

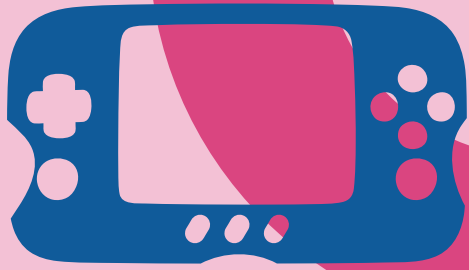
Game, set, what's the catch?

Games are fun.

Games are part of the family furniture.

But how much do we know
about the way we play?





In the 50 years since the first game console was released, they have remained **a gateway to gaming**. It's estimated **about a fifth of the global population owns or uses a console, making them the most widely used home entertainment device in the world after TV and DVDs**[1].

In Europe, gaming is thriving online, on phones but most of all on games consoles **like PlayStations, Xboxes and Nintendo Switchers**. Half of all Europeans regularly play video games[2] and around a third of Europeans own or have access to a console.

New research from Euroconsumers has found that while most players are happy with the way they play but 38% said they had a negative impact on their sleep. A joint survey of consumers in Euroconsumers' member countries asked around 1,840 people in Italy, Spain, Belgium and Portugal how they choose and use, play and pay with their consoles.

[1] <https://business.yougov.com/content/42391-game-console-ownership-around-world>

[2] <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/study-european-video-games-sector>

1. Ready player one, two and three?

People of all ages play on consoles and it's an even split between male and female gamers. The younger you are, the younger you were when you got your first console.

Our data found people now aged between 18 and 34 are most likely to have got their console at age 12 or 13, whereas the older age bracket of 35-49 would have waited till they were 17 or 18.

PlayStations are the most popular brand, owned by **67%** of those surveyed, **Nintendo Switch** comes in second at **25%** and **Xbox** is third most popular with only **8%**.



18-34 year olds

Got their first console at 12-13

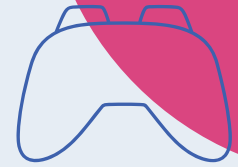
35-49 year olds

Got their first console at 17-18

Although dominated by three main brands, the market seems to deliver on different preferences – **Nintendo Switch users choose it for the portability, Xbox users appreciate the backwards compatibility** so they can play games designed for older models on newer ones.

Half of all the owners said it was **specific games that were tied into consoles** which made them choose that one.

When it comes to an upgrade, players are loyal to their brand. **32% of Xbox owners and 41% of PlayStation users tend to get made by the same manufacturer.**



Why do people chose a specific console?

PlayStation

- **65%** - believe it's the best console
- **46%** for a specific game
- **41%** - loyal to the brand

Xbox

- **48%** - believe it's the best console
- **47%** - specific game
- **37%** - backward compatibility

Nintendo Switch

- **67%** for portability
- **66%** for a specific game
- **20%** - believe it's the best console

Just over half of all respondents (52%) subscribe to an online pass or subscription plans like PlayStation Plus, Nintendo Switch Online or Xbox Live. There is also a bigger trend in the demise of physical games bought as a CD or DVD which are still available but make up only 17% of total revenues in the European gaming sector according to a European Commission study published in October 2023[3].

Players can now get games through cloud-based subscription services which means they don't have to update their console every few years. This could save consumers' money but they need to watch out for situations where gamers might find it difficult to cancel subscriptions or opt out of different elements of the service, and get locked into unwanted recurring payments.



[3] Study on European video games sector, 2023 <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/study-european-video-games-sector>

2. Mental health and time online

Globally, the hours spent playing have dropped since the lockdowns of the pandemic[4].

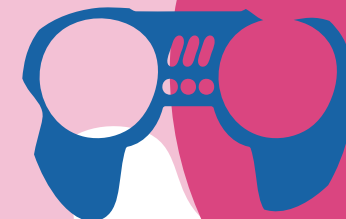
Our survey found an average game time of about **10 hours a week**. **84% of people play up to 16 hours per week**, but the largest proportion, actually half of all respondents, played a bit less between 1 and 8 hours a week on screen. **A small percentage (3%) played over 33 hours a week, and 1% of that were those playing over 64 hours.**



**3% - play over
33 hr/week**

**1% - play over
64 hr/week**

**84% - play up to
16 hr/week**



[4] <https://www.reuters.com/technology/gaming-industrys-fortunes-fade-spending-squeeze-follows-pandemic-bump-2022-08-10/>

When asked whether video games have a negative impact on their mental health, professional life, or overall health and quality of life, **over 80% of respondents in all but one category said there were few or no negative impacts.** Digging a little deeper, we find that a slightly higher proportion report some negative impact **when it comes to academic/ professional life and social life at 16% and 17% respectively.**

Although this is a small amount of people, a much more **significant number of people interviewed (38%) reported a negative impact on their sleep.**



13% report negative impact on mental health

16% report impact on professional life

38% reported negative impact on sleep

There are concerns around the way **games are designed to compel people to keep playing even if they're ready to stop**[5].

The attention of gamers is held with 'addictive' features built in like reaching certain levels to get more rewards etc. **Setting boundaries is really important to ensure gaming doesn't have a negative aspect on other areas like social, professional, or family life.**

However, our survey also showed many positive aspects that support the idea that online **gaming can bring together like-minded individuals in a cohesive community and contribute to social skills.** Gaming can also support creative, organizational skills and logical thinking skills.

[5] <https://gamequitters.com/are-video-games-addictive/>



Far from being an isolating experience, the gamers we surveyed were sharers and socializers. Almost half (49%) share their console with children they live with, and 41% share with other adults in the house. **On average 46% of respondents play with other people they live with or with friends and 15% with people they don't know.** 18% of Italians say they play with people they don't know. Spain follows the same trend, while in Portugal and Belgium, this number remains at 12%.

Players communicate differently depending on who they are playing with – with people they know **44% like to chat by voice and a third talk and text at the same time.** **With strangers, it's text chat (if they chat at all).**



46% play with people they live with or friends



33% talk and text at the same time



44% prefer to chat by voice

3. Playing the long game

How long a console is in use for depends on a few different factors. Already, we've learnt that the shift to paying by subscription for digital versions of games, instead of buying a hardcopy lowers the need to update to a new console. Players also like devices which are backwards compatible so they can use their old games for longer.

However, we still find that pretty much everyone buys their console new, with **only 6% buying refurbished OR second hand.**

The data also shows that they expected **new consoles to last almost five years, with none of the brands standing out on durability.** Despite this, people still said they'd aim to replace them before their expected minimum lifetime.



6% buys refurbished or second hand console

Most people buy their console new

5 years is the expected lifetime of consoles

People still aim to replace consoles before their lifetime



However, it's likely we'll see a difference between what our respondents say and actually do. **An ecodesign study by the EU found that in reality based on purchasing data, games consoles stay in use for between 7 and 14 years [6]** . This was due in part to its continued functionality as well as an emotional attachment to a console that's become part of the family experience.

Our survey also asked about any problems owners had with their consoles. Generally, the majority of respondents express **overall contentment with their consoles (78%)** and with specific elements assessed (i.e., performance and connectivity). In some cases, there were **issues like breaking or losing fluidity when playing offline which was mentioned by 28% of people, and overheating by 46%**.

Gaming controllers were the culprit for the most reported moderate or severe problem, with 15% of people having an issue. The most famous of these was the 'Joy-Con drift' issue where Nintendo Switch Console users found their online characters' ignoring the joystick controls and moving on their own across the screen. Effectively making the device unusable, Euroconsumers' member Testachats/Test Aankoop were part of a European wide consumer organisation call on Nintendo to repair all the defective products free of charge and critically, to stop releasing devices that still had this fault.

[6] Review Study of the Ecodesign Voluntary Agreement for the Product Group "VideogamesConsoles" 2019

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b29e4799-e4bd-11e9-9c4e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

Nintendo admitted the flaw and promised to make it easy for gamers to get the repair they deserve. Matching the reality of console purchases, we ensured that the warranty extends to devices bought second-hand or received as gifts, eliminating the need for proof of purchase. We are closely monitoring the enforcement, recognising that the process may encounter occasional challenges.



Given gaming consoles are part of the family furniture and one of the most uses, it is important to make them energy efficient and long lasting, equally encouraging people to buy second hand or reconditioned one This means making them as energy efficient as possible is really important, encouraging people to buy second hand or reconditioned ones, and making sure companies are banned from continuing to sell goods where an early failure design issue has been identified.



About Euroconsumers

Gathering five national consumer organisations and giving voice to a total of more than 1,5 million people in Italy, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and Brazil, Euroconsumers is the world's leading consumer cluster in innovative information, personalised services and defence of consumer rights. Our European member organisations are part of the umbrella network of BEUC, the European Consumer Organisation. Together we advocate for EU policies that benefit consumers in their daily lives.

