ABOUT

INTERACTIVE GAMES & ENTERTAINMENT ASSOCIATION (IGEA)

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The role of all media, including video games, in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic is profound. Mercifully, this moment in history provides half of the world’s human population with connection through shared communications and media experiences, even if we are physically segregated to limit the spread of disease. For New Zealand, almost everyone has access to almost all media, including video games.

Early critics of video games dismissed them as solo and lonely pursuits. Their unidimensional gaze failed to see the most basic characteristic of popular media – the ability to share experiences and stories, even if we did so after the fact and not in real time. Imagine if the pandemic hit during the early days of video games when they were played by a single player or by up to two players in the same household. The connections formed would be made over the landline telephone as we shared notes with friends who had played the same game we played. Working from home would be a greater challenge too.

This isn’t the 1970s and video games aren’t played only on that great icon of mass media: the television. Instead, video games, like most of our media, are carried on the great icon of electronic personal media: the telephone. If not being played on a smartphone, games are purchased or subscribed through the telecommunications infrastructure that once served mainly landline phones. And the great benefit of all this is that, in a global pandemic, we can play together and connect with one another, even while physically distancing.

The theme of Digital New Zealand 2022 (DNZ22) is Connected by Games. It’s an effort to find joy and respite despite the Pandemic. It’s a simple story of defiance, continuation, and resilience.

The quantitative data in this report are based on over 800 households with generous New Zealand adults from all over the country who answered our questions. While the numbers have evolved and are similar to those we’ve reported over the previous 12 years and six earlier studies, they take on a different meaning in the pandemic.

Importantly, the numbers don’t uncover the individual, lived experience of New Zealanders at this time. Therefore, in the spirit of our theme, we have chosen to tone down the quantitative, just a little, and dial up people’s stories, just a little.

What we learned through this process is that New Zealanders have been connected by games, that they have connected to games, with games, through the pandemic, in their families, for personal benefit, to connect to player culture, and connect the growing value of our digital economy.

Video games in a pandemic are an important social connector and form of respite. We hope, in particular, you enjoy reading people’s stories of being Connected by Games.
**Connecting to Games**

- Games rank 2nd medium for getting through the pandemic.
- 1.6 Million households connect with video games.
- 1.2 Million households use 2+ game devices.
- 73% (3.7 million) New Zealanders play video games.

**Connecting with Games**

- Average player is 35 years.
- 81 minutes/day New Zealanders who play video games.

**Connecting Through Games**

- 1/3 communicated through video games.
- 3/4 played video games socially, with others online or at home.
- 76% of parents played with children.
- 26% have made friends through video games.
- 48% of video game players in New Zealand are female.
COVID was the turning point in my life especially during lockdown. I started to play games just for something to do. I now have a daily routine playing my most loved games. When playing video games I feel challenged and I know it has improved my preception and ability to work on puzzles.”

Female. Age 70 years. Lives Alone. Hawkes Bay Region.
"Playing video games for me during the covid period was a way of relaxing and catching up with good mates in NZ and across the world - being able to have a better understanding of what was going on for friends in their country's, just having a laugh, taking the seriousness out of my daily life even for a short period."

Digital New Zealand 2022 (DNZ22) is an empirical study about digital games in New Zealand households with a focus on demographics, behaviours, and attitudes.

In this report, the words computer games, video games, digital games, and interactive games are used interchangeably to refer to the broad class of interactive, digital entertainment.

A game household was one that had in it any device for playing a video game, including personal computers, smart phones, dedicated home consoles, tablet computers, and handheld game devices. A player was a person who indicated they play computer or video games, simply "yes" or "no" on any device including a PC, console, handheld, social network, mobile phone or tablet computer.

Questions in the survey included open-ended, short response, list selection, dichotomous response (such as Yes/No or Selected/Not selected), ranking (1-10), and three-, four- and five-point Likert items (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, for example). These questions created over 350 measurement points.

Questions were grouped according to theme including:

- Household demographics,
- Household media environment,
- Media access to game devices, internet access and purchasing,
- Video gameplay preferences and routines,
- Motivations for playing video games and social connections that result,
- Parental engagement with video games,
- Engagement with game culture including esports,
- Games related to education, work, health and ageing,
- Classification and ratings,
- Attitudes and issues related to video games and policy, and

Specifically for this year, the impact and response connecting video games and COVID-19.
Data reported here come from 800 New Zealand households and 2,270 individuals of all ages in those households. Participants were drawn randomly from the Nielsen Your Voice Panel in March 2021. The Nielsen Company provided the research team at Bond University with raw data from the survey for statistical analysis at the University. The data were analysed by report authors using the SPSS Versions 26 and 27.

Results are calculated for three parts of households including responses to the survey by one adult member of the household (800 households) and of those, the adults who themselves play video games (683), they and one other person in the home whose game habits they know (1,228 people), then all people in those households (2,270 people).

For clarity throughout this report, we refer to these in turn as households, adult players, key players, all household members, then all video game players among them.

The quality of the sample was high and age, gender, and geographic representation were consistent with population proportions.

For the purposes of including results for all members of a given household, the Vars-to-Cases procedure was used to create individual records for all persons in a household as identified by the participants in the study.

Data reduction procedures included reducing the range for some questions to simplify presentation of responses. Some measures were combined into indices where obtaining a frequency or mean across a combination of measures simplified the presentation of findings or produced a more reliable result.

Missing values were eliminated from analysis on a per-question basis unless multiple measures were examined conjointly. For these, the case-wise deletion method was applied.

Statistical procedures included simple descriptive statistics such as frequencies, cross-tabulations, means, correlations, and tests of significance such as Chi-square and One-way ANOVA.

The margin of error is ± 3.5% for the national sample comparing households and all household members, ± 3.9% for adult players, ± 2.9% for key players, and ± 2.1% for all players.