

Constructive engagement on digital health issues

We engage positively in policy and academic dialogue around screen time and digital health. We believe that video games should be enjoyed as part of a balanced lifestyle. Of the two-thirds of Australians and New Zealanders who play video games, the overwhelming majority do so in a healthy and responsible way. To support this goal, our industry has a longstanding history of providing tools that allow game players and their parents and guardians to monitor and manage screen time more effectively.

Is there a problem of excessive video gaming?

According to community research that Bond University has undertaken for us for over a decade, the answer is a resounding no for the vast majority of the population. Australian and New Zealand game players respectively spend on average 81 and 88 minutes a day playing games, a figure that has remained steady in recent years. This is a less than half the time people in both countries spend watching TV. In contrast to common stereotypes, our data shows us that Australian and New Zealand game players enjoy a rich and balanced lifestyle filled with other interests, and very few only play alone. Our research also tells us that parents regularly monitor their children's game play, and routinely discuss and set rules around when, and for how long, they can play.

Is there such a thing as video game addiction?

Our industry follows the academic discussion in this space carefully, and the reality is that there is currently no conclusive evidence behind the existence of video game addiction or disorder. While the World Health Organization (WHO) recently included 'gaming disorder' in the 11th edition of its International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), it did so without undertaking research or citing evidence, and without consensus from the medical and academic community. In fact, dozens of health experts and social scientists from leading research centres like Oxford University, Johns Hopkins University, and The University of Sydney opposed the WHO's process and decision.

The risks of formalising a disorder that is not real doesn't just stigmatise video game players, but it creates a risk of harm from misdiagnoses that ignore underlying health issues, with some researchers arguing that some people may be using video games as a coping mechanism.

How does the industry help people to manage their game play?

Like any activity or hobby, from watching TV to playing sport, video gaming can be taken to an extreme. Our industry has a role to play in mitigating this risk and takes this responsibility very seriously. This is why our industry actively encourages people to play in moderation, and has provided a range of ways to help people balance their time playing games. Many video games and game platforms provide regular reminders for players to take breaks, and some developers design their games deliberately in a way that discourage extended gaming sessions. Many game platforms also provide tools and controls for parents and guardians to monitor their children's play time, and to limit when during the week, and for how long, their children can play games.

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