



Levelling up to stay safe:

Young people's experiences navigating the joys and risks of online gaming

February 2024



eSafety research program

The eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) helps Australians to have safer and more positive experiences online.

The eSafety research program supports, encourages, conducts and evaluates research about online safety for Australians. We do this so that:

- our programs, policies and regulatory functions are evidence-informed
- robust, person-centred evidence on the prevalence and impact of online harms is available to stakeholders
- the evidence base on what works to prevent and remediate online harms continues to grow.

eSafety research is available at: esafety.gov.au/research

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Acknowledgements

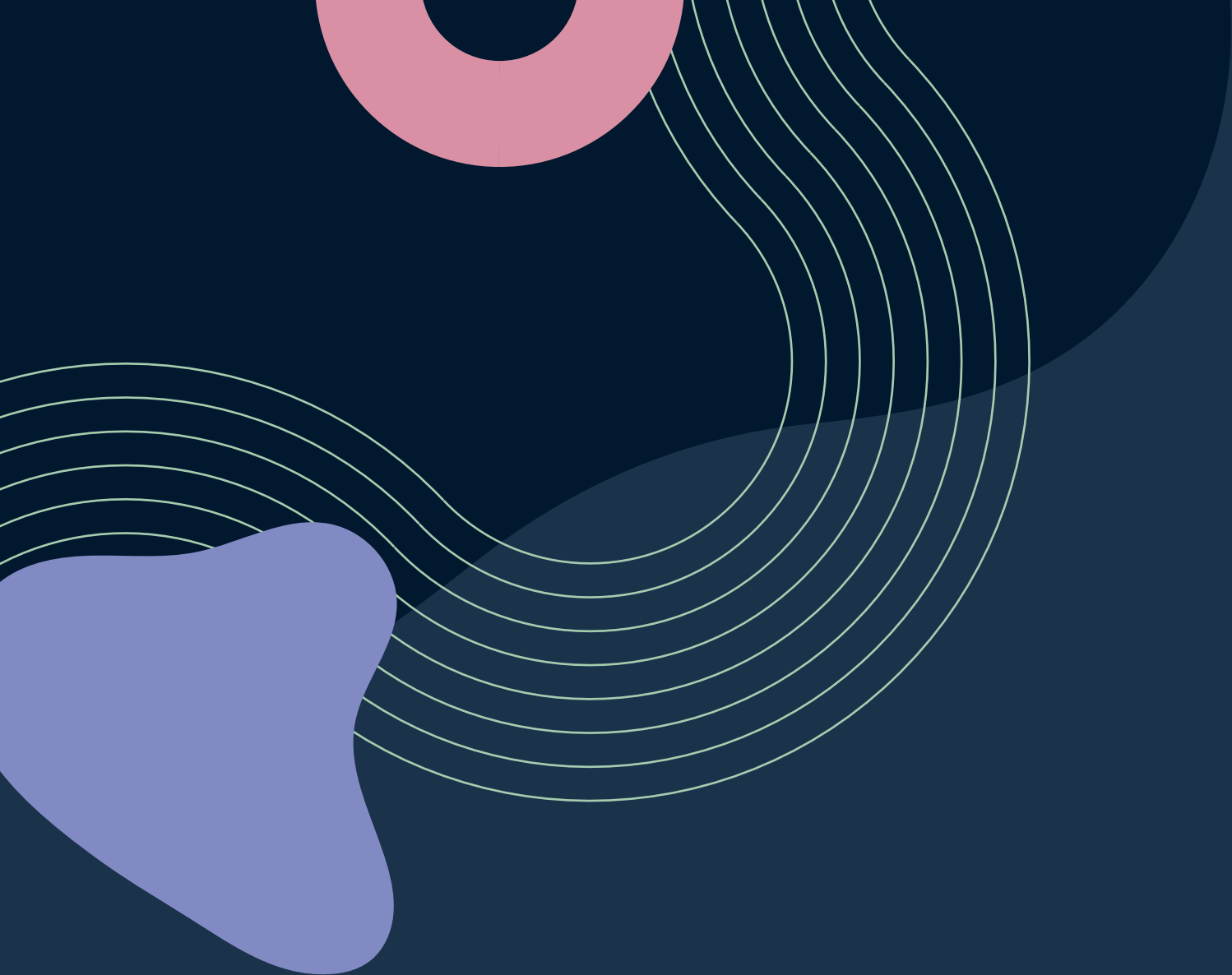
We would like to thank the young people and their parents who participated in this research and gave their time to contribute to a greater understanding of online gaming experiences.

eSafety gratefully acknowledges the contributions of our academic collaborators on this report: Daniel Johnson, Professor at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and Chief Investigator at the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child; and Dr Rhett Loban, Lecturer at Macquarie University.

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eSafety acknowledges all First Nations peoples for their continuing care of everything Country encompasses – land, waters and community. We pay our respects to First Nations peoples, and to Elders past, present and future.

Key terms

Actively engaged gamers: Throughout this report, we refer to a group of young people who were ‘actively engaged’ in gaming – more specifically, those who did one or more of the following: spent more than 12 hours per week playing video games online, played games with others online, and/or directly communicated with other people online while gaming.

Active mediation: In this type of mediation, parents or carers provide advice and guidance to their children to help them play online games more safely.

Bullying-type behaviours: Throughout this report, we use the term ‘bullying-type behaviours’ to refer to a range of behaviours that were described in the survey instrument as ‘hurtful’ or ‘upsetting’, such as leaving people out on purpose or sending ‘nasty’ or ‘hurtful’ messages.

Griefing/trolling: For the purposes of this report, behaviour described as griefing/trolling is not included in bullying-type behaviours, but is instead separated out to refer to young gamers doing things or making comments to annoy other players on purpose.

Online game: Throughout this report, we use the term ‘online game’ to refer to a video game played online. We also use the terms ‘game’ to refer to online games, and ‘gaming’ to refer to playing online games.

Parents and carers: Throughout this report, we use the term ‘parents and carers’ to refer to parents, carers, guardians, co-parents, or any other adult with parent-like responsibilities for a child.

Restrictive mediation: In this type of mediation, parents or carers attempt to control access and set rules about their children playing online games.

Technical mediation: In this type of mediation, parents or carers use software or other technology-based tools to control, limit, monitor or check their child’s online gaming activities (specifically, activating parental controls in the app, browser or device their children use for gaming).

Young gamer: Throughout this report, we use the term ‘young gamer’ to refer to young people aged 8–17 who have played online games at any time in the past year, on any device. In addition, we use the terms ‘child gamer’ to refer to a gamer who is aged 8–12, and ‘teen gamer’ to refer to a gamer who is aged 13–17.

Young people: Throughout this report, we use the term ‘young people’ to describe young people aged 8–17 years (unless otherwise specified).



About this report

Online gaming is a form of digital play that allows young people to connect with friends, have fun, develop skills and learn new things. However, online games are also environments where young people can be at risk of bullying and other harmful interactions, including hate speech. Young gamers and their parents and carers are proactive in their online gaming safety strategies, but young people want more to be done to keep them safe when gaming. While parents and carers are often concerned about their children's gaming, young gamers want the adults in their lives to understand more about gaming and why they love it. This report explores the online gaming experiences of young people in Australia, finding that while gaming can lead to a range of benefits for young people, there is much more that can be done to level-up their safety while gaming online.



During August and September 2023, eSafety conducted a mixed-methods study into the online gaming experiences of over 2,000 young people aged 8–17 years in Australia. The study examined young people's perspectives on online gaming, the risks and benefits they experience while gaming online, the safety practices they adopt, and ways in which they can be further supported to game safely. The study also asked parents and carers about their perspectives on their child's gaming and the safety measures they have implemented.

The findings presented in this report will inform eSafety's ongoing online safety programs, including safer gaming resources for parents and carers and frontline practitioners working with young people and their families. The report also contributes to the Australian evidence base on the online gaming experiences of young people.

Levelling up to stay safe begins with a snapshot of young people's participation in online gaming. It then details their positive and negative gaming experiences and examines the online safety practices currently in use among young people and their parents and carers. Finally, the report explores the disconnect between parent and carer perceptions of gaming and young gamers' lived experience and acknowledges young people's desire to bridge this gap.

Overall, the study found that most young people who play online games have positive experiences. The vast majority of them believe they benefit from online gaming in one or more ways, including feeling more connected to others. However, a significant minority of the children in our study had negative experiences while gaming, and around half of the teen gamers had potentially harmful experiences or had been exposed to potentially harmful ideas while gaming, or both.¹ It was relatively common for these experiences to have detrimental effects on these young gamers' self-esteem or other aspects of their emotional wellbeing. Significantly, this study found that being more actively engaged in online gaming was associated with both higher risk and higher reported benefits. Young gamers in the study emphatically wanted their parents and carers to understand what gaming is like for them, and we found that many would welcome the opportunity to game with the adults in their lives.

This report concludes with a discussion of how these findings might be utilised to support young people's safe and positive online gaming experiences.

¹ Children aged 8–12 were not asked about exposure to potentially harmful ideas.

Key findings



Most young people play online video games, and the majority of young gamers play with others online.

In the past year, 89% of the young people surveyed had played online games, with most (66%) playing for more than 6 hours per week. Four out of 5 (79%) young gamers had played with others online, including 2 in 5 (40%) who had played with people they didn't already know offline and 1 in 4 (26%) who had communicated with players they didn't already know offline while gaming.



Online gaming brings young people happiness, social connection and opportunities for learning.

Most (94%) young people surveyed described positive feelings associated with their online gaming and reported that it benefited their skill development and learning (76%), social connections (58%) or emotional wellbeing (41%). Young gamers also reported positive, prosocial gaming interactions, with over 2 in 3 (68%) supporting another player while gaming in the past year and slightly fewer (61%) receiving support from another player.



Negative behaviour from other gamers, and exposure to potentially harmful content, are risks of online gaming for young people.

In the past year, 2 in 5 young gamers (40% of children aged 8–12 years and 44% of teens aged 13–17) had a negative experience while gaming (e.g. bullying-type behaviours, grieving or trolling, receiving or being asked to send nudes or sexual information, hate speech), while half (51%) of teen gamers had a negative experience and/or were exposed to potentially harmful content (e.g. hate speech, misogynistic ideas, violent content) while gaming.



Negative online gaming experiences can impact young people's wellbeing

Between 28% and 65%² of young gamers who experienced negative behaviour while gaming said they were adversely impacted. For example, almost 2 in 3 (65%) young gamers who received or were asked to send nude images or sexual information, and 1 in 2 (52%) who had experienced hate speech, reported at least one negative impact.

² Participants who reported negative experiences were asked follow-up questions for each type of experience (for up to a maximum of 3 experiences). The findings relating to each type of experience were examined separately where at least n=50 provided an answer. As such, a percentage range is provided.



Most parents and carers are proactive about implementing safety strategies for their young gamer.

To help their child stay safe while gaming, more than 4 in 5 (85%) parents and carers used active mediation practices, close to 4 in 5 (78%) used restrictive mediation practices, and 1 in 3 (34%) had used technical mediation practices.



Most young gamers are proactive about their safety while gaming.

Young gamers reported using steps such as restricting who they played or communicated with (78%), not sharing personal information with others (53%) and limiting their use of communication features (51%). When negative experiences occurred, the majority (58–72%)³ of young gamers took direct action to stop it happening again, and approximately 1 in 2 (39–55%) sought support from others.



Young people want more to be done to keep them safe while gaming.

Most (85%) young gamers agreed that gaming companies should do more to make online games safe for young people. Suggestions from young people for safer gaming included age restrictions to allow gamers of a similar age to play together, more effective moderation, and more effective repercussions for players who, for example, break the rules or bully other players.



Young people want the adults in their lives to understand how happy gaming makes them.

A majority (58%) of young gamers surveyed thought that their parents and carers had one or more negative perceptions about their gaming or argued with them about how much time they spend gaming. Our research also found that many children (52%) and teens (27%) would like their parents and carers to play online games with them. Young gamers indicated that they would like the adults in their life to understand that gaming is fun or makes them happy (40%), helps them to learn new skills or be creative (10%), has mental health benefits or helps them to relax (11%), or is a way for them to feel a sense of belonging or being connected to friends or family (10%).

³ Ibid.

Methodology

This study aimed to build on our understanding of young people’s experiences of online gaming and to provide an updated evidence base to inform the development of appropriate online safety information for young people and their parents and carers. It also aimed to assist eSafety in fulfilling its regulatory responsibilities relating to cyberbullying on online gaming platforms.

The study took a mixed-methods approach and comprised two phases: focus groups and a home diary study, followed by an online survey of young people.

Informed consent to participate in all activities in the study was sought from both parents and young people. This project was submitted as part of the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) approval process. Ethics approval for the project was received from Bellberry Ethics Committee on 10 August 2023, ID 22CeSC084.

Study materials were reviewed by Dr Rhett Loban of Macquarie University’s School of Education for cultural safety and relevance to gamers. Dr Loban’s research interests include culture, game-based learning and virtual reality. Dr Loban is a Torres Strait Islander man with connections to Mabuyag and Boigu. He led the development of Torres Strait Virtual Reality, a game used at the University of New South Wales to teach about Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledge.

Professor Daniel Johnson of QUT and the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child reviewed the study materials, key findings and conclusions for alignment with the latest research into young people and online gaming. Professor Johnson’s areas of expertise include media psychology, video games, wellbeing, human–computer interaction and questionnaire design.

Focus groups and diary study

We spoke to a total of 43 young people in the qualitative phase of this study, including 19 girls and young women and 24 boys and young men, during August 2023. This phase comprised four one-hour online text-based focus groups with young people aged 14–17, two 90-minute in-person focus groups with young people aged 12–13 and a diary study with young people aged 8–11. All participants played video games online with others and played at least once a week.

Questions asked in this phase of the research informed the survey development and complemented the survey findings, adding depth and nuance and drawing out young people’s experiences of playing video games online in their own words.

Online survey

In September 2023, we conducted a 20-minute online survey with a nationally representative sample of young people aged 8–17 years living in Australia. A total of 2,024 young people participated in the survey, including 1,799 who had played online games in the past year.

Survey participants were asked about their experiences while playing video games online in the past year, including who they played and interacted with, positive and negative encounters, approaches they used to stay safe while gaming, and how their parent(s) and carer(s) felt about their gaming. Parents and carers of the gamers who participated in the survey were also asked to provide demographic information and to answer three or four questions about their child’s gaming. These questions included the rules or practices they used to support their child to stay safe while playing games online, how long their child usually spent gaming per day (if their child was aged 8–12⁴), who their child played online games with, and how they felt about their child’s gaming.

The survey instrument was tested with 10 gamers aged 8–17 to ensure they were able to understand the survey questions and response options.

Throughout the survey, participants were asked to think about the ‘past year’ when answering the questions. They were also asked to include any experiences or interactions they may have had with other players in gaming forums, chat rooms or streaming platforms, as well as in online games.

Apparent differences between subgroups of young gamers who participated in the survey, such as boys and young men, and girls and young women, are only included

⁴ Teen gamers (aged 13–17) were asked to estimate the time they usually spent gaming per day themselves.

in this report when the difference is statistically significant (as indicated by arrows in relevant data tables).

Figures provided in data tables and charts may not sum to 100% due either to rounding or to question formats that allowed multiple answers to be given. Tables and charts may not include response options such as ‘prefer not to answer’, ‘don’t know’, ‘another reason’, or ‘none of these’, for example, if the incidence is low.

In cases where only a sub-set of gamers were asked a question, the results were ‘re-based’ on all gamers, to provide an accurate incidence of behaviours or experiences among all young gamers. To minimise respondent fatigue, gamers who reported having multiple types of negative experiences while gaming were asked follow-up questions for a maximum of three negative experiences. Each table and figure in this report includes a description of the base used for analysis purposes.

Limitations

The following limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this research.

The findings detailed in this report are reliant on self-reported data. This means that the gaming-related harms and benefits noted in this report are based on participants’ experiences and perceptions as they have shared them with us, as opposed to independent observation or assessment. Related to this, if gamers have become used to aggressive cultures in the context of certain games, they may not recognise aggressive or bullying behaviours as problematic, which could lead to underreporting (McInroy & Mishna, 2017). Although the survey instrument used for this study did not explicitly ask respondents if they had ‘negative’ experiences while gaming, this may have been inferred given the context of the response options and the knowledge that the study was being conducted by the eSafety Commissioner.

The survey sample was sourced from an online panel of people who have agreed to be invited to participate in online research on a variety of topics, which is technically a convenience sample. Results from convenience samples may be subject to a range of biases when compared with results from research using probability-based sampling. Although quotas were used to control for demographic skews, controlling for psychographic skews arising from differential approaches to participation attraction is more challenging.

This research draws primarily on research with young people, with reference to data drawn from three or four survey questions asked of their parents and carers, as described above. The study did not include a comprehensive mixed-methods investigation of the experiences and attitudes of young gamers’ parents and carers.

This research focuses on harms that are covered by eSafety’s functions and powers under the *Online Safety Act 2021*, including abusive behaviours and exposure to harmful content while gaming online. We note that young gamers may also be exposed to other types of harm that are not identified in this report, such as fraud, scams, malware, viruses and age-inappropriate gambling content. Similarly, the study did not investigate ‘internet gaming disorder’ (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Research into psychological harms and online gaming is best conducted by an agency or institution with the requisite clinical expertise to design and conduct this research in a robust and safe manner.

Specific survey findings for trans and gender-diverse young people were not separated out in the main survey data collected. This was due to the small sample size for this group, which is an inherent challenge in statistical analysis. As a result, our findings are unable to reflect the specific experiences of young trans and gender-diverse gamers. This report also does not discuss young people’s online gaming experiences as they relate to their experience of disability, the language they speak at home or their First Nations identity. Future reports separating out data into demographic subgroups will be considered based on any significant differences identified during further analysis.

More detailed information about the methodology for this study is provided in our full [methodology report](#).

Positionality statement

eSafety understands the impact of researchers’ intersecting experiences of power and marginalisation on our research and analysis. The team that authored this report is made up of cis-gender women of European heritage. Identities represented in the team include parents, queer women and those with disability. Our team has expertise in quantitative and qualitative methodologies, online harms and safety issues, and the lived experiences of people at risk of online harms.

Young people’s participation in online gaming

Online gaming was a very common activity for young people of all ages in our survey. For most, playing online games was a social experience. The majority of young gamers in the survey reported playing with others online and directly communicating with others while playing. Young people were typically communicating with their offline friends, parents and carers, siblings and wider family members. A significant minority were gaming with other players they didn’t already know offline.

Most young people in Australia regularly play online games

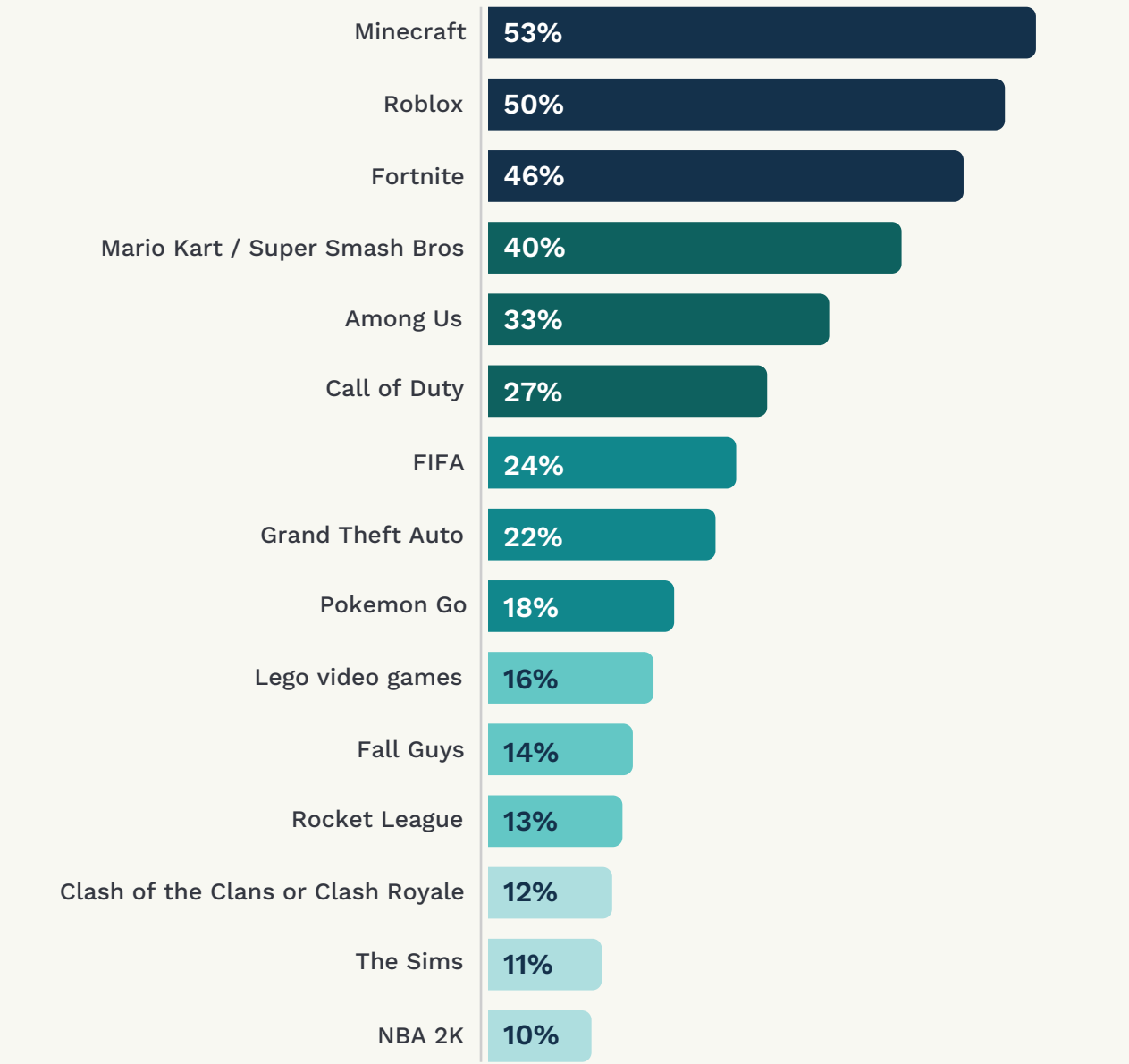
Most (89%) young people in our survey had played online games in the past year. The young gamers in our study had played a wide variety of games, spanning multiple genres. The most popular games played in the past year were Minecraft (53%), Roblox (50%), Fortnite (46%) and Mario Kart/Super Smash Bros (40%), as shown in Figure 1.

Some online games, like Minecraft, were popular among both boys and young men and girls and young women. In contrast, some games were played more by boys and young men (e.g. Fortnite) and others were played more by girls and young women (e.g. Roblox).

Full details are provided in Appendix B: Table A1.



Figure 1: Online games played by young people (by 10% or more of the young people surveyed)



Q. From the following list, pick all the video games you have played in the past year, even if you only played them once or twice. / In the past year have you played any other video games online that are not on the list? / List all of the other games you can remember playing in the past year, even if you only played them once or twice.

Base: 1,799 gamers aged 8–17

Young gamers typically played for more than 6 hours per week. Specifically, 33% played for between 6 and 12 hours per week and 33% played for more than 12 hours per week. The remaining third (33%) played for 6 hours or less per week.⁵

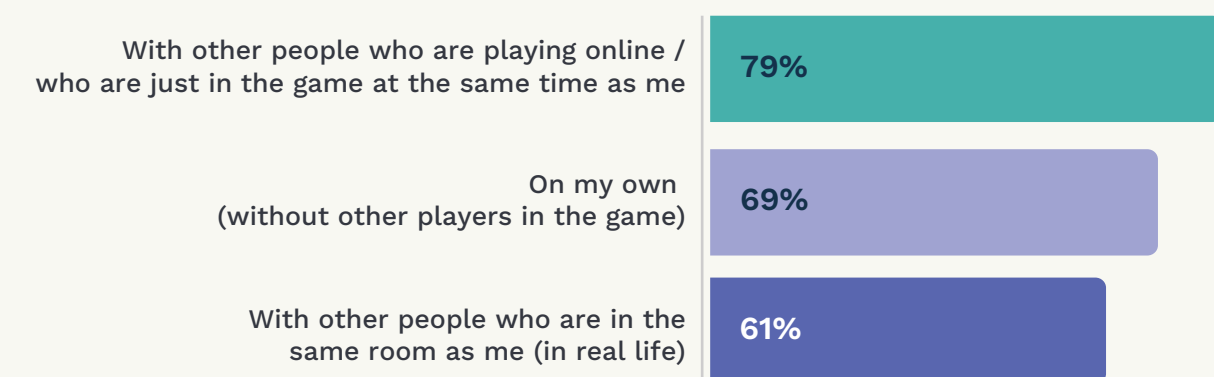
While 2 in 5 (41%) young gamers indicated that their parents and carers say they spend too much time gaming, only 1 in 10 (11%) said they personally think the amount of time they spend gaming causes problems for them. However, this increased to 17% of young gamers who played for more than 12 hours per week.

Gaming is a social experience for young people, with most playing online games with their friends and family members

Young people in our survey played online games in a variety of ways, including with others in person (61%) and with others online (79%) (Figure 2).⁶

Most young gamers (91%) had played online games with people they already knew offline (Figure 3). Specifically, 3 in 4 (75%) young people had played online games in the past year with friends or other people they knew offline (non-family members). In addition, more than 3 in 4 (78%) young gamers said they had played with family members (e.g. parents, siblings and other relatives) in the past year.

Figure 2: Playing online games with others or alone



Q. In the past year, how have you played video games online?
Base: 1,799 gamers aged 8–17

⁵ Survey respondents were asked to indicate how long they usually spent playing online games on each day of the week, using a scale which ranged from 'less than 1 hour' to 'about 5 hours or more'. This data was used to estimate the total number of hours each young gamer spent playing per week, with a duration of 5 hours being used for the '5 or more hours' category. For some young people, this may have resulted in an underestimation of the time spent gaming per week.

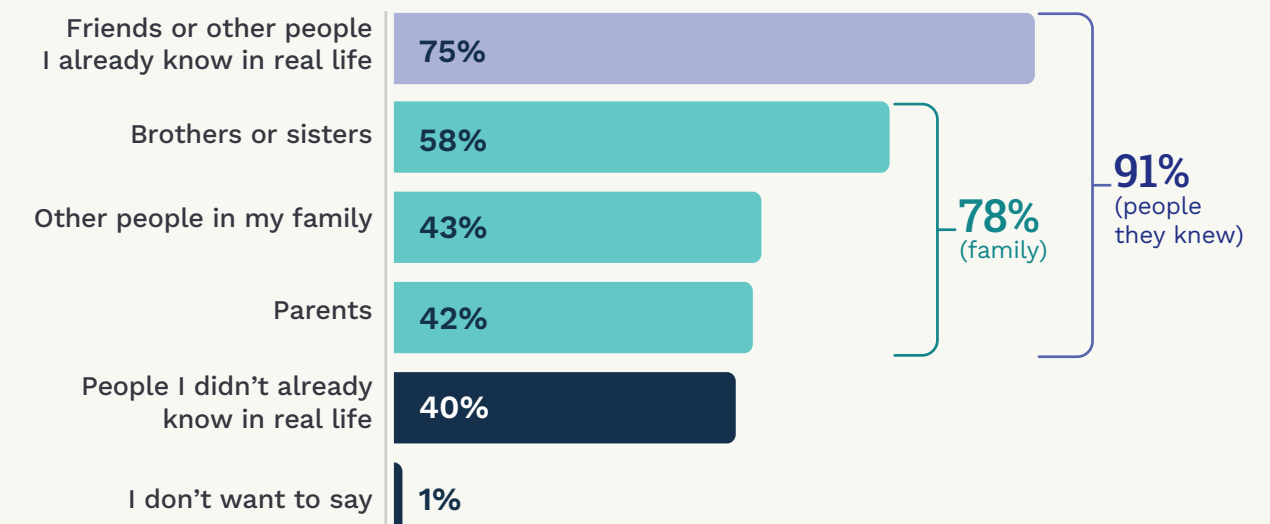
⁶ Playing with others online included people playing in the game at the same time as them, with whom they may or may not directly communicate or interact.

“ I get to play fun games with my friends.”
 (Girl, 10, diary study)

“ When I’m playing with my mum [I feel] happy ‘cause she is not good at it and we laugh lots. My sister and I play and we are competitive.”
 (Girl, 10, survey)

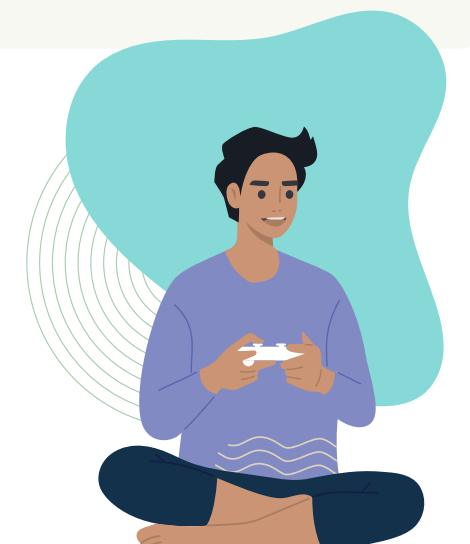
While most young people said they played online games with people they already knew, 2 in 5 (40%) had played with people they didn’t already know in their offline life.

Figure 3: Relationship to people with whom they play online games



Q. In the past year, have you played video games online with any of the following?

Base: 1,799 gamers aged 8–17



Direct communication with other gamers is a common part of gaming for young people

Most (66%) young gamers in our survey had directly communicated with others while playing online games in the past year. One in 4 (26%) young gamers had directly communicated with people they didn't already know offline while gaming.

Boys and young men, and older children and teens, tend to be more actively engaged in online gaming

Boys and young men in our survey were more actively engaged in gaming, compared to girls and young women. In addition, older children and teens (aged 11–17 years) were more actively engaged in gaming compared to younger children (aged 8–10 years). That is, both boys and young men and older children and teens (11–17) were more likely to play for longer (i.e. more than 12 hours per week), and more socially (i.e. they were more likely to have gamed with or directly communicated with other people online while gaming, and were more likely to have gamed with or directly communicated with other people they didn't already know offline while gaming).

Full details are provided in Appendix B: Tables A2–A5.

Discussion: The prevalence and extent of young people's gaming means it is crucial to understand their experiences

Gaming has become ubiquitous among young people living in Australia. We found that most young gamers spend a significant amount of time gaming each week, and this is especially true for older children and teen gamers. For young people in the study, gaming was a highly social activity, with many playing and communicating with family, friends and, sometimes, people they didn't already know offline. Boys and young men in the study reported different ways of playing and engaging with gaming than girls and young women.

The social nature of online gaming presents both risks and opportunities to young gamers, and with so many young people participating in online game play, it is imperative to understand what gaming is like for them. The rest of this report examines the online gaming experiences of young people in greater detail.



Young people's positive online gaming experiences: Happiness, social connection and learning new things

The feelings young people in this study reportedly had while gaming were overwhelmingly positive. Their desire to game was closely linked to a desire to have fun with friends, and they described feeling happy, relaxed and excited while gaming. Young people also reported several positive effects from gaming, and most had positive interactions in gaming environments.

Most young people play online games because they want to have fun, relax, relieve boredom or connect with friends

When we asked young people in our survey about why they play online games, having fun (81%) or relieving boredom (64%) were the key reasons they identified (Figure 4).

Relaxation was also a significant motivator, with more than 1 in 2 (54%) young gamers indicating this was a reason why they play online games. Focus group participants also told us they game to escape the pressures of their day-to-day lives.

“They [online games] are good when you just want to have fun and forget about things you are stressing about.”
(Young man, 14–15, focus group)

“It helps me to take my mind off school and work. It’s also fun and [a good way] to socialise.”
(Young woman, 16–17, focus group)

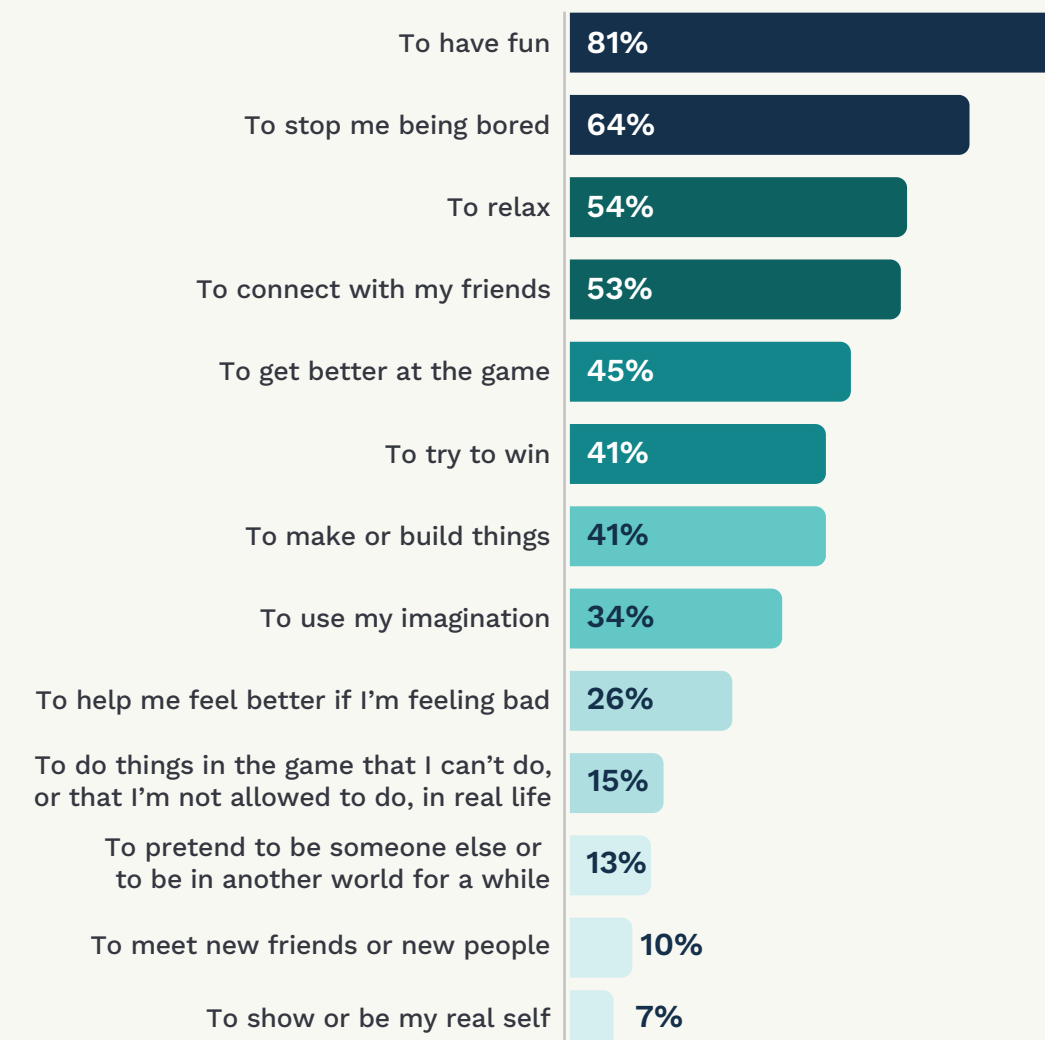


Similarly, social connection was a common reason young people gave us for playing online games. This aligns with our finding (p. 18) that most young gamers played and communicated with others online. Over half (53%) of those surveyed said they game to connect with friends. Further, 1 in 10 (10%) young gamers reported that they game to meet friends or new people.

“I play cause I’m having fun with my mates.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

“[I like best that] I get to play with all my friends.”
(Boy, 10, diary study)

Figure 4: Motivations for gaming



Q. Why do you play video games online?
Base: 1,799 gamers aged 8–17

For many in the focus groups, gaming gave them a way to interact with friends they might not see otherwise. It allowed them to stay in touch with friends who no longer lived nearby, or who they may only see at work. For others, it was a low-pressure way to socialise, with co-play allowing connection and bonding without having to maintain a conversation the whole time.

“ I play cause I’m having fun with my mates.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

“ [I like best that] I get to play with all my friends.”
(Boy, 10, diary study)

Gaming makes young people feel happy

When young gamers were asked to choose a colour to represent how they felt while gaming, and to explain the significance of that colour in their own words, they overwhelmingly (94%) gave positive responses. (See Figure 5 for a summary of responses.)

Many young gamers chose their favourite colour to reflect how much they liked gaming. Over two-thirds (69%) said they felt happy, good or like they were having fun while gaming, often selecting colours such as yellow and green which many considered ‘happy’ colours. In addition, 20% said gaming made them feel calm or relaxed, by offering an escape or distraction from daily life. Feeling excited or energised was also quite common, with 14% of young gamers telling us they feel this way when gaming.

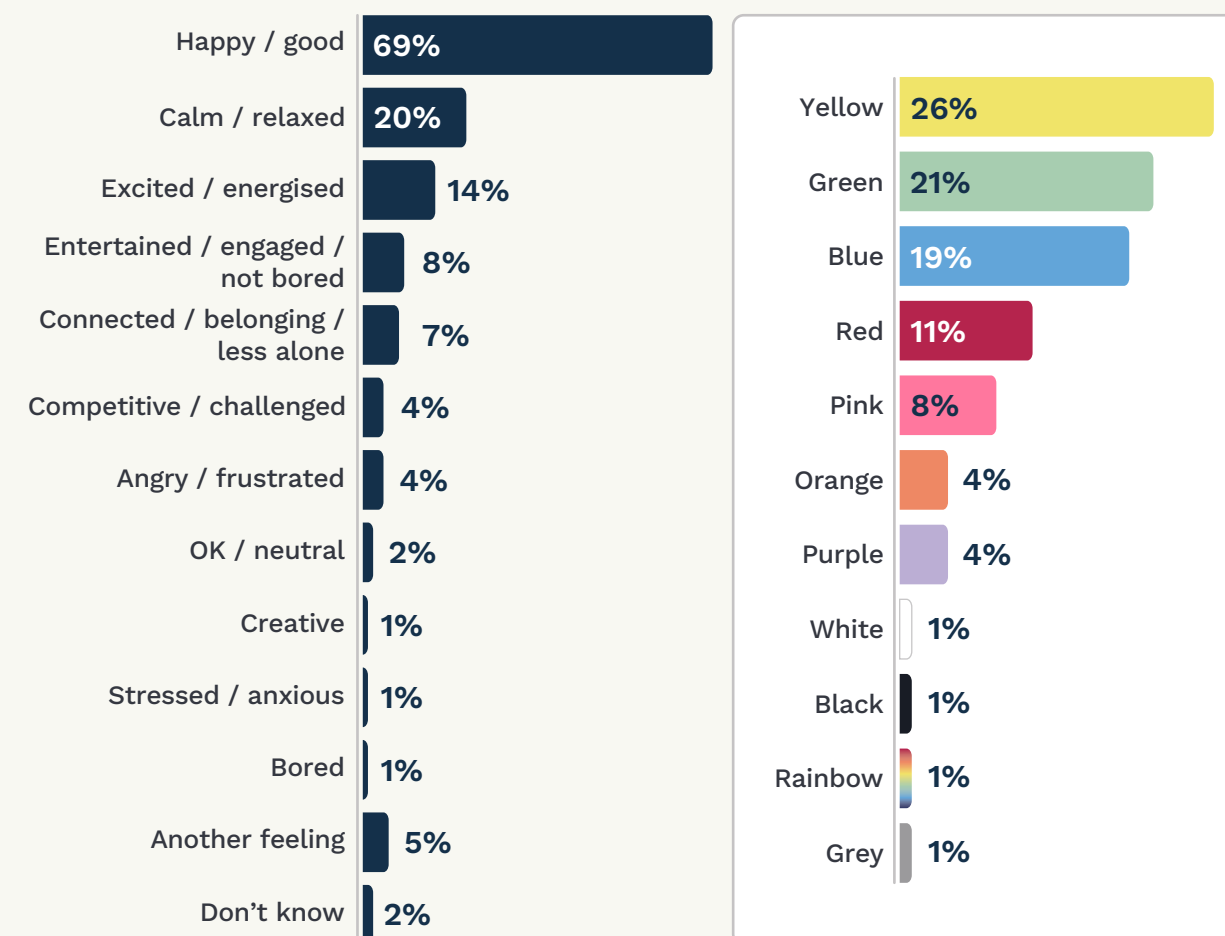
“ Pink, because that’s my favourite colour and playing games is one of my favourite things.”
(Girl, 8, survey)

“ Yellow, cus I was happy to play with others who enjoy playing the same game as me. Red, cus I was frustrated at people’s attitudes and comments sometimes.”
(Boy, 13, survey)

Young people in our focus groups shared that they experience a wide range of emotions while they play online games, often at the same time. For example, while feelings of frustration and stress may dominate for some, for many these feelings may ebb and flow with other more positive feelings as they engage in competition with other players or navigate a tricky part of the game.

“ Usually I’m laughing because my friends are hilarious. Competitive games get a bit heated (especially when I’m not winning) and sometimes it’s just chill and talking.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

Figure 5: Feelings experienced while gaming, along with associated colours



Q. How does playing video games online usually make you feel? What colour matches that feeling? Why? (free text response)

Base: 1,799 gamers aged 8–17

Young people see gaming as helping them with skill development, social connection and their emotional wellbeing

Just over three-quarters (76%) of young gamers surveyed indicated that gaming had helped them with **skill development**, such as learning something new, using digital technologies, solving problems and thinking faster (as shown in Figure 6).

“You can get better hand–eye coordination and get better reaction times depending on the game.”
(Young woman, 14–15, focus group)

Over half (58%) of young gamers surveyed felt that gaming had helped them with their **social connections**. This included things like helping them to get to know their friends better, to make new friends, to feel like they belong to a community and to feel less lonely.

“Well, if I’m playing with a friend, I’m gonna be more happy and like, less likely to feel, you know, kind of lonely.”
(Young woman, 12–13, focus group)

“Just hanging out with your friends even if you can’t do it in person. It’s just a great bonding experience and loads of fun – winning, especially.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

Alongside connecting with friends that they already knew, some young people in the focus groups described **making friends** through gaming. Having something in common – namely, gaming – was seen by some as a good entry point for connecting with someone new. While the overall preference among young people was to game with friends they already knew, there were some who had made good friends through gaming.

“Sometimes it can be a little confronting face to face to start a conversation with somebody, [but] if you can already like relate on one thing, which is immediately the game, you know, it’s a bit easier. Yeah. So you’ve already got the game in common, I guess.”
(Young woman, 14–15, focus group)

“1/100 there’s that one teammate with a crazy connection ... like someone you instantly click with and then you can literally open up to them like you’ve known each other for years ... deep conversations late at night.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

Young gamers also reported that online gaming had **emotional benefits** for them. Just over 2 in 5 (41%) thought that gaming helped them to feel more confident, to control their feelings or to improve their mental health. Similarly, gaming was commonly described by 8–11 year-olds in the diary study as increasing their confidence, typically through experiences of winning.

“Online gaming to me is about having confidence and relaxing.”
(Boy, 9, diary study)

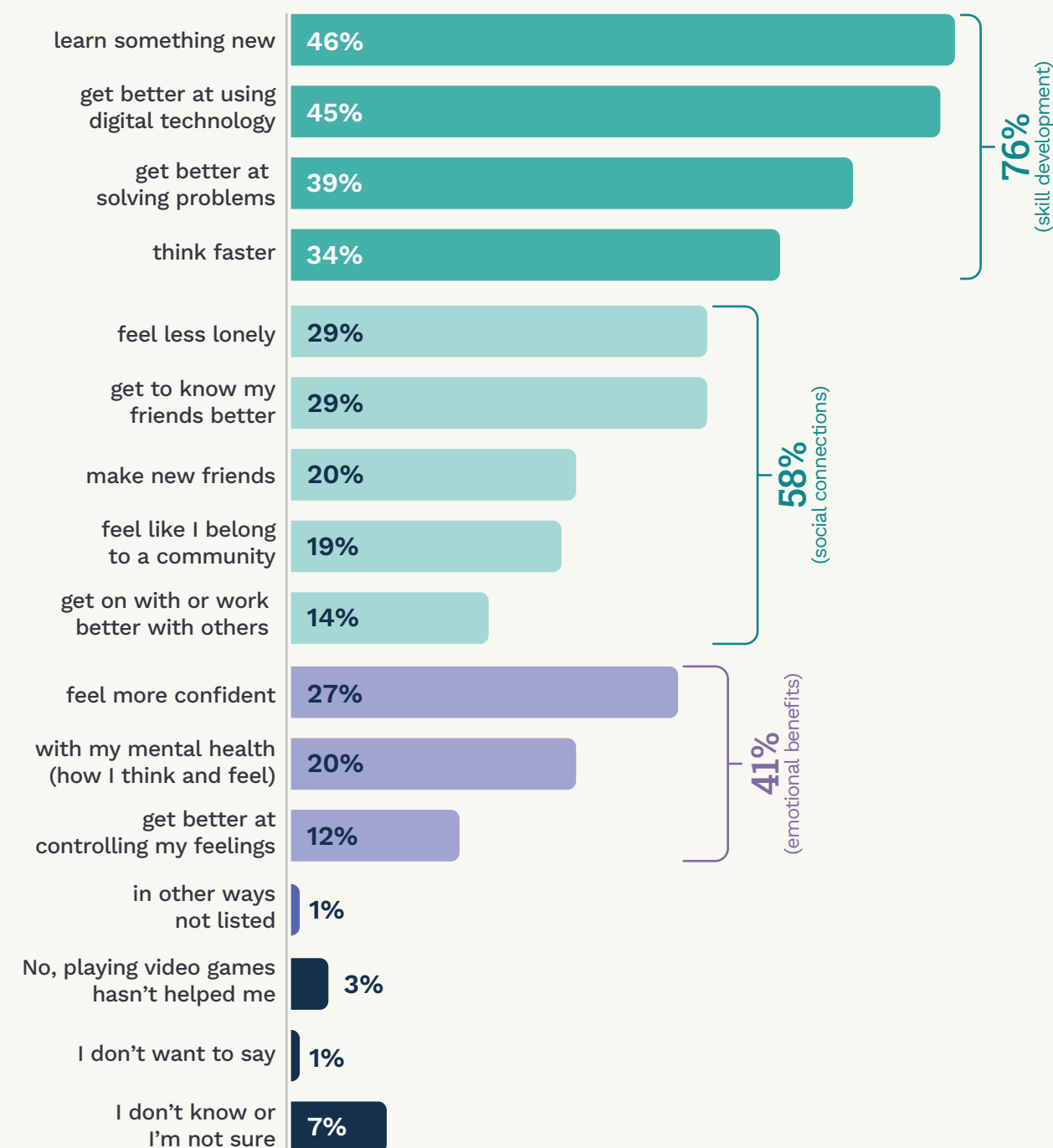
“[If] I get high scores when I game, I level up, I win, I have confidence.”
Boy, 8, diary study)

Overall, 9 in 10 (90%) young gamers said they had benefited in one or more ways from gaming.



Figure 6: Perceived benefits of gaming

Playing video games online has helped me ...



Q. Has playing video games online helped you in any of these ways or not?

Base: 1,799 gamers aged 8–17

Most young people have positive interactions in gaming environments

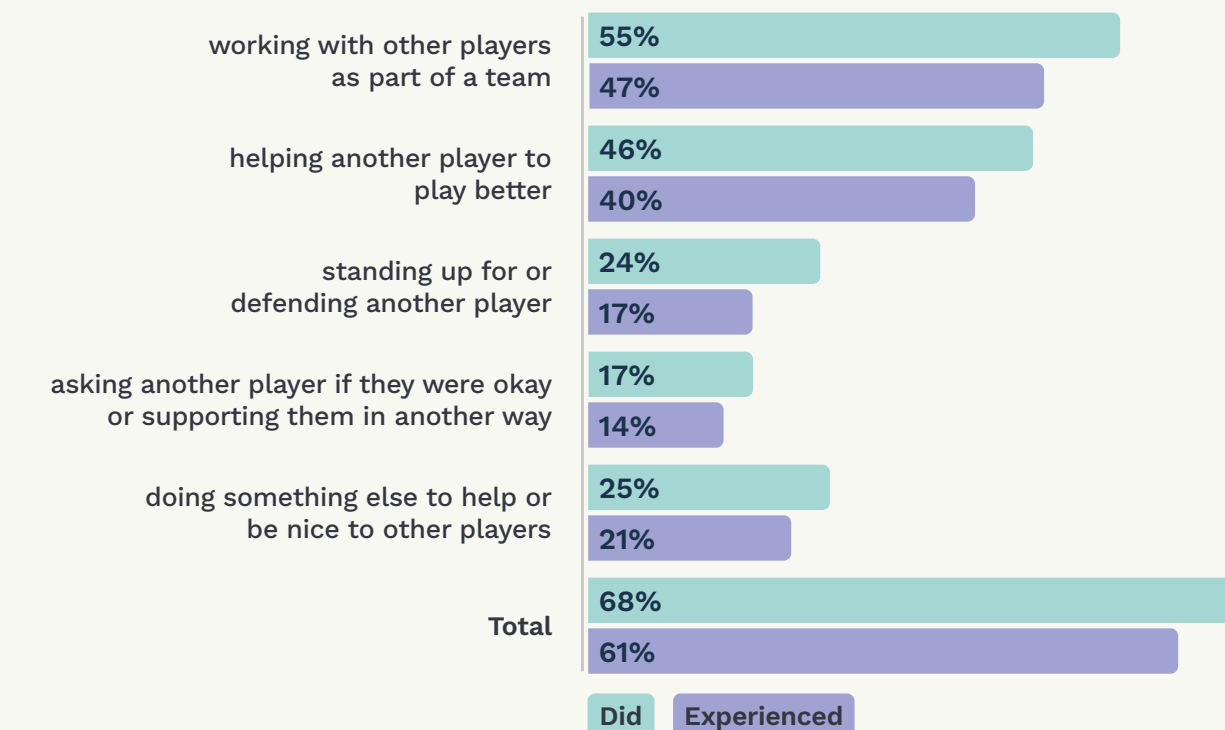
Almost 7 in 10 (68%) young people surveyed said they **did something to help other players** while gaming online in the past year. In particular, they told us that they worked together to be successful in the game by **playing as a team** (55%) or by **helping others to play better** (46%).

Four in 10 young gamers told us they had engaged in 'upstander behaviours' (40%) while gaming online. Being an upstander online means choosing to support a person who is being hurt or harmed. For young gamers, this included **standing up for other**

players (24%), **asking another player if they are okay or supporting them in other ways** (17%) or **doing something else to help or be nice to other players** (25%).

Similarly, more than 6 in 10 (61%) young gamers had been **supported by others** in some way while gaming. Most commonly, they reported **someone working with them in a team** (47%), followed by **someone helping them to play better** (40%) and **someone standing up for them** (17%), as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Positive interactions while gaming



Q. In the past year, have you done any of these things while you were playing video games?

Q. In the past year, did any of these things happen to you while you were playing video games online?

Base: 1,799 gamers aged 8–17

Young people who are more actively engaged in gaming are more likely to experience benefits

While most of the young people in the survey reported one or more benefits that they associated with their online gaming, young people who were more actively engaged in gaming were more likely to do so. The difference between those who were more actively engaged in gaming and those who were less so was most pronounced in relation to social and emotional benefits.

As discussed previously (p. 20), boys and young men, as well as older children and teens (aged 11–17), were likely to be more actively engaged in gaming. Reflecting this, boys and young men, as well as older children and teens, were more likely than girls and young women, and younger children, to report social connection and emotional benefits from online gaming.

In addition, boys and young men and older children and younger teens (aged 11–14) were also more likely to have supported or worked with other players or to have experienced other players supporting or working with them.

Full details are provided in Appendix B (Tables A6–A9).



Discussion: Young gamers' positive experiences may mean that online gaming can be a positive part of their lives

Young people in our study had positive experiences while gaming online and endorsed numerous benefits they had enjoyed as a result of their gaming. Young gamers' motivations for playing, their feelings while playing, the positive interactions they have in-game, and the effects they experience as a result of all of these things suggest that gaming can be a substantial force for good in their lives.

Forming and maintaining meaningful peer relationships is an important contributor to young people's wellbeing and mental health. Our research shows that gaming can facilitate connection with friends the young people already know offline, as well as connection with new friends made while gaming. This suggests that gaming may be a useful tool for supporting young people's social and emotional wellbeing. It may especially be the case for boys and young men, who were among the most likely to report that gaming had helped them socially and with their mental health.

For many young gamers in the study, playing online games provided opportunities to support and be supported by other gamers. These findings suggest that online gaming can facilitate young people's development of prosocial skills that may benefit them within and beyond a gaming context. The social connections and skills that young people experience through gaming are likely enhanced by using the communication features of online games, which we found to be popular among young gamers (p. 20).

We also found that online gaming presents an opportunity for young people to have fun and to relax. Relaxation was an especially important motivator for older teen gamers (aged 15–17). Teenagers often feel under pressure at school, at work and even at home. Gaming, as an outlet for relaxation, escapism and fun, may offer important relief from these stressors, allowing for periods of rest and play that can bolster young people's capacity to meet the challenges of growing up head-on.

Young people’s negative online gaming experiences: Serious risks and serious impacts

Participating in online gaming came with a risk of encountering harmful ideas and behaviours for the young people in our study. We found that just under 1 in 3 teen gamers had come across potentially harmful ideas while gaming.⁷ A slightly higher proportion of young gamers had experienced negative interactions with other players while gaming. Some of these negative experiences had serious impacts on young people’s social and emotional wellbeing.

Almost 1 in 3 teen gamers encounter potentially harmful ideas

Just under 1 in 3 (31%) teen gamers (aged 13–17) had encountered at least one type of potentially harmful ideas (shown in Figure 8) while gaming in the past year.

Most commonly, 1 in 5 (20%) teen gamers had seen or heard other players share or use hate speech (‘using words that are racist, sexist or nasty about things like disability, gender, sexuality, etc.’). In addition, just over 1 in 10 (11%) had seen or heard other players expressing or sharing misogynistic ideas relating to men’s superiority over women.

“The popular “go back to the kitchen” or “make me a sandwich” types of sexist comments are very prominent.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

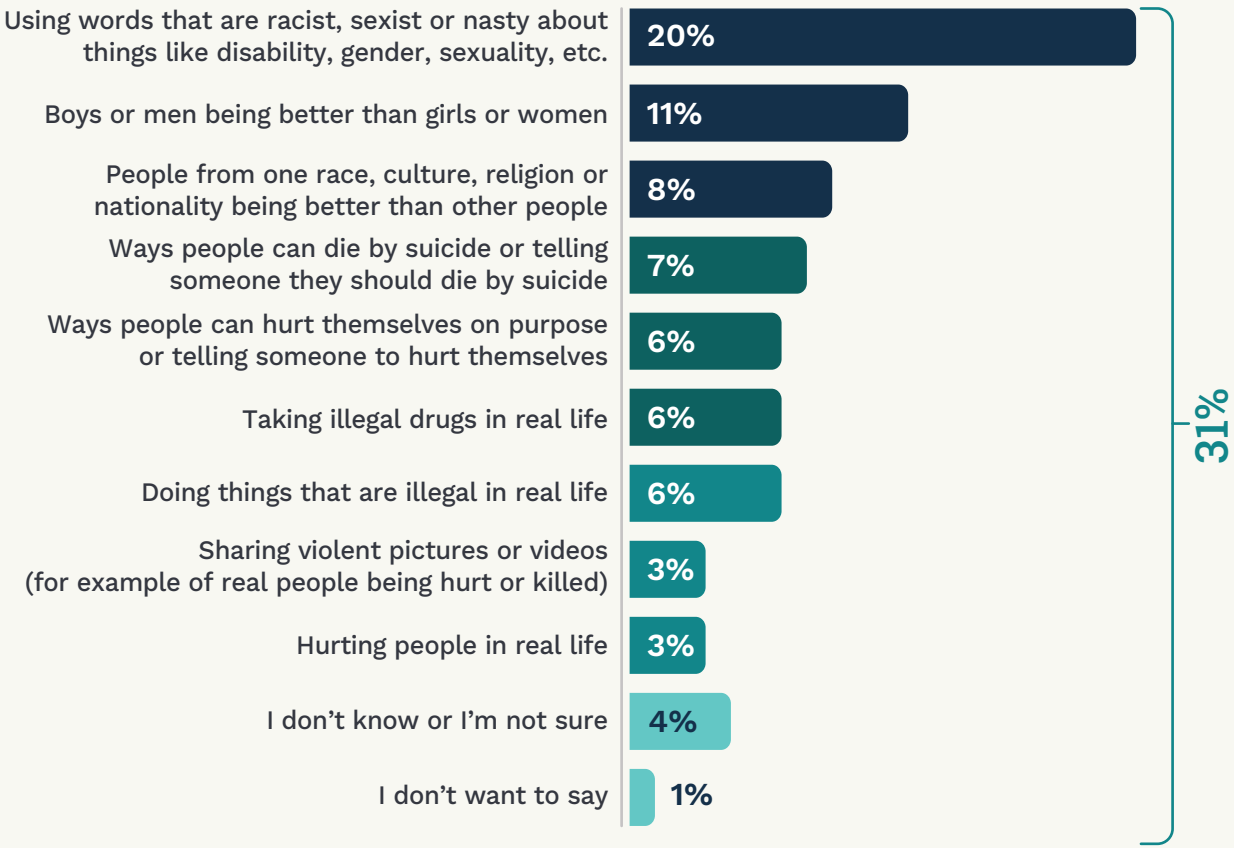


⁷ Questions about exposure to this potentially harmful content or ideas were only asked of gamers aged 13–17.

When queried about some of the negative aspects of online gaming, focus group participants noted the potential for exposure to these kinds of harmful ideas.

- “I really dislike the toxic communities in gaming. Many people can get riled up over things which can cause toxicity. In certain games like Call of Duty, there is a lot of misogyny which feeds on the idea of only men are good at video games, which mostly causes the bad environments.”
(Young woman, 14–15, focus group)
- “[Some negative things about gaming are] the racist and sexist stuff you get exposed to.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

Figure 8: Exposure to potentially harmful ideas⁸



Q. In the past year, have you seen other players show, share or talk about any of these things?
Base: 924 gamers aged 13–17

⁸ Questions about exposure to these potentially harmful content or ideas were only asked of gamers aged 13–17.

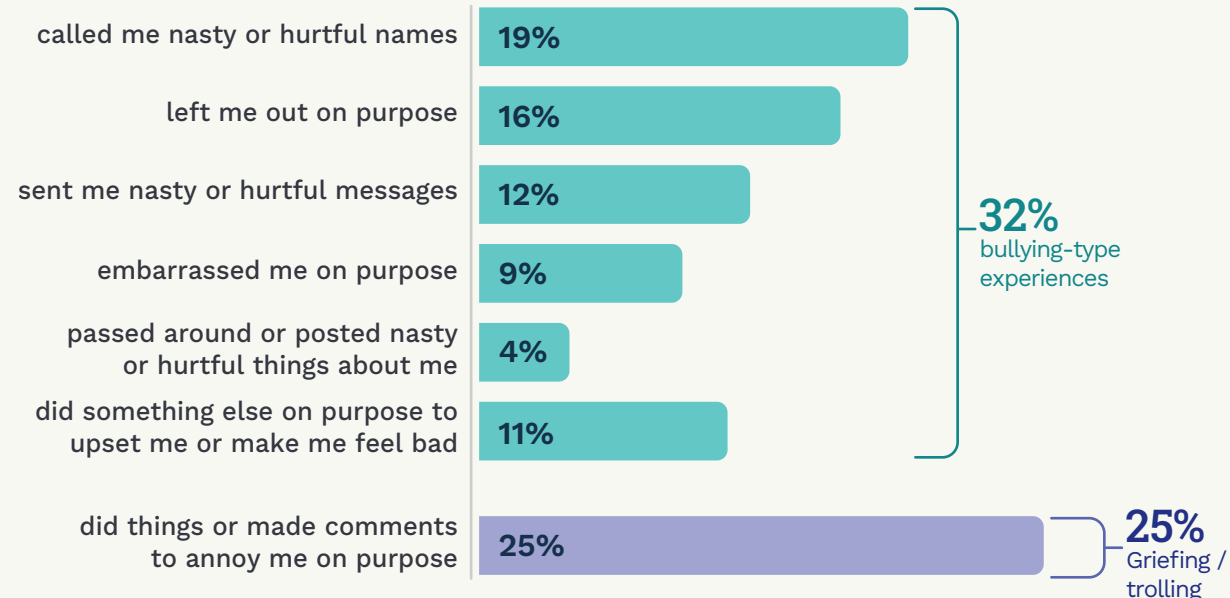
One in 3 young people experience bullying-type behaviours and 1 in 4 experience griefing or trolling while gaming

As shown in Figure 9, almost one-third (32%) of young gamers had experienced other players targeting them with bullying-type behaviours while they were playing online games.

Nasty or hurtful name calling by other players was the most common of these types of behaviours (19%), followed by experiences of other players intentionally leaving them out (16%), sending them nasty or hurtful messages (12%), intentionally embarrassing them (9%) or sharing ‘nasty or hurtful things’ about them (4%).

Figure 9: Bullying-type experiences, griefing and trolling while gaming

Another player ...



Q. In the past year, did any of these things happen to you while you were playing video games online?
Another player ...

Q. In the past year, did another player do any of these things to you while you were playing video games online?

Base: 1,799 gamers aged 8–17

Similarly, young gamers in the focus groups and diary study frequently identified this type of behaviour as a negative aspect of gaming. Participants in the focus groups also discussed other players berating gamers who were less skilled or who sounded young over voice chat.

“ Having a younger sounding voice, or female sounding voice, will automatically land you with a “shut up, kid” or sexist comment.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

“ You mess up and get berated on chat or even voice chat.”
(Young woman, 16–17, focus group)

Some focus group participants pointed out that the security of communicating digitally, rather than face to face, may embolden some gamers to bully others while gaming, perhaps accounting for the prevalence of these kinds of behaviours in gaming environments.

“ Your actions still count, even if it’s online. Like people ... might be bullying someone and they think it’s like funny because they don’t know it’s like a real person because they’re not face to face.”
(Young woman, 12–13, focus group)

“ Bullying, swearing and exclusion for some people. Just because people are behind a screen and they think there are no consequences.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

The extent to which behaviours like name calling were perceived as bullying varied. Some young gamers in the focus groups, especially teen boys, saw this type of behaviour as a common or even routine part of certain gaming environments, such as first-person shooter games. They suggested that aggressive ‘banter’ or insults were often thrown around these games but that they were not personal.

“ Yeah, I always thought it was a part of gaming.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

“ No one that I know of takes it on a personal level.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

Additionally, 1 in 4 (25%) young gamers in the survey reported other players doing things or making comments to annoy them on purpose – often known as ‘griefing’ or ‘trolling’ (Figure 9).

Some young gamers experience other harms, including potential grooming and hate speech

The survey also found that 7% of young gamers had experienced other players doing or saying something that made them feel uncomfortable (Figure 10). This could include asking them personal questions, being too friendly or asking them to keep secrets. These types of interactions could be an indicator of, or precursor to, someone building a relationship with a child with the intention of sexually abusing them – also known as grooming.

While the survey found that it wasn't common for young gamers to knowingly have these encounters, it's clear that young people are aware of the potential for them. Younger diary study participants often described how playing online games means they might meet people who are pretending to be someone they are not. Similarly, focus group participants indicated that they knew there was a risk of encountering predatory people through gaming.

“ There’s so many reasons to [be cautious while gaming], with online predators and “horror” stories.”
(Young woman, 16–17, focus group)

Some young gamers in the survey (6%) shared that they had experienced hate speech while gaming, meaning other players had said nasty or hurtful things to them because of their race, religion, culture, nationality, disability, gender or sexuality.

Some young gamers in the focus groups speculated that women being targeted in gaming environments was linked to the stereotype of women not being skilled gamers, while others observed that sexism could be a feature of gaming environments generally.

“ I find when they can hear your voice, they attack you immediately for being a girl. If not, it’s more general swearing and insults.”
(Young woman, 16–17, focus group)

“ They don’t know what you look like, but women get slandered if they speak ... They don’t even have to do anything to deserve it. Women just get flamed x100.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

A few of the young people we spoke with in the focus groups indicated that racist language and abuse were a common part of gaming ‘banter’ in some games. It’s notable that unless players stream, use voice chat or adopt particular avatars, it’s difficult for

other gamers to identify or guess their race or ethnicity. This means that racism in online gaming environments may not always be motivated by discrimination against an individual player, but against a group in general, members of which may or may not be present to hear it.

“ It can get pretty heated in fps [first person shooter] game lobbies where people throw [out] death threats and racist comments.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

“ You can’t see who’s on the other screen, but people still just bully most of the time. It doesn’t even relate to offline characteristics ... People just shout slurs for the fun of it.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

Finally, 4% of young gamers in the survey indicated that other players had continued to contact them when they didn't want them to – behaviours that are consistent with cyberstalking.

Figure 10: Other negative experiences while gaming



Q. In the past year, did any of these things happen to you while you were playing video games online?
Base: 1,799 gamers aged 8–17

Almost 1 in 10 teen gamers received or were asked to send nude images or sexual information

A significant minority of young gamers in the survey reported that they had received or been asked to send nude images or sexual information while gaming. Almost 1 in 10 (9%) teen gamers (aged 13–17) and 3% of children (aged 8–12) surveyed had these experiences (Table 1). Receiving or being asked to send nude images or sexual information may be linked to experiences of grooming, online child sexual exploitation or image-based abuse.

Importantly, some teenagers may not perceive the sharing or receiving of nude images or sexual messages while gaming as a negative experience. A series of contextual factors may contribute to how a teenager feels about the experience, including whether the sharing was consensual, the age of the player(s) sending or requesting this, and the nature of the relationship between them. The majority (71%) of teens in our survey described the experience of receiving or being asked to send nudes or sexual information as either negative (60%) or neutral (11%), while 25% indicated these experiences had been positive for them.⁹

Table 1: Receiving or being asked for nude images or sexual information

| | Aged 8–12 | Aged 13–17 |
|---|------------------|------------|
| Another player ... | | |
| asked me to send them naked or nude pictures or videos of myself | 2% | 4% |
| asked me to tell them about private parts of my body | 1% | 3% |
| sent me naked or nude pictures or videos of themselves | 2% | 3% |
| sent me sexual messages or made sexual comments about me | NA ¹⁰ | 4% |
| sent me naked or nude pictures or videos of other people (e.g. pornography) | 1% | 3% |
| Received or asked for nude images or sexual information (combined) | 3% | 9% |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 875 | 924 |

Q. In the past year have any players asked you to do / sent you any of these things while you’ve been playing video games online?

⁹ Teen gamers (aged 13–17) who indicated they had experienced players requesting or sending them sexual images or messages were asked how they would describe the experience(s), using a scale where 0 is negative, 5 is neutral and 10 is positive. Scores of 0–4 were categorised as negative, 5 was categorised as neutral and 6–10 were categorised as positive.

¹⁰ Only gamers aged 13–17 were asked if they had been sent sexual messages or comments.



Taken together, the findings indicate that, overall, 2 in 5 (42%) gamers (40% of those aged 8–12 and 44% of those aged 13–17) had one or more of the negative experiences captured by the survey (described in Figures 9–10, and Table 1). Around half (51%) of teen gamers had one or more of the negative experiences captured by the survey or had been exposed to one or more of the potentially harmful types of ideas described in Figure 8 in the past year.*

*Reminder: Only gamers aged 13–17 were asked about exposure to potentially harmful ideas.

Young people who are more actively engaged in gaming are at increased risk of negative experiences

The more actively engaged a young person in our survey was in gaming, the more likely they were to have negative experiences while playing. Young people in our survey who gamed for longer and/or more socially were more likely than those who were less actively engaged to have experienced each of the following:

- bullying-type behaviours (e.g. being sent nasty or hurtful messages, being called nasty or hurtful names, or being left out or embarrassed on purpose by other players)
- griefing or trolling (e.g. other players doing things or making comments to annoy people on purpose)
- hate speech (having nasty or hurtful things said because of race, religion, culture, nationality, disability, gender or sexuality)
- cyberstalking (unwanted repeated contact from other players)
- other players making them feel uncomfortable (e.g. by asking personal questions, being too friendly, or by asking them to keep secrets)
- other players sending or requesting nude images (pictures or videos) or sexual information (being asked to talk about private parts of their body or being sent sexual messages)
- threats of violence (other players threatening to hurt them in real life)
- exposure to harmful content (e.g. hate speech, misogyny, illegal behaviour, and ways people can die by suicide or self-harm).

Boys and young men were more likely than girls and young women to have experienced bullying-type behaviours, as well as griefing/trolling. This aligns with our finding that boys and young men were typically more actively engaged in gaming. However, we found no gender differences in experiences of hate speech, cyberstalking or being made to feel uncomfortable by other players while gaming, or in the experience of encountering potentially harmful ideas.

Risk of certain negative online gaming experiences was also found to differ by age. Gamers aged 11–12 were more likely than both older and younger gamers to have experienced griefing/trolling and bullying-type behaviours. In addition, teens (aged 13–17) were more likely than younger children (aged 8–12) to have experienced doxing, cyberstalking, and receiving or being asked for nude images or sexual information.

Full details are provided in Appendix B (Tables A10–A13).

Negative gaming experiences can impact young gamers' self-esteem and wellbeing

Young gamers in our survey who had received or been sent nude images or sexual information were the most likely to report that these experiences resulted in negative impacts, with 65%¹¹ experiencing at least one negative consequence in their lives (Table 2).

Approximately 1 in 2 (52%) young gamers who had experienced other players directing hate speech at them reported negative impacts as a result, as did those who had experienced other players doing or saying things that made them feel uncomfortable (48%).

Bullying-type behaviours and griefing/trolling were the most common types of negative experiences among survey participants. Two-fifths (40%) of young gamers who had experienced bullying-type behaviours, and over a quarter (28%) of those who had experienced griefing/trolling, also reported negative impacts. However, many of those who had experienced bullying-type behaviours (46%) or griefing/trolling (58%) told us that these experiences didn't result in any difficulties or challenges for them.

As shown in Table 2, lower self-esteem and feeling more worried, anxious or sad were the most common ways in which young gamers reported being affected by these experiences. Similarly, several young gamers in the focus groups described negative gaming experiences as hurtful, and as being likely to affect young people's mental health and self-esteem.

¹¹ Teen gamers (aged 13–17) who had received or been asked for nude images or sexual information were only asked follow-up questions, including how they had been impacted, if they indicated that this experience had been negative or neutral for them.

“It can get pretty heated in fps [first person shooter] game lobbies where people throw [out] death threats and racist comments.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

“You can't see who's on the other screen, but people still just bully most of the time. It doesn't even relate to offline characteristics ... People just shout slurs for the fun of it.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

Some focus group participants also noted that negative online gaming experiences can cause people their age to stop playing online games.

“It makes them upset and ruins all the fun for them so they may end up not playing anymore.”
(Young woman, 16–17, focus group)

“People may feel discouraged to continue playing if they're experiencing bullying while learning a game. It also can change your mood, as a fun and relaxing game can be ruined by comments.”
(Young woman, 16–17, focus group)



Table 2: Impacts of negative experiences while gaming¹²

| | Bullying-type behaviours | Nude images/ sexual messages | Hate speech | Griefing/ trolling | Felt uncomfortable |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Yes, I started feeling bad about myself | 18% | 26% | 16% | 8% | 14% |
| Yes, I started feeling more worried, anxious or sad | 16% | 23% | 19% | 9% | 22% |
| Yes, I had more arguments with my family or friends | 12% | 14% | 8% | 6% | 12% |
| Yes, I found it harder to concentrate at school, study or work | 9% | 17% | 8% | 3% | 10% |
| Yes, I lost some of my friends | 8% | 14% | 10% | 5% | 9% |
| Yes, people started thinking or saying bad things about me | 8% | 8% | 3% | 3% | 9% |
| Yes, I was less interested in meeting up with friends | 6% | 17% | 10% | 4% | 11% |
| Yes, I started treating other people badly (or worse than usual) | 6% | 7% | 9% | 4% | 6% |
| Yes, I felt less close to my family or friends | 5% | 16% | 6% | 3% | 14% |
| Yes, I had other difficulties or challenges because of what happened | 4% | 6% | 5% | 2% | 2% |
| No, I didn't have any difficulties or challenges | 46% | 33% | 34% | 58% | 37% |
| I don't know or I'm not sure | 12% | 2% | 12% | 11% | 12% |
| I don't want to say | 2% | 0% | 3% | 2% | 2% |
| Any of these impacts (combined) | 40% | 65% | 52% | 28% | 48% |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 who had each experience | 570 | 86 | 77 | 331 | 81 |

Q. In the past year, did you have any difficulties or challenges because other players ...?

¹² The sample size of gamers who had other types of negative experiences wasn't large enough for analysis of impacts.

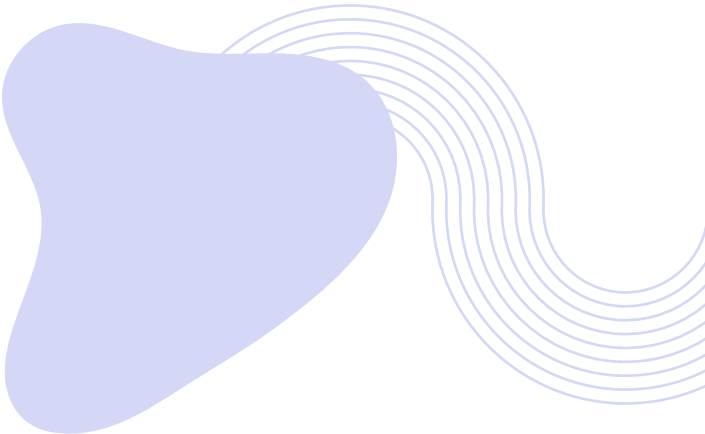
Discussion: Harmful and negative experiences are a risk for young gamers

Our findings indicate that a substantial proportion of young people may encounter negative behaviour and potentially harmful content while gaming online, and that these experiences can have serious impacts.

This included a significant minority of young gamers who could be at risk of negative experiences which may be linked with or be indicative of grooming, online child sexual exploitation, image-based abuse or cyberstalking. Although these experiences were relatively uncommon, this doesn't diminish the seriousness of these harms or their impacts, which we found to be more negative than other online gaming harms. We discuss what these findings might mean for gaming platforms in the conclusion to this report (p. 76).

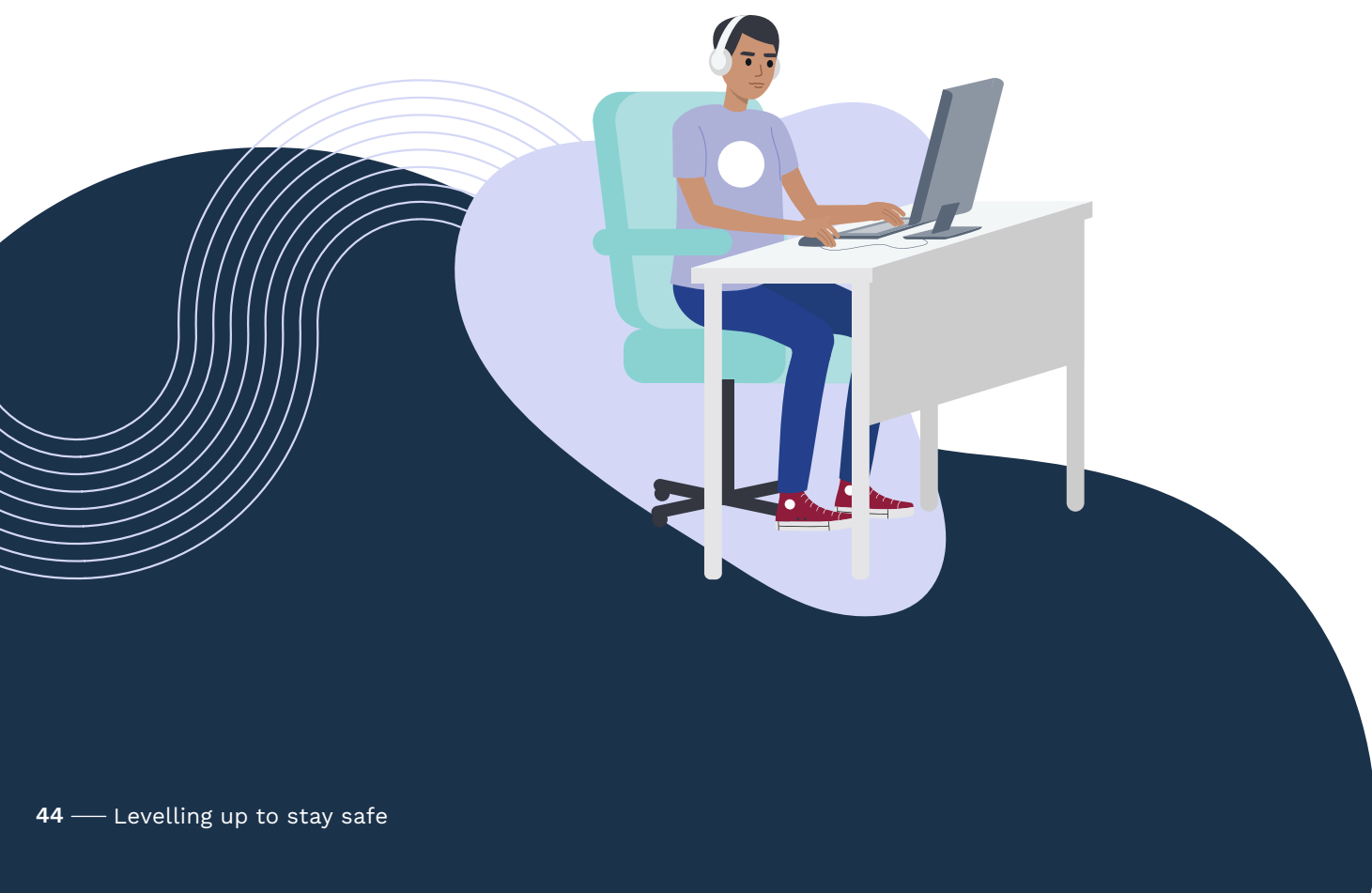
Our survey findings indicate that young people who are more actively engaged in online gaming are more likely to have negative and potentially harmful experiences while gaming. At the same time, gamers who are more actively engaged were also more likely to report experiencing benefits from their gaming. This tension suggests that, like many aspects of young people's lives, online gaming carries with it a potential for both risk and reward. As in many risky behaviours that young people undertake, such as participating in contact sports, exploring romantic relationships, and learning to drive, the risk/reward dynamic of online gaming likely evolves as a young person grows older and their developmental capacity, social skills and resilience increase.

With many young people in this study not reporting negative experiences, or indicating that such an experience didn't impact them negatively, it is possible that some young gamers feel that the benefits they derive from gaming outweigh its potential harms.



Staying safe while gaming online: Young gamers' proactive and responsive strategies

Most young gamers and their parents and carers are **proactively implementing safety measures for online gaming**. Many parents and carers use a combination of **active and restrictive mediation strategies** to support their child's safer online gaming, with some also using **technical mediation**. Young gamers also reported that they usually **take steps to try to stay safe while gaming**, including **restricting who they play or communicate with**, **limiting their use of communication features in games**, and **keeping personal information to themselves**. The majority of young gamers who had negative experiences while gaming took some sort of direct action to try to stop it happening again, but only a minority reported it.



Most parents and carers take preventative measures to make their child's gaming safer

The vast majority (95%) of parents and carers in our survey reported implementing one or more rules or practices to help their child stay safe while gaming. Only 5% of parents and carers said their child had no restrictions on their gaming.

Most (85%) parents and carers had provided their child with guidance and advice about how to stay safe while gaming online in the past 12 months, a practice known as 'active' mediation. Active mediation strategies used by parents and carers included (Figure 11):

- teaching or reminding their child not to share or reveal personal information while gaming (63%)
- encouraging their child to talk to them if they experience anything that worries them or makes them uncomfortable (62%)
- teaching or reminding their child not to talk to or message players they don't already know while gaming (55%)
- talking with their child about their video gaming interests and who they play with online (53%).

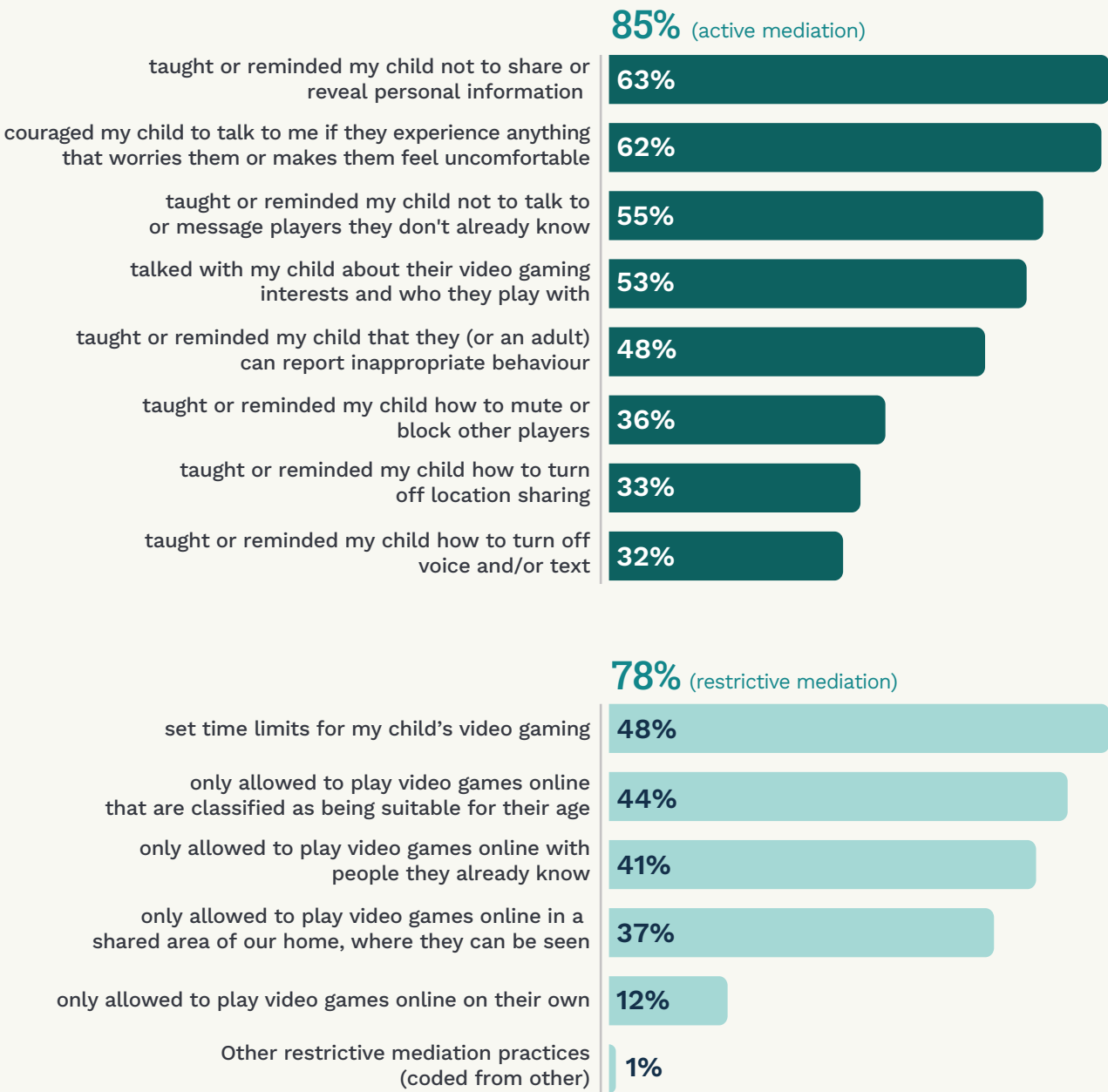
Many (78%) parents and carers in our survey also reported that they had implemented **restrictive mediation** practices, including:

- setting time limits on their child's video gaming (48%)
- only allowing their child to play video games that are classified as being suitable for their age (44%)
- only allowing their child to play video games with people they already know (41%).

Just over a third (34%) of parents and carers reported that they use technical mediation in the form of activating parental controls in the app, browser or device their child uses for gaming.

Figure 11: Parental mediation practices

I or another parent or carer ... / my child is ...



Q. Thinking about the past 12 months, read the following statements and select all that apply to your child ...

Base: 1,782 parents who said their child (aged 8–17) played video games online



Most parents and carers support their young gamers to manage their own safety as they age

Parents and carers appeared to continue to support their young gamers' safety with active mediation strategies as they age. There was only a slight decrease in active mediation for older children, with 87% of parents and carers of gamers aged 8–14 reporting using one or more of these strategies, compared to 82% of parents and carers of gamers aged 15–17.

Parents and carers in the survey were less likely to use restrictive and technical mediation practices with older children. Just over 9 in 10 (91%) parents and carers of gamers aged 8–10 reported using one or more restrictive practices, compared to just over 6 in 10 (61%) parents and carers of gamers aged 15–17. It follows that parents and carers may be empowering their young gamers to manage their own safety as they age, while continuing to support them through active mediation.

Parents and carers were just as likely to use each of the three types of mediation in relation to their child's gaming, regardless of the child's gender. However, some specific restrictions on gaming activities were more likely to be applied to girls and young women than to boys and young men. For example, girls and young women were more likely than boys and young men to only be allowed to play games classified as suitable for their age (48% vs. 40%) and less likely to be allowed to play online games with whoever else is in the game at the same time (14% vs. 22%).

Full details are provided in Appendix B (Table A14).

Young gamers don't always follow their parents' or carers' safety strategies

Young people in the survey revealed that they don't always put into practice their parents' and carers' online gaming safety strategies.

Of the young people whose parents and carers only allowed them to play online games with people they already know, 1 in 4 (24%) reported playing games with people they didn't know offline. Similarly, of the young gamers whose parents and carers taught or reminded them not to communicate with people they don't already know, 1 in 4 (24%) reported messaging or talking to players they didn't know offline while gaming.



Young gamers are proactive in their online gaming safety practices

Despite not always following the safety guidelines set out by their parents and carers, nearly all (95%) young gamers in our survey said they usually take steps to try to stay safe while gaming (Figure 12).

Almost 8 in 10 (78%) young gamers indicated that they usually restrict who they play or communicate with while gaming to try to stay safe by:

- only adding or accepting friend requests from players they already know (46%)
- only messaging or talking to players they already know (44%)
- setting their account to private or friends only (39%)
- playing games that only have people they already know in them (30%)
- only playing on their own, without any other players in the game (20%).

“ [To stay safe while gaming] try to play with people you know irl [in real life] and not strangers because most incidents tend to happen with randoms.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

Just over half (51%) of young gamers indicated they usually limit their use of communication features while gaming, which included:

- muting or blocking other players who are doing or saying things that make them feel uncomfortable (35%)
- turning off voice chat in the game or console, so they can't hear other players talking (26%)
- turning off text chat or messaging in the game or console, so they can't see other players messaging (22%).

Similarly, focus group participants reported that avoiding text and chat functions while gaming was a key safety strategy for them.

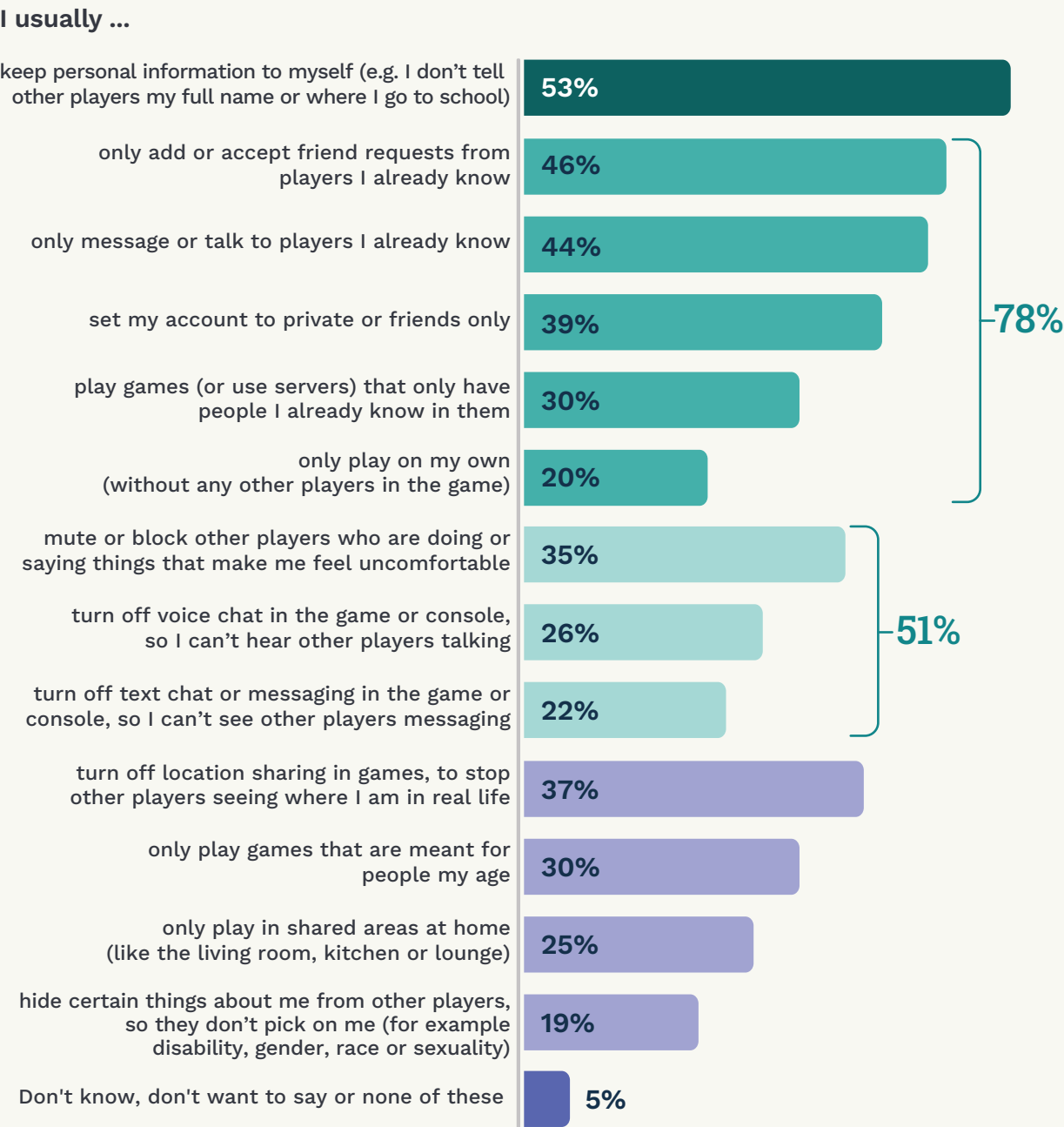
“ Every time I log into like a Fortnite creative, I instantly mute everyone.”
(Young man, 12–13, focus group)

“ My mum's scared me out of talking to people online. I just don't like to [do it] at all.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

Many young gamers also reported using other safety strategies, such as:

- keeping personal information to themselves while gaming (53%)
- turning off location sharing (37%)
- only playing age-appropriate games (30%)
- only playing in shared areas of the home (25%).

Figure 12: Safety rules or practices implemented by young gamers¹³



Q. Which of these things (if any) do you usually do to make playing video games online safer?

Base: 1,799 gamers aged 8–17 / 924 gamers aged 13–17

¹³ Only gamers aged 13–17 were given the response option 'hide certain things about me from other players so they don't pick on me (for example my disability, gender, race or sexuality)'.

Boys and young men, and girls and young women, largely used the same safety practices; however, a slightly larger proportion of girls and young women reported that they usually set their account to private or friends only, and usually only play games that are meant for people their age.

Younger children (aged 8–10) were also more likely than older children and/or teens to implement a number of the safety measures, such as:

- usually only playing games that are meant for people their age
- usually only playing in shared areas of their home
- usually only gaming on their own.

However, younger children were also less likely to have turned off location sharing and muted or blocked other players, compared to older children and/or teens.

Full details are provided in Appendix B (Table A15).

Nearly all young gamers take action in response to negative experiences, but only a minority report them

Among young gamers who reported negative experiences in the survey,¹⁴ the majority (58–72%) took direct action to try to stop it happening again. The most common direct actions taken in response to a negative online gaming experience were blocking or unfriending the person who did it (31–46%) and asking them to stop (26–37%) (Table 3).

A significant proportion of young gamers who reported negative experiences sought some form of support (44–55%). Young people tended to seek support by talking to parents and carers (31–45%), friends (8–20%) or another adult (3–12%).

A minority (18–43%) of young gamers in the survey had reported a negative online gaming experience – for example, to game moderators or in the game (16–25%). A small proportion had reported a negative experience to eSafety (1–13%) or the police (0–5%).

While a few young people in the focus groups mentioned reporting a negative experience to a game moderator or platform, most thought little would be done in response and so didn't see much point in taking this type of action. Some participants noted that reporting could lead to, for example, someone who is bullying people being banned; however, many others commented that reporting had little effect.

“By reporting it, it will get the person that is bullying others banned.”
(Young woman, 16–17, focus group)

“Most of the time, it [reporting] never results in anything happening.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

¹⁴ Young gamers were asked what they did (if anything) in response to each type of negative experience (for up to a maximum of 3 experiences). The findings relating to each type of experience were examined separately where at least n=50 provided an answer. As such, this analysis was only conducted for the more common negative experiences (shown in Table 3) and a percentage range is provided.

Whether derived from belief or personal experience, the idea that reporting is ineffective is likely a barrier that prevents young people from making reports when they have negative online gaming experiences. Focus group participants' discussions indicate that they believe gaming platforms either don't see harms such as bullying as significant enough to take action on, or don't monitor or action reports effectively.

“If it's like, actually something bad, or if it's just like they called me a loser, they're not gonna ban someone [for that]. They might give them like a warning, but they're not gonna just ban them [for] saying that.”
(Young woman, 12–13, focus group)

“There's no ways to make sure the reports are legitimate ... 'cause some people report just for the fun of it, from the gaming company perspective.”
(Young woman, 12–13, focus group)

Around 1 in 5 to 1 in 4 (17–26%) young gamers in our survey who were affected by negative experiences responded by stopping playing the game, either for a while or for good.

Many young people in the focus groups, especially boys and young men, saw negative gaming experiences as an inevitable part of gaming, particularly in certain types of games.

“Sometimes you can't avoid it, you have just got to deal with it.”
(Young woman, 16–17, focus group)

“Yeah, I would say it's quite unavoidable. You can't really control what everyone else does.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

Some were resigned to this and conveyed that the only way to avoid it was to stop playing the game where this was occurring.

“You can just stop playing the game and walk away from it, especially if you don't even know the people.”
(Young woman, 12–13, focus group)

“I usually just block them and leave the game.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

Lastly, a substantial minority (21–29%) of young gamers said they retaliated in some way to negative encounters. Retaliation may account, at least in part, for the perceived ubiquity of negative interactions in online gaming environments, increasing the number of incidences and potentially escalating them.

Table 3: Impacts of negative experiences while gaming¹²

| | Bullying | Intimate images/sexual information | Prejudiced insults | Griefing/ trolling | Felt uncomfortable |
|--|----------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Did something (combined) | 92% | 97% | 87% | 87% | 91% |
| Tried to stop it directly (combined) | 69% | 65% | 58% | 59% | 72% |
| blocked or unfriended them | 41% | 43% | 35% | 31% | 46% |
| asked them to stop doing it | 37% | 27% | 26% | 34% | 28% |
| turned off chat or messaging in the game or console | 27% | 19% | 19% | 24% | 30% |
| changed my privacy or contact settings | 9% | 24% | 12% | 6% | 17% |
| Talked to someone / sought support (combined) | 55% | 50% | 39% | 47% | 44% |
| talked to my parents about it | 45% | 31% | 32% | 42% | 36% |
| talked to a friend about it | 20% | 16% | 8% | 11% | 17% |
| talked to another adult about it | 5% | 12% | 4% | 3% | 4% |
| contacted a helpline or online support service | 2% | 5% | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| Defended myself by doing or saying something similar back | 29% | NA | 21% | 21% | 25% |
| Reported it (combined) | 29% | 43% | 25% | 18% | 27% |
| reported it to the game moderators, or I reported it in the game | 25% | 24% | 18% | 16% | 17% |
| reported it to eSafety | 4% | 13% | 6% | 1% | 12% |
| reported it to someone else | 3% | 6% | 1% | 1% | 4% |
| reported it to the police | 2% | 5% | 5% | 0% | 2% |
| Stopped playing that game (for a while or for good) | 26% | 21% | 17% | 25% | 23% |
| did something else | 2% | 0% | 0% | 3% | 0% |
| Ignored them or didn't do anything (only) | 8% | 3% | 10% | 12% | 5% |
| ignored them | 31% | 16% | 26% | 29% | 17% |
| didn't do anything | 7% | 2% | 6% | 8% | 2% |
| don't know or I'm not sure | 0% | 0% | 1% | 1% | 2% |
| don't want to say | 0% | 0% | 1% | 0% | 1% |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 who had each experience ¹⁵ | 570 | 86 | 77 | 331 | 81 |

Q. In the past year when others players did [negative experience] what (if anything) did you do?

¹⁵ Teen gamers were only asked what they did in response to receiving or being asked for nude images or sexual information if they indicated this experience had been negative or neutral.

Some young people don’t respond to potentially negative gaming experiences because they don’t feel impacted by them

The most common reason given by young people in the survey for not taking any action in response to a potentially negative experience while gaming¹⁶ was that it didn’t upset them enough (52%) (Figure 13). This may mean they weren’t upset at all by the experience, or that they didn’t feel they were upset *enough* to justify taking action.

Some young men in the focus groups were adamant that negative aspects of online gaming such as aggression and bullying behaviours were not only inevitable but weren’t particularly harmful.

“ [It’s] not that hard to leave the game or just turn off your computer ... if you’re getting bullied that bad.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

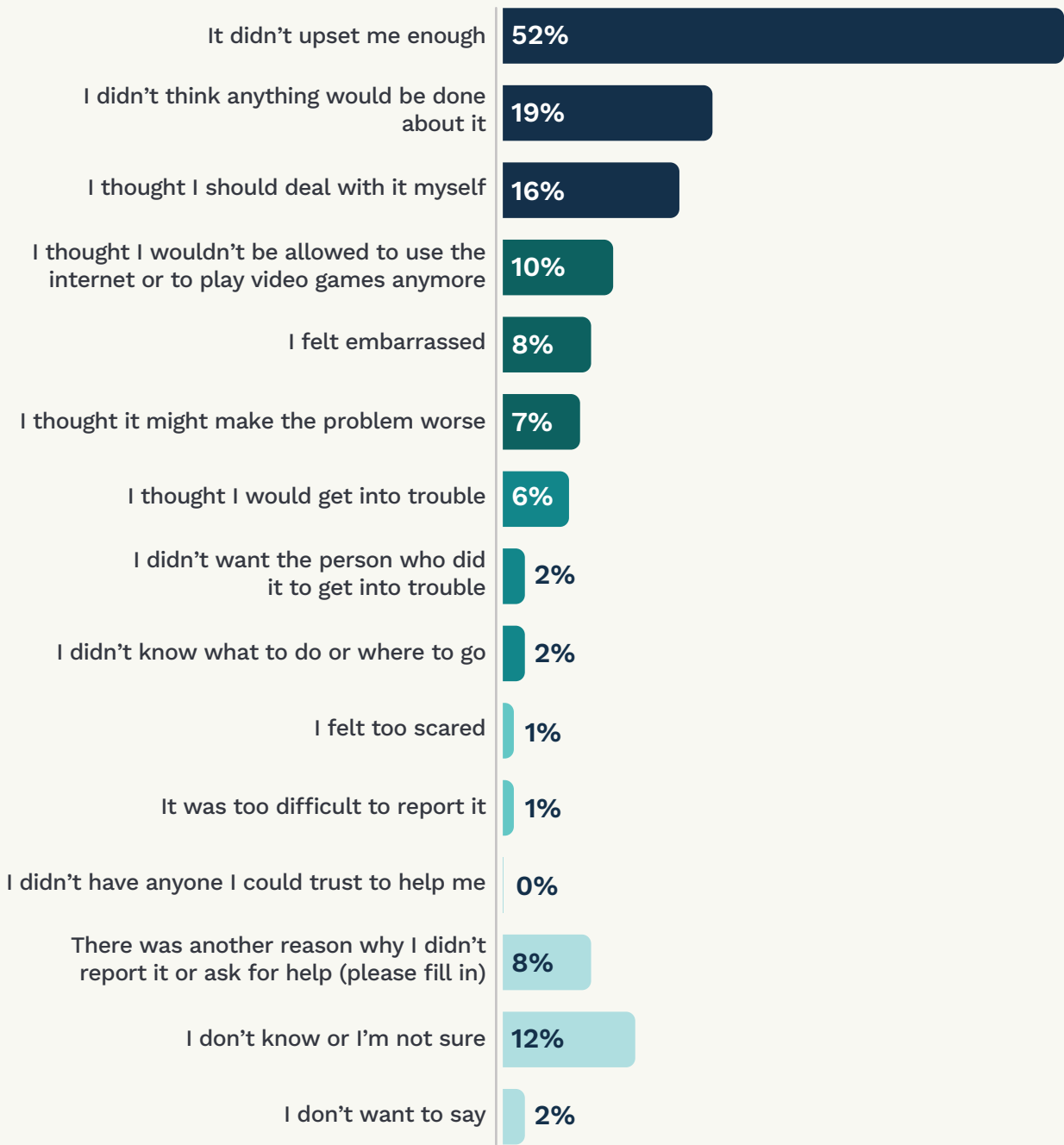
“ You should be able to handle it. [Or] you should play a more child-friendly game.”
(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

Around 1 in 5 (19%) young gamers indicated that they didn’t act in response to negative experiences because they didn’t think anything would be done about it if they did. This likely relates to our finding earlier in this section that many young gamers view reporting as ineffective.

Further, 16% of young people who reported a potentially negative online experience but didn’t do anything about it indicated that they didn’t take action because they felt they should deal with the issue themselves, while 10% told us they were worried they would be prevented from gaming or using the internet if they reported it or talked to someone about it.

¹⁶ Young gamers who said they didn’t do anything about a negative experience, or that they just ignored the person who did it, were asked why they didn’t take any action. Gamers were asked this question in relation to each type of negative experience they reported in the survey (for up to a maximum of 3 experiences), but responses to these questions have been combined to provide a large enough sample size for analysis (as most of the young people surveyed had taken some action).

Figure 13: Reasons for not acting in response to negative experiences



Q. Why didn't you do anything (like talk to someone or report it) when these things [negative experience] happened to you in the past year?

Base: 90 gamers aged 8–17 who had negative experiences in the past year while gaming and didn't do anything

Seeking support in response to bullying is more common among girls and young women, as well as younger children

We found that boys and young men were more likely than girls and young women to have retaliated or defended themselves by doing or saying something similar back in response to bullying-type behaviours.¹⁷ Girls and young women in the survey were more likely to have sought support or talked to someone about it.

Younger children (8–10) were more likely than older children and teens (11–17) to take some sort of action in response to bullying-type behaviours while gaming, including talking to someone or seeking support and asking the person responsible to stop. However, the likelihood of young gamers talking to their parents and carers about bullying-type behaviours was lower among teens.

Full details are provided in Appendix B (Tables A16–A17).

When parents and carers are involved in their child's online gaming, young gamers are more likely to talk to them about negative experiences

As shown in Table 4, we found that young gamers who had experienced bullying-type behaviours were more likely to talk to a parent or carer about these experiences if they had played online games with their parent(s) or carer(s) in the past year, or if their parent or carer talked to their child about their gaming interests, or encouraged their child to talk to them about anything that worried them or made them uncomfortable while gaming, in the past year.



¹⁷ Analysis of differences in how gamers of different ages and genders responded to specific negative gaming experiences was only possible in relation to the more common experiences of bullying behaviours and griefing/trolling (as the sample size was too small for the other experiences).

Table 4: Incidence of talking to a parent or carer about bullying and grieving/trolling, by parental engagement with gaming

| Talked to a parent about ... | Young person had played online games with their parent or carer (according to young person) | | Parent(s) talked to child about their gaming interests and who they play with (according to parent) | | Parent(s) encouraged child to talk to them about concerns while gaming (according to parent) | |
|---|---|--------------------|---|--------------------|--|--------------------|
| | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| bullying experience(s) | 51% ↑ | 39% ↓ | 55% ↑ | 30% ↓ | 54% ↑ | 26% ↓ |
| grieving/trolling | 47% | 37% | 50% ↑ | 26% ↓ | 50% ↑ | 24% ↓ |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 who experienced bullying-type behaviours | 274 | 294 | 338 | 230 | 375 | 193 |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 who experienced grieving/trolling | 157 | 174 | 210 | 119 | 221 | 108 |

Q. When other players did these hurtful or upsetting things to you in the past year, what (if anything) did you do? / **Q.** In the past year, when another player did things or made comments to annoy you on purpose, what (if anything) did you do?

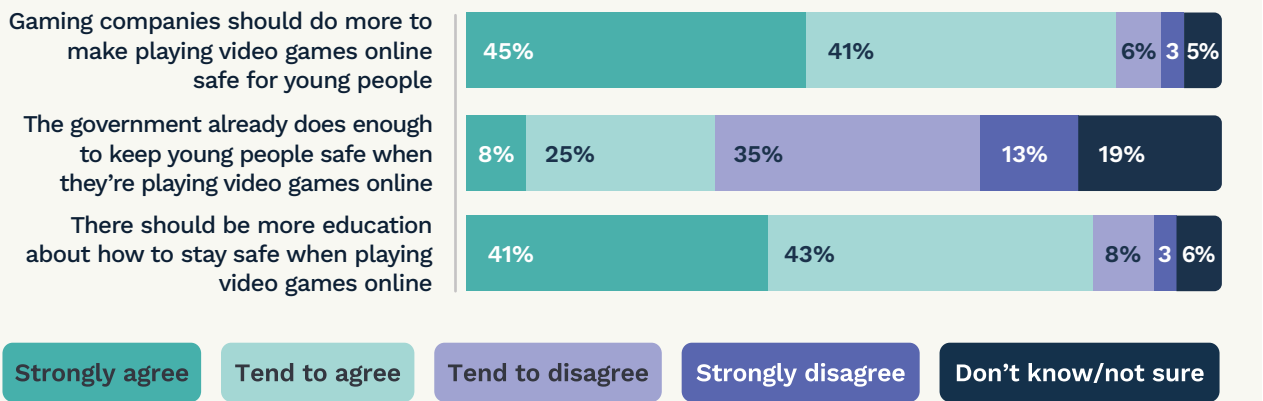
Young people want more to be done to keep them safe while gaming

The majority of teen gamers agreed that more needed to be done to keep young gamers safe, especially by the gaming industry, and that more education about how to stay safe was needed (Figure 14).¹⁸

- 85% strongly agreed, or tended to agree, that gaming companies should do more to make playing video games safe for young people.
- 83% strongly agreed or tended to agree that there should be more education about how to stay safe when playing video games online.
- 48% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the government was doing enough to keep young people safe when they are playing video games online.

¹⁸ These questions (asking participants how much they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about gaming safety) were only asked of gamers aged 13–17.

Figure 14: The role of gaming companies, the government and education in keeping young people safe while gaming



Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

Base: 924 gamers aged 13–17

We asked young gamers what they would change to make gaming safer for people their age. Almost 1 in 6 (15%) said that young people should be able to play games only with other people of a similar age or made suggestions relating to age restrictions. (See themes emerging from open text responses in Table 5.)

“ Have certain servers for different age groups. For example, servers for teenagers, servers for adults and servers for younger children. That way everyone can remain a little safer and not get targeted by older people.”
(Young woman, 14, survey)

Approximately 1 in 10 (9%) young gamers suggested more effective moderation or blocking of inappropriate or harmful language or content. The same proportion (9%) wanted more – or more effective – bans, suspensions or punishments for players who, for example, broke the rules or bullied other players. These, along with other suggestions made by young gamers, are shown in Table 5.

“ Report and ban people, but [it should be] done properly – so, not false bans.”
(Young man, 15, survey)

“ Have moderators who are more proactive and actively seek to protect kids.”
(Young man, 16, survey)

Table 5: Young people’s suggestions for making online gaming safer

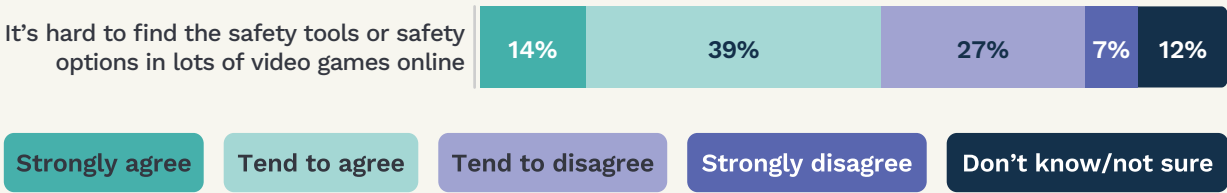
| | |
|--|-------|
| Age restriction / verification / only allow similar ages to play together | 15% |
| More effective moderation / blocking of inappropriate content, language, etc. | 9% |
| Ban / block / suspend / more effectively punish players who break the rules, bully, etc. | 9% |
| Make it easier for friends to play together / prevent contact from strangers | 6% |
| Make safety setting / reporting / blocking easier or quicker | 5% |
| Remove anonymity / require ID | 4% |
| Better education / in-game safety tips | 3% |
| Remove chat / text functions (or make this a default for children) | 3% |
| Provide more parental approvals / controls | 3% |
| Other players being nicer / playing fair | 2% |
| Something else / ambiguous | 19% |
| Nothing / don't know / no answer | 33% |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 |

Q. If you could change anything about playing video games online to make it safer for people your age, what would it be? Why would you change this?



In addition, over half (53%) of teen gamers strongly agreed or tended to agree that it is often hard to find safety tools or options in online games (Figure 15). This suggests that gaming could be made safer by making these tools more accessible.

Figure 15: Ease of implementation of safety tools or options in online games



Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

Base: 924 gamers aged 13–17

Discussion: Preventing and responding to negative online gaming experiences is a complex challenge

Young people and their parents and carers are aware of the risks of playing online games, and the vast majority are taking action to reduce and respond to these risks. In particular, our findings indicate that most parents and carers are aiming to equip their child to manage the risks of gaming online via active mediation practices and to gradually give their child more independence in their gaming activities as they develop. Young gamers often take steps to keep themselves safe by restricting who they game and communicate with or by limiting their use of communication features.

However, some safety measures, while effective, may inhibit young gamers’ access to the benefits of gaming. Both young gamers and their parents and carers reported that they implemented safety measures that limit the social aspects of online gaming. Turning off voice chat or only playing with offline friends may reduce the risk, but these strategies may also prevent young gamers from fully accessing the social connection and friendships that many told us are a benefit of gaming. Similarly, while some young gamers stop playing certain games as a response to negative experiences, this measure may have the additional effect of cutting them off from the important wellbeing support that gaming can provide (p. 26). Ensuring that online gaming is safe without reducing its benefits presents a substantial challenge to parents and carers, young gamers and the online gaming industry, as we discuss in the conclusion to this report.

Parent and carer involvement in young people's online gaming may be a key way to support their safety. Engagement by parents and carers in their child's gaming was found to be linked to young gamers talking to their parents and carers about bullying-type experiences. While it is developmentally appropriate for young people to seek the support of their parents and carers less often as they grow older, it is likely beneficial to young gamers to feel able to talk with their parents and carers if they think they need support after a negative gaming experience. Parent and carer involvement in gaming may also assist in bridging the gap between the rules and practices put in place by parents and carers and the gaming practices and behaviours reported by young people. Increasing parents' and carers' understanding of young gamers' online gaming experiences has great potential for increasing their ability to support their child to have safe and positive online gaming experiences. We discuss this potential further in the next section.

While parents and carers have a role to play in supporting their young gamer's safety, young people expressed a desire for government, industry and educators to do more to keep them safe while gaming online. Young gamers' insights into what should be done to make online gaming safer indicate that they have a strong understanding of how the structure of the games they play impacts their experience and safety. Insights from their lived experiences are essential to developing safety interventions that maintain gaming's potential for positive experiences.



Inviting parents and carers to understand young gamers' online experiences

A majority of parents and carers feel okay about their child playing online games, often on the condition that their child adheres to certain rules or safety practices. Further, parents and carers in our study showed an awareness of potential risks of gaming to their child's safety. However, our research indicates that few parents and carers consider gaming in the context of the potential benefits it may have for their children. In comparison to their parents and carers, young gamers identified many benefits of gaming (p. 26), viewing it as a source of positive feelings and experiences and wanting the adults in their lives to understand how happy gaming makes them. Some young gamers in this study expressed a desire for their parents and carers to game with them, perhaps as a way of inviting them to understand what gaming is really like for them.

Most parents and carers focus on the risks associated with online gaming

When we asked parents and carers of young gamers how they felt about their child gaming,¹⁹ almost half (45%) of their responses indicated that they felt okay with their child gaming, but only in the context of certain safety measures being in place or other qualifiers (see Figure 16).



¹⁹ Parents and carers were asked how they felt about their child playing online games in a free text response format. Responses were reviewed and coded into themes.

For example, 1 in 8 (12%) responses from parents and carers indicated they were okay with their child playing online games because they trusted their child, felt they had equipped them to be safe while gaming, and/or had open lines of communication about gaming. This mindset was more common as the age of the child increased.²⁰

A smaller proportion of responses from parents and carers (15%) cited specific benefits for their child or other positive associations with gaming.

“ I believe it is a very good way to socialise while keeping the brain active and can sometimes be educational.”
(Parent of young woman, 14, survey)

“ I feel ok with it. He has met some really nice kids from all over the world, mostly Australia, [has] remain[ed] friends and they talk a lot during their games. My son doesn't engage with any people he meets who talk any shit – [he] just blocks them, or if they make him feel uncomfortable, [he] leaves the game. He can be himself while online and finds a lot of kids who have similar interests.”
(Parent of young woman, 14, survey)

A further 1 in 8 (12%) responses from parents and carers indicated they were okay with their child playing online games, without offering any qualifiers or conditions, or gave some other neutral response.

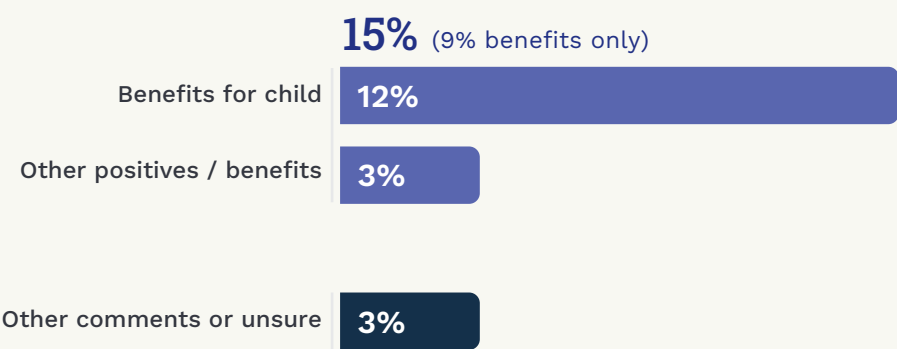
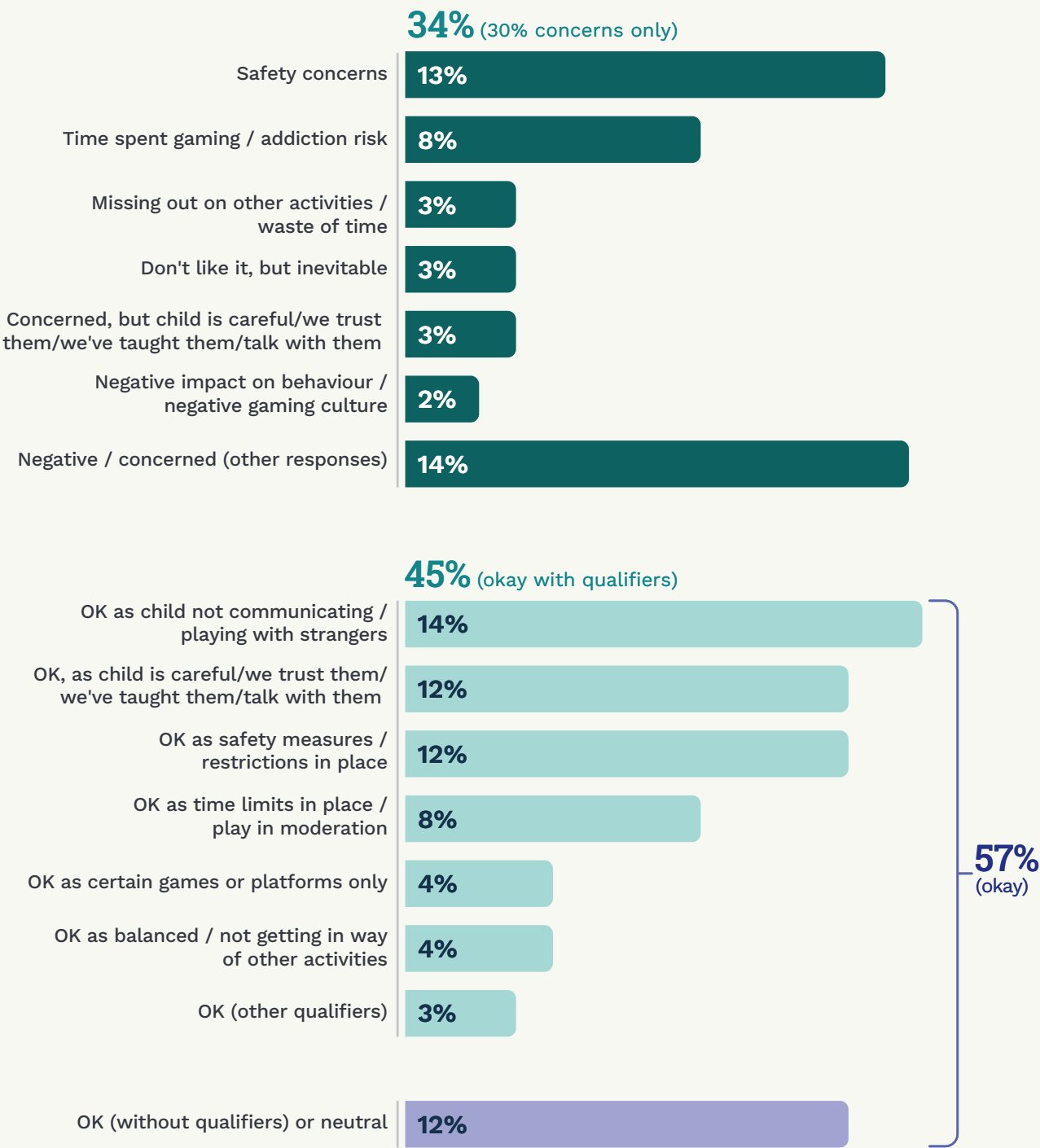
“ I feel it's ok as they need to take some time off to relax after studying.”
(Parent of young man, 16, survey)

Although the majority (69%) of parents and carers felt neutral, okay (or okay under certain conditions) or positive about their child's gaming, approximately one-third (30%) of parents and carers only expressed concern about their child's gaming (i.e. they didn't give any positive or more neutral responses). Negative perceptions of gaming and concerns about their child playing online games most often related to:

- safety concerns (13%)
- the amount of time their child spent gaming or the perceived risk of addiction (8%).

²⁰ This was expressed by 6% of parents and carers of 8–10 year-olds, 6% of parents and carers of 11–12 year-olds, 15% of parents and carers of 13–14 year-olds, and 21% of parents and carers of 15–17 year-olds.

Figure 16: Feelings of parents and carers about their child playing online games



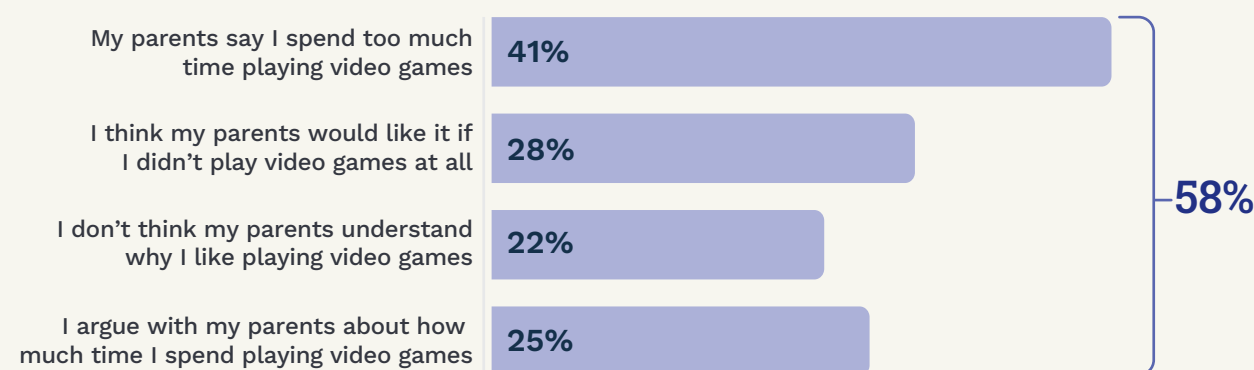
Q. How do you feel about your child playing video games online (free text)?
Base: 1,782 parents who said their child (aged 8–17) played video games online

Many young gamers know that their parents and carers have concerns about gaming

Almost 3 in 5 (58%) young gamers in our survey said that their parents and carers had at least one negative perception about their gaming, or that gaming causes arguments with them. Specifically, among the young gamers in our survey (Figure 17):

- 41% indicated that their parents and carers say they spend too much time playing online games
- 28% indicated that their parents and carers would like it if they didn't play online games at all
- 25% indicated that they argue with their parents and carers about how much time they spend gaming
- 22% indicated that they didn't think their parents and carers understood why they like gaming.

Figure 17: Parents' views on gaming, according to young gamers



Q. Are any of these statements true for you?

Base: 1,799 gamers aged 8–17

Similarly, many young people in the focus groups believed that adults think that gaming is a waste of time. Some elaborated on this, saying they think adults see gaming as an unproductive use of their time and think it gets in the way of things they view as more important, such as study. Others noted that they thought adults wanted them to spend time doing other activities, such as going outside or reading.

“It’s just like it’s not the most productive thing.”
(Young man, 12–13, focus group)

“[They think it takes] time away from other activities, like studying or sports.”
(Young man, 12–13, focus group)

However, some young people noted that adults they knew did see the positives of gaming, or were gamers themselves and could therefore appreciate its benefits in a personal way.

“If I’m talking to my tech teacher, who’s like quite young, he’ll be like, ‘Oh, I’m really good at Minecraft.’”
(Young man, 12–13, focus group)

“Most adults I have encountered are fairly understanding of the fact that many teens play games.”
(Young woman, 16–17, focus group)

Young gamers' perceptions that the adults in their lives have negative attitudes towards gaming appeared to impact how they saw gaming and its role in their life. They seemed to be keen to distance themselves, and their gaming, from the kind of negative stereotypes that were reflected in some parents' and carers' thoughts about gaming.

“It’s the kids that never go outside. They are constantly stuck indoors because they do nothing but sit at the screen all day. That’s not me.”
(Young man, 12–13, focus group)

Young gamers who were more actively engaged in gaming, as well as boys and young men, were more likely than others to report that their parents and carers had concerns about or didn't understand their gaming.

Full details are provided in Appendix B (Tables A18–A21).

Young people want adults to understand how happy gaming makes them

In the survey, just over 3 in 5 (62%) young gamers said they talk to their parents about playing online games, but this leaves just under 2 in 5 (37%) who apparently do not. The findings in this report suggest that even where these conversations occur, they don’t necessarily bridge the gap between young people’s mostly positive gaming experiences and what they perceive to be their parents’ and carers’ feelings about gaming.

When we asked young gamers what they would like adults in their life to understand about gaming, the most common response (40%) from young gamers related to how fun or exciting they found gaming or how happy it made them. (See themes from the free text response in Table 6.)

Other young gamers expressed that they were keen for the adults in their life to understand that gaming had benefits for them in terms of learning, creativity or skill development (10%), or that it helped them to relax or benefited their mental health in other ways (11%). Almost 1 in 10 (10%) wanted adults to understand that gaming was a way for them to connect with friends or family, or to feel part of a community or have a sense of belonging.

Likewise, young people in the focus groups told us that they wanted adults to understand the good things about gaming. These included many of the positives described in the survey – for example, that gaming is fun, relaxing and can be a way of spending time with friends.

“

I think I would try to make them understand that it’s a relaxing and fun activity to do to wind-down and it’s not all dangerous.”

(Young woman, 16–17, focus group)

“

It’s a way to connect with friends.”

(Young woman, 12–13, focus group)

Others in the survey wanted to refute some of the negative perceptions they felt adults had about gaming. For example:

- 8% wanted adults to understand that gaming isn’t all bad, that not all gamers are bad, or that gaming doesn’t harm young people who play
- 6% wanted to reassure adults that it’s safe, that they know how to stay safe, or understand the risks, or that they shouldn’t worry
- 2% wanted them to understand that gaming isn’t a waste of time or that it’s a legitimate hobby.

Table 6: What young gamers would like adults in their life to understand about gaming

| | |
|---|-------|
| It's fun / exciting / makes me happy | 40% |
| It's relaxing / provides downtime / it's good for my mental health | 11% |
| It helps me to connect with friends / family / community / feel a sense of belonging | 10% |
| It helps me to develop skills / teamwork / creativity | 10% |
| It's not all bad / not all gamers are bad / gaming doesn't harm young people | 8% |
| It's safe / I know how to stay safe / I understand the risks / they shouldn't worry | 6% |
| Parents / adults should game with me / learn to play / try to understand why we like it | 5% |
| It's normal / it's part of our world or how we play | 3% |
| It's just a game / it's not real / serious | 2% |
| It's not a waste of time | 2% |
| It stops me being bored | 2% |
| You can't pause online games / just stop playing immediately | 2% |
| It gives me a sense of achievement / confidence | 1% |
| Gaming can be dangerous / problematic / can cause addiction | 1% |
| My parents / some adults do understand | 2% |
| Something else | 9% |
| Don't know / no answer / nothing | 9% |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 |

Q. What would you want adults to understand about gaming?

Similarly, young people in the focus groups primarily wanted adults to understand that games aren't as bad as they might think. Some young people wanted adults to understand that gaming isn't always dangerous, and others wished that adults could understand that games don't cause young people to behave badly.

“ It doesn't create “bad behaviour”. What does [create bad behaviour] is unrestricted access to the internet and bad influences over the internet, but the games themselves, as long as you can draw the line between game and reality, [don't] create violent people.”

(Young woman, 16–17, focus group)

“ All the bad things that can happen are quite rare.”

(Young woman, 16–17, focus group)

Some young people felt that adults in their lives were hypocritical for seeing gaming as problematic when their own use of social media or engagement with other hobbies was, in the young people's view, very similar to how young people game.

“ When my parents yell at the TV for sports, I can't get up them. But when I yell at my game (possibly shit-talk), I get in trouble. Like, I genuinely wanna know what's going on?”

(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

“ My mum used to be addicted to Facebook. I used to tell her and then she'd say she doesn't use it that much.”

(Young man, 11–12, focus group)

Young people in the focus groups also expressed a desire for adults to understand that gaming is a hobby, and that they are entitled to spend their down time doing something that interests them.

“ Sometimes, if I've had like, a really rough day, I like to just sit down and game just for like a little bit and kind of relieve my mind and [then] get on to something else and [be] a little bit less stressed. And then I calm down.”

(Young woman, 16–17, focus group)

“ This is something that should be addressed with some parents. They need to understand that children play games for fun and that they should respect their down time.”

(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

A significant proportion of young people want their parents and carers to play online games with them

It's clear that young people very much want the adults in their lives to understand what gaming means to them. This is illustrated by the 2 in 5 (39%) young gamers in the survey who told us they would like their parents and carers to play online games with them (52% of children, and 27% of teens, who game). Further, 58% of those who said they would like their parents and carers to play with them also said they had played with a parent or carer in the past year, perhaps suggesting that they would like their parents and carers to game with them more often.

“ I think some parents don't have time to play with us anymore ... As we get older no one really has time anymore.”

(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

“ [Did you like playing with your parents when you were younger? Why?] [I liked] just spending time with them.”

(Young man, 16–17, focus group)

Full details are provided in Appendix B (Table A20).



Discussion: Parent and carer involvement in their child's gaming may benefit young gamers

Regardless of the complex feelings many parents and carers have about online games, often centred around valid concerns for their child's safety, our research indicates that the messages that young gamers are receiving from the adults in their lives about gaming tend to be negative. The disconnect between the messages young people receive about their parents' and carers' perceptions of gaming and young gamers' own experiences and perceptions may cause problems for families. Parents' and carers' concerns about gaming may translate into the message that, according to adults, time spent studying or doing other activities away from screens is more valuable than the fun and connection they experience while gaming. While parents understandably feel anxious to ensure the safety of their young gamer, young people may hear their parents dismissing the confidence, happiness and belonging that they feel while gaming. This misalignment may also hinder digital parenting strategies and become a source of family conflict.

Our findings suggest that young gamers in our study can be seen as inviting the adults in their lives to understand their online gaming experiences – for example, by playing with them. Parent and carer involvement in gaming may have the potential to bridge the gap between what gaming is like for young gamers and what they believe their parents and carers think about gaming. Increasing parents' and carers' understanding of what gaming is like for young people could facilitate connection, open communications and a greater awareness of the risks and benefits associated with gaming, and give families more opportunities to develop safety strategies that support positive gaming experiences.



Conclusion: Levelling up young gamers' safety

This study explored the lived experience of young gamers in Australia, considering both the risks and benefits they encounter, as well as the ways in which they can be supported to game safely. We found that online gaming can be a meaningful source of happiness, relaxation, connection and learning in the lives of young people. However, a significant proportion of young gamers had harmful experiences while gaming online, and the impacts of these harms could be serious. Actively engaged gamers were more likely to experience both the risks and the benefits associated with gaming online. While most young people and their parents and carers are proactive in their online safety strategies, young gamers want more to be done to keep them safe while gaming.



The positive experiences reported by young gamers in this study echo those detailed in the wider research. Prior studies have identified that gaming can have positive impacts for young people's emotional state, engagement, relationships, learning, and sense of meaning and accomplishment (e.g. Boyle et al., 2016; Connolly et al., 2012; Granic et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2006). A recent review identified evidence suggestive of positive outcomes from game play across a range of domains including cognitive development, social-emotional development, and mental health and wellbeing (Haddock et al., 2022).

The negative online gaming experiences detailed by young people in the study were similarly supported by existing studies. Previous research indicates that online games can be environments where young people are exposed to harms such as cyberbullying (McInroy & Mishna, 2017), hate, toxicity (Harriman et al., 2020), grooming (We Protect, 2023) and gendered harassment (Kahila et al., 2022; Gestos et al., 2018). Importantly, these studies suggest that the potential for harm can vary considerably based on several factors, including the specific game being played, how communication happens in the game, and moderator presence and control.

Our study found that while most parents and carers feel concerned about their child's safety and wellbeing when they game online, young gamers can interpret this as negativity about their gaming. Gamers expressed a strong desire for the adults in their lives to understand what gaming is like for them, and why they love it so much, with many reporting that they would like their parents and carers to play games with them. Evidence from prior research suggests that cross-generational co-play can bring a number of benefits for families. These include improved levels of family satisfaction and closeness, the fostering of positive communication, enhanced reciprocal learning, increased understanding of one another, and reduced conflict (Wang et al., 2018; Reis et al., 2021; De La Hera et al., 2017; Jirout et al., 2022; Bonnaire & Phan, 2017). In addition to these benefits, co-play has been identified as a fruitful but underutilised strategy for active parental mediation (Geffen, 2023) that warrants investigation in future research.

The findings from this research reinforce and contribute to the knowledge base on young people's online gaming in Australia and indicate that there is much to be done to level up young gamers' safety. The insights reported here suggest some practical considerations for supporting the safety of young gamers. Findings from the study may be meaningful to the online gaming industry, parents and carers, educators and researchers. The support of evidence-informed, proactive public policy and industry regulation will enable these four groups to consider acting on the conclusions that we have drawn from the findings in this report.

The online gaming industry

The findings outlined in this report affirm the online gaming industry's important role in ensuring that young gamers can have safe and positive online gaming experiences. This includes game studios/developers, game industry organisations and associations, and game moderators (Unity, 2023). Recent research has identified that adult gamers and developers alike see that the onus of responsibility for safe game environments largely lies with industry and gamers themselves, with a lesser role for governments/regulators (Unity, 2023). This is aligned with the views of the young gamers in this study, who felt that gaming companies should be doing more to keep young people safe.

Preventing harm

Young gamers in the study were most likely to be adversely impacted by negative online gaming experiences that related to them receiving or being sent nude images or sexual information, other players making them feel uncomfortable, or having hate speech directed at them. However, some of the safety strategies that gamers and their parents and carers can implement to avoid these harms, such as turning off communication features, may also prevent young people from experiencing the full benefits of gaming. These findings suggest that industry has a crucial role to play in reducing online gaming harms so that gamers and their parents and carers don't have to choose between gaming safely and experiencing the full range of benefits gaming can offer.

The findings in this report may therefore provide additional impetus for industry to implement [Safety by Design](#) measures across the product life cycle, to continually innovate and invest in safety technologies, and to utilise [tools](#) that support designers to build products that enable children's play in online worlds, promote their rights and best interests, reflect their evolving capacities as they grow up, and prevent harms where possible.

Safety features and reporting processes

While young people in the study were likely to take action in response to a negative online gaming experience, they were relatively unlikely to report an incident. This may have been because young gamers largely saw reporting as ineffective. We also heard from gamers that safety features in games can be hard to access. The findings in this report suggest that industry could consider the following measures:

- Ensure that games and consoles are set to the most secure privacy and safety levels by default or, alternately, that players are automatically asked a series of questions about their preferred privacy and safety options before starting to play for the first time (as is currently the process with accessibility features in many games).
- Ensure that all safety and privacy features are easy and intuitive to access and use, so that gamers and their parents and carers can proactively manage their preferred settings in line with young players' evolving capacities.
- Clearly communicate community guidelines to gamers and enforce consequences for violating these rules.
- Ensure that complaint mechanisms are easily accessible for gamers, and that these mechanisms provide feedback loops to ensure that gamers understand what action has been taken as a result of their complaint.

Age-segregated servers

Some of the young gamers in the study believed that gaming could be made safer if they were able to play only with others close to their age. It is possible that gaming with players who are much older may increase young gamers' likelihood of exposure to a variety of risks by placing them in environments with social dynamics that, due to their developmental stage, they may not yet have the social-emotional skills or resilience to navigate. Teen gamers also explained that the presence of younger players in games that they are not equipped to play properly can be frustrating for those around them. If this frustration is expressed, it could result in a negative experience for the younger players.

While game classifications come with an age guide, these are based on the content of a game and don't necessarily correlate to the culture of a game or the levels of harm that can occur between players in that game (Australian Classification, 2023). That is, a G- or PG-rated game could potentially be one in which players of all ages interact and where bullying or other negative behaviours are culturally entrenched. Traditional classification schemes are based on content risks, which represent just one of the four potential categories of risk (i.e. content, contact, conduct, contract; Livingstone & Stoilova, 2021) that young people may encounter in gaming platforms.

It follows that establishing age-segregated servers or experiences within games, in addition to other strategies, could reduce risk for young gamers. In order to segregate audiences by age, service providers need to conduct some form of age assurance. 'Age assurance' is an umbrella term that includes both age verification and age estimation solutions. Generally, merely asking users for their age or date of birth isn't sufficient. However, age assurance by itself won't eliminate risk, and it must be implemented as part of a series of safety strategies such as those discussed in this conclusion. Further discussion of age assurance technology can be found in eSafety's [Age Verification Roadmap and Background Report](#) and in [our research series with young people](#).

Parent and carer accessibility

Young gamers in our study wanted their parents and carers to understand what gaming is like for them, and many wanted the adults in their lives to play, or play more, online games with them. As described above, family co-play is aligned to a range of wellbeing and safety benefits for young gamers. However, parents and carers who are not gamers themselves might find online game play unfamiliar and challenging. Industry could potentially support parental involvement in their child's gaming in the following ways, among others:

- Develop more games with modes and options that allow co-playing with users who are unfamiliar with gaming (e.g. a mode where player 2 is invulnerable or has extra lives).
- Include tutorials or instructions that are accessible to beginners.
- Create conversation starters and tips to support parents to talk to their child about the game, to help them scaffold learning and to understand game play and safety considerations.
- Highlight features of games that may be of interest to parents as well as young people, such as cooperation, creative expression, puzzle-based activities and more. This may build on or contribute to similar work done by the not-for-profit sector (e.g. [Common Sense Media](#)).
- Run campaigns that encourage parents and carers to get involved in their child's gaming and promote the safeguards and parental controls that are available to parents within their products. Similar campaigns have been run in other jurisdictions (e.g. [UKIE's Get Smart about P.L.A.Y campaign](#)).

Parents and carers

The findings in this report suggest that parents and carers play an important role in supporting their young gamers to have safer and more positive online gaming experiences, and that they could potentially also share in and benefit from these experiences themselves through co-play.

Connecting through gaming

A number of young people in the study reported that they would like their parents and carers to game with them. This may be linked to young gamers' desire for the adults in their lives to better understand their online gaming experiences, as well as to enjoy playing together. These findings suggest an opportunity for parents and carers to get more involved in their child's gaming.

As noted above, gaming together can provide an avenue for parents and children to connect with and learn from each other. Further, co-play gives parents and carers an opportunity to gain a greater awareness of the benefits and risks that their child may encounter while gaming, which can support the development of safety strategies that support positive gaming experiences (Geffen, 2023).

To maximise the benefits of co-play, parents and carers and young gamers may consider seeking out games, or genres of games, that are new to both of them, so they can learn to play together without a significant skill mismatch. Alternatively, some children might enjoy the opportunity to reverse the usual parent-child dynamic by taking on the role of expert and teaching their parent or carer how to play (Volda & Greenberg, 2012). Parents can also engage by actively observing their child's gaming, looking out for opportunities to ask questions, to understand the challenges they must face and overcome, and to see the skills they are building.

Building trust and open communication

This study shows that young people who have negative encounters while gaming may be reluctant to take action or to seek support for a range of reasons, including if they feel embarrassed, if they believe they should deal with the issue themselves, or if they fear that their gaming devices or internet access will be taken away. It also indicates that gamers whose parents and carers seek to understand and get involved in their gaming, and who actively encourage them to talk to them about any concerns they have about gaming, are more likely to seek support from their parent or carer if they have a negative experience.

Parents and carers may be able to support their child's safety while gaming by getting involved in their gameplay and encouraging them to talk about both positive and negative gaming experiences. Parents and carers can build trust and open communication with their child in relation to gaming from an early age by asking questions about their gaming, talking with them about the positives of gaming (as well as the potential risks), and supporting them to set goals, think critically and problem-solve within the context of games their children are engaged with (Heard et al., 2023).

The findings in our study also suggest that parents and carers could consider reassuring their child that gaming time and devices won't be removed if they encounter problems while playing. If parents and carers become concerned about their child's mental health in relation to gaming, the first step should be to seek support from a mental health professional,²¹ rather than restricting access to gaming, which may have unintended consequences.

[eSafety has developed resources based on this research that provide support for parents.](#)

Supporting balance and meaningful gaming opportunities

Many parents and carers in the study expressed concern that their child was spending too much time gaming, or reported that they restricted the time their child spent gaming. These concerns were not unfounded, as this study found that gamers who played for longer periods, and therefore had greater exposure to the risks associated with gaming, were more likely to have negative experiences. However, we also found that longer periods spent gaming were associated with more benefits from gaming.

Parent and carer concerns may be linked to popular discourses around the ill-effects of screen time and gaming that arise in media, education and social media settings (Orben, 2020). However, these ideas are rarely based on a full view of the evidence about the prevalence of harms and potential benefits of online gaming. For instance, the idea that time spent gaming reduces the time young people spend engaging in other valued pursuits, such as learning, seeing friends, or being physically active, isn't fully supported by research. A review by UNICEF noted that the current evidence doesn't point to any major or long-lasting negative impact of gaming for children's mental wellbeing, social relationships or physical activity (Kardefelt Winther, 2017).

Parents and carers might consider working with young people to negotiate and agree on ways to make time for gaming that enable them to achieve a good balance of daily activities such as sleep, relaxation, study and offline activities. This shift in parents' and carers' focus may also help to counter young people's perception that adults don't see much value in gaming.

²¹ Professional mental health support may come from meeting with a practitioner or contacting a crisis line.

Preventing harm and equipping young people to manage risk

Young gamers and their parents and carers in this study were aware of the risks associated with gaming online, and most were taking steps to try to mitigate these. However, only a minority of parents and carers had activated parental controls in the app, browser or device their child uses for gaming. This suggests that parents and carers may be able to support their child's safety by making greater use of gaming safety features, alongside building trust and open communication with their young gamer.

Research suggests that age-appropriate monitoring and use of the safety features of online games, including parental controls, may be helpful in limiting young people's exposure to risks on gaming platforms. However, the same studies emphasise that these strategies are not a replacement for proactive conversations with children about potential risks and are best considered as part of a broader approach to parental mediation and communication (Coşa et al., 2022; Stoilova et al., 2023). Research points to the importance of communication, joint rule setting, negotiation and child involvement in decision making, indicating that parental controls should be set up in consultation with young gamers and be modified as their capacities evolve (Stoilova et al., 2023). Parents who are uncertain about the safeguards available or how to apply them could consider consulting guidelines accompanying specific apps, devices, games or as summarised by other trusted sources.

Our study also found that gamers who use certain gaming features associated with risk, such as those allowing communication with other players, were also more likely to experience benefits from gaming. This suggests that young gamers may benefit from parents and carers supporting them to make wise decisions for themselves, scaffolding their learning and granting age-appropriate levels of autonomy. Doing so may give young gamers opportunities to learn about online risks in ways appropriate to their evolving capacities, and to develop digital skills and confidence and resilience (Stoilova et al., 2023). This, in turn, may help to build their capacity in responding to negative experiences that they may encounter within games and increase their access to the full range of potential benefits from gaming.

The study also found that boys and young men are no less likely than girls and young women to encounter risky situations while gaming, but boys and young men were less likely to have certain restrictions placed on their gaming activities. This suggests that harm prevention practices are an important consideration for parents and carers regardless of their child's gender.

[eSafety has developed resources based on this research that provide support for parents.](#)



Educators partnering with parents and carers

Taken together, the findings in this report indicate that parents and carers face a complex challenge when it comes to facilitating their young gamer's safety and positive gaming experiences. This suggests that education providers may have a role in supporting parents and carers in this.

It is important that digital parenting resources present a balanced picture of gaming. This could include an evidence-informed outline of both the benefits and the risks associated with gaming and specific gaming behaviours, as well as guidance around increasing young gamers' independence as their capacities evolve. If parents and carers are empowered by balanced information, they may be more able to help their young gamers get the most out of gaming.

Parents and carers may also feel supported by digital parenting resources that explain how safety and privacy settings in games work, and how to activate them. Accessible resources detailing how to use other tools – for example, servers that allow young people to control who they play particular games with – to maximise their safety may also benefit parents and carers and, in turn, their young gamers.

Educators supporting young people

Many young people in the study thought there should be more education available about how to stay safe while gaming. The study also found that a significant proportion of young gamers had encountered potentially harmful ideas and/or had negative experiences while gaming. These findings reinforce the role of educators in supporting young gamers' safety and suggest that this role could extend beyond traditional online safety education.

Participants in this study described having negative online gaming experiences, including encountering aggression and hate speech. Some participants described these and other online gaming harms as inevitable. Participatory research with young people has found that they see critical thinking as a key skill that is required in order to navigate online (and offline) spaces safely and ethically (Marsden et al., 2022). Educators may have a role in supporting young people's development of critical thinking skills as they apply to online gaming contexts. Educators can foster this and other key skills, such as effective communication, building respectful relationships, establishing, maintaining and respecting boundaries, and cultivating resilience (Marsden et al., 2022). In doing so, they can empower young people to make active decisions about what gaming contexts they want to take part in, push back on or avoid.

Researchers

The findings in this report have contributed to the evidence on the online gaming experiences of young people in Australia. The report highlights the value of child- and youth-centred, strengths-based research for increasing understanding and insight into young gamers' safety needs, which is aligned with a rights-based approach to child safety.

This research has explored a wide range of young people's online gaming experiences, as well as parent and carer feelings about their child's gaming. The findings from this study suggest the benefits of future research in the following areas.

- Mixed-methods research into potentially low-frequency but high-impact harms that occur in online gaming environments, such as grooming and radicalisation, to understand young people's lived experience of these. These studies should be carried out with careful consideration for participant wellbeing and the ethical issues associated with these subjects.
- Studies with larger and more diverse sample sizes to investigate which young gamers are at risk of frequent negative experiences while gaming, and the factors that contribute to the frequency of those negative experiences.
- Research into how different types and features of games might promote both positive and negative experiences for young gamers. This could investigate the role of game genre, communication modalities, the use of virtual reality, and more.
- Research focusing on the conditions under which gaming can promote positive outcomes for young people. This could include considerations of young gamers' developmental stage and their broader family and social contexts.
- Research into how often young gamers experience a wide range of harms while gaming. This research should consider how to accurately measure the frequency of children's and teens' negative experiences while gaming.
- Research focusing on trans and gender-diverse young people's online gaming experiences, identifying the unique benefits and risks associated with gaming for this cohort.
- Research investigating parent and carer attitudes towards online gaming and their mediation practices. This could consider the factors that influence parents' and carers' perceptions of online gaming and how they develop their digital parenting styles.

- Research with parents and carers in Australia who are playing online games with their children, to understand both parties' experiences of co-play and its impacts.
- Research into the barriers and enablers for parental involvement in young people's online gaming.
- More mixed-method studies focused on understanding the depth and complexity of young gamers' lived experiences would ensure that a child-centered and child's rights-based approach is at the heart of research in this area.

Finally, our efforts to contextualise the findings from this study in the wider evidence base suggest that the field of research into young people and online gaming could benefit from greater coordination and collaboration. This could encourage the development of an even more aligned and cohesive body of evidence from which to draw practical implications for policy and practice.



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Appendix B: Additional data tables

Table A1: Online games played by at least 10% of young gamers, by age, gender and time spent gaming (%)

| | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | | Time spent gaming | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|-------------------|--------|------|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girl | Boy | Low | Medium | High |
| Minecraft | 53 | 56 | 58 | 55 | 45 ↓ | 52 | 54 | 50 | 51 | 59 ↑ |
| Roblox | 50 | 54 ↑ | 62 ↑ | 56 ↑ | 33 ↓ | 54 ↑ | 46 ↓ | 41 ↓ | 51 | 57 ↑ |
| Fortnite | 46 | 30 ↓ | 55 ↑ | 54 ↑ | 52 ↑ | 36 ↓ | 55 ↑ | 30 ↓ | 47 | 62 ↑ |
| Mario Kart/Super Smash Bros | 40 | 51 ↑ | 41 | 35 | 30 ↓ | 41 | 38 | 40 | 43 | 36 |
| Among Us | 33 | 31 | 42 ↑ | 35 | 28 ↓ | 33 | 33 | 24 ↓ | 35 | 41 ↑ |
| Call of Duty | 27 | 15 ↓ | 27 | 29 | 38 ↑ | 16 ↓ | 36 ↑ | 13 ↓ | 29 | 39 ↑ |
| FIFA | 24 | 20 | 26 | 25 | 25 | 11 ↓ | 34 ↑ | 19 ↓ | 26 | 25 |
| Grand Theft Auto | 22 | 11 ↓ | 22 | 26 | 32 ↑ | 13 ↓ | 30 ↑ | 11 ↓ | 21 | 34 ↑ |
| Pokemon Go | 18 | 21 | 21 | 16 | 15 | 15 ↓ | 21 ↑ | 15 | 18 | 21 |
| Lego video games | 16 | 22 ↑ | 18 | 16 | 6↓ | 12 ↓ | 19 ↑ | 15 | 17 | 15 |
| Fall Guys | 14 | 10 ↓ | 20 ↑ | 17 | 11 | 9 ↓ | 18 ↑ | 7 ↓ | 14 | 21 ↑ |
| Rocket League | 13 | 8 ↓ | 15 | 15 | 14 | 4 ↓ | 20 ↑ | 7 ↓ | 12 | 19 ↑ |
| Clash of Clans or Clash Royale | 12 | 6 ↓ | 10 | 14 | 17 ↑ | 7 ↓ | 16 ↑ | 7 ↓ | 13 | 16 ↑ |
| The Sims | 11 | 6 ↓ | 14 | 11 | 16 ↑ | 18 ↑ | 5 ↓ | 10 | 13 | 11 |
| NBA 2K | 10 | 8 | 10 | 10 | 13 | 3 ↓ | 17 ↑ | 6 ↓ | 11 | 14 ↑ |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 563 | 312 | 411 | 513 | 841 | 945 | 586 | 589 | 591 |

Q. From the following list, pick all the video games you have played in the past year, even if you only played them once or twice.

Q. In the past year, have you played any other video games online that are not on the list?

Q. List all of the other games you can remember playing in the past year, even if you only played them once or twice.

Table A2: Time usually spent gaming per week, by age and gender (%)

| | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girls | Boys |
| 0–6 hrs per week | 33 | 41 ↑ | 26 ↓ | 30 | 32 | 42 ↑ | 25 ↓ |
| 6.5–12 hrs per week | 33 | 34 | 37 | 33 | 30 | 33 | 34 |
| More than 12 hrs per week | 33 | 25 ↓ | 37 | 37 | 38 | 25 ↓ | 41 ↑ |
| Base: Gamers aged 13–17/parents of gamers aged 8–12 who provided usual time spent gaming for each day of the week | 1,766 | 555 | 305 | 404 | 502 | 828 | 925 |

Q. PARENTS OF GAMERS AGED 8–12: How long does your child usually spend playing video games (on any device) on each day of the week during term time (not during school holidays)?

Q. GAMERS AGED 13–17: How long do you usually spend playing video games online on each day of the week (on any device)? Think about how long you play during term time (not school holidays).

Table A3: Gaming with others, by age, gender and time spent gaming (%)

| | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | | Time spent gaming | | |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|-------------------|--------|------|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girl | Boy | Low | Medium | High |
| On my own (without any other players in the game) | 69 | 71 | 74 | 68 | 64 ↓ | 67 | 70 | 70 | 67 | 69 |
| With other people who are in the same room as me (in real life) | 61 | 66 ↑ | 70 ↑ | 59 | 52 ↓ | 64 ↑ | 58 ↓ | 61 | 63 | 58 |
| With other people who are playing online / in games where there are other players online who are just in the game at the same time as me (combined) | 79 | 68 ↓ | 84 ↑ | 85 ↑ | 83 ↑ | 75 ↓ | 82 ↑ | 65 ↓ | 83 ↑ | 90 ↑ |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 563 | 312 | 411 | 513 | 841 | 945 | 586 | 589 | 591 |

Q. In the past year, how have you played video games online?

Table A4: Relationship to the people young people game with, by age, gender and time spent gaming (%)

| Played games with: | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | | Time spent gaming | | |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|-------------------|--------|------|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girl | Boy | Low | Medium | High |
| people I knew in real life (combined) | 91 | 87 ↓ | 94 | 94 | 92 | 90 | 92 | 85 ↓ | 93 | 96 ↑ |
| friends or other people I already knew in real life | 75 | 64 ↓ | 82 ↑ | 82 ↑ | 78 | 73 | 77 | 65 ↓ | 77 | 84 ↑ |
| family members (combined) | 78 | 77 | 84 ↑ | 80 | 74 ↓ | 77 | 79 | 74 ↓ | 82 ↑ | 80 |
| parents | 42 | 48 ↑ | 52 ↑ | 39 | 30 ↓ | 39 | 43 | 38 ↓ | 45 | 42 |
| brothers or sisters | 58 | 51 ↓ | 61 | 63 ↑ | 59 | 58 | 57 | 54 ↓ | 57 | 62 ↑ |
| other people in my family | 43 | 44 | 47 | 44 | 38 ↓ | 42 | 43 | 38 ↓ | 47 ↑ | 44 |
| people I didn't already know in real life | 40 | 31 ↓ | 46 | 45 | 44 | 36 ↓ | 44 ↑ | 22 ↓ | 41 | 59 ↑ |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 563 | 312 | 411 | 513 | 841 | 945 | 586 | 589 | 591 |

Q. In the past year, have you played video games online with any of the following?

Table A5: Direct communication while gaming, by age, gender and time spent gaming (%)

| | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | | Time spent gaming | | |
|--|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|-------------------|--------|------|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girl | Boy | Low | Medium | High |
| Messaged or talked to people online while playing video games online | 66 | 50 ↓ | 72 ↑ | 73 ↑ | 75 ↑ | 61 ↓ | 70 ↑ | 48 ↓ | 69 | 83 ↑ |
| Messaged or talked to any players I didn't already know while playing video games online | 26 | 17 ↓ | 27 | 31 ↑ | 32 ↑ | 22 ↓ | 29 ↑ | 10 ↓ | 26 | 43 ↑ |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 563 | 312 | 411 | 513 | 841 | 945 | 586 | 589 | 591 |

Q. In the past year, have you messaged or talked to people online while you were playing video games online?

Q. In the past year, did you message or talk to any players you didn't already know while you were playing video games online?

Table A6: Benefits of gaming, by age and gender (%)

| | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girls | Boys |
| Skills and learning benefits (combined) | 76 | 82 ↑ | 79 | 77 | 66 ↓ | 74 | 77 |
| Social benefits/connection (combined) | 58 | 49 ↓ | 60 | 66 ↑ | 59 | 52 ↓ | 63 ↑ |
| Emotional benefits (combined) | 41 | 35 ↓ | 39 | 44 | 46 ↑ | 35 ↓ | 45 ↑ |
| No, playing video games hasn't helped me | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 5 ↑ | 4 | 3 |
| Don't know / not sure / don't want to say | 7 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 7 |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 563 | 312 | 411 | 513 | 841 | 945 |

Q. Has playing video games online helped you in any of these ways, or not?

Table A7: Benefits of gaming, by gaming activities (%)²²

| | Total | Time spent gaming | | | Messaged/ talked to others online | | Messaged/ talked to strangers | | Gamed online with | | | Used voice chat | |
|---|-------|-------------------|--------|------|---|------|-------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-----------|---------------|--------------------|-------|
| | | Low | Medium | High | Yes | No | Yes | No | Family/ friends only | Strangers | Alone only | Yes | No |
| Skills and learning benefits (combined) | 76 | 71 ↓ | 77 | 79 | 77 | 72 ↓ | 79 | 75 | 74 | 80 ↑ | 69 | 77 | 75 |
| Social benefits/ connection (combined) | 58 | 44 ↓ | 59 | 71 ↑ | 68 ↑ | 36 ↓ | 74 ↑ | 51 ↓ | 54 ↓ | 69 ↑ | 27 ↓ | 74 ↑ | 48 ↓ |
| Emotional benefits (combined) | 41 | 30 ↓ | 42 | 51 ↑ | 44 ↑ | 34 ↓ | 48 ↑ | 38 ↓ | 38 ↓ | 47 ↑ | 30 ↓ | 49 ↑ | 36 ↓ |
| No, playing video games hasn't helped me | 3 | 6 ↑ | 2 | 2 ↓ | 2 ↓ | 6 ↑ | 2 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 ↓ | 4 ↑ |
| Don't know / not sure / don't want to say | 7 | 11 ↑ | 6 | 5 ↓ | 5 ↓ | 12 ↑ | 7 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 17 ↑ | 4 ↓ | 9 ↑ |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 586 | 589 | 591 | 1,190 | 531 | 470 | 1,269 | 941 | 725 | 105 | 671 | 1,050 |

Q. Has playing video games online helped you in any of these ways, or not?

²² Skills and learning benefits comprised: learn something new, get better at using digital technology, get better at solving problems, think faster. Social benefits comprised: feel less lonely, get to know my friends better, make new friends, feel like I belong to a community, get on with or work better with other people. Emotional benefits comprised: feel more confident, helped me with my mental health (how I think and feel), get better at controlling my feelings.

Table A8: Receiving and giving support to other players, by age and gender (%)²³

| | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | |
|--|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girls | Boys |
| I supported/worked with other players (combined) | 68 | 59 ↓ | 75 ↑ | 74 ↑ | 67 | 63 ↓ | 72 ↑ |
| I stood up for or defended another player (for example, if someone in the game was being nasty or hurtful to them) | 24 | 18 ↓ | 30 ↑ | 27 | 23 | 21 ↓ | 26 |
| I helped another player to play better | 46 | 39 ↓ | 54 ↑ | 51 ↑ | 45 | 40 ↓ | 51 ↑ |
| I worked with other players as part of a team | 55 | 47 ↓ | 63 ↑ | 58 | 56 | 48 ↓ | 60 ↑ |
| I asked another player if they were okay or supported them in another way | 17 | 15 | 20 | 20 | 16 | 15 | 19 |
| I did something else to help or be nice to other players | 25 | 25 | 30 ↑ | 25 | 21 | 23 | 26 |
| Other players supported/worked with me (combined) | 61 | 54 ↓ | 68 ↑ | 67 ↑ | 59 | 56 ↓ | 65 ↑ |
| stood up for me (for example, if someone else in the game was treating me in a nasty or hurtful way) | 17 | 14 | 20 | 19 | 16 | 15 | 18 |
| helped me to play better | 40 | 36 ↓ | 49 ↑ | 45 | 35 ↓ | 36 ↓ | 44 ↑ |
| worked with me as part of a team | 47 | 40 ↓ | 55 ↑ | 53 ↑ | 46 | 42 ↓ | 52 ↑ |
| asked me if I was okay or supported me in another way | 14 | 12 | 15 | 16 | 15 | 14 | 14 |
| did something else to help or be nice to me | 21 | 22 | 29 ↑ | 18 | 15 ↓ | 19 | 22 |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 563 | 312 | 411 | 513 | 841 | 945 |

Q. In the past year, have you done any of these things while you were playing video games?

²³ Supportive behaviours comprised: standing up for or defending other players, helping others to play better, working with other players as part of a team, asking if other players were okay or supporting them in another way, something else to help or be nice to other players.

Table A9: Receiving and giving support to other players, by gaming activities (%)

| | Total | Time spent gaming | | | Messaged/ talked to others online | | Messaged/ talked to strangers | | Gamed online with | | Used voice chat | |
|--|-------|-------------------|--------|------|---|------|-------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------|-------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Low | Medium | High | Yes | No | Yes | No | Family/ friends only | Strangers | Yes | No |
| I supported/worked with other players (combined) | 68 | 51 ↓ | 73 ↑ | 81↑ | 84 ↑ | 34 ↓ | 88 ↑ | 60 ↓ | 62 ↓ | 87 ↑ | 88 ↑ | 56 ↓ |
| I stood up for or defended another player (for example, if someone in the game was being nasty or hurtful to them) | 24 | 12 ↓ | 21 | 38 ↑ | 32 ↑ | 5 ↓ | 43 ↑ | 16 ↓ | 15 ↓ | 39 ↑ | 37 ↑ | 16 ↓ |
| I helped another player to play better | 46 | 30 ↓ | 49 | 60 ↑ | 60 ↑ | 18 ↓ | 70 ↑ | 37 ↓ | 40 ↓ | 63 ↑ | 66 ↑ | 35 ↓ |
| I worked with other players as part of a team | 55 | 39 ↓ | 59 ↑ | 67 ↑ | 68 ↑ | 27 ↓ | 77 ↑ | 46 ↓ | 46 ↓ | 76 ↑ | 74 ↑ | 44 ↓ |
| I asked another player if they were okay or supported them in another way | 17 | 11 ↓ | 16 | 26 ↑ | 24 ↑ | 5 ↓ | 27 ↑ | 14 ↓ | 15 ↓ | 24 ↑ | 26 ↑ | 13 ↓ |
| I did something else to help or be nice to other players | 25 | 16 ↓ | 25 | 33 ↑ | 31 ↑ | 11 ↓ | 38 ↓ | 20 ↓ | 18 ↓ | 37 ↑ | 34 ↑ | 19 ↓ |
| Other players supported/worked with me (combined) | 61 | 46 ↓ | 64 | 74 ↑ | 77 ↑ | 28 ↓ | 85↑ | 52 ↓ | 54 ↓ | 80 ↑ | 79 ↑ | 51 ↓ |
| stood up for me (for example, if someone else in the game was treating me in a nasty or hurtful way) | 17 | 8 ↓ | 15 | 28 ↑ | 24 ↑ | 3 ↓ | 31 ↑ | 12 ↓ | 13 ↓ | 25 ↑ | 26 ↑ | 12 ↓ |
| helped me to play better | 40 | 29 ↓ | 42 | 50 ↑ | 52 ↑ | 16 ↓ | 61 ↑ | 33 ↓ | 35 ↓ | 54 ↑ | 54 ↑ | 33 ↓ |
| worked with me as part of a team | 47 | 34 ↓ | 49 | 60 ↑ | 60 ↑ | 22 ↓ | 73 ↑ | 38 ↓ | 37 ↓ | 70 ↑ | 64 ↑ | 39 ↓ |
| asked me if I was okay or supported me in another way | 14 | 8 ↓ | 12 | 22 ↑ | 19 ↑ | 4 ↓ | 23 ↑ | 11 ↓ | 12 ↓ | 19 ↑ | 21 ↑ | 11 ↓ |
| did something else to help or be nice to me | 21 | 13 ↓ | 20 | 28 ↑ | 27 ↑ | 9 ↓ | 31 ↑ | 17 ↓ | 16 ↓ | 30 ↑ | 28 ↑ | 17 ↓ |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 586 | 589 | 591 | 1,190 | 531 | 470 | 1,269 | 941 | 725 | 671 | 1,050 |

Q. In the past year, have you done any of these things while you were playing video games?

Q. In the past year, did any of these things happen to you while you were playing video games online?

Table A10: Exposure to potentially harmful content, by age and gender (%)

| | Total | Age (years) | | Gender | |
|--|-------|-------------|-------|--------|-----|
| | | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girl | Boy |
| Exposure to harmful ideas (combined) | 31 | 28 | 34 | 28 | 34 |
| People from one race, culture, religion or nationality being better than other people | 8 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 10 |
| Boys or men being better than girls or women | 11 | 11 | 12 | 11 | 10 |
| Using words that are racist, sexist or nasty about things like disability, gender, sexuality, etc. | 20 | 19 | 22 | 18 | 22 |
| Doing things that are illegal in real life | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| Ways people can die by suicide or telling someone they should die by suicide | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 7 |
| Ways people can hurt themselves on purpose or telling someone to hurt themselves | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| Hurting people in real life | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Taking illegal drugs in real life | 6 | 4 ↓ | 8 ↑ | 7 | 6 |
| Sharing violent pictures or videos (for example, of real people being hurt or killed) | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| Base: Gamers aged 13–17 | 924 | 411 | 513 | 428 | 486 |

Q. In the past year, have you seen other players show, share or talk about any of these things?

Table A11: Exposure to potentially harmful content, by gaming activities (%)

| | Total | Time spent gaming | | | Messaged/ talked to others online | | Messaged/ talked to strangers | | Gamed online with | | Used voice chat | |
|---|-------|-------------------|--------|------|---|------|-------------------------------------|------|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------|------|
| | | | | | | | | | Family/ friends only | Strangers | | |
| | | Low | Medium | High | Yes | No | Yes | No | | | Yes | No |
| Exposure to harmful ideas (combined) | 31 | 20 ↓ | 30 | 43 ↑ | 39 ↑ | 10 ↓ | 48 ↑ | 23 ↓ | 23 ↓ | 45 ↑ | 41 ↑ | 24 ↓ |
| People from one race, culture, religion or nationality being better than other people | 8 | 3 ↓ | 9 | 13 ↑ | 11 ↑ | 1 ↓ | 17 ↑ | 4 ↓ | 4 ↓ | 14 ↑ | 14 ↑ | 4 ↓ |
| Boys or men being better than girls or women | 11 | 7 ↓ | 10 | 17 ↑ | 14 ↑ | 3 ↓ | 21 ↑ | 6 ↓ | 6 ↓ | 19 ↑ | 17 ↑ | 7 ↓ |
| Using words that are racist, sexist or nasty about things like disability, gender, sexuality, etc. | 20 | 13 ↓ | 16 | 31 ↑ | 26 ↑ | 5 ↓ | 36 ↑ | 13 ↓ | 12 ↓ | 33 ↑ | 28 ↑ | 15 ↓ |
| Doing things that are illegal in real life | 6 | 4 | 3 | 10 ↑ | 8 ↑ | 2 ↓ | 11 ↑ | 4 ↓ | 4 ↓ | 9 ↑ | 10↑ | 3 ↓ |
| Ways people can die by suicide or telling someone they should die by suicide | 7 | 3 ↓ | 7 | 11 ↑ | 9 ↑ | 3 | 12 ↑ | 5 ↓ | 4 ↓ | 12 ↑ | 9 | 6 |
| Ways people can hurt themselves on purpose or telling someone to hurt themselves | 6 | 3 ↓ | 5 | 11 ↑ | 8 ↑ | 2 ↓ | 12 ↑ | 4 ↓ | 3↓ | 10 ↑ | 8 | 6 |
| Hurting people in real life | 3 | 1 ↓ | 2 | 6 ↑ | 4 ↑ | 1 ↓ | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 2 |
| Taking illegal drugs in real life | 6 | 3 ↓ | 4 | 11 ↑ | 8 ↑ | 2 ↓ | 12 ↑ | 4 ↓ | 3 ↓ | 10 ↑ | 9 ↑ | 4 ↓ |
| Sharing violent pictures or videos (for example, of real people being hurt or killed) | 3 | 1 ↓ | 3 | 5 ↑ | 4 | 2 | 6 ↑ | 2 ↓ | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| Base: Gamers aged 13–17 | 924 | 280 | 288 | 338 | 685 | 196 | 289 | 600 | 458 | 411 | 416 | 465 |

Table A12: Negative experiences, by age and gender (%)

| | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | |
|--|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girl | Boy |
| Bullying behaviours (combined) | 32 | 26 ↓ | 41 ↑ | 34 | 30 | 26 ↓ | 36 ↑ |
| Said hurtful or nasty things to me because of my race (or skin colour), religion, culture, nationality, disability, gender or sexuality | 6 | 4 ↓ | 8 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 6 |
| Showed other people my personal details, private information or private photos of me online without asking me | 2 | 0 ↓ | 0 ↓ | 3 ↑ | 3 ↑ | 1 | 2 |
| Did things or made comments to annoy me on purpose | 25 | 23 | 32 ↑ | 24 | 22 | 19 ↓ | 30 ↑ |
| Kept contacting me when I didn’t want them to | 4 | 0 ↓ | 0 ↓ | 7 ↑ | 7 ↑ | 3 | 4 |
| Threatened to hurt me in real life | 1 | 0 ↓ | 0 | 2 | 3 ↑ | 1 | 2 |
| Did or said something that made me feel uncomfortable (for example, asked me personal questions, was too friendly or asked me to keep secrets) | 7 | 5 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 7 |
| Received or asked for nude images or sexual information (combined) | 6 | 3 ↓ | 4 | 9 ↑ | 9 ↑ | 6 | 6 |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 563 | 312 | 411 | 513 | 841 | 945 |

Q. In the past year, did any of these things happen to you while you were playing video games online?
Q. In the past year, did another player do any of these things to you while you were playing video games online?
Q. In the past year, have any players asked you to do any of these things while you’ve been playing video games online?
Q. In the past year have any players sent you any of these things while you’ve been playing video games online?

Table A13: Negative experiences, by gaming activities (%)

| | Total | Time spent gaming | | | Messaged/ talked to others online | | Messaged/ talked to strangers | | Gamed online with | | Used voice chat | |
|--|-------|-------------------|-----|------|---|------|-------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------|------|--------------------|-------|
| | 32 | 14 ↓ | 33 | 48 ↑ | 42 ↑ | 11 ↓ | 53 ↑ | 24 ↓ | Family/ friends only | | 46 ↑ | 24 ↓ |
| | | | | | | | | | Strangers | Yes | | |
| Bullying behaviours (combined) | 32 | 14 ↓ | 33 | 48 ↑ | 42 ↑ | 11 ↓ | 53 ↑ | 24 ↓ | 24 ↓ | 47 ↑ | 46 ↑ | 24 ↓ |
| Said hurtful or nasty things to me because of my race (or skin colour), religion, culture, nationality, disability, gender or sexuality | 6 | 3 ↓ | 5 | 11 ↑ | 8 ↑ | 2 ↓ | 12 ↑ | 4 ↓ | 4 ↓ | 10 ↑ | 9 ↑ | 5 ↓ |
| Showed other people my personal details, private information or private photos of me online without asking me | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 ↑ | 2 ↑ | 0 ↓ | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Did things or made comments to annoy me on purpose | 25 | 12 ↓ | 25 | 37 ↑ | 34 ↑ | 6 ↓ | 47 ↑ | 16 ↓ | 15 ↓ | 42 ↑ | 38 ↑ | 17↓ |
| Kept contacting me when I didn’t want them to | 4 | 2 ↓ | 3 | 6 ↑ | 5 ↑ | 1 ↓ | 7 ↑ | 2 ↓ | 2 ↓ | 6 ↑ | 7 ↑ | 2 ↓ |
| Threatened to hurt me in real life | 1 | 0 ↓ | 1 | 3 ↑ | 2 ↑ | 0 ↓ | 3 ↑ | 1 ↓ | 1 ↓ | 2 ↑ | 3 ↑ | 0↓ |
| Did or said something that made me feel uncomfortable (for example, asked me personal questions, was too friendly or asked me to keep secrets) | 7 | 2 ↓ | 6 | 12 ↑ | 9 ↑ | 2 ↓ | 13 ↑ | 5 ↓ | 5 ↓ | 10 ↑ | 10 ↑ | 5 ↓ |
| Received or asked for nude images or sexual information (combined) | 6 | 3 ↓ | 6 | 10 ↑ | 8 ↑ | 1 ↓ | 10 ↑ | 5 ↓ | 6 | 8 | 9 ↑ | 4 ↓ |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 586 | 589 | 591 | 1,190 | 531 | 470 | 1,269 | 941 | 725 | 671 | 1,050 |

Q. In the past year, did any of these things happen to you while you were playing video games online?
Q. In the past year, did another player do any of these things to you while you were playing video games online?
Q. In the past year, have any players asked you to do any of these things while you’ve been playing video games online?
Q. In the past year have any players sent you any of these things while you’ve been playing video games online?

Table A14: Safety rules or practices implemented by parents, by age and gender (%)

| I or another parent or carer have ... / my child is/has ... | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girl | Boy |
| Enabling mediation (combined) | 85 | 85 | 91 ↑ | 87 | 82 ↓ | 85 | 86 |
| taught or reminded my child not to share or reveal their personal information when playing video games online | 63 | 63 | 70 ↑ | 63 | 57 ↓ | 64 | 61 |
| encouraged my child to talk to me if they experience anything that worries them or makes them uncomfortable while they are playing video games online | 62 | 60 | 69 ↑ | 62 | 59 | 62 | 61 |
| taught or reminded my child not to talk to or message players they don’t already know | 55 | 61 ↑ | 58 | 58 | 45 ↓ | 57 | 54 |
| talked with my child about their video gaming interests and who they play with online | 53 | 56 | 58 | 53 | 48 ↓ | 51 | 55 |
| taught or reminded my child that they (or an adult) can report inappropriate behaviour in video games | 48 | 45 | 50 | 54 ↑ | 45 | 49 | 47 |
| taught or reminded my child how to mute or block other players | 36 | 34 | 41 | 40 | 33 | 37 | 36 |
| taught or reminded my child how to turn off location sharing in video games | 33 | 27 ↓ | 36 | 39 ↑ | 34 | 36 ↑ | 31 ↓ |
| taught or reminded my child how to turn off voice and/or text chat in video games or consoles | 32 | 31 | 40 ↑ | 35 | 25 ↓ | 31 | 32 |
| Restrictive mediation (combined) | 78 | 91 ↑ | 85 ↑ | 78 | 61 ↓ | 78 | 79 |
| set time limits for my child’s video gaming | 48 | 61 ↑ | 55 ↑ | 47 | 29 ↓ | 45 | 50 |
| only allowed to play video games online that are classified as being suitable for their age | 44 | 59 ↑ | 47 | 37 ↓ | 30 ↓ | 48 ↑ | 40 ↓ |
| only allowed to play video games online with people they already know | 41 | 47 ↑ | 41 | 44 | 32 ↓ | 42 | 40 |
| only allowed to play video games online in a shared area of our home, where they can be seen | 37 | 54 ↑ | 39 | 32 | 20 ↓ | 37 | 36 |
| only allowed to play video games online on their own (without any other players in the game) | 12 | 19 ↑ | 8 ↓ | 8 ↓ | 8 ↓ | 12 | 11 |
| only allowed to download or play new games with parental permission/monitor games played / only allowed to make gaming purchase with parental permission* | 1 | 2 ↑ | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

*Coded from ‘other’ responses.

Table A14: Continued

| I or another parent or carer have ... / my child is/has ... | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girl | Boy |
| Technical mediation: Activated parental controls in the app, browser or device my child uses for playing video games online | 34 | 48 ↑ | 41 ↑ | 31 | 15 ↓ | 33 | 34 |
| other rules or practices about paying video games online (please fill in) | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 ↓ | 2 | 1 |
| Any mediation practices (combined) | 95 | 99 ↑ | 97 | 95 | 89 ↓ | 95 | 95 |
| No mediation practices | 5 | 1 ↓ | 3 | 4 | 10 ↑ | 5 | 5 |
| allowed to play video games online in their bedroom | 31 | 20 ↓ | 31 | 34 | 41 ↑ | 30 | 32 |
| allowed to play video games online with whoever else is in the game at the time | 18 | 13 ↓ | 22 | 20 | 21 | 14 ↓ | 22 ↑ |
| no restrictions on their online video game use | 4 | 1 ↓ | 3 | 3 | 9 ↑ | 4 | 4 |
| I don’t know or I’m not sure | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Base: Parents who said their child (aged 8–17) played video games online. | 1,782 | 559 | 311 | 405 | 507 | 830 | 939 |

Q. Some families have lots of rules and practices in place for when their children play video games online; other families are more relaxed. Thinking about the past 12 months, read the following statements and select all that apply to your child.

Table A15: Safety rules or practices implemented by children, by age and gender (%)

| | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | |
|--|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girl | Boy |
| Any safety practice (combined) | 95 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 94 | 96 | 95 |
| Keep personal information to myself (for example, I don't tell other players my full name or where I go to school) | 53 | 51 | 56 | 54 | 53 | 52 | 54 |
| Restrict who I play or communicate with (combined) | 78 | 82 ↑ | 79 | 77 | 74 ↓ | 80 | 76 |
| Only add or accept friend requests from players I already know | 46 | 48 | 49 | 46 | 42 | 48 | 44 |
| Only message or talk to players I already know | 44 | 43 | 49 | 46 | 41 | 46 | 43 |
| Set my account to private or friends only | 39 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 39 | 44↑ | 35 ↓ |
| Play games (or use servers) that only have people I already know in them | 30 | 30 | 33 | 31 | 28 | 31 | 29 |
| Only play on my own (without any other players in the game) | 20 | 30 ↑ | 21 | 13 ↓ | 15 ↓ | 20 | 20 |
| Limit use of communication features (combined) | 51 | 46 ↓ | 57 | 56 ↑ | 48 | 48 | 52 |
| Mute or block other players who are doing or saying things that make me feel uncomfortable | 35 | 30 ↓ | 41 | 41 ↑ | 34 | 34 | 36 |
| Turn off voice chat in the game or console, so I can't hear other players talking | 26 | 25 | 30 | 29 | 24 | 25 | 28 |
| Turn off text chat or messaging in the game or console, so I can't see other players messaging | 22 | 25 | 23 | 22 | 20 | 24 | 21 |
| Turn off location sharing in games, to stop other players seeing where I am in real life | 37 | 30 ↓ | 37 | 40 | 41 ↑ | 38 | 35 |
| Only play games that are meant for people my age | 30 | 44 ↑ | 36 | 24 ↓ | 17 ↓ | 33 ↑ | 28 ↓ |
| Only play in shared areas at home (like the living room, kitchen or lounge) | 25 | 39 ↑ | 29 | 20 ↓ | 12 ↓ | 27 | 24 |
| Hide certain things about me from other players, so they don't pick on me (for example, my disability, gender, race or sexuality)* | 10 | NA | NA | 22 ↑ | 16 ↑ | 10 | 9 |
| I have done something else to make playing video games online safer (please fill in) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| I don't do any of these things / I don't know or I'm not sure / I don't want to say | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 5 |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 563 | 312 | 411 | 513 | 841 | 945 |

Q. Which of these things (if any) do you usually do to make playing video games online safer?

*This option was only provided to gamers aged 13–17.

Table A16: Response to bullying experiences, by age and gender (%)

| | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | |
|--|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girl | Boy |
| Did something (combined) | 92 | 98 ↑ | 93 | 90 | 88 | 93 | 91 |
| Tried to stop it directly (combined) | 69 | 73 | 72 | 66 | 64 | 72 | 66 |
| blocked or unfriended them | 41 | 44 | 45 | 40 | 36 | 41 | 41 |
| asked them to stop doing it | 37 | 47 ↑ | 35 | 35 | 31 | 40 | 34 |
| turned off chat or messaging in the game or console | 27 | 22 | 26 | 30 | 29 | 27 | 27 |
| changed my privacy or contact settings | 9 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 12 | 9 | 9 |
| Talked to someone/sought support (combined) | 55 | 71 ↑ | 53 | 49 | 47 | 64 ↑ | 49 ↓ |
| talked to my parents about it | 45 | 63 ↑ | 48 | 36 | 32 ↓ | 51 | 40 |
| talked to a friend about it | 20 | 19 | 16 | 24 | 20 | 25 | 16 |
| talked to another adult about it | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 3 |
| contacted a helpline or online support service | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Defended myself by doing or saying something similar back | 29 | 22 | 29 | 35 | 29 | 22 ↓ | 33 |
| Reported it (combined) | 29 | 32 | 38 | 28 | 20 | 29 | 29 |
| reported it to the game moderators, or I reported it in the game | 25 | 26 | 34 ↑ | 22 | 18 | 24 | 25 |
| reported it to the police | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| reported it to eSafety | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| reported it to someone else | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| Stopped playing that game (for a while or for good) | 26 | 31 | 27 | 22 | 25 | 23 | 28 |
| did something else | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| ignored them | 31 | 27 | 30 | 29 | 36 | 28 | 32 |
| didn't do anything | 7 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 7 |
| don't want to say / don't know / not sure | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 who had experienced bullying behaviours | 570 | 147 | 128 | 141 | 154 | 222 | 341 |

Q. When other players did these hurtful or upsetting things to you in the past year, what (if anything) did you do?

Table A17: Response to grieving/trolling, by age and gender (%)

| | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | |
|--|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-----|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girl | Boy |
| Did something (combined) | 87 | 92 | 86 | 83 | 84 | 92 | 84 |
| Tried to stop it directly (combined) | 59 | 61 | 58 | 59 | 55 | 63 | 56 |
| turned off chat or messaging in the game or console | 24 | 21 | 21 | 24 | 32 | 24 | 24 |
| blocked or unfriended them | 31 | 29 | 32 | 39 | 24 | 30 | 31 |
| changed my privacy or contact settings | 6 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 8 | 5 |
| asked them to stop doing it | 34 | 34 | 38 | 35 | 32 | 37 | 33 |
| Talked to someone/sought support (combined) | 47 | 57 | 52 | 35 | 38 | 53 | 44 |
| talked to a friend about it | 11 | 8 | 13 | 11 | 16 | 13 | 10 |
| talked to my parents about it | 42 | 54 | 45 | 32 | 29 | 48 | 38 |
| talked to another adult about it | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 2 |
| contacted a helpline or online support service | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| defended myself by doing or saying something similar back | 21 | 15 | 30 | 18 | 21 | 13 | 25 |
| Reported it (combined) | 18 | 16 | 19 | 15 | 20 | 18 | 17 |
| reported it to the game moderators, or I reported it in the game | 16 | 14 | 18 | 14 | 18 | 17 | 15 |
| reported it to the police | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| reported it to eSafety | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| reported it to someone else | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Stopped playing that game (for a while or for good) | 25 | 29 | 19 | 23 | 29 | 25 | 26 |
| did something else | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| just ignored them | 29 | 23 | 26 | 35 | 36 | 22 | 33 |
| didn't do anything | 8 | 7 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 9 |
| don't know or I'm not sure | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| don't want to say | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 who had experienced grieving / trolling | 331 | 112 | 77 | 66 | 76 | 119 | 209 |

Q. In the past year, when another player did things or made comments to annoy you on purpose, what (if anything) did you do?

Table A18: Parents' views on gaming, according to young people, by age and gender (%)

| | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girl | Boy |
| Believe parents have negative perceptions/ concerns about gaming (combined) | 58 | 61 | 63 | 57 | 51 ↓ | 48 ↓ | 66 ↑ |
| My parents say I spend too much time playing video games | 41 | 42 | 47 ↑ | 41 | 36 ↓ | 32 ↓ | 49 ↑ |
| I don't think my parents understand why I like playing video games | 22 | 22 | 25 | 21 | 23 | 18 ↓ | 27 ↑ |
| I think my parents would like it if I didn't play video games at all | 28 | 31 | 33 | 22 ↓ | 26 | 25 ↓ | 31 ↑ |
| I argue with my parents about how much time I spend playing video games | 25 | 29 ↑ | 29 | 23 | 21 ↓ | 18 ↓ | 32 ↑ |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 563 | 312 | 411 | 513 | 841 | 945 |

Q. Are any of these statements true for you?

Table A19: Parents’ views on gaming, according to young people, by gaming activities (%)

| | Total | Time spent gaming | | | Messaged/ talked to others online | | Messaged/ talked to strangers | | Gamed online with | | | Used voice chat | |
|---|-------|-------------------|--------|------|---|------|-------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-----------|---------------|-----------------|-------|
| | | Low | Medium | High | Yes | No | Yes | No | Family/ friends only | Strangers | Alone only | Yes | No |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Believe parents have negative perceptions/ concerns about gaming (combined) | 58 | 44 ↓ | 59 | 71 ↑ | 62 ↑ | 48 ↓ | 70 ↑ | 53 ↓ | 53 ↓ | 66 ↑ | 47 ↓ | 63 ↑ | 54 ↓ |
| My parents say I spend too much time playing video games | 41 | 23 ↓ | 43 | 58 ↑ | 46 ↑ | 31 ↓ | 56 ↑ | 35 ↓ | 34 ↓ | 53 ↑ | 29 ↓ | 49 ↑ | 36 ↓ |
| I don't think my parents understand why I like playing video games | 22 | 16 ↓ | 21 | 30 ↑ | 25 ↑ | 17 ↓ | 32 ↑ | 19 ↓ | 18 ↓ | 30 ↑ | 15 | 25 | 21 |
| I think my parents would like it if I didn't play video games at all | 28 | 26 | 26 | 32 ↑ | 29 | 26 | 34 ↑ | 26 ↓ | 25 ↓ | 33 ↑ | 22 | 28 | 28 |
| I argue with my parents about how much time I spend playing video games | 25 | 15 ↓ | 27 | 34 ↑ | 27 ↑ | 21 ↓ | 34 ↑ | 22 ↓ | 20 ↓ | 33 ↑ | 19 | 28 ↑ | 23 ↓ |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 586 | 589 | 591 | 1,190 | 531 | 470 | 1,269 | 941 | 725 | 105 | 671 | 1,050 |

Q. Are any of these statements true for you?

Table A20: Would like parents to game with them, by age and gender (%)

| | Total | Age (years) | | | | Gender | |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-----|
| | | 8–10 | 11–12 | 13–14 | 15–17 | Girl | Boy |
| I would like my parents to play video games with me | 39 | 56 ↑ | 46 ↑ | 30 ↓ | 24 ↓ | 37 | 41 |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 563 | 312 | 411 | 513 | 841 | 945 |

Q. Are any of these statements true for you?

Table A21: Would like parents to game with them, by gaming activities (%)

| | Total | Time spent gaming | | | Messaged/ talked to others online | | Messaged/ talked to strangers | | Gamed online with | | | Used voice chat | |
|---|-------|-------------------|--------|------|---|-----|-------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-----------|---------------|-----------------|-------|
| | | Low | Medium | High | Yes | No | Yes | No | Family/ friends only | Strangers | Alone only | Yes | No |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I would like my parents to play video games with me | 39 | 40 | 39 | 39 | 38 | 41 | 39 | 39 | 39 | 40 | 35 | 36 | 41 |
| Base: Gamers aged 8–17 | 1,799 | 586 | 589 | 591 | 1,190 | 531 | 470 | 1,269 | 941 | 725 | 105 | 671 | 1,050 |

Q. Are any of these statements true for you?

