

PEW INTERNET PROJECT DATA MEMO

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RE: Adults and video games
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*Over half of American adults play video games, and four out of five young adults play
Among adults, computers are the most popular gaming device, but among young adults
gaming consoles are preferred
Virtual worlds only draw a small crowd*

Some 53% of American adults age 18 and older play video games,¹ and about one in five adults (21%) play everyday or almost everyday. While the number of video gamers among adults is substantial, it is still well under the number of teens who play. Fully 97% of teens play video games.²

Independent of all other factors, younger adults are considerably more likely than older adults to play games, and the likelihood that an adult is a video gamer decreases significantly with age. Fully 81% of respondents 18-29 years old play games, while only 23% of respondents 65 years old and older report playing games.

Overall, men (55%) are slightly more likely than women (50%), and urbanites (56%) are a bit more likely than rural-dwellers (47%) to play any kind of digital game. There is no significant difference in game playing across income groups or between suburbanites and adults from other locales.

A person's education level is another predictor of video game play. Some 57% of respondents with at least some college education play games, significantly more than high school graduates (51%) and those who have less than a high school education (40%). Current students who are 18 or older are also avid players. Notably, 76% of students (82% of full-time and 69% of part-time students) report playing games, compared with 49% of non-students.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, any reference to video games, game playing or the term 'gamer' in this report refers to any respondent who reported playing games online and/or said he used any one or more of the following devices to play games: desktop or laptop computer, game console, cell phone, Blackberry, some other handheld organizer or a portable gaming device.

² All teen data in this report is based on a survey of 1,102 teens (1,064 teen gamers) conducted November 2007-February 2008, with a margin of error of $\pm 3\%$. For more information about teens and gaming, see "Teens, Video Games and Civics" (Pew Internet & American Life Project, September 2008) Available at: http://pewinternet.org/PPF/r/263/report_display.asp.

Demographics of Adult Gamers	
<i>The percentage of Americans in each demographic category who report playing games online or offline, using a computer, cell phone or any other kind of gaming device:</i>	
All adults	53%
Sex	
Men	55*
Women	50
Age	
18-29	81*
30-49	60
50-64	40
65+	23
Race	
White, non-Hispanic	51
Black, non-Hispanic	51
Hispanic (English-speaking)	63†
Annual Household Income	
Less than \$30,000	52
\$30,000 - \$49,999	59
\$50,000 - \$74,999	62
\$75,000 +	56
Education	
Less than HS	40
HS grad	51
Some college/College grad	57*
Locale	
Urban	56
Suburban	53
Rural	47

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Survey, October-December 2007.
N= 2,054 total adults, margin of error is ±2%.

* These groups are significantly more likely to play games than the other groups.

†English-speaking Hispanics are more likely to play games, but this is a factor of the overall youth of the population, rather than any difference independently attributable to ethnicity.

Internet users are also significantly more likely to play games than those who are not online. Fully 75% of adults in the survey use the internet, and 64% of internet users play games. By comparison, just 20% of non-internet users play games.

Older adult gamers play games more frequently

Younger generations tend to dominate the gaming world; however, older respondents who do play games are more avid players. Older gamers, particularly seniors, tend to play games more frequently. Over one-third (36%) of gamers 65 and older say they play games everyday or almost everyday, compared with 19% of adults aged 50-64, 20% of adults aged 30-49, and 20% of adults aged 18-29. Senior gamers may play more frequently because they have more time to play than younger gamers, as 77% of senior gamers reported being retired.

Frequency of Game Play				
<i>How often do you play games, whether on a computer, or online, or on a game console, or on some other device? Do you do this...?</i>				
	Everyday or almost everyday	A few times a week	A few times a month	Less often
Total gamers	21%	28%	27%	20%
Gamers ages 18-29	20	30	30	16
Gamers ages 30-49	20	26	25	24
Gamers ages 50-64	19	30	25	21
Gamers age 65+	36	28	17	14

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Survey, October-December 2007. N=1,063 total game players, margin of error is ±3%.

Almost half (49%) of all adult gamers reported playing games at least a few times a week.

Computers are the most popular equipment for video game play; consoles are the favorite gaming hardware among the youngest players.

Of the devices that can be used to play video games, computers are the most popular. Fully 38% of adults report playing games on desktop or laptop computers. This percentage compares with 28% who play on game consoles like an Xbox, PlayStation or Wii; 18% who play on a cell phone, Blackberry or other handheld organizer; and 13% who play on portable gaming devices like a PSP, DS or Gameboy.

Adults Play Games On Many Devices			
<i>Do you ever use any of the following to play games whether or not you personally have one? Do you use...to play games?</i>			
	% of all adults	% of adult gamers	% of teen gamers
Desktop or laptop computer	38%	73%	76%
Game console (Xbox, PlayStation, Wii, etc)	28	53	89
Cell phone, Blackberry, or other handheld organizer	18	35	50
Portable gaming device like PSP, DS, or Gameboy	13	25	62

Source: Adult data based on Pew Internet & American Life Project Survey, October-December 2007. N= 2,054 total adults, margin of error is ±2%. N=1,063 total game players, margin of error is ±3%. Teen data based on Pew Internet Project survey, November 2007-February 2008. N=1,064 teen gamers, margin of error is ±3%.

These trends contrast with the gaming experiences of teens. For those ages 12-17, game consoles are the most popular gaming device, and 89% of teen gamers use consoles to play games. Teen gamers are no more likely than adult gamers to use computers to play games, and while adult gamers are more likely to play games on cell phones or Blackberries than on portable gaming devices, teen gamers show the opposite set of preferences, preferring the portable devices to cell phones.

Like teens, a majority of young adults play games on consoles, while older gamers prefer computers.

Young adults, 18-29 year olds, are the most apt to play games on any given device. But, while computers are most popular with the total population, younger Americans are more likely to play games using a console than any other type of video game-playing device. Like their teen counterparts, a majority (61%) of respondents 18-29 years old play games on consoles, compared

with 28% of all adults who use consoles to play games. Teens, however, are even more likely than young adults to play games on consoles; 86% of teens play on consoles.

Computer or Game Console?				
<i>Do you ever use any of the following to play games whether or not you personally have one? Do you use...to play games?</i>				
Age	% of adults		% of gamers	
	Computer	Game console	Computer	Game console
Total adult population	38%	28%	73%	53%
18-29	55	61	68	75
30-49	42	34	70	57
50-64	33	9	83	23
65+	19	2	81	10

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Survey, October-December 2007. N=2,054 total adults, margin of error is ±2%. N=1,063 total game players, margin of error is ±3%.

If an older person is going to play games, he or she will most likely use a computer. Some 19% of seniors 65 and older play games on computers, while only 2% use each of the other devices listed. Similarly, Americans ages 50-64 are much more likely to use computers than to use gaming consoles, cell phones (6%) or portable gaming devices (5%).

When looking specifically at gamers, these age-based preferences are even more distinct. Nearly three out of four gamers (73%) use computers to play, while just over half (53%) use game consoles. Gamers 50 and older are significantly more likely than younger age groups to use computers. Middle-aged gamers, 30-49 years old, prefer to play on computers, but a significantly large percentage also plays on consoles. Young adult gamers are the only age group to prefer playing on game consoles; three-fourths (75%) of 18-29-year-old gamers play on consoles.

Certain demographic groups – men, minorities and parents – use some devices more.

Men are significantly more likely than women to play games on gaming consoles: 35% of adult men say they play games on a console compared with 21% of women. Men and women are statistically equally likely to use all other gaming devices, including computers, cell phones, handheld organizers and portable gaming devices.

Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to play games on smaller, mobile gadgets. While there is no statistically significant difference in game play between ethnic groups on computers or game consoles, blacks and Hispanics are significantly more likely than whites to use cell phones and portable gaming devices to play games.³ One-quarter (25%) of blacks and 27% of Hispanics report using a cell phone or Blackberry to play games, while only 16% of whites reported doing so. Similarly, 18% of blacks and 21% of Hispanics use portable gaming devices, compared with 11% of whites who use these devices to play games.

Independent of other demographic categories, parents are more likely to play games than non-parents. Fully 66% of parents or guardians of children 17 years old or younger play games,

³ For comparative data for teens, please see page 14 in our *Teens, Video Games and Civics* report http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/263/report_display.asp

compared with 47% of adults who are not parents who play games. Parents are also more likely to play games on every kind of device we asked about than respondents who were not parents.

Just 31% of parents of teens say they play video games with their child at least some of the time, however, and younger parents are more likely than older parents to do so. Four out of ten parents under age 40 (40%) play games with their children, compared with 25% of older parents. Parents of younger teens (12-14 years old) are also more likely to play video games with their children than parents of older teens (15-17 years old), 34% versus 27%.⁴

Parents Play on More Devices		
<i>Do you ever use any of the following to play games whether or not you personally have one? Do you use...to play games?</i>		
	Parents	Non- Parents
Desktop or laptop	45%	35%
Game console	41	22
Cell phone, Blackberry, or other handheld organizer	25	16
Portable gaming device	21	10

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Survey, October-December 2007. N=597 total parents, margin of error is ±4%. N=1,450 total non-parents, margin of error is ±3%

Online games have a modest place in the world of adult gaming.

Just under a quarter (23%) of all adults play games online. Put another way, some 43% of adult gamers play online games. Adults are much less likely to play games online than teens, as about 76% of all teens play games online and 79% of teen gamers play games online.

As with all games, younger adults are more likely to report playing games online than their older counterparts. Fully 43% of adults ages 18-29 play games online, compared with 26% of people ages 30-49, 13% of people ages 50-64, and 5% of those 65 and older.

Respondents who report playing games online tend to play more often than gamers who do not play games online. The majority (59%) of online gamers play at least a few times a week, significantly more than the 41% of strictly offline gamers who play that often. Those who play massive multiplayer online games (MMOGs),⁵ such as World of Warcraft, are even more likely to play frequently, as 89% play at least a few times a week.⁶ Nearly half (49%) of MMOG players play everyday or almost everyday, while just one in four online gamers (26%) and 17% of offline gamers play as often.

⁴ “Teens, Video Games and Civics” (Pew Internet & American Life Project, September 2008) Available at: http://pewinternet.org/PPF/r/263/report_display.asp.

⁵ Massive multiplayer online games (MMOGs), or massive(ly) multiplayer online role-playing games, are online game spaces where multiple individuals can play a game together. While gamers can go anywhere within the digital world of an MMOG, the game developer has determined the direction and goals of game play. MMOGs are persistent spaces where game play continues to move forward even when an individual or group of players is not playing the game.

⁶ The total unweighted number of those who play MMOGs is less than 100 (n=83).

Virtual worlds and MMOGs have yet to catch on.

Just 2% of gamers say they have ever visited a virtual world, such as Second Life.⁷ While there are no significant age or other demographic differences between adults who visit virtual worlds and those who do not, teens are significantly more likely to visit virtual worlds. One in ten teens and 11% of teen gamers reported visiting virtual worlds.

A total 6% of adults say they have created an avatar, or online representation of themselves often used for participation in virtual worlds and in some online games and social networks.

Slightly more game players, however, say that they have played MMOGs. Still, only 9% of gamers play these types of online games. Again, young adults are significantly more likely than average adults to play MMOGs, as 14% of 18-29-year-old gamers report playing these types of games. Teens are even more likely to play MMOGs, with 21% of teen gamers reporting MMOG play.

⁷ Virtual worlds, like MMOGs, are persistent online play spaces, but unlike with MMOGs, the user of a virtual world determines the direction of game play.

About the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project

The Pew Internet Project is an initiative of the Pew Research Center, a nonprofit “fact tank” that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. The Pew Internet Project explores the impact of the internet on children, families, communities, the work place, schools, health care and civic/political life. The Project is nonpartisan and takes no position on policy issues. Support for the project is provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Questions and Data

Annual Gadgets Survey 2007 Final Topline 12/13/07

Data for October 24 – December 2, 2007

Princeton Survey Research Associates International
for the Pew Internet & American Life Project

Sample: n = 2,054 adults 18 and older, including 500 cell phone users
Interviewing dates: 10.24.07 – 12.2.07

Margin of error is plus or minus 2 percentage points for results based on total sample [n=2,054]

Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on internet users [n=1,572]

Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on landline and form 1 cell sample [n=1,804]

Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on landline and form 2 cell sample [n=1,804]

Margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on landline only [n=1,554]

Q36 Do you ever use any of the following to play games whether or not you personally have one? Do you use [INSERT ITEM] to play games?

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
a. A game console like an Xbox, a Playstation or a Wii	28	72	*
b. A portable gaming device like P-S-P, D-S or Gameboy	13	86	*
c. A desktop or laptop computer	38	62	*
d. A cell phone, Blackberry, or other handheld organizer	18	81	*

Q37 Do you ever play games online, whether using a computer or a game console or other device?

	CURRENT	
%	23	Yes
	77	No
	*	Don't know/Refused

Q38 How often do you play games, whether on a computer... or online... or on a game console... or on some other device? Do you do this...?

Based on those who play games [N=1,063]

	<u>CURRENT</u>		<u>FEB-APRIL 2006⁸</u>
%	21	Everyday or almost everyday	8
	28	A few times a week	11
	27	A few times a month	8
	20	Less often	12
	4	Never	60
	*	Don't know/Refused	*

Q39 Do you ever visit virtual worlds online such as Second Life, There.com or Habbo Hotel?

Based on internet users [N=1,572]

	<u>CURRENT</u>	
%	2	Yes
	98	No
	*	Don't know/Refused

Q40 Do you play Massive Multiplayer Online Games, such as World of Warcraft?

Based on internet users [N=1,572]

	<u>CURRENT</u>	
%	6	Yes
	94	No
	0	Don't know/Refused

Q41 Here's another list of activities people sometimes do online. Please tell me whether you ever do each one, or not. Do you ever...?

Item G: Based on all Landline internet users or Form 1 Cell Internet users [N=1,359]

g. Create or use an avatar or online graphic representation of yourself, for example, in a virtual world such as Second Life	6	94	*
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Methodology

The Annual Gadgets Survey, sponsored by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, obtained telephone interviews – both landline and cell phone - with a nationally representative sample of 2,054 adults living in the continental United States. The survey was conducted by Princeton Survey Research International. The interviews were conducted in English by Princeton Data Source, LLC from October 24 to December 2, 2007. Statistical results are weighted to correct

⁸ Feb-April 2006 question wording was as follows: "How often, if ever, do you play video games, whether on a computer or the internet or on a game console like Xbox?" Trend was based on Total respondents.

known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is $\pm 2.4\%$.

A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all adults in the continental United States who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. Random phone numbers for the landline sample were generated from active blocks (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained three or more residential directory listings. Active blocks were chosen with probabilities in proportion to their share of listed telephone households. The cellular sample was not list-assisted, but was drawn through a systematic sampling from 1000-blocks dedicated to cellular service according to the Telcordia database.