

This report uncovers why people play and how gaming's social elements heighten these feelings across different game modes, genres, and formats. It also explores the connections people form outside of the game, and how this further enhances the gameplay experience.

Gaming's fandom and its ability to build and enhance bonds - between friends, family and strangers - is like no other medium. Gaming puts the audience first, giving them unique control over their playing experience depending on mood and occasion. It drives connections between people, uniting them through shared interactions, passion and achievements.



02

KEY TAKEAWAYS

01

GAMING DELIVERS POSITIVITY IN A SOCIAL WORLD

Gaming is an overwhelmingly positive experience, with audiences citing relaxation, escapism, and happiness as reasons why they play. Almost half of people who play do so for its social aspects, such as competition, interaction, and meeting other players.

02

GAMING SUPERCHARGES SOCIAL BONDS

Of people who game, 66% have played video games with others - either online or in-person - in the last three months. Gaming also helps grow relationships, with over half of players reporting it has helped them develop bonds with their friends and family.

03

GAMING PUTS PLAYERS IN CONTROL OF HOW THEY CONNECT

With gaming, audiences have more choice over how they interact with gaming than other forms of entertainment, allowing them to choose an experience that matches their mood or desire for socialization across genre, franchise, and platform.

04

GAMING FANDOM FOSTERS FRIENDSHIPS ONLINE

The connection offered by gaming extends beyond the game itself, with the majority of people who play using non-in-game platforms to communicate around gaming, such as online communities which serve as hubs for fandoms of all types, including those that enjoy solo play.

03

FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME

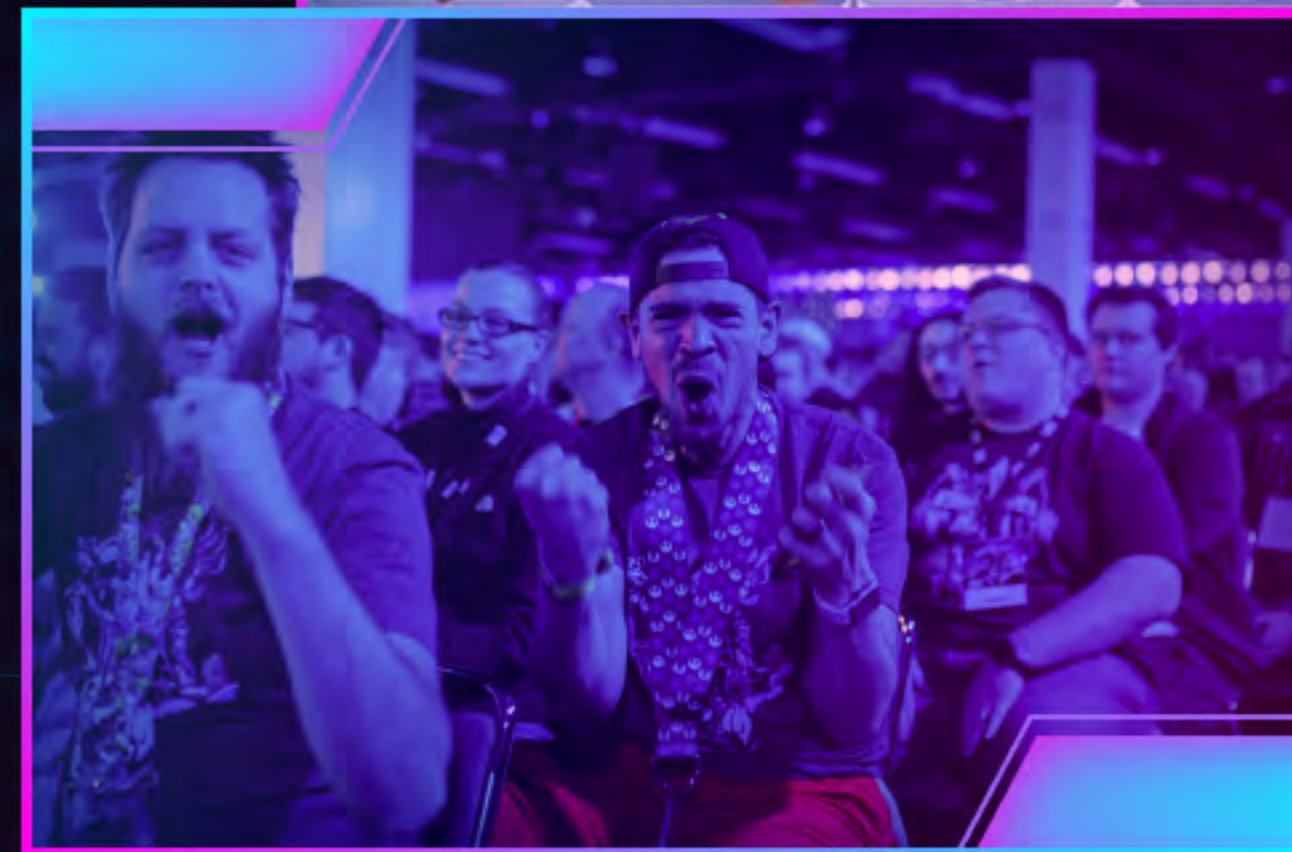
Delivering Positivity In A Social World

FOR THOSE WHO PLAY, GAMING IS MORE THAN JUST ENTERTAINMENT.

Gaming is a platform that allows audiences to interact, compete and share, creating strong emotional bonds in the process. While the motivations of people who game vary, they are all grounded in feelings of positivity and escapism. 69% of those surveyed said they play video games because it helps them relax, while over half of respondents also highlighted gaming's ability to provide an escape from everyday life and feelings of happiness as core reasons they play.

When the desire for authentic connection has never been stronger, understanding how gaming fosters community amongst those who play presents opportunities for meaningful engagement in an interactive and highly social environment.

Beyond relaxation and escapism, socialization is a key motivator for those who game. Almost half of people who play say the social aspects of gaming, such as competition, interacting with other players, and meeting new players like them, is one of the reasons they engage with video games. Gaming is a means of positive competition, a way to stay connected with friends, and offers friend and familial bonding.



“GAMING IS A WAY TO HAVE FUN. IT'S ALSO A WAY TO MEET NEW PEOPLE. WHETHER IT'S MEETING RANDOM PEOPLE ONLINE, THAT YOU END UP COMMUNICATING WITH FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME, OR, ONCE YOU MEET SOMEONE [IN-PERSON], THAT'S HOW YOU BUILD THAT FRIENDSHIP. YOU'RE PLAYING TOWARDS AN OBJECTIVE. YOU HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON THAT YOU'RE BOTH TALKING ABOUT, AND I FEEL LIKE THAT THIS REALLY HELPS WITH STRENGTHENING FRIENDSHIPS AND MEETING NEW PEOPLE. AND IT'S ALSO A WAY TO DISCOVER NEW WORLDS BECAUSE THERE'S SO MANY POSSIBILITIES.

- Eurie (Female, 26)





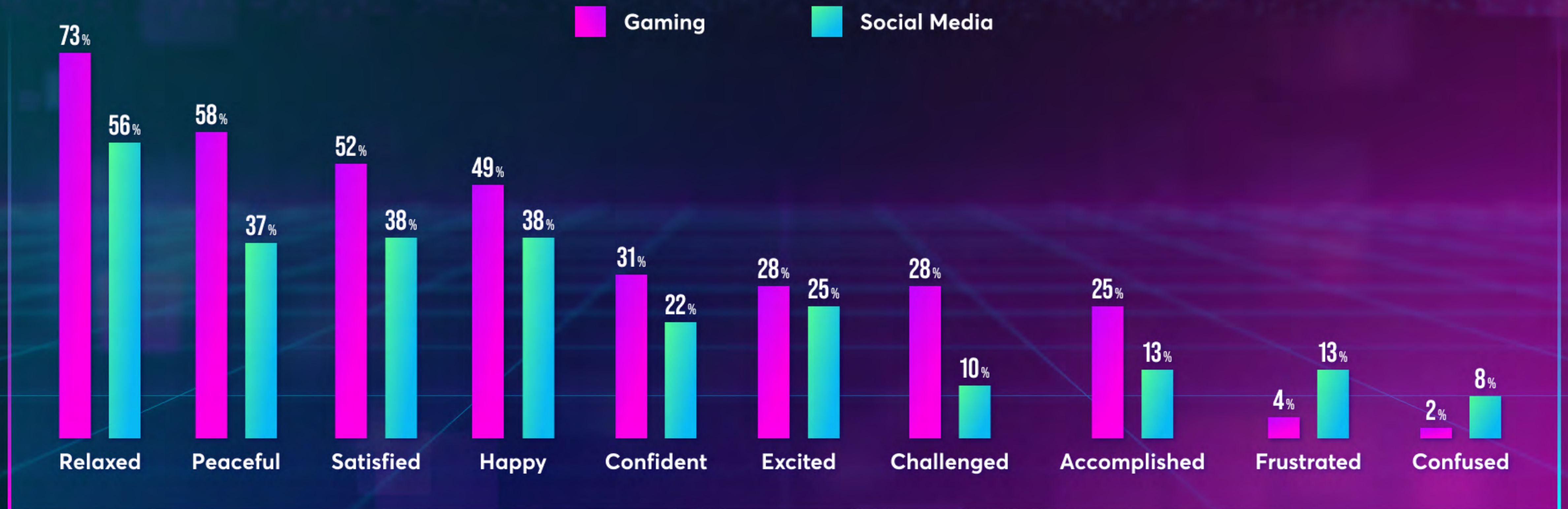
GAMING IS A PLATFORM WHERE AUDIENCES CAN SOCIALIZE AND INTERACT WITH A FOCUS ON PEOPLE, SHARED EXPERIENCES, AND COMMONALITY.

When comparing gaming to social media, players cite greater levels of relaxation, peacefulness, happiness, and confidence.

This drives the positive emotional connections developed amongst players both with gaming itself and with each other.



THE POSITIVE FEELINGS THAT GAMING DELIVERS THROUGH SOCIALIZATION ARE DISTINCTIVE TO GAMING.



"Gaming" feelings are attributed to solo gameplay.

“ WITH SOCIAL MEDIA, YOU LOSE GENUINE CONNECTION WITH PEOPLE... YOU'RE NOT NECESSARILY ALWAYS BEING 1,000% AUTHENTIC... I FEEL LIKE WITH GAMING THAT BARRIER IS NOT THERE... IT SPARKS MORE CONVERSATION. IT SPARKS MORE LAUGHS. I FEEL LIKE IT'S VERY DIFFERENT THAN LOOKING AT A SCREEN AND SCROLLING THROUGH.”

- Jordan (Male, 25)



SOJOURN

04

DOUBLE THE FUN

Supercharging Social Bonds

GAMING'S ROLE AS A SOCIAL MEDIUM IS EVIDENT IN THE POPULARITY OF COMMUNAL PLAY.

In the past three months, 66% of those who game have played video games with others - either online or in-person.

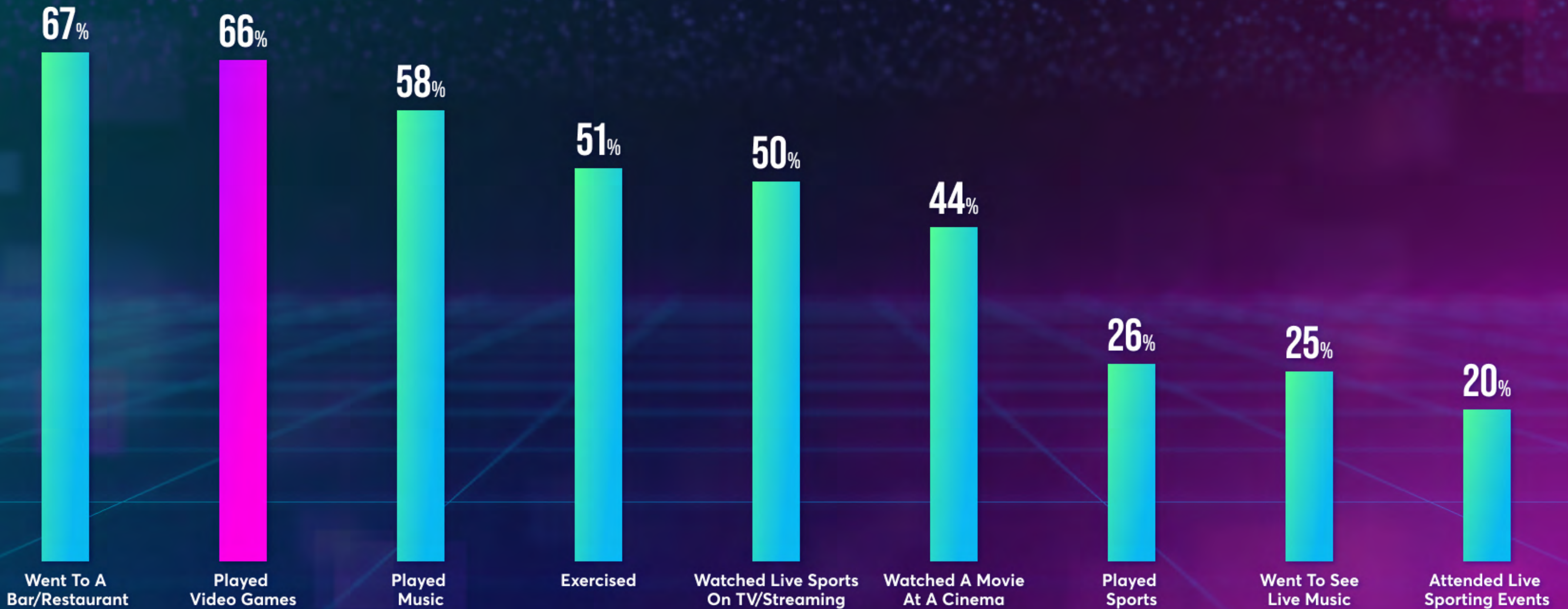
When they play with family and friends, the gaming experience and feelings around it, including positivity and escapism, are heightened. Compared to playing alone, playing with others provides increased feelings of excitement, confidence, happiness and challenges.

At the same time, players who game with others feel more challenged as there is more competition, and therefore also feel more frustrated, disappointed, and confused. However, they also feel a greater sense of accomplishment, which highlights the emotional investment they have in the game when sharing the experience with others.



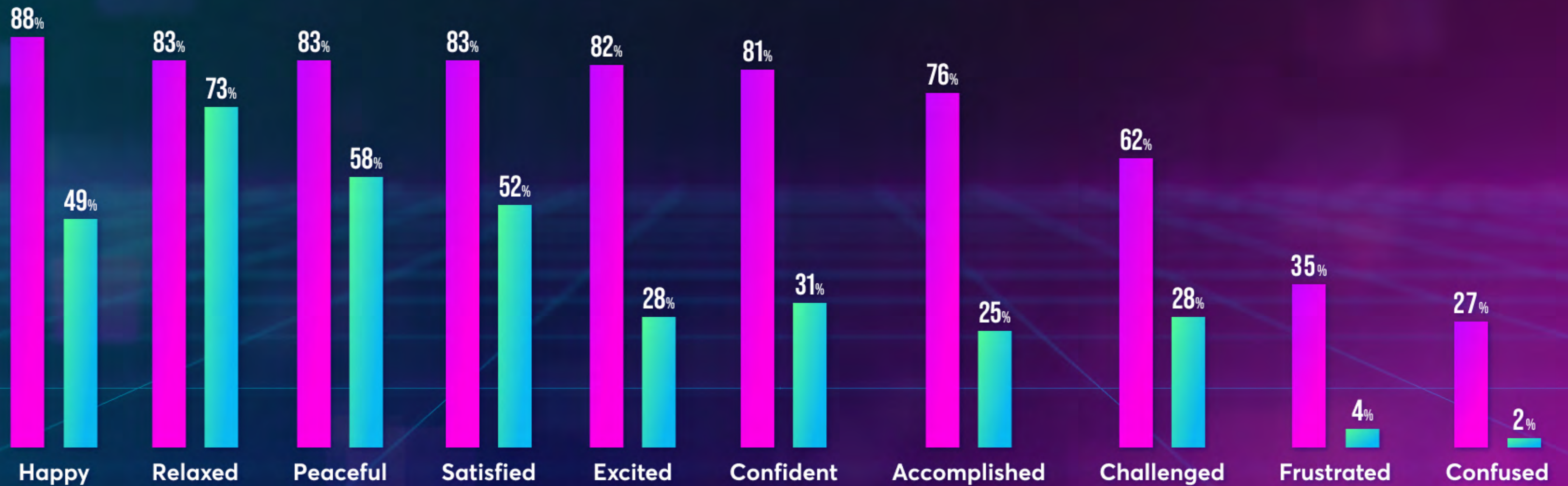
ACTIVITIES PARTICIPATED IN WITH OTHERS

(Last 3 Months)



FEELINGS WHILE PLAYING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS VS ALONE

With Friends/Family Alone

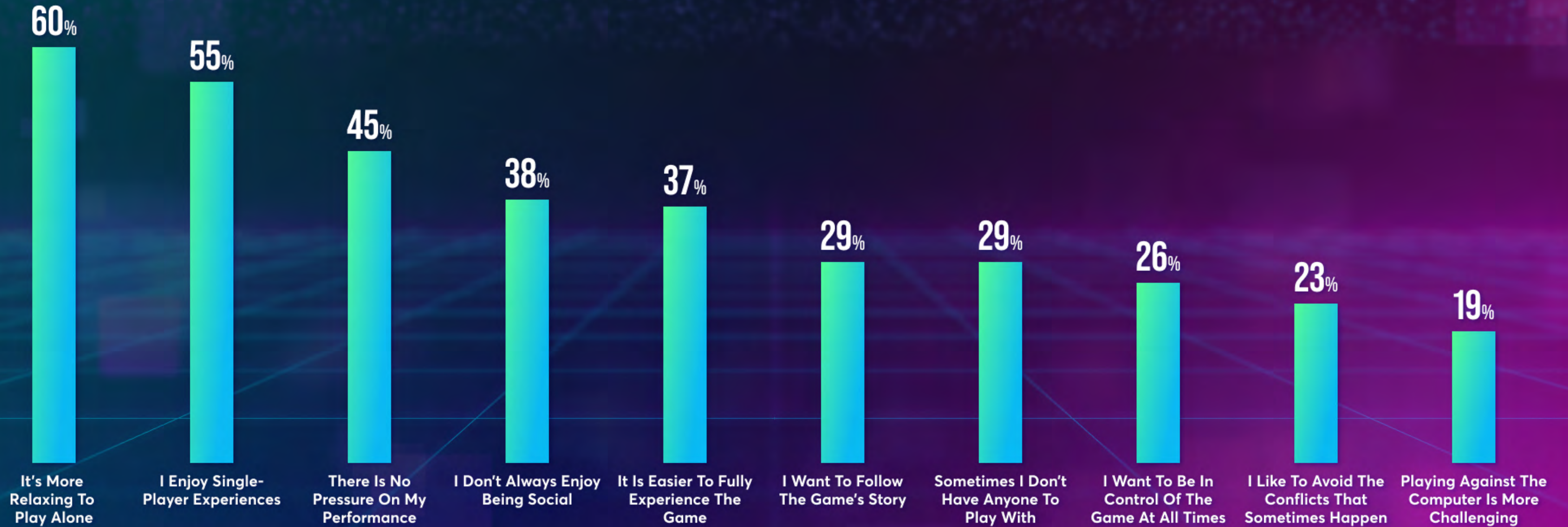




EVEN THOUGH EMOTIONS ARE HEIGHTENED WHILE PLAYING IN GROUPS, IT'S IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT PLAYING WITH OTHERS FULFILLS A DIFFERENT ROLE COMPARED TO THE EXPERIENCE OF GAMING SOLO.

When playing alone, people are primarily looking for opportunities to relax or simply enjoy the single-player game and experiences. They can also play without pressure on their performance, as they won't impact anyone else should they not complete a level or task.

REASONS FOR PLAYING ALONE



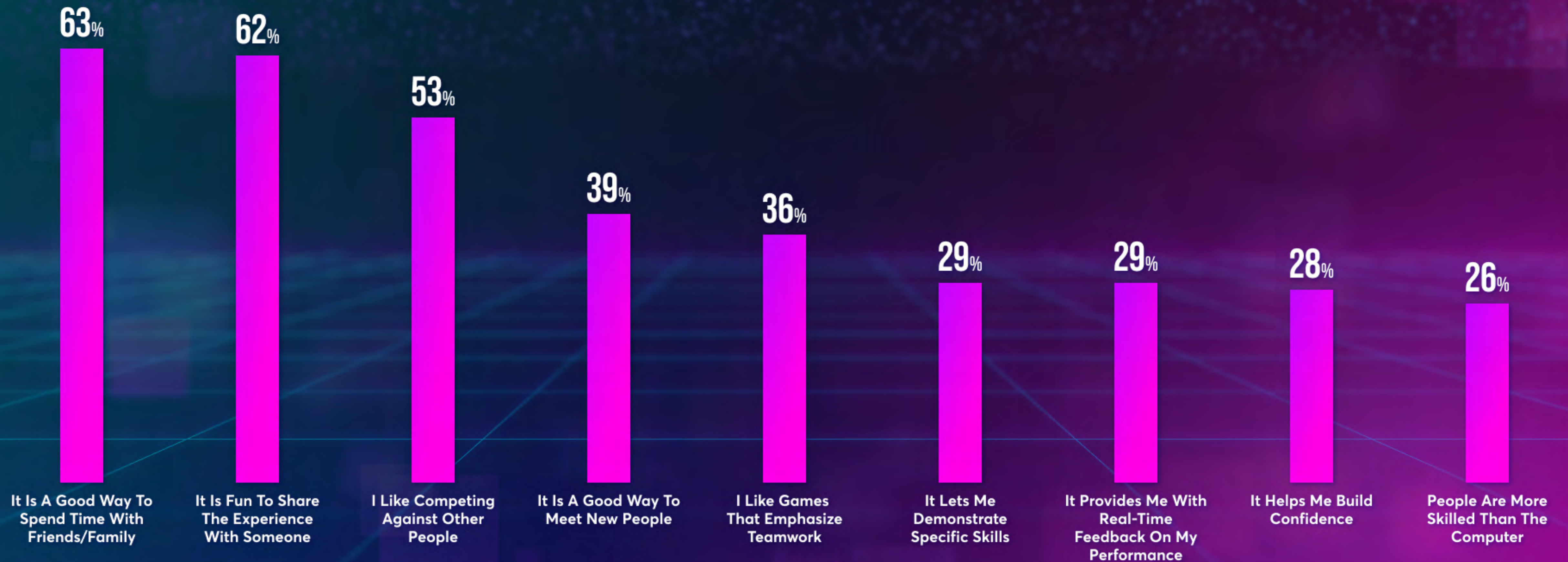


CONVERSELY, ONE OF THE KEY REASONS PEOPLE PLAY WITH OTHERS IS TO CAPTURE THAT SENSE OF COMPETITION.

Other motivations include the fun of sharing the experience with someone and gaming being a good way to spend time with friends and family. There's a sense of competition and connectivity that people seek when playing with others.



REASONS FOR PLAYING TOGETHER



HOW PLAYERS DEVELOP BONDS WITH THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY (Net Top 3 Ranking)



55%

Through
Gaming



45%

Through
Social Media



44%

Through
Video Chat



25%

Through
Email

Many people have developed bonds with family through gameplay - often throughout their lives while growing up together - while also finding new ways to use gaming to stay connected to their social network.

ONGORI

58

159,884/324,994

Fetish Chieftain

300

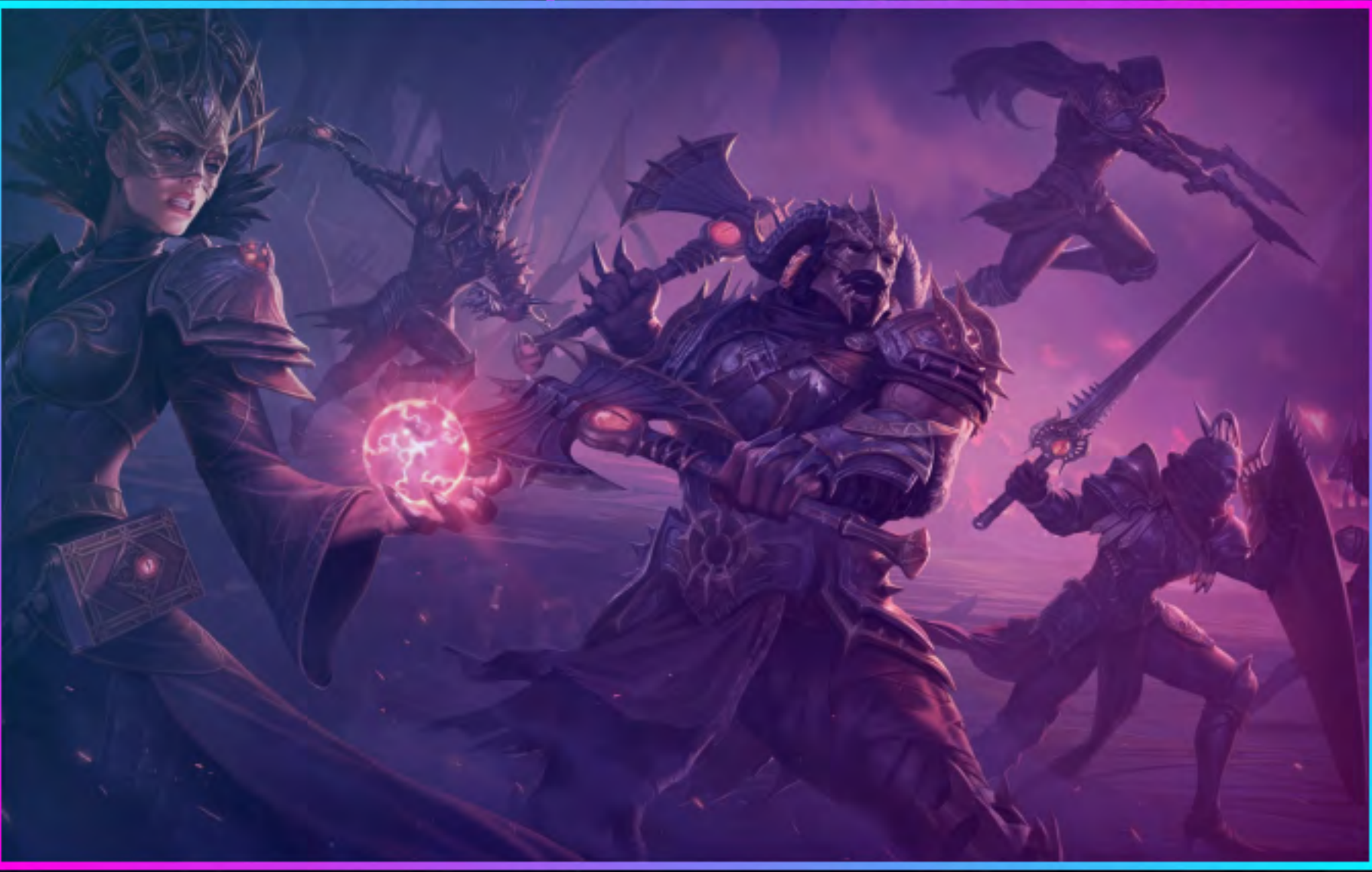
Ongori

37
375

KIKURAS
RAPIDS

“ MY SISTERS AND I GREW UP PLAYING MARIO KART AND DIFFERENT WII GAMES. GROWING UP, THAT WAS DEFINITELY SOMETHING THE THREE OF US WOULD DO TOGETHER - EVEN MORE SO THAN I DO WITH MY FRIENDS. I HAVE A FAMILY WORDLE GROUP RIGHT NOW AND THAT'S REALLY FUN, TOO... SINCE WE'RE ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, WE TEXT AND SHARE OUR WORDLES EVERYDAY.”

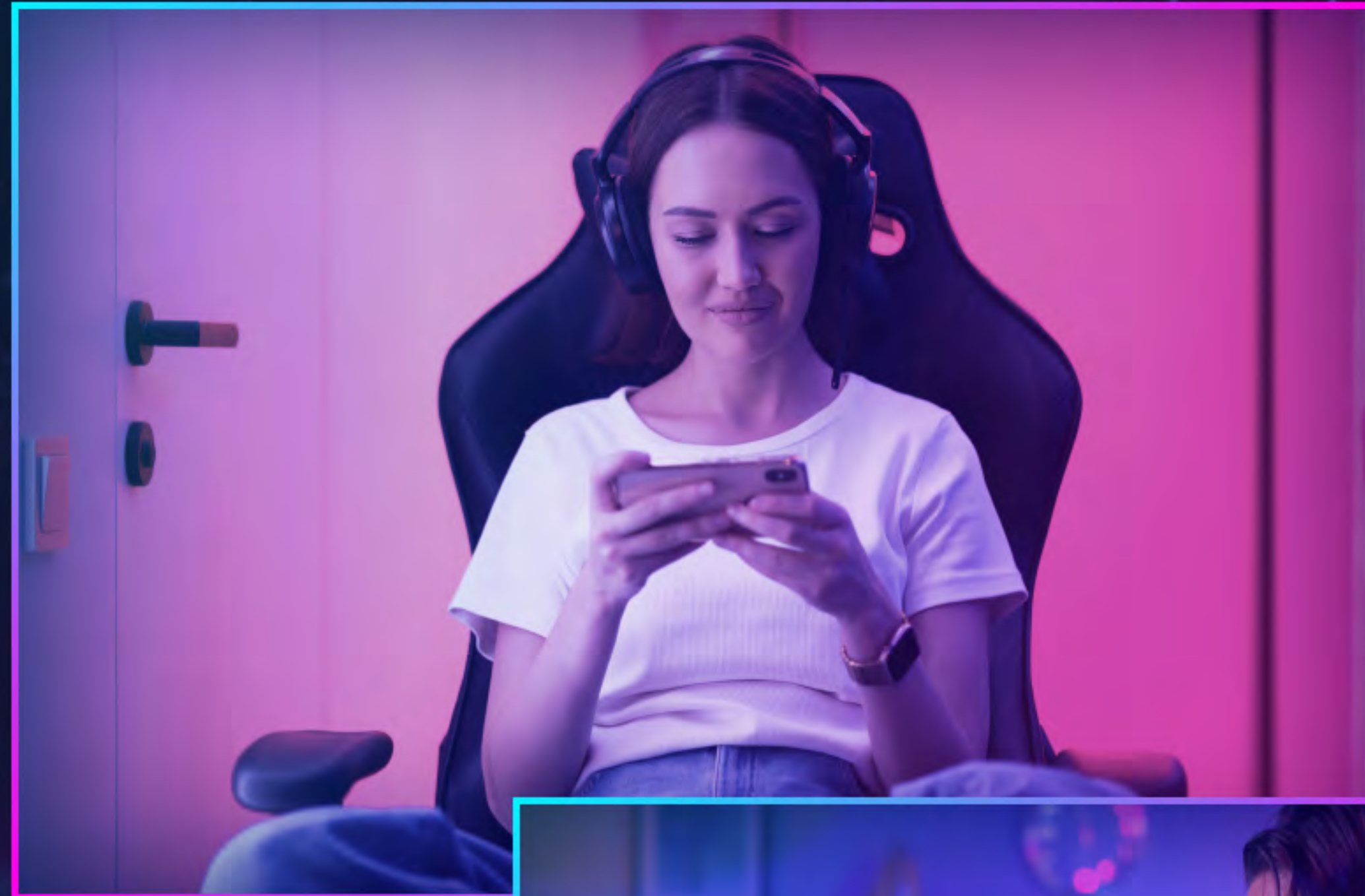
- Emily (Female, 21)



Those that prefer to play solo still find connection and enjoyment as part of the gaming ecosystem. They're building their own communities and social circles around titles they go to for personal moments of fun and relaxation. In these instances, gaming provides them with social connection in a different way, by bonding over a shared passion and activity, even if the experience happens independently.

“ I THINK ONE OF THE THINGS PERSONALLY THAT I LIKE ABOUT [THE WORDLE TURTLES] IS THAT IT'S A TOUCH OR A PING TO LIKE TWO PEOPLE THAT I REALLY LIKE. AND SO IT JUST KIND OF REMINDS ME OF THEM EVERY MORNING AND IT'S KIND OF A LITTLE CHECK-IN WITHOUT NEEDING TO TALK. IT'S A NICE WAY TO START TODAY.”

- Kelley (Female, 50+)



05

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

Putting Players In Control

Gaming's interactive nature and the variety of game types, genres, and ways to play means that audiences are firmly in control of their gaming experience. How and what people choose to play unlocks different ways they can interact with gaming communities, both on the platform and off it.

“ WATCHING TV IS A VERY PASSIVE HOBBY OR ACTIVITY. GAMING, YOU'VE GOT MORE AGENCY AND YOU'RE TAKING AN ACTIVE ROLE. OBVIOUSLY, YOU COULD PICK WHAT YOU WATCH, BUT WITHIN THE CONFINES OF A GAME, YOU CAN CONTROL WHAT YOU DO AND HOW YOU PLAY THE GAME AND WHAT YOU DO WITHIN THE GAME.”

- Jack (Male, 26)

This ability to control the experiences means that players can choose a gaming endeavor that matches their emotional need state and similarly change that experience according to their mood or preference. The different roles that gaming fulfills vary across genre or franchise, as well as platform, and as such, also impacts how players connect and socialize.



KEY GAMING GENRES BY DEMOGRAPHIC



01

AGES 18-34

At the generational level, we see that players 18-34 are more likely to play Battle Royale games like Fortnite, First-Person Shooters like Call of Duty, and World Building Games like Minecraft which are multiplayer experiences with friends/family/strangers online.



02

AGES 35-54

Players 35-54 are slightly more likely to enjoy Music/Dance Games like Guitar Hero, Party Games like Jackbox, and Racing Games like Mario Kart which are in-person co-op staples.



03

AGES 55-65

Players 55-65 are significantly more likely to enjoy Puzzle Games like Candy Crush Saga and are drawn to genres that offer a relaxing solo experience.

**PLATFORM CHOICE ALSO DEFINES THE PLAYER EXPERIENCE.
MOBILE IS THE MOST POPULAR GAMING PLATFORM DUE
LARGELY TO ITS ACCESSIBILITY.**

A circular progress indicator with a blue-to-purple gradient border, showing 84% completion. The percentage '84%' is displayed in large white font in the center of the circle.

84%

Play On Mobile
at least once a week

A circular progress indicator with a blue-to-purple gradient border, showing 61% completion. The percentage '61%' is displayed in large white font in the center of the circle.

61%

Play On Console
at least once a week

A circular progress indicator with a blue-to-purple gradient border, showing 42% completion. The percentage '42%' is displayed in large white font in the center of the circle.

42%

Play On PC
at least once a week

WHETHER SWIPING OR SHOOTING, GAMING IS A PLATFORM FOR EVERY MINDSET.

It can be everything to everyone in a way that other forms of entertainment cannot, putting players front and center in choosing how and when they connect.



06

COMMUNITY BUILDER

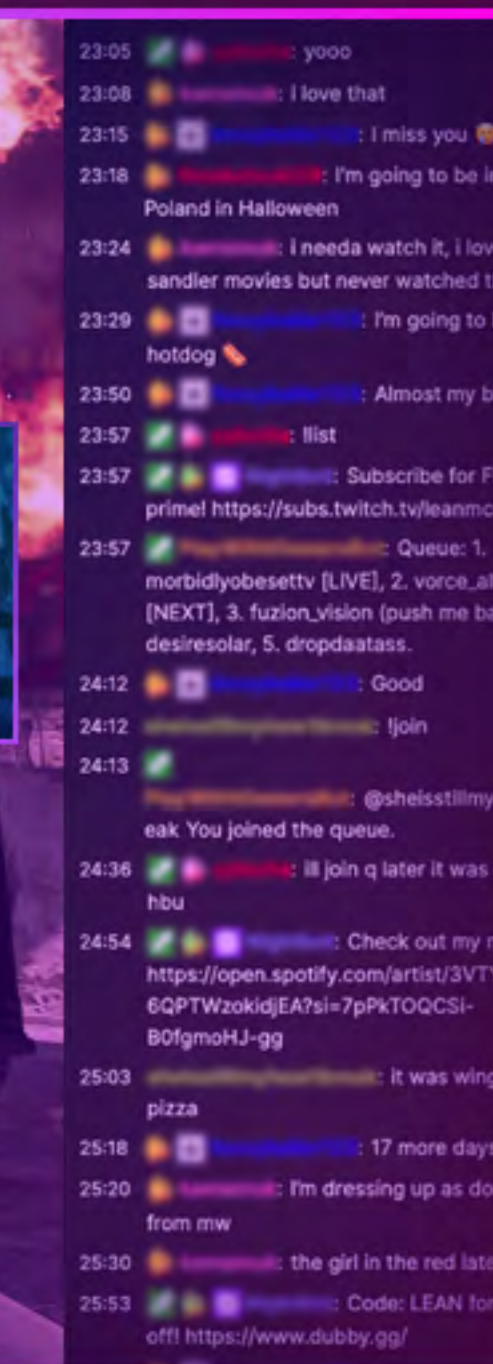
Fostering Friendships Online

Gaming's ability to cultivate a sense of community and fandom exists both within the game experience and outside of it. While much social interaction occurs during gameplay, it is not the only place where discourse takes place. The conversation, and thus by association the connection, driven by gaming continues on platforms and online communities specifically made with players in mind.

Online gaming communities allow people to be themselves and connect with like-minded people about their favorite activity, creating further bonds through gaming. Players can use these communities to create and consume content to improve their gameplay and industry knowledge, further instilling their emotional connection to gaming.

“ IF I AM INTRIGUED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE STRATEGY, HELPFUL THINGS LIKE DISCORD CHANNELS AND SUBREDDITS, THAT ARE MORE DEDICATED TO THE HIGHLY SPECIFIC AND INTRICATE THINGS AND LESS SO THE CONTENT CREATION, FACILITATE ME GETTING MORE INVOLVED IN THE GAME.”

- Jake (Male, 21)



GAMING IS BIGGER THAN PLAYING, IT'S CONSUMING + CONTRIBUTING



66%

Of Players **Use Online
Gaming Communities**



34%

Of Players **Watch
Esports + Streamers Online**

Players aged 18-34 are more likely to use online gaming communities to connect, ahead of those aged 35-54 and far greater than those aged 55-64

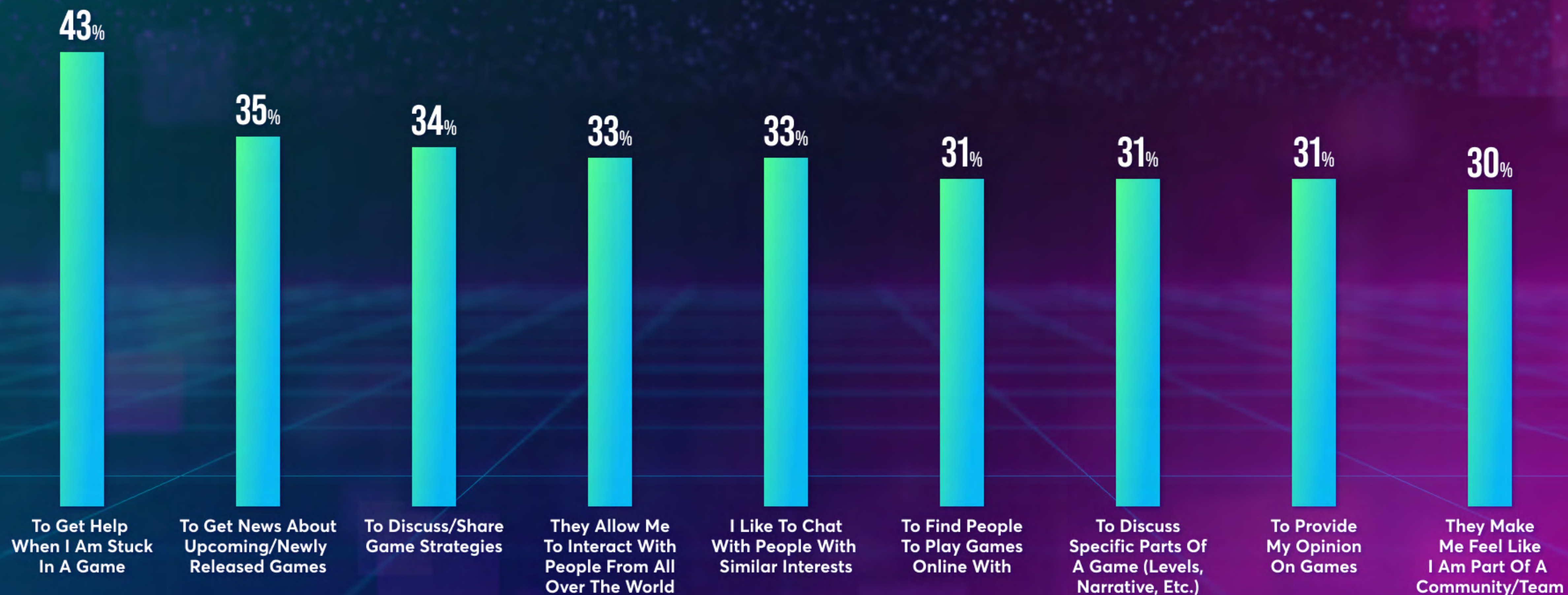
THESE COMMUNITIES SERVE AS HUBS FOR FANDOMS OF ALL TYPES TO CONNECT, INCLUDING THOSE THAT ENJOY SOLO PLAY.

What is traditionally considered a solo experience still fosters socialization and connection beyond the game's parameters. This includes puzzle games, which are one of the more popular game types for older demographics. While this age group may report less interest in playing with others in person, they still find ways to connect online with a wide community of players.

The primary reason for engaging in these communities is to get help when they are stuck on a particular level or challenge. However, players also use them to get news about upcoming or newly released titles, discuss gamer strategy generally, or dissect specific parts of games such as individual levels or game narrative.

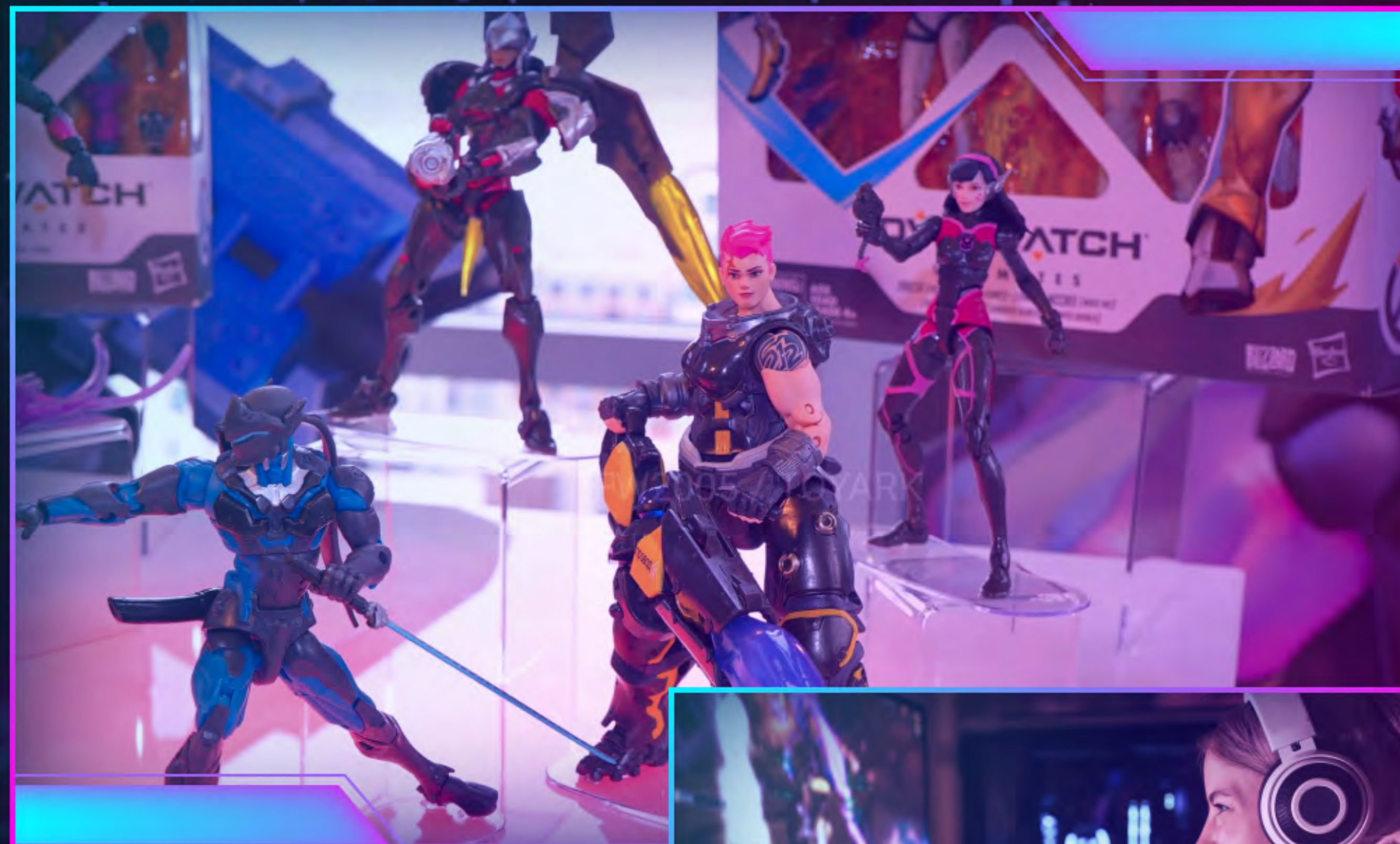


REASONS FOR USING ONLINE COMMUNITIES



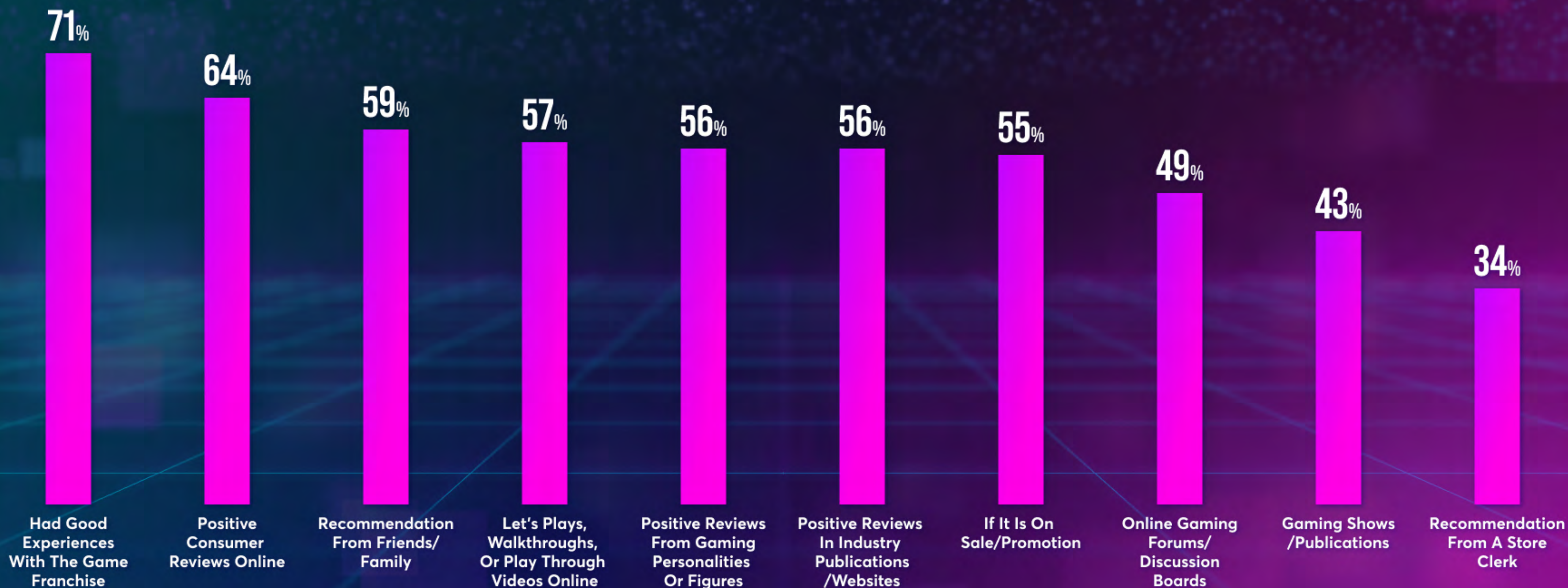
WITH SO MANY PLACES TO ENGAGE ONLINE, PLAYERS LOOK TO ONE ANOTHER AS A SOURCE OF TRUTH - ESPECIALLY AS THEY RELATE TO NEW GAMES AND GAMING PRODUCTS.

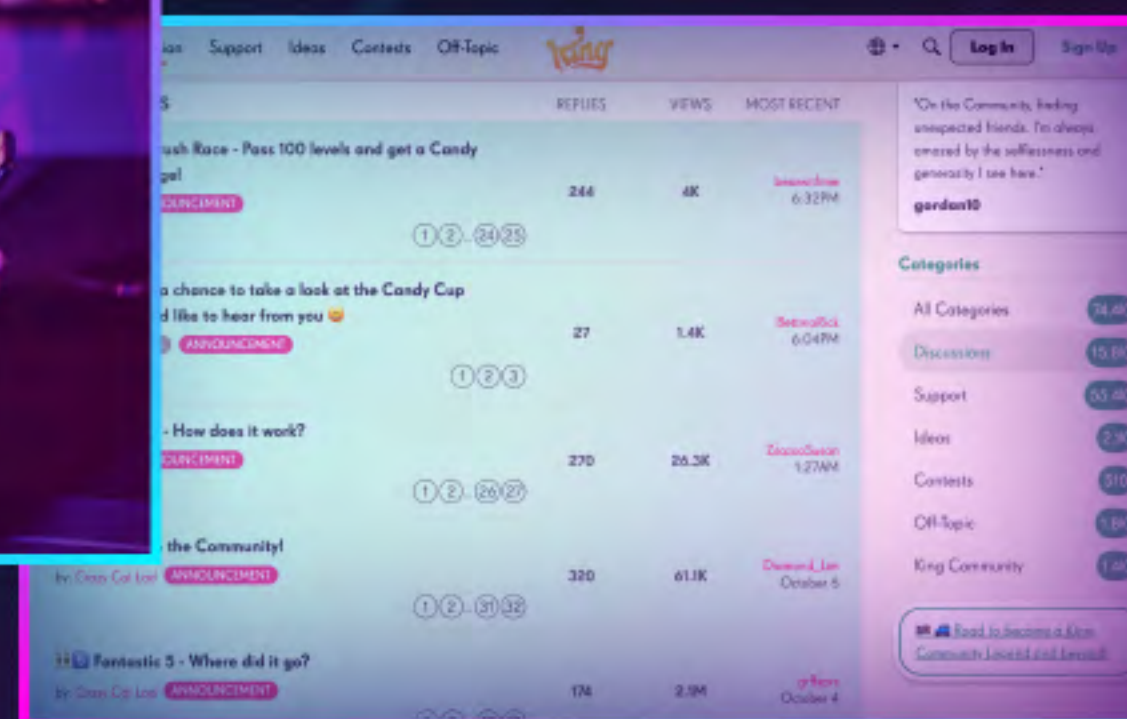
They seek recommendations and feedback from their fellow community members, especially regarding new game products. Positive reviews from gaming personalities or figures influence over half of players, and a similar number reported ads in video games help them find new products and experiences. Game walkthroughs/playthroughs are also very influential to this group in looking for and considering new game products.



INFLUENCES ON GAMING PRODUCT PURCHASES

(% "Extremely/Very Influential")





ONLINE COMMUNITIES ARE AN EXTENSION OF THE GAMING EXPERIENCE AND OFFER ADDITIONAL WAYS FOR PLAYERS TO INTERACT, EXPLORE AND ENGAGE.

Leveling up in-game isn't the only motivation for engaging with our communities online. Gaming communities have also played a part in socializing information in technology and gaming. Those who visit online gaming communities were significantly more likely to know about the metaverse than those who don't (49% vs 25%). They report being more optimistic and inspired regarding the metaverse, and less confused or unsure.

They allow players to continue their connection beyond the game itself, mirroring the in-person interactions around gaming but at scale and in a way that is more accessible - both as an active participant and an observer.

CONCLUSION

07

SOCIAL INTERACTION HAS ALWAYS BEEN AT THE HEART OF THE GAMEPLAY EXPERIENCE

GAMING BRINGS PLAYERS FEELINGS OF ESCAPISM, RELAXATION, AND HAPPINESS

The full extent of gaming as a positive and community-enriching medium is only now beginning to be understood. With so many different ways for players to connect and engage, gaming has never been more accessible, and as a result, more people are using it as a way to socialize. This is partly driven by the positive emotions people experience while playing and when gaming is enjoyed with others these emotions increase.

GAMING CREATES A SPACE FOR BRANDS THAT IS POWERED BY INTERACTION AND ENGAGEMENT

Marketers have increasingly leaned toward more communal platforms to share their messages. Gaming should be viewed through the same lens. It provides players with a social outlet.

By understanding gaming's role as a social connector and its impact on those who play, marketers will be better equipped to utilize its value and reach an audience that is sharing, conversing and building a sense of community.

GAMING CONVERSATIONS HAVE MOVED BEYOND THE GAME AND INTO ONLINE COMMUNITIES/FORUMS

Gaming also provides an opportunity for players to meet new people, build closer bonds with friends and family, and build and celebrate community around their favorite titles. It has helped grow existing relationships and form new ones through a shared experience and passion. It's not just in the game where these connections are taking place. Helping players interact with trustworthy sources. While the players themselves have so much control in how they choose to engage with gaming, and, furthermore, connect with gaming communities.

08

APPENDIX



Research Methodology

Activision Blizzard Media partnered with Toluna Insights for an online quantitative survey of 4000 people across the US and UK; this work is based on 2000 responses from the US.

All respondents are aged 18-64 and are active users of video games/gaming media as well as social media. Activision Blizzard Media also partnered with Michele Madansky Consulting to interview 18 people in the US, both in-person and virtual, to discuss the role of gaming in their lives and their own experiences gaming socially.

About Activision Blizzard Media

Activision Blizzard Media Ltd is the gateway for brands to the leading interactive entertainment company with hundreds of millions of monthly active users around the world.

Our legendary portfolio includes iconic mobile game franchises such as Candy Crush™, esports like the Call of Duty League™, the Overwatch League™, and some of the top PC and console gaming franchises such as Call of Duty®, World of Warcraft®, and StarCraft®. The idea is simple: great game experiences offer great marketing experiences.

Learn more at www.activisionblizzardmedia.com