Free to Play?

Hate, Harassment and
Positive Social Experiences
in Online Games 2020

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To stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.

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Center for Technology & Society

In a world riddled with cyberhate, online harassment and misuses of technology, the Center for Technology & Society (CTS) serves as a resource to tech platforms and develops proactive solutions. Launched in 2017 and headquartered in Silicon Valley, CTS aims for global impacts and applications in an increasingly borderless space.

It is a force for innovation, producing cutting-edge research to enable online civility, protect vulnerable populations, support digital citizenship and engage youth. CTS builds on ADL's experience over more than a century building a world without hate and supplies the tools to make that a possibility both online and offline.

ADL (Anti-Defamation League) fights antisemitism and promotes justice for all. Join ADL to give a voice to those without one and to protect our civil rights.

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ADL

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Executive Summary

Over 200 million people, 64 percent of American adults, regularly play video games—which include both online and offline games. A $159 billion industry, annual revenue from video games increased 9.3 percent this year, whereas revenue reported by traditional media such as movies and music steeply declined.

Video games have been popular in the United States for at least three decades, but the lockdowns and quarantines brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic kicked their growth as vital social spaces into overdrive.[1] Over 200 million people, 64 percent of American adults, regularly play video games—which include both online and offline games.[2] A $159 billion industry, annual revenue from video games increased 9.3 percent this year, whereas revenue reported by traditional media such as movies and music steeply declined.[3]

Like other social platforms, interactions within video games can be personally enriching and harmful for users. ADL's survey explored the social interactions, experiences, attitudes and behaviors of online multiplayer gamers across America.

We analyzed findings from a nationally representative survey of American gamers aged 18-45 designed by ADL's Center for Technology and Society in collaboration with Newzoo, a data analytics firm focused on games and esports. ADL previously worked with Newzoo to produce the first "Free to Play? Hate, Harassment and Positive Social Experiences in Online Games" survey in 2019. This year's report used a similar methodology, which allowed for a year-over-year comparison in some areas. In other areas, however, we refined the current study's methodology to provide more accurate data, but as a result we cannot allow for a direct comparison between 2019 and 2020.

Our 2020 survey found that 95 percent of adults aged 18-45 who played online multiplayer games in the U.S. had positive social experiences while playing. They helped other players (86%), made friends (83%), and felt they belonged to a community (83%). Games cited by players as producing the most positive social experiences were *World of Warcraft* (98%), *Rocket League* (96%), *Defense of the Ancients 2 (DOTA 2)* (95% of players of that game), *League of Legends* (95%) and *Valorant* (95%).

Despite that positive news, ADL's survey also found high levels of harassment in online multiplayer games and showed a year-over-year increase in harassment. For 2020, 81 percent of U.S. adults aged 18-45 who played online multiplayer games experienced some form of harassment, an increase from the figure of 74 percent reported in the 2019 survey. Thirty six percent of online multiplayer gamers who experienced harassment reported that it did not impact their play at all. That still translates to harassment shaping the gaming experience of a stunning 64 percent of adult online multiplayer gamers - or in the neighborhood of 34 million Americans.

Alarmingly, 68 percent of online multiplayer gamers experienced more severe abuse, including physical threats, stalking and sustained harassment, up from 65 percent in the 2019 survey. That's approximately 45 million online game-playing Americans reporting significant harassment. The games in which the greatest proportion of players experienced harassment while playing were *DOTA 2* (80%), *Valorant* (80%), *Rocket League* (76%), *Grand Theft Auto* (76%), *Call of Duty* (75%) and *Counter Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO)* (75%). *DOTA 2* led all games for the most players who reported in-game harassment in 2019.

Our survey also found significant abuse and harassment targeting specific groups and individuals based on identity characteristics. For example, 53 percent of online multiplayer gamers who experienced harassment reported that they were targeted because of their race/ethnicity, religion, ability status, gender, or sexual orientation. Forty-one percent of female and 37 percent of LGBTQ online multiplayer gamers, respectively, were harassed based on their gender and sexual orientation. Roughly a third of Black (31%) and Hispanic/Latinx (30%) online multiplayer gamers experienced in-game harassment based on their race or ethnicity. Twenty-five percent of Asian-American online multiplayer gamers experienced harassment based on their identity. Twenty-five percent of disabled people were targeted as a result of their disability.

Religion was another reason why online multiplayer gamers were abused: 18 percent of Jewish gamers and 25 percent of Muslim gamers said they were subjected to harassment.

The cost of abuse is steep for players and the industry. Twenty-eight percent of online multiplayer gamers who experienced in-game harassment avoided certain games due to their reputations for hostile environments, and 22 percent stopped playing certain games altogether. The games that most online multiplayer gamers either became more careful playing or stopped playing altogether are *DOTA 2* (40%), followed by *Call of Duty* (39%), *League of Legends* (36%), *Fortnite* (35%), *Grand Theft Auto* (34%) and *Valorant* (33%).

95%
of adults aged 18-45 who played online multiplayer games in the U.S. had positive social experiences while playing.

81%
of players in the U.S had their online multiplayer game experience shaped by harassment in some way, an increase from the figure of 74 percent reported in the 2019 survey.

68%
of online multiplayer gamers experienced more severe abuse, including physical threats, stalking and sustained harassment, up from 65 percent in the 2019 survey.

12%

or over one in ten players took steps to reduce risks to their physical safety because of their experience of harassment in online games. Nine percent called the police.

64%

of players who experienced harassment in online games did not report other players in game. Their stated reasons for not reporting were not feeling their experience was disruptive enough (18%) and not seeing meaningful results from previous reports (11%).

Moreover, the impact of harassment in online multiplayer games goes far beyond game environments. Sixteen percent of gamers who experienced some form of harassment indicated they became less social, and 14 percent felt isolated. Just over one in ten players (12%) took steps to reduce risks to their physical safety. Perhaps most concerning, roughly the same amount (11%) had depressive or suicidal thoughts. Thirteen percent of gamers contacted game companies, and nine percent indicated they called the police to ask for help or report harassment.

In addition to harassment, ADL's study explored players' in-game exposure to controversial topics, such as extremism and disinformation. Alarmingly, nearly one in ten online multiplayer gamers (9%) witnessed discussions on white supremacist ideology. Seventeen percent saw hateful messaging linking the COVID-19 pandemic to the Asian community, and 12 percent observed disinformation surrounding Antifa and the Black Lives Matter protests related to the murder of George Floyd. The survey also showed that one in ten online multiplayer gamers (10%) came across Holocaust denial discussions while playing.

The survey asked online multiplayer gamers whether they reported other players. More than a third (36%) who experienced harassment reported other players. Twenty-five percent of those who experienced some form of harassment but did not report other players stated they declined to come forward because they thought their experiences were not disruptive enough. Sixteen percent said that a previous report did not result in meaningful action, so they did not feel reporting was a worthwhile use of their time.

To curb harassment, the features that most online multiplayer gamers deemed effective are: blocking certain players from joining their team (60%), the ability to "push to talk" or mute other players on voice or text chat (58%), and playing with those they trust (58%). Asked about features used by game developers to combat harassment, players listed the following as ineffective in managing harassment in online multiplayer games: reminders and prompts to encourage positive behavior (21% of online multiplayer gamers feel this is ineffective), coaching and mentoring other players (17%), and matchmaking with opponents/teammates based on skill (17%).

We see opportunities to act and do more to address harassment in online games:

Games Industry: Game developers and publishers need to proactively reduce hate and harassment in online multiplayer games by improving their existing content moderation processes---including their reporting systems---and advancing new content moderation tools that include the ability to monitor and moderate voice chat. Such an approach should include policies and enforcement against hate and harassment that improve upon the best practices of traditional social media. There needs to be real data transparency about online game communities, including the gaming experience of individuals from marginalized and vulnerable communities. The games industry should collaborate with civil society, educate it about the gaming community's unique challenges, and take advantage of civil society's expertise.

Civil Society: Many civil society organizations have expanded their work to document the impact of social media on their priority issues and communities. This work should be expanded to address the impact of online multiplayer games. Civil society should support scholars and practitioners whose work helps fight hate, bias and harassment in games. It should also partner with newer nonprofits that have emerged from the gaming space to address these critical issues.

Government: Federal and state legislators and executive branch agencies should strengthen and enforce laws that protect targets of online hate and harassment, whether on traditional social media or in online multiplayer games. As they do with social media companies, government should push for increased transparency and accountability from game companies around online hate and harassment.

We believe this report provides insight into how critical enriching online games are to the lives of people around the world, alongside a better understanding of how the games industry can improve.

Note: When we say players "experienced" hate, harassment or positive social interactions, we mean that survey respondents indicated they had this happen within the past six months. Despite our use of the past tense, our survey shows hate and harassment are ongoing problems for millions of gamers.

Introduction

On May 7, 2020, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Democrat of New York, visited the family of Justin Mirsky and Laura Smykla at what the congresswoman called their "home away from home." Before moving to the suburb of New Rochelle, N.Y., Mirsky and Smykla were her constituents and supporters. The difference between this visit and others that Rep. Cortez has paid was its location: the congresswoman connected with the couple inside the video game *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*, sporting a blue digital shirt with her initials drawn onto it by hand. The Biden-Harris campaign followed suit with a series of lawn signs that players could display on their islands in *Animal Crossing*.

According to the Entertainment Software Association, there are 214.4 million gamers in the United States.[4] Seventy-nine percent are over 18. As the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the world and lockdowns, virtual meetings and social distancing became the norm, games became an even more vital social outlet by operating as a form of entertainment and a forum for conversation and expression. Players of *Animal Crossing* have participated in Black Lives Matter vigils,[5] raids against animal abuse,[6] and rallies supporting protesters in Hong Kong,[7] leading to a ban of the game by the Chinese government. A March 2020 Newzoo study of gamers aged 10-30 in the U.S., Japan and Italy found that socializing was the second most popular reason people played online multiplayer games during the lockdown.[8]

But as online multiplayer games become more dynamic social spaces, hate and harassment persist. In June, Riot Games released its online multiplayer game, *Valorant*. Anna Donlon, the game's executive producer, said she decided not to use voice chat due to gender-based harassment. "It was a huge wake-up call for me when I experienced it in my own game," she said. "That sucked."[9]

Two studies released this year showed how frequently players did not call out harassment perpetrated by others. A joint *Wired* and Michigan State University study found that only 20 percent of respondents said they strongly resist antisocial behavior in online games.[10] Research from Alison Chasteen of the University of Toronto found that players' most common response to prejudiced comments in online games was to ignore them. Their second most common response was to make similarly discriminatory remarks.[11] A qualitative study published this year by Stephanie Ortiz of Florida Atlantic University further illustrates how people from marginalized communities—specifically men of color—adapt to the norms of online game environments where hate and harassment run rampant:

"I don't care [pauses]. Well, let me rephrase that. I mean, I cared about it for too long . . . Ignorance is exhausting to deal with . . . I've heard it for so long, and I harbored a lot of resentment against these strangers I would never meet in my life. I had to make it stop hurting."[12]

As online game spaces become more critical for information, social connection and political expression, it is urgent that the public, including industry, civil society and government, find ways to push against the normalization of hate and harassment within them.

ADL's first "Free to Play? Hate, Harassment and Positive Social Experiences in Online Games" report, released last year, provided a snapshot of online multiplayer gamers' experiences in the U.S. The nationally representative survey explored transgressive behaviors in these spaces: expressions of hate, harassment, extremism, conspiracy theories and disinformation. Last year's report also provided a brief history of online games as social spaces over the past 40 years.[13] It looked at players' positive experiences, such as the degree to which players make friends or find community in online multiplayer games. Building on that model, this current report contains the results of a 2020 survey designed to give a snapshot of the experience of online multiplayer gamers in the U.S. and a brief update on trends in online games as social spaces over the past year that may have impacted our survey results.

We hope this survey raises awareness of hate, harassment, disinformation and extremism in online multiplayer games and compels the public to treat these problems with seriousness and urgency.

Games Industry Trends 2019-2020

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced the #PlayApartTogether campaign in April, highlighting online games as a meaningful way to stay connected with friends and loved ones while also practicing safe social distancing. This is a far cry from the WHO's public positioning on video games in 2019, when it officially classified "gaming disorder" as addictive behavior, which drew much scrutiny.

COVID-19

In 2020, the novel and deadly coronavirus, known as COVID-19, spread around the world. To curb transmission of the virus, many governments took swift, decisive action, and people changed many aspects of how they went about their daily lives. Early on, it became clear that one of the critical practices to mitigating the virus's spread was social distancing, which led some governments to forbid public gatherings, shut down schools and businesses and expand work from home practices, among other changes.

Demand surged for games because users wanted escapism and social connection. When many countries first went into lockdown in March, Verizon's global data use for games rose by 75 percent.[14] Video game streaming services such as Twitch, YouTube and Facebook Gaming exploded as well—Twitch's viewership grew 101 percent year over year.[15] A survey released by Deloitte in July found that during the pandemic, a third of consumers in the U.S. subscribed to a video gaming service, used a cloud gaming service, or watched esports or a virtual sporting event for the first time.[16]

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced the #PlayApartTogether campaign in April, highlighting online games as a meaningful way to stay connected with friends and loved ones while also practicing safe social distancing.[17] This is a far cry from the WHO's public positioning on video games in 2019, when it officially classified "gaming disorder" as addictive behavior,[18] which drew much scrutiny.[19] The dramatic increase in playing games during quarantine, combined with the engagement of credible and once oppositional groups like WHO, speaks to the growing importance of online games as part of our digital social fabric.

Black Lives Matter and George Floyd

George Floyd, a Black man murdered by Minneapolis police officers on May 25, 2020 continued a longstanding pattern of murders of Black Americans by law enforcement in the United States. These murders include Eric Garner (2014), Michael Brown (2014), Tamir Rice (2014), Laquan McDonald (2014), John Crawford (2014), Freddie Gray (2015), Sandra Bland (2015), Walter Scott (2015), Deborah Danner (2016), Alton Sterling (2016), Philando Castile (2016), Terence Crutcher (2016), Antwon Rose (2018), Atatiana Jefferson (2019), Breonna Taylor (2020) and many others. George Floyd's death ignited a reckoning with systemic racism in America. The murder sparked huge numbers of racial justice protests across the country, as well as internationally. It is estimated that at least 15 million Americans participated in a Black Lives Matter event in the wake of Floyd's murder.

The Black Lives Matter movement garnered unusually broad support from companies across the games industry. In the past, the industry had been reticent to speak out on social justice issues in America, particularly hate, misogyny and racism. For example, prominent targets of the coordinated harassment campaign Gamergate in 2014 frequently criticized the industry's silence in response to allegations of widespread misogyny.[20]

In reaction to the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent public discussion around racial justice, most major game companies made statements, gave donations to nonprofits dedicated to racial justice, or took other action. Electronic Arts (the developers of the *Madden* game franchise) pledged to grant its employees an extra day of paid vacation to volunteer in their local communities (among other actions such as donating to nonprofits).[21] InfinityWard (developers of the game franchise *Call of Duty*) planned to address their games' role in spreading racism and pledged to do better.[22]

Many corporations in other sectors made similar statements and commitments in June and July,[23] but it remains to be seen whether the games industry will further support social justice work. For example, as of this writing, no game company has decided to use its public voice in support of justice for Jacob Blake, a Black American who was shot seven times in the back by law enforcement on August 23 in Kenosha, Wis., and became paralyzed.

**May 25, 2020
George Floyd is murdered**

$ = MONETARY PLEDGES

Riot Games: $1,000,000 to ACLU and Innocence Project

Bungie: Unspecified donations to the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, Showing Up for Racial Justice, the BU Center for Antiracist Research, the Equal Justice Initiative, and Colorlines

Ubisoft: $100,000 NAACP and Black Lives Matter

Square Enix: $250,000 to Black Lives Matter

Electronic Arts: $1,000,000 to Equal Justice Initiative and NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund

Niantic Labs: $160,000 to Gameheads and Marsha P. Johnson Foundation

2k: $1,000,000 to 2k Foundations

Sega: Unspecified donations to unspecified organizations

WB Games: $500,000 to One Fifty

May 31 | 1:20pm | **Riot Games** $
May 31 | 8:00pm | **Bethesda Studios**
May 31 | 9:59pm | **Naughty Dog**
May 31 | 11:18pm | **Nexon America**
May 31 | 11:42pm | **Activision/Blizzard**
June 1 | 10:52am | **Playstation**
June 1 | 11:43am | **zynga**
June 1 | 12:58pm | **Xbox**
June 1 | 1:45pm | **Insomniac**
June 1 | 5:31pm | **Bungie** $
June 2 | 6:43am | **Splash Damage**
June 2 | 7:48am | **Ubisoft** $
June 2 | 4:15pm | **Square Enix** $
June 2 | 9:07pm | **Electronic Arts** $
June 2 | 9:07pm | **Bioware**
June 2 | 10:31pm | **Roblox**
June 3 | 7:59am | **Rovio**
June 3 | 10:00am | **Capcom**
June 3 | 11:00am | **Bandai Namco**
June 3 | 11:02am | **Niantic Labs** $
June 3 | 11:30am | **Nintendo of America**
June 3 | 12:14pm | **Stadia**
June 3 | 5:46pm | **Infinity Ward**
June 3 | 8:14pm | **NCSoft West**
June 3 | 8:19pm | **2k** $
June 4 | 10:11am | **Sega** $
June 4 | 12:00pm | **Rockstar Games**
June 4 | 12:00pm | **Take Two**
June 4 | 12:00pm | **WB Games** $
June 5 | 12:00pm | **Epic Games**
June 5 | 7:21pm | **EA Sports**

May 26
May 27
May 28
May 29
May 30
May 31
June 1
June 2
June 3
June 4
June 5

Source: ADL

#MeToo

In January 2018, journalist Keza MacDonald wrote in *The Guardian* that the games industry was not yet ready to have a conversation on #MeToo. Its resounding silence continued even after female targets publicly shared powerful stories revealing sexual violence, harassment and misogyny, and journalists pushed for victims to come forward. However, MacDonald argued the industry's reckoning could not be dictated by the press. "Women do not want to be pressed to share their trauma," she wrote. "And if women in the video games industry do decide to speak out, they will do so on their own terms."[24]

This past June, three female video game streamers, JewelsVerne, SheSnaps and SchviftyFive, came forward about their experiences with sexual abuse perpetrated by Lono, also known as SayNoToRage,[25] a prominent streamer of the online game *Destiny*. An outpouring of similar stories shared by streamers and developers on abuse and misogyny across the industry followed. The streamer Jessica Richey compiled the stories of survivors, which were posted on Twitter. Last updated in July, the spreadsheet tracker represents the stories of over 400 victims of sexual harassment in the games industry.[26]

In some cases, targets' stories of sexual harassment led to action against their abusers. At Ubisoft, the creator of the *Assassin's Creed*, *Watch Dogs* and *Rainbow Six* game franchises, longtime, influential executives accused of harassment and sexual abuse resigned or were fired, including Tommy François, its vice president of editorial and creative services, along with Serge Hascoët, its chief creative officer, and many others.[27]

Misogyny within the industry and online game communities is not new and can be traced back to when the first video games were marketed. Widespread harassment has been reported at major game studios before. In 2018, an in-depth investigation into Riot Games made public its sexist culture,[28] which led to Riot vowing to transform its workplace.[29] Stories of sexual harassment and misogyny in the games industry, the appearance of similar behaviors in online game environments created and maintained by these companies, and the subsequent actions taken by game companies are thus worth considering in terms of the results of this survey.

2020 Survey Methodology

We defined "disruptive behavior" as being the target of trolling/griefing, personally embarrassed by another online player, called offensive names, threatened with physical violence, harassed for a sustained period of time, stalked, sexually harassed, discriminated against by a stranger or doxing.

ADL designed a nationally representative survey to examine Americans' experiences of both disruptive behavior and positive social interactions in online multiplayer games in collaboration with Newzoo. We collected 1,009 responses from adults aged 18-45 years old who play games across PC, console and mobile platforms, including 733 responses from people who play online multiplayer games. We oversampled individuals who identify as LGBTQ, Jewish, Muslim, Black and Hispanic/Latinx. We collected responses for the oversampled target groups until at least 70 Americans were represented in each group. Surveys were conducted from July 1 to July 16, 2020. The margin of error based on our sample size is two to three percentage points in general, though this may be slightly higher when looking at smaller sample sizes.

In addition to questions about positive social experiences in online games, we asked respondents whether and how often they experience "disruptive behavior," defined as being:

- The target of trolling/griefing (deliberate attempt to upset or provoke)
- Personally embarrassed by another online player
- Called offensive names
- Threatened with physical violence
- Harassed for a sustained period
- Stalked (online monitoring/information gathering used to threaten or harass)
- Sexually harassed
- Discriminated against by a stranger (based on age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.)
- Doxed, which is having personally-identifying information made public
- Swatted, known as when a stranger makes a false report to emergency services

Note: Survey respondents who "experienced" hate, harassment or positive social interactions had this happen within the past six months. Our use of the past tense does not mean these players are no longer targets. In fact, our findings show the opposite is true.
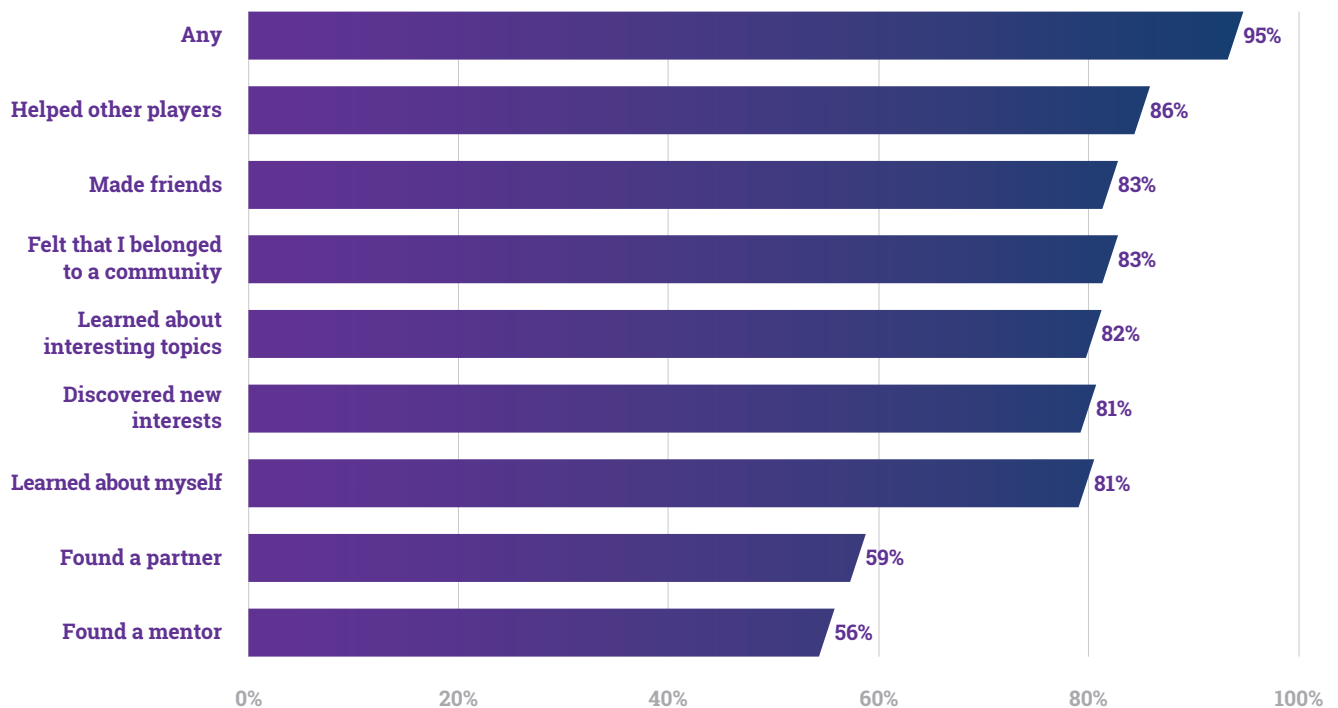
In the following analysis, we refer to these forms of disruptive behavior as harassment. We consider harassment hate-based when the activity or actions are clearly motivated by the identity of the target.

Results

Category	Value
Any	95%
Helped other players	86%
Made friends	83%
Felt that I belonged to a community	83%
Learned about interesting topics	82%
Discovered new interests	81%
Learned about myself	81%
Found a partner	59%
Found a mentor	56%

Positive Social Experiences

As players across the U.S. and the world increase the time they spend at home playing games due to the COVID-19 crisis, they are nearly all having some form of positive social experiences in online multiplayer games. For our 2020 report, we revised our 2019 methodology to get a better picture of how frequently players had positive social experiences in online multiplayer games. As a result, we can dive more deeply into these results and the frequency with which certain behaviors occurred, but cannot use the results from this year's survey as a basis for comparison with our 2019 survey.

Figure 2. Positive Experiences in Gaming. The positive aspects of digital social spaces that exist inside online games include the ability for these spaces to connect people, build friendships and communities and allow for learning and knowledge sharing.

Source: ADL/Newzoo 2020 Online Game Survey

In 2020, 95 percent of online multiplayer gamers experienced positive social behavior while playing online multiplayer games. Players included in this 95 percent indicated they have positive social experiences in online multiplayer games rarely, sometimes, often, or every time while playing. These experiences included other players helping them (86%), making friends (83%), and feeling they belong to a community (83%). Eighty-two percent of players learned about exciting topics in online multiplayer games, 81 percent of players discovered new interests, and 81 percent of players learned something about themselves in online multiplayer games. Fifty-six percent found mentors, and 59 percent met partners in online multiplayer games. As we didn't specify a more specific meaning of "partners," this could include romantic partners, teammates or other interpretations.

Ninety percent of online multiplayer gamers indicated they frequently had positive social experiences in online games, meaning they told of positive experiences sometimes, often, or every time they play. Seventy-four percent helped other players, 70 percent made friends, and 69 percent felt they belonged to a community.

We also looked at positive experiences by identity category to investigate whether these experiences are more common among certain groups. More Jewish, Muslim and disabled players feel part of a community in online multiplayer games than the overall average. Simultaneously, more Black, Jewish, Muslim and disabled players make friends in online multiplayer games than the overall average.

Online games at their best can function as social platforms connecting people and building communities for a multitude of lived experiences. Notably, however, 50 percent of online multiplayer gamers who had positive social experiences in a game also quit or started to avoid at least one game because of harassment. Ninety-eight percent of players who left or avoided a game also acknowledged having a positive experience in an online game at some point. Nevertheless, the intensity of harassment for these players was enough to remove themselves from some games' environments.

Positive Social Experiences by Game

Ninety-eight percent of online multiplayer gamers who played *World of Warcraft* had at least some positive social experiences, leading all other online multiplayer games in our 2020 survey. Ninety-six percent of *Rocket League* and *CS:GO* players, 95 percent of *League of Legends*, *Valorant* and *DOTA 2* players had positive social experiences. When looking at how many players had frequent positive social experiences in online multiplayer games (sometimes, often, or every time they play), 87 percent of *DOTA 2* players; 85 percent of *World of Warcraft*, *Clash Royale*, *Valorant*, *Animal Crossing* and *League of Legends* players; and 83 percent of *Rocket League* players had frequent positive social experiences.

Over 90 percent of players had positive social experiences in each of the six online multiplayer shooter games (*Call of Duty*, *Valorant*, *Fortnite*, *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive*, *Player Unknown: Battlegrounds* and *Overwatch*) of various types and structures, continuing the trend from last year's survey, even if the results were not directly comparable. A non-trivial number of players had meaningful positive social experiences in online multiplayer shooters, despite public consternation about these games' relationship with gun violence and morality. Players of online shooter games make friends, learn about themselves and others and find community.
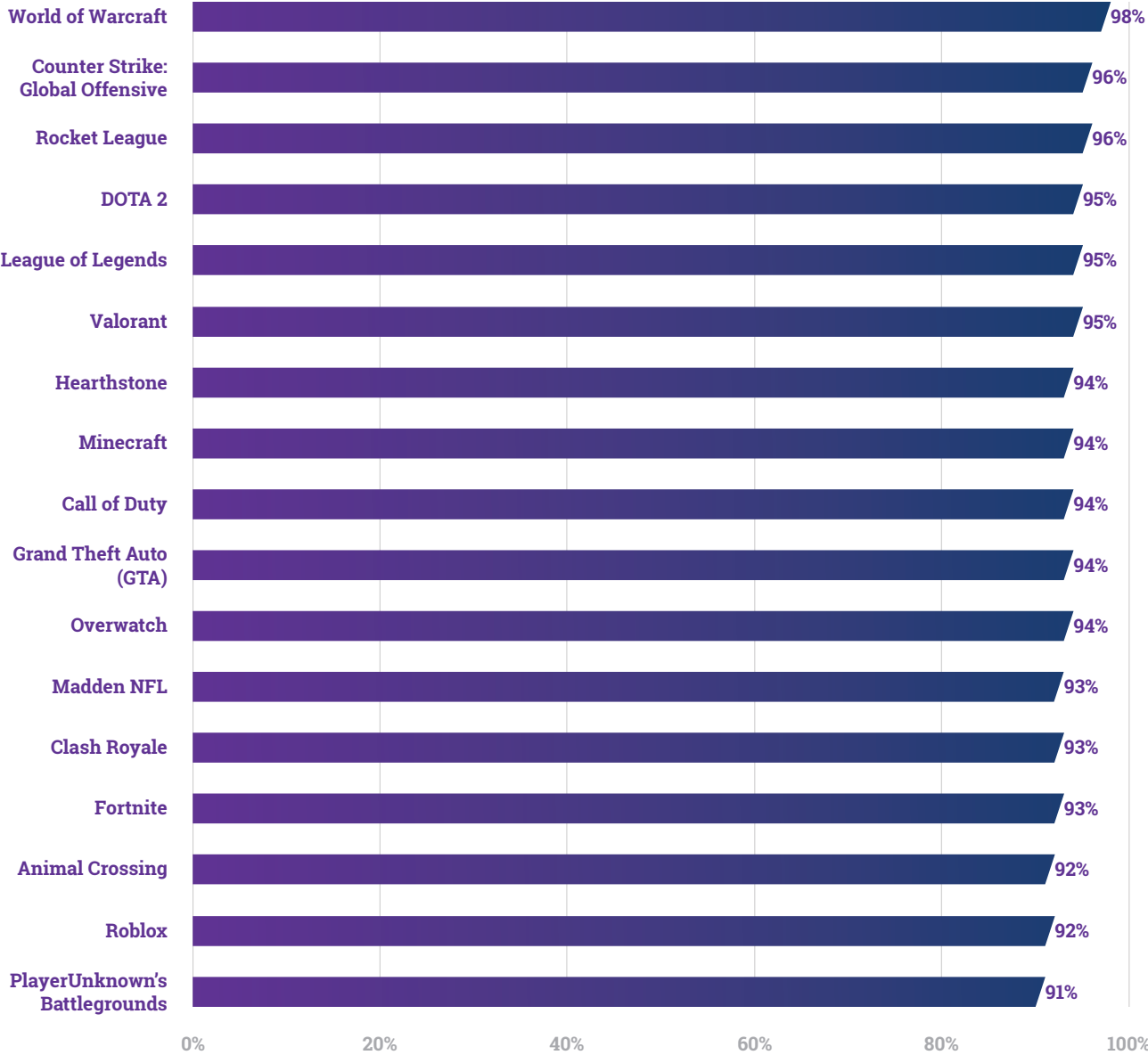
Figure 3. Positive Social Experiences by Game. Over 90 percent of players had positive social experiences in each of the six online multiplayer shooter games (Call of Duty, Valorant, Fortnite, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Player Unknown: Battlegrounds, and Overwatch) in the survey, showing a non-trivial number of players had meaningful positive social experiences in online multiplayer shooters

Source: ADL/Newzoo 2020 Online Game Survey

"I am a gay youtuber currently at 40,00 subscribers and it's really hard at times and yeah I deal with this shit [doxing] on the daily."

26-30, male, white, LGBTQ (gay), no religion in particular, online and offline multiplayer gamer

Stalking, Doxing and Swatting

Although positive social experiences in online multiplayer games are nearly universal, so are hate and harassment. Our 2020 survey found a year-on-year increase in harassment in online games: more than four in five (81%) American adults experienced harassment overall in online multiplayer games compared to 74 percent in 2019. Seventy percent were called offensive names in online multiplayer games, while 60 percent of gamers were the targets of trolling, deliberate and malicious attempts to provoke them to react negatively. Name-calling and trolling represent an increase of three percent year on year, which is within the margin of error of this study. However, the increase of seven percent in harassment overall between 2019 and 2020 is notable.

Sixty-eight percent of online multiplayer gamers experienced more severe forms of harassment, up from 65 percent in 2019, but within the margin of error. Forty-eight percent were directly harassed for a sustained period, and 53 percent were discriminated against by a stranger based on their identity. Fifty-one percent were threatened with physical violence, and 44 percent were stalked, their online presence was monitored in the game and the information gathered was used to threaten or harass them. The increase in stalking in online multiplayer games is the largest increase among the year-on-year harassment comparisons—a 10-point increase from 34 percent in 2019.

"He found my I.P. address and posted it for people to crash."

21-25, white, male, Muslim, heterosexual, online and offline multiplayer gamer

"It was an awkward experience, but it didn't do much when i explained that nothing happened and they [law enforcement] were fine with that."

31-35, male, Hispanic, Protestant, LGBTQ (bisexual), online and offline multiplayer gamer

For the 2020 study, we added swatting as a new category of harassment and changed our methodology around doxing to improve data collection. We asked survey respondents questions with the following definition of each behavior:

- Doxing is personally-identifying information made public.

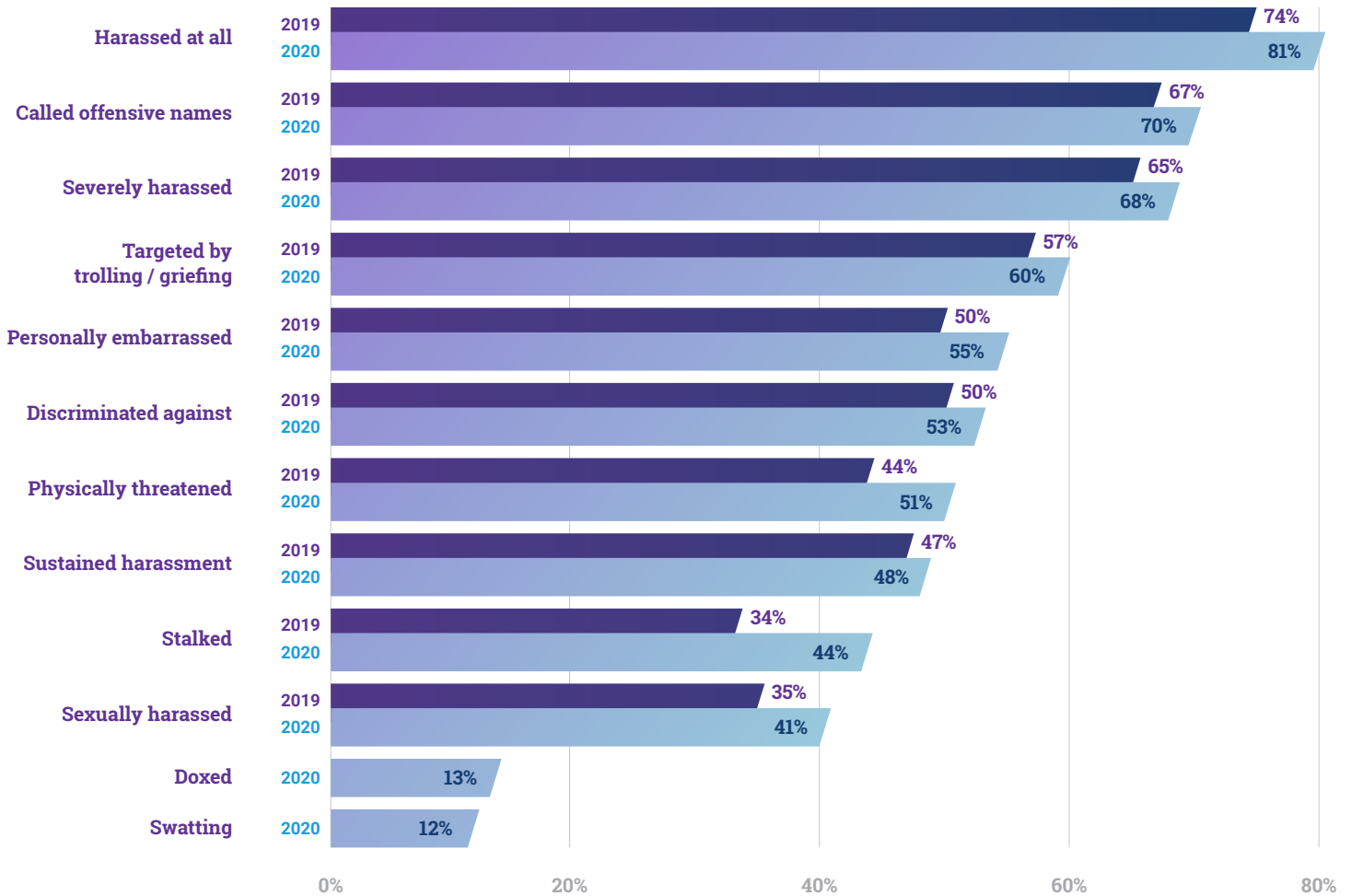- Swatting is when a stranger makes a false report to emergency services.

These behaviors, however, are not widely known or understood. To collect better data around swatting and doxing, we asked respondents who experienced either to describe what happened. In our total figures for swatting and doxing, we included the responses of players who reported something similar to either behavior or who preferred not to elaborate. We removed descriptions unrelated to swatting or doxing from our final numbers.

With our new methodology, we found that 13 percent of respondents experienced doxing in 2020. When we applied the new methodology to the results from last year, filtering out a similar percentage of responses as we did in our 2020 results, we determined 10 percent of adults in 2019 were doxed in online multiplayer games. We then applied the same methodology to our question on swatting and found that 12 percent of adults experienced swatting in online multiplayer games during 2020.

We believe these numbers provided by our updated methodology are a more accurate picture of the experience of American adults who are doxed and swatted in online multiplayer games.

"Somebody came knocking at my door, and I was ready to make sure that nothing was going against us."

26- 30, female, white, Jewish, heterosexual, online and offline multiplayer gamer

Harassed at all	2019	74%
	2020	81%
Called offensive names	2019	67%
	2020	70%
Severely harassed	2019	65%
	2020	68%
Targeted by trolling / griefing	2019	57%
	2020	60%
Personally embarrassed	2019	50%
	2020	55%
Discriminated against	2019	50%
	2020	53%
Physically threatened	2019	44%
	2020	51%
Sustained harassment	2019	47%
	2020	48%
Stalked	2019	34%
	2020	44%
Sexually harassed	2019	35%
	2020	41%
Doxed	2020	13%
Swatting	2020	12%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%

Identity or Hate-Based Harassment

Hate-based harassment is when players become targets of disruptive behaviors based at least in part on their actual or perceived identity, including but not limited to their age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, religion, or membership in another protected class. Fifty-two percent of online multiplayer gamers were harassed based on their race/ethnicity, religion, ability status, gender, or sexual orientation.

Figure 4. Harassment All, Severe and by Type. Over three quarters (81%) of online multiplayer gamers have experienced some form of harassment in online multiplayer games, an increase from 74% in 2019.

Source: ADL/Newzoo 2020 Online Game Survey

Gender and sexual orientation were often the reasons for abuse: 41 percent of women and 37 percent of LGBTQ online multiplayer gamers experienced harassment. Thirty percent of Hispanic/Latinx players are harassed because of their race/identity. Meanwhile, 31 percent of Black gamers who experienced disruptive behavior are targeted

because of their race/ethnicity in online multiplayer games. Twenty-five percent of Asian, Asian-American, or South Asian gamers are targeted based on their race or ethnicity. Twenty-five percent of Muslim players are harassed because of their religion. Eighteen percent of Jewish players who experienced harassment are targeted for their religion. This year, we also found that 25 percent of disabled players were harassed because of their ability status.
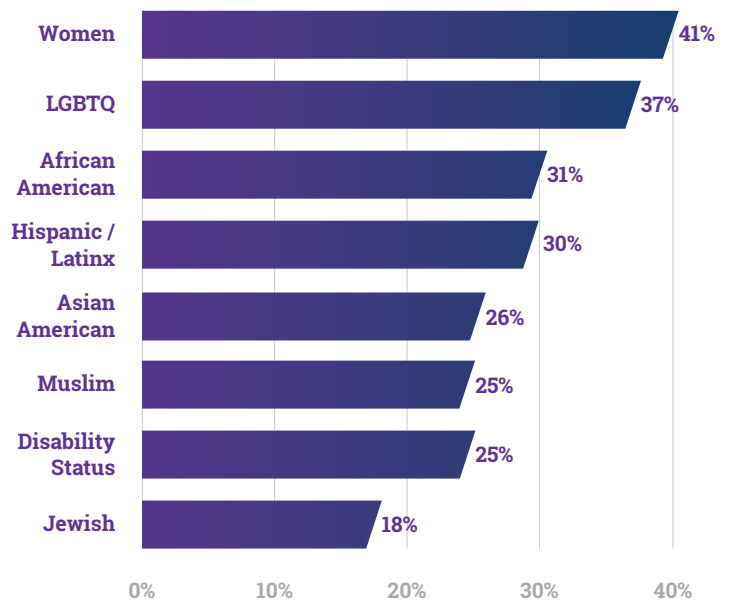
Harassment by Game

Our study looked specifically at players' experiences of harassment in several prominent online multiplayer games that ADL and Newzoo chose to analyze because of their popularity. Harassment is common in online multiplayer games regardless of the genre, as we found in last year's survey. Thus, this year's list included games of various genres, from shooters to multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) games to deck-building games, sports, adventure and role-playing games. Several games were omitted from this year's survey that appeared last year, and a few new games were added, such as *Animal Crossing*, due to overwhelming popularity. *Apex Legends* was left out of this year's survey because of question length constraints and to satisfy our goal to balance genres.

At least 53 percent of players experienced harassment in each of the games included in this survey, except *Animal Crossing*, at 36 percent. The next lowest was *Minecraft*, with 53 percent of players, a slight increase from 51 percent in 2019, but within the margin of error.

Eighty percent of online multiplayer gamers who play *DOTA 2* or *Valorant* experienced in-game harassment; more than half of these players were frequently harassed (67% and 66%, respectively). *DOTA 2* and *Valorant* led all games included in our survey for the number of players experiencing harassment. For the second consecutive year, *DOTA 2* led this survey; in 2019, 79 percent of players experienced harassment playing *DOTA 2*.

Figure 5. Experienced Harassment by Identity. Exploring identity-based harassment reveals that gender and sexual orientation are often the basis for abuse: 41 percent of women and 37 percent of LGBTQ+ online multiplayer gamers experienced harassment.

Source: ADL/Newzoo 2020 Online Game Survey

Seventy-six percent of players of *Rocket League*, a sports game, experienced in-game harassment, compared to 66 percent of players last year, a big jump of 10 percent. The deck-building game *Hearthstone* had an even bigger increase from the previous year: 71 percent of players reported in-game harassment this year compared to 57 percent in 2019.

Seventy-five percent of players experienced harassment in the shooter game *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (C.S.: G.O.)* and 74 percent in the shooter game *Fortnite*. Last year, 75 percent of *C.S.: G.O.* players reported harassment, while 70 percent of *Fortnite* players did so.
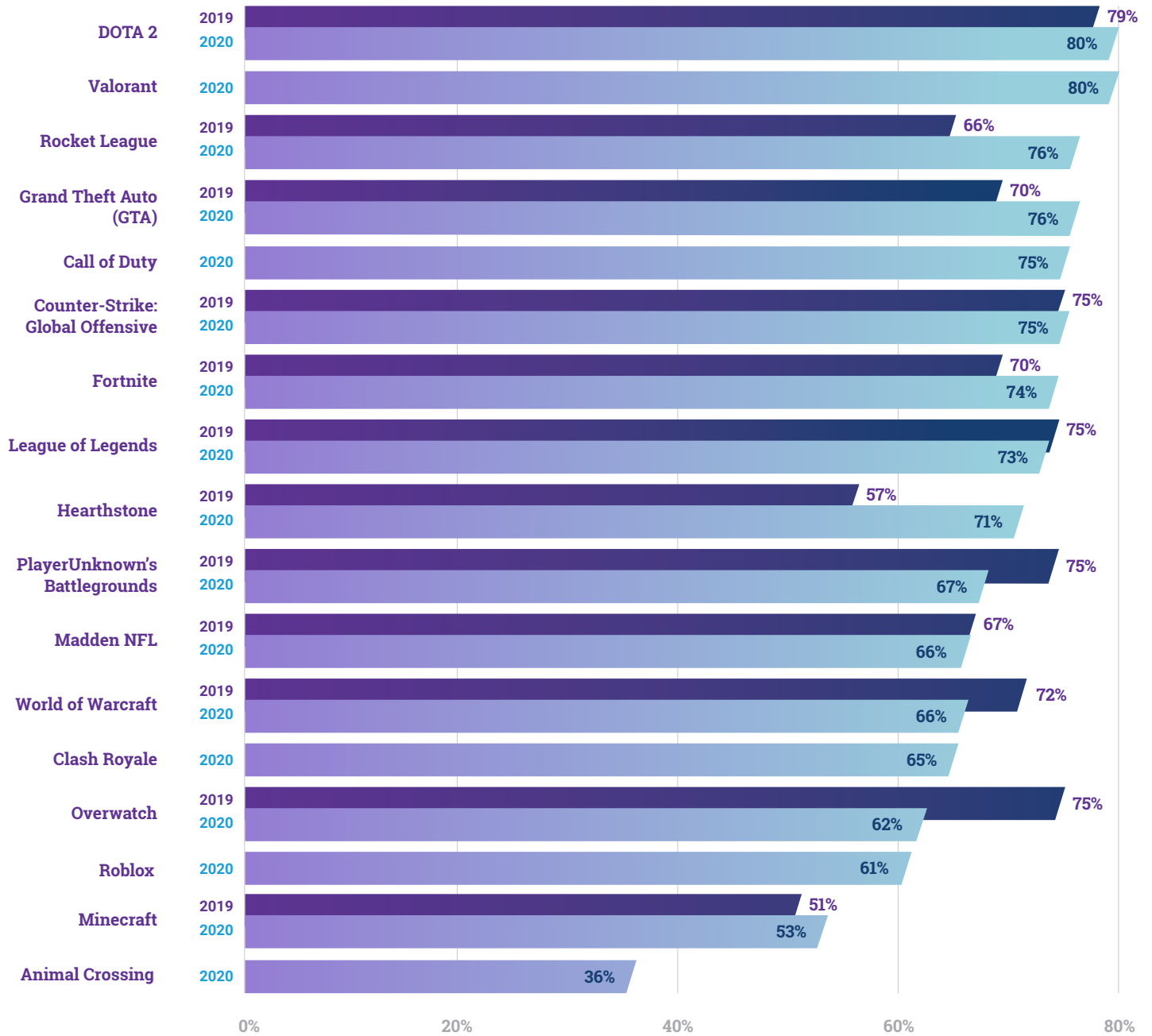
	2019	2020
DOTA 2	79%	80%
Valorant		80%
Rocket League	66%	76%
Grand Theft Auto (GTA)	70%	76%
Call of Duty		75%
Counter-Strike: Global Offensive	75%	75%
Fortnite	70%	74%
League of Legends	75%	73%
Hearthstone	57%	71%
PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds	75%	67%
Madden NFL	67%	66%
World of Warcraft	72%	66%
Clash Royale		65%
Overwatch	75%	62%
Roblox		61%
Minecraft	51%	53%
Animal Crossing		36%

Figure 6. Harassment by Game. Eighty percent of online multiplayer gamers who play DOTA 2 or Valorant experienced in-game harassment. For the second consecutive year, DOTA 2 led this survey; in 2019, 79 percent of players experienced harassment playing DOTA 2.

Source: ADL/Newzoo 2020 Online Game Survey

The online multiplayer game with the most significant drop in reports of harassment is *Overwatch*. In 2020, 62 percent of *Overwatch* players experienced in-game harassment, a 13-point decrease from 75 percent of players in 2019. Another notable drop was *PlayerUnknown: Battlegrounds (PUBG)*: this year, 67 percent of *PUBG* players experienced harassment, compared to 75 percent last year.

Harassment by Location

Our study also investigated where players most often experienced harassment within online games, both in hardware and in-game channels. We looked across platforms and found that 62 percent of online multiplayer gamers who used a console (such as an Xbox or PlayStation), 43 percent who played games on a mobile device, and 36 percent who used a PC, experienced harassment.

The number of players who were harassed widely varies by the console. Fifty-six percent of players experienced harassment on a PlayStation 4, compared to 37 percent of players who use the Xbox One console and 14 percent of players on the Nintendo Switch/Nintendo Switch Lite.

We asked players about the communication channels they used to learn more about the environments online multiplayer gamers experienced harassment. More players reported harassment through voice chats than text chats for both in-game and out-of-game channels. Forty-eight percent of players reported some form of harassment via in-match voice chat, while 39 percent said it was through in-match text chat. Regarding out-of-game communication channels, 28 percent of players were harassed via voice chat versus 22 percent through text chat.

Figure 7. Harassment by Communication Mode. The study investigated the communication modes where players experience harassment within online games.

Source: ADL/Newzoo 2020 Online Game Survey
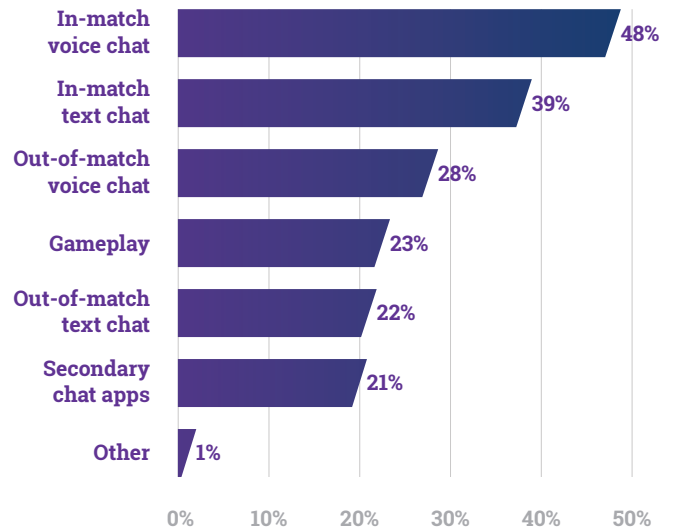
Extremism, Conspiracy Theories and Disinformation

The relationship between extremist movements and the game community continues to be a topic of public conversation. Early in 2020, ADL published a report investigating extremist activity on Steam, the leading PC game store containing a social component. The ease by which our investigators could discover extremist content and user profiles on Steam was alarming.[30]

In 2019, our survey found almost a quarter of online multiplayer gamers (23%) were invited to discuss or heard others discuss the "superiority of whites and inferiority of non-whites" or a "white identity/home for the white race." Surprised by such a high number, we wanted to ensure that we were getting the best data possible within the limits of a survey when we asked players about this behavior again in 2020. We applied the same updated methodology we used in our questions regarding doxing and swatting to our 2020 survey questions on white supremacy. We asked respondents to provide open text answers about their exposure to discussions of white supremacist ideology in online games. Our analysis only took into account relevant responses, and we disregarded irrelevant responses in our final total.

It is worth noting that in the context of this survey, we are not referring to "white supremacy" as the system of power that privileges the experience of white people over other identities in American society. Instead, ADL refers to "white supremacy" as the collection of extremist ideologies undergirding the beliefs that white people should dominate other identities, there should be a "whites-only" nation, and "white culture" is superior to different cultures.[31]

For our 2020 study, we used this new definition and found that nearly one in ten (9%) adult online multiplayer gamers in the U.S. discussed or heard others discuss the "superiority of whites and inferiority of non-whites" or a "white identity/home for the white race." When applying the same methodology to our 2019 results—that is, disqualifying a similar amount of responses, we would change our finding to say that around the same amount (11%) of adult online multiplayer gamers in the U.S. discussed or heard others discuss topics related to white supremacy in 2019.

While nine percent described a relevant experience in their open responses that we included in our total number, their responses also told of various experiences. Some descriptions by players were what ADL would call explicit white supremacist ideology, but players more often described hateful experiences that do not refer to the explicit beliefs of white supremacists.

EXPLICIT WHITE SUPREMACY

"Person said George Floyd had it coming. They also said whites were superior to blacks cause of our roles in society."

Male, 21-25, Hispanic or Latino and white, Protestant, heterosexual, online multiplayer gamer

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HATEFUL EXPERIENCE

"I was playing Call of Duty, and some other players were insulting me and my friends because we are Hispanic."

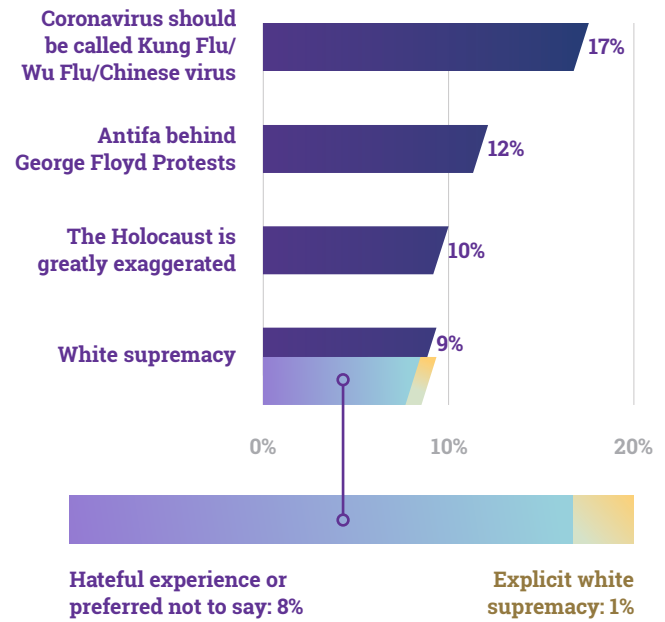*Male, 21-25, Hispanic or Latino, Protestant, heterosexual online multiplayer gamer*

Such experiences may be motivated by a belief in white supremacy or aspects of white supremacist ideology, whose core is antisemitic, anti-Muslim, racist, sexist and homophobic. But without more information, it is hard to be sure. We decided to include such experiences in our total tally, deferring to lend credence to players' reported experiences of white supremacy. Furthermore, our tally included respondents who opted not to share their experiences due to their sensitive nature.

None of the open responses mentioned recruitment or explicit attempts to indoctrinate players. Instead, the responses seem to indicate the continued normalization of white supremacist rhetoric and ideas in online multiplayer games, a trend we continue to see in all digital spaces. That does not mean that recruitment or indoctrination to extremist movements is absent in online multiplayer games, simply that this survey does not presently show evidence of that behavior.

Additionally, our survey asked players about their exposure to malicious disinformation or hate targeting the Asian community and its connection to COVID-19. Seventeen percent of adult online multiplayer gamers in the U.S. heard discussions on "Coronavirus should be called the Kung Flu/Wu Flu/Chinese virus." We also asked about disinformation related to the Black Lives Matter protests; 12 percent of adult online multiplayer gamers in the U.S. heard discussions on "Antifa was behind the George Floyd protest." Finally, we followed up on our question from last year on the prevalence of players' exposure to conversations on Holocaust denial. In 2019, nine percent of players listened to in-game discussions on "The Holocaust is either a myth or greatly exaggerated." In 2020, 10 percent of online multiplayer gamers were exposed to in-game conversations on Holocaust denial.

Figure 8. Exposure to Specific Controversial Topics in Online Games. The survey asked whether players were exposed to specific controversial topics in online games. The results confirm that these topics are being discussed in online game environments.

Source: ADL/Newzoo 2020 Online Game Survey

Coronavirus should be called Kung Flu/Wu Flu/Chinese virus — 17%
Antifa behind George Floyd Protests — 12%
The Holocaust is greatly exaggerated — 10%
White supremacy — 9%

0%   10%   20%

Hateful experience or preferred not to say: 8%

Explicit white supremacy: 1%

75%

of gamers report that their play is shaped by harassment.

40%

of online multiplayer gamers who experience harassment were more careful about who they played with online, an increase from **38 percent** in 2019.

25%

of online multiplayer gamers reported that harassment did not impact their play at all, down from **27 percent** in 2019.

The Impact of Hate and Harassment on Players

Our survey looked at the impact of harassment in online games on players and how their experiences affected their online play and private lives. Forty percent of online multiplayer gamers who experience harassment were more careful about who they played with online, an increase from 38 percent in 2019. Thirty-three percent changed the way they play out of concern for harassment, compared to 27 percent in 2019. Examples we gave regarding how they changed their way of playing included, "not using in-game voice chat" and "changing my username."
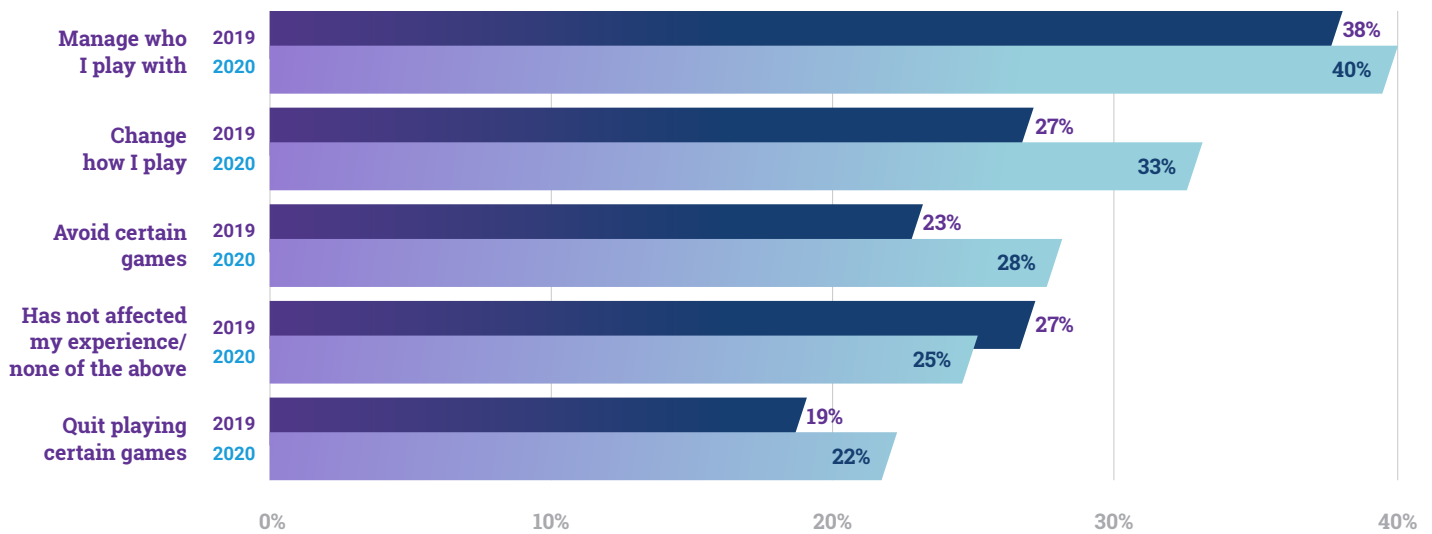
Twenty-eight percent of online multiplayer gamers who experienced harassment avoided certain games due to their reputations for having hostile environments, and 22 percent stopped playing certain games altogether. Only 25 percent of online multiplayer gamers reported that harassment did not impact their play at all, down from 27 percent in 2019. The play of an overwhelming majority of gamers, 75 percent, is shaped by harassment.

The games that most players said have the most hostile environments are *DOTA 2* (40%), followed by *Call of Duty* (39%), *League of Legends* (36%), *Fortnite* (35%), *Grand Theft Auto* (34%), *Valorant* (33%), *World of Warcraft* (32%), *Clash Royale* (30%), *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* (30%) and *Madden NFL* (30%). Players either exercised more caution or stopped playing as a result of harassment.

Of all gamers in the survey, 28 percent stated they have only played offline games in the past six months. Sixty-one percent of offline players who considered disruptive behavior or safety risks as the main reasons they no longer played online multiplayer games said they would be more likely to return if these behaviors were better managed.

The impact of harassment in online games spills over into the real world. There are approximately 92 million gamers 18-45 years old in the U.S. in 2020, and 66 million Americans ages 18-45 who have played online multiplayer games in the past 6 months.

Between 6 and 9 million American adults ages 18-45 (between 7% and 10 %) adjusted how they socialize, considered self-harm or took precautions to ensure their physical safety because of negative experiences. Only 21 percent of players felt that disruptive behavior in online games had no impact on their personal lives. Still, disruptive behavior in online games affects the private lives of nearly 73 million Americans 18-45.

	2019	2020
Manage who I play with	38%	40%
Change how I play	27%	33%
Avoid certain games	23%	28%
Has not affected my experience/ none of the above	27%	25%
Quit playing certain games	19%	22%

The negative experiences in games impact personal relationships and school performance of 6 to 7 million Americans 18-45 (between 6% and 8%). Five percent of players targeted call the police, implying that roughly 5 million Americans 18-45 do so because of harassment in online multiplayer games. Despite the prevalence of harassment, only 8 percent of players made complaints to the game company, showing the industry needs to do much more to inspire players' trust.

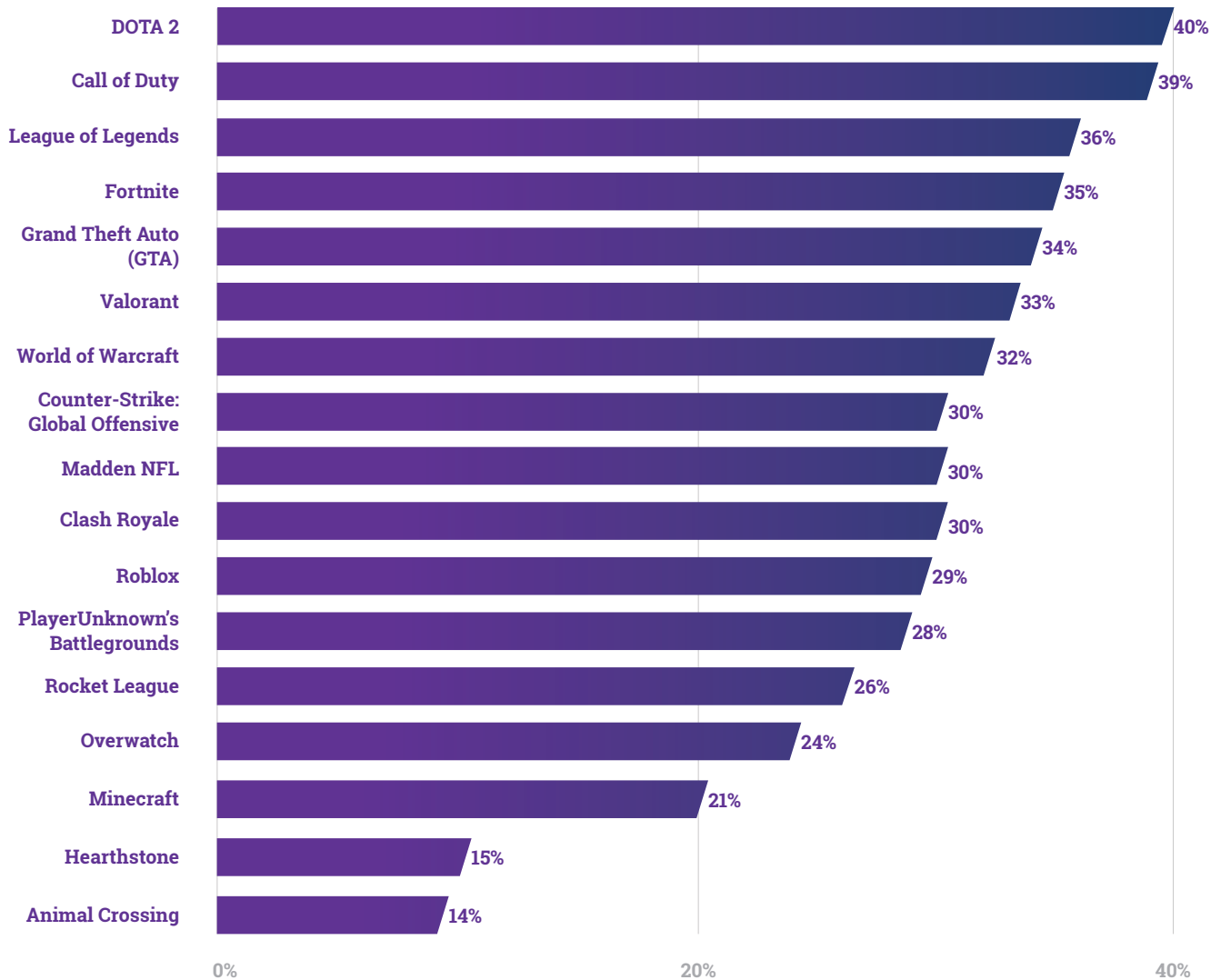## Player Attitudes and Suggestions for the Industry

To suggest how to mitigate hate and harassment in online game spaces, we asked players about reporting other players in online multiplayer games, and which in-game features they feel are most effective in addressing harassment. Less than half of adult online multiplayer gamers in the U.S. (36%) said they reported other players in online multiplayer games. For those who do, about half (52%) said the complaint resulted in meaningful action from the game developer, whereas 24 percent said it did not. Another 24 percent did not know if their report resulted in meaningful action. Among those who did not report

Figure 9. Reactions to Harassment. Survey results reflect the deep and lasting impact of online harassment on targets, especially for players in vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Source: ADL/Newzoo 2020 Online Game Survey

other players in online multiplayer games, but experienced harassment in such games, 25 percent said their reason for not reporting their harassment is that they thought it was not disruptive enough. Nineteen percent said harassment is just part of the gaming experience. Fifteen percent said reporting required too much effort, and 16 percent felt that because they had not seen any meaningful action taken when they previously reported another player, they did not want to waste their time.

The survey asked about online multiplayer gamers' perception of the effectiveness of in-game features in managing harassment, and whether it was clear these features were available when playing. Overall, almost half of players (47%) said they were "sometimes" clear on which features are available to manage harassment, 24 percent stated they knew which features were "often" available,

Game	Percentage
DOTA 2	40%
Call of Duty	39%
League of Legends	36%
Fortnite	35%
Grand Theft Auto (GTA)	34%
Valorant	33%
World of Warcraft	32%
Counter-Strike: Global Offensive	30%
Madden NFL	30%
Clash Royale	30%
Roblox	29%
PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds	28%
Rocket League	26%
Overwatch	24%
Minecraft	21%
Hearthstone	15%
Animal Crossing	14%

and 14 percent said they were "rarely" aware. The features that most online multiplayer gamers perceived as effective in managing harassment were the ability to block certain players from being on their team (60%), to "push to talk" or mute other players on voice or text chat (58%), and playing with those they trust (58%). The features that most online multiplayer gamers saw as ineffective in managing harassment were reminders and prompts to encourage positive behavior (21%), coaching and mentoring systems with other players (17%), and matchmaking with

Figure 10. Games Quit or Approached More Carefully. This survey also looked at which specific games players either quit or became more careful in approaching.

Source: ADL/Newzoo 2020 Online Game Survey

opponents/ teammates based on skill (17%). A quarter to a third of online multiplayer gamers (25%-33%) are neutral on whether these features work to mitigate harassment.
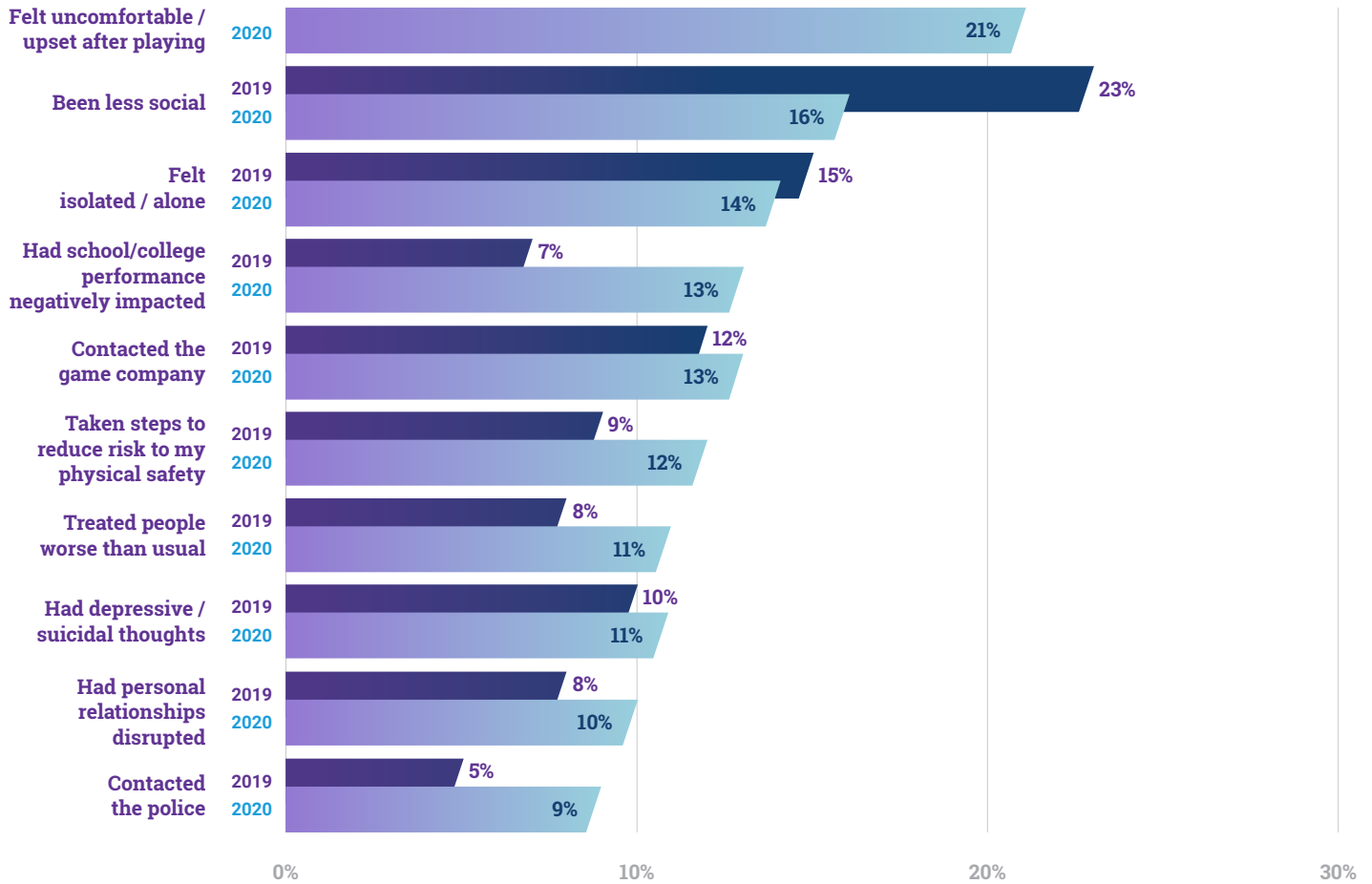
Felt uncomfortable / upset after playing — 2020: 21%

Been less social — 2019: 23%, 2020: 16%

Felt isolated / alone — 2019: 15%, 2020: 14%

Had school/college performance negatively impacted — 2019: 7%, 2020: 13%

Contacted the game company — 2019: 12%, 2020: 13%

Taken steps to reduce risk to my physical safety — 2019: 9%, 2020: 12%

Treated people worse than usual — 2019: 8%, 2020: 11%

Had depressive / suicidal thoughts — 2019: 10%, 2020: 11%

Had personal relationships disrupted — 2019: 8%, 2020: 10%

Contacted the police — 2019: 5%, 2020: 9%

Figure 11. (Above) Impacts of Harassment. The impact of harassment in online games goes beyond the game environments, and can have a significant impact on players' lives.

Source: ADL/Newzoo 2019 Online Game Survey

Figure 12. (Below) Reporting Harassment in Online Multiplayer Games. An important aspect of addressing harassment in online multiplayer games is the ability of players to report in-game harassment to the game company. Our survey asked about player's frequency of reporting and why they did or did not report in-game harassment.

Source: ADL/Newzoo 2020 Online Game Survey

Did not report other players for harassment: 64%

Reported other players for harassment: 36%

Reason for not reporting

Reporting too much effort: 15%

Reporting not effective, a waste of time: 16%

Harassment part of gaming experience: 19%

Harassment not disruptive enough: 25%

Recommendations

For the Games Industry

The games industry, academia and civil society should develop in-game voice chat content moderation. ADL's Center for Technology and Society remains in conversation with major tech companies to push crucial research towards this technology to make online games safer and more inclusive.

Create content moderation tools for in-game voice chat

Abusers often use voice chat in online games, but tools and techniques to detect hate and harassment within games' voice chat lag behind those that evaluate and moderate text communication. The games industry, academia and civil society should develop in-game voice chat content moderation. ADL's Center for Technology and Society remains in conversation with major tech companies to push crucial research towards this technology to make online games safer and more inclusive.

Improve existing in-game reporting systems

We found two reasons players do not report another player after experiencing disruptive behavior are related to the reporting process. Furthermore, 24 percent of online multiplayer gamers do not know if their report had any effect. The games industry can increase players' trust by re-examining the effectiveness of their reporting systems. Companies can provide transparency to players on how their reports are processed and whether a company takes action following a complaint.

Strengthen policy and enforcement of terms of service

Many of the companies that create the games included in this survey have Codes of Conduct or Terms of Use that prohibit hate or harassment, but rarely do they go far enough in describing which communities they protect and which behaviors are forbidden. We recommend companies specify protected categories (including gender, gender identity, race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, ability status) in their Terms of Use and explicitly prohibit doxing and swatting. In developing these Terms of Use, we urge game companies to consult with individuals and organizations representing groups that experience high rates of harassment.

Improve workplace cultures

Game studios must model the kinds of behaviors and communities they want to see on their gaming platforms by creating inclusive and supportive cultures within their own companies. Through revamped human resources policies, regular anti-bias training for all employees, and practices that eliminate "crunch culture," or working long hours to make sure a game is ready by its release, companies can foster healthier cultures.

Establish an industry-wide effort to address white supremacy

We recommend that the games industry support research into the use of online games by white supremacists. The industry must work with experts on white supremacy to find ways to counter their abuse. The research could include reviews of usernames for common extremist terms and sharing information with companies on radicalization efforts.

Increase transparency on harassment and hate on platforms

While many social media companies currently provide limited transparency reports on these issues, no game company does. We recommend game companies produce transparency reports that describe the prevalence of hate, harassment and positive social experiences in online games to give the public and civil society organizations an accurate picture of social interactions in online games.

For Civil Society

Increase focus on how games impact the vulnerable

Civil society organizations have started to pay serious attention to the effects of social media on people's lives. It is equally important to take a serious look at the impact of games on players and society.

Support game scholars and practitioners who have expertise on these issues to increase research

Many game scholars and practitioners in academia have spent decades studying games' potential for social good and harm. We encourage civil society organizations to engage seriously with these researchers and expand knowledge on the impact of games.

Civil society organizations have started to pay serious attention to social media, and should start putting equivalent resources into online game platforms.

For Government

Strengthen laws against perpetrators of online hate

Hate and harassment exists both online and on the ground but our laws have not kept up. Many forms of severe online misconduct are not consistently covered by cybercrime, harassment, stalking and hate crime laws. Legislators have an opportunity to create laws that hold perpetrators of severe online hate and harassment accountable for their offenses, including at the state level. Congress can lead the fight against hate in online games by increasing protections for targets, requiring more transparency and accountability from social media and game companies, and enacting federal doxing and swatting statutes.
.
States should close the gaps that often prevent stalking and harassment laws from capturing online misconduct and also pass anti-doxing and anti-swatting legislation. Improved laws can create better protections for victims and targets without creating constitutional complications.

Legislators have an opportunity to create laws that hold perpetrators of severe online hate and harassment accountable for their offenses, including at the state level.

Urge the games industry to institute robust governance in its online game products

Government officials have an important role in encouraging the games industry to create robust, verifiable industry-wide self-governance mandates. These could take many forms, including Congressional oversight that raises awareness and understanding of hate and harassment in online games.

Improve training for law enforcement

Law enforcement is a crucial responder to online hate, especially when users feel they are in imminent physical danger. Increasing resources and training for these departments is critical to investigate and prosecute cyber cases effectively.

COVID-19 upended the world in mere weeks. Americans now live with great uncertainty, anxiety, and boredom brought on by the pandemic. To cope, they turn to pastimes that give them a measure of comfort or serve as distractions. For millions, their diversion of choice is video games. Since the early 1970s, video games have been an integral part of our culture, and as that culture moves increasingly online, their potential for good---and harm---grows exponentially. The speed of game development often outpaces the ability of the games industry to ensure their platforms are respectful and inclusive spaces for all players. It is our hope that through this report we can provide the public with more information about the environments of these critical social platforms, and in doing so, urge the industry to further action.

Appendix 1

Descriptions of Games

The following games were included in this survey. Below please find more information on each game, including a brief description, their ESRB rating and a rough estimate of the most recent statistics regarding the number of players.

Defense of the Ancients 2 (Dota 2) is a multiplayer online battle area or MOBA, in which two teams of five players compete to destroy a large structure called an "Ancient", which is owned by the opposing team while simultaneously defending their own.

Number of Players: 400k average concurrent in the last 30 days[32]

Rating: None   **Genre: MOBA**

Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO), published by Valve, is a first-person shooter in which a team of "Terrorists" competes against a team of "Counter Terrorists" with the goal to eliminate the other, in addition to completing other objectives.

Number of Players: 600k average concurrent in the last 30 days[33]

Rating: Mature (17+)   **Genre: Shooter**

Overwatch is a team-based, first-person shooter, created by Blizzard, where teams play together in order to control points on a map or play a version of capture the flag.

Number of Players: 30 million monthly active users in Q3 2020 across all Blizzard games[34]

Rating: Teen (13+)   **Genre: Shooter**

PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds (PUBG) is a battle-royale style shooter, the first of its kind that popularized the genre, where players are airdropped onto an island, collect equipment, and battle to become the last person standing on the island.

Number of Players: 160k concurrent in the last 30 days[35]

Rating: Teen (13+) **Genre: Shooter**

World of Warcraft (WOW), is a massively multiplayer online roleplaying game, developed and published by Blizzard, where players create custom characters in a high fantasy setting and go on adventures either on their own or in groups to fight monsters, gain abilities and collect equipment.

Number of Players: 30 million monthly active users in Q3 2020 across all Blizzard games[36]

Rating: Teen (13+) **Genre: RPG**

Fortnite is a battle-royale style shooter, where players are airdropped onto an island and compete to be the last person standing. Fortnite also operates in several other modes, including one focused on building and creativity.

Number of Players: 350 million players total[37]

Rating: Teen (13+) **Genre: Strategy**

League of Legends is a multiplayer online battle arena where players select distinct "champions" with certain abilities and battle in teams in order to destroy the opposing team's "Nexus", although other game modes exist.

Number of Players: 115 million players total[38]

Rating: Teen (13+) **Genre: MOBA**

Rocket League is a vehicular soccer game, where players select a car or other vehicle and compete to hit a ball into the opposing team's goal.

Number of Players: 70k average concurrent in the last 30 days[39]

Rating: Teen (13+)	Genre: Card game

Grand Theft Auto (GTA) an open-world online action game where players can engage in a variety of modes of play in a contemporary urban crime setting, including heists, races and death matches.

Number of Players: 77k average concurrent in the last 30 days[40]

Rating: Everyone	Genre: Racing/Sports

Madden NFL is a sports simulator game, allowing players to play as various professional football teams and players.

Rating: Mature (17+)	Genre: Action

Hearthstone is an online card game based on characters and lore from the *Warcraft* franchise, where players each have a deck of cards representing unique abilities of their hero and compete to destroy the other player's hero.

Number of Players: 30 million monthly active users in Q3 2020 across all Blizzard games[41]

Rating: Everyone	Genre: Sports

Minecraft, published by Xbox game studios, is a 3-D sandbox game that allows players to build structures using various kinds of blocks, and play in a variety of modes that can include resource gathering, crafting, combat and exploration.

Number of Players: 126 million monthly active users[42]

Rating: Everyone (10+)

Genre: Puzzle/Adventure

Valorant, developed by Riot Games, is a team-based tactical first-person shooter set in the near-future, where players play as one of a set of agents with a variety of ability and a goal to either attack ("plant The Spike") or defend ("Defuse the spike").

Number of Players: 3 million daily in closed beta (April-May 2020), no numbers since June 2020 launch

Rating: Teen (13+)

Genre: Shooter

Animal Crossing: New Horizons is the latest game in the long running Animal Crossing series, developed by Nintendo. This latest game focuses on a colorful cartoonish simulation of life on a deserted tropical island.

Number of Players: 11 million copies of the game purchased after first month of sales (March 2020)[43]

Rating: Everyone

Genre: Social Simulation

CALL OF DUTY

The *Call of Duty* series, developed by Infinity Ward, is a series of first person shooter games that are set in various contemporary and historical settings. The most recent entry in the franchise, Call of Duty: Warzone- a free-to-play multiplayer version of the most recent entry in the franchise Call of Duty: Modern Warfare- was released in March 2020 and is set in a contemporary setting.

Number of Players:
75 million in Warzone as of July 2020[44]

Rating: Mature   **Genre: Shooter**

CLASH ROYALE

Clash Royale, developed by Supercell, is a team game where players must destroy the greatest number of enemy towers in order to win. Buildings, troops and spells a represented as cards, making the game a combination of a digital card game and a tower defense style game.

Number of Players:
9 million monthly active users on mobile (Newzoo consumer insights)

Rating: Everyone   **Genre: Strategy**

ROBLOX

Roblox is an online game platform and game creation system developed by Roblox Corporation that allows players to program games and play games created by other players. It's targeted at young people, ages 7 to 14 primarily.

Number of Players:
150 million monthly active users[45]

Rating: Everyone (10+)   **Genre: Online game creation system**

Appendix 2

Disruptive Behavior Descriptions

In this survey, we asked about players' experiences of the following "disruptive behaviors" which we refer to as harassment in the report. We included six of these behaviors as examples of severe harassment. Those behaviors are listed and briefly described below.

Harassment

1. Trolling/griefing: a deliberate attempt to upset or provoke
2. Personally embarrassing another player
3. Calling a player offensive names

Severe Harassment

4. Threatening a player with physical violence
5. Harassing a player for a sustained period of time
6. Stalking a player (online monitoring/information gathering used to threaten or harass)
7. Sexually harassing a player
8. Discriminating against a player by a stranger on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.
9. Doxing (from "dropping documents"): the internet-based practice of researching and broadcasting private or identifying information (especially personally identifying information) about an individual, group or organization. In the gaming context, doxing commonly manifests as personal information and is posted in chat and streaming comments.
10. Swatting: The act of falsely reporting an emergency to someone's home with the goal of having a police unit (usually a SWAT team) deployed to their residence. This can result in injury to the target or other witnesses and has even caused a fatality.

Appendix 3

Newzoo Detailed Sample & Methodology Sheet

Recruitment

Sampling: Respondents (n=814) were recruited to be representative of gamers aged 18-45 in the U.S. online population. Respondents were selected according to age, gender, income, education, and region. The age range of 18-45 was defined in order to offer a concentrated sample within the age range with the largest concentration of gamers. People below the age of 18 were excluded from the sample due to the sensitive nature of some of the topics addressed.

Over-sampling (n=195): Respondents identifying as LGBTQ, Jewish, Muslim, Black and Hispanic/ Latinx were deliberately oversampled to ensure the base group was large enough to accurately look within and compare these groups. The final total sample was then weighted to the US gamer population aged 18-45, so the oversampled respondents from minority groups were not over-represented in the final dataset.

Study Specifications

Target population: U.S. gamer population aged 18-45.

Sample size: 1,009 "invitation-only" respondents in the U.S..

Key interest groups: Black (n=154), Hispanic / Latinx (n=134), Asian / South Asian American (n=142), Jewish (n=100), Muslim (n=71), LGBTQ+ (n=146) and ability status (n=332).

Recruitment method: Computer assisted web interviewing.

Accuracy: Estimated margin of error of +/- 2%-3%, with 95% confidence interval when using the full sample.

Dates for fieldwork: July 1st – 16th 2020.

Fieldwork framework: The survey was conducted by Newzoo in cooperation with Dynata. Dynata is a global leader in first-party data. The sample was recruited through Newzoo's Global Gaming & Esports Panel powered by Dynata. With 50M+ members from 45 markets including the U.S., the largest panel of game enthusiast in the world. Panelists are pre-profiled on their game and behavior and interest, enabling Newzoo to directly interview the relevant target groups. In the case of ADL's study being gamers.

Data Quality

Detailed overview of the weighting process

Step 1: Establish a Nationally Representative Sample
We recruited 814 respondents to be representative the U.S. gamer population aged 18-45 on a national level (according to age, gender, income, education, and region). The sample was then validated by comparing it to census data, ITU numbers (internet penetration), and Newzoo's Consumer Insights Data on gaming behavior in the U.S.. This data, along with the census data available, gave us insight into the demographic distribution of what the minority group variables
(ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and ability status) should look like in the final dataset.

Step 2: Over sample on key interest groups
We then oversampled on key interest groups, including Jewish, Muslim, LGBTQ, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latinx, to ensure we had enough respondents belonging to these minority groups to be able to examine responses within these groups during analysis.

Step 3: Weight data to account for oversampling
The final dataset (including the over-sampled population, n=1,009) was then weighed, so that the demographic distribution of our final dataset matched the demographic distribution of our initial gamer sample. This involved re-applying weights based on four variables - age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and ability stats using a rake algorithm* to give each respondent a weight. Newzoo combined data from the UN Census, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Newzoo's Consumer Insights Data Base, U.S. Census Bureau, the Pew Research Center, and CDC.

Step 4: Clean and validate weights
It's important when weighing data to not give one respondent a weight that is too high (as this would result in the data relying too much on a single individual's response) or too low (which would result in the data basically ignoring that individual's response). Therefore, weights were trimmed to a min=0.3 and a max=3 (industry standard).

Finally, key gaming behavior metrics were then compared again with secondary data sources, to ensure that the weighted sample was still representative of the U.S. gamer population aged 18-45, and that the gaming behavior observed was consistent with Newzoo's Consumer Insights Research.

* Rake or raking (sometimes called iterative proportional fitting) is the most prevalent method for weighting survey data.

A useful overview of research weights: https://www.nyu.edu/classes/jackson/design.of.social.research/Readings/Johnson%20-%20Introduction%20to%20survey%20weights%20%28PRI%20version%29.pdf.

A good academic article comparing different ways to weigh data: http://www.sverigeisiffror.scb.se/contentassets/ca21efb41fee47d293bbee5bf7be7fb3/weighting-methods.pdf.

Data cleaning

Data is cleaned according to the following factors. Approximately 5% of total responses were removed from the sample.

Time: Respondents who complete the survey too fast or too slow get filtered out (separate brackets were used for online multiplayer and non-multiplayer gamers). Times are based on standard deviation (distance from the average time).

Repetitive / flatlining responses (Grid validation): When respondents answer questions without reading. This is usually expressed by consistently answering the same options as presented in the survey.

Inconsistent and incoherent answers: Often expressed by providing responses that strongly mismatch with earlier answering, or by answering clearly answering open text responses in a nonsensical way.

Final checks

Before publication of any extrapolated data, Newzoo also performed several quality checks:

Validation questions: The survey included several questions comparable to topics that can be found in Newzoo's own Consumer Insights Research e.g., gaming behavior and games / franchises played.

Appendix 4

Games Industry Statements Re: George Floyd Protests + Black Lives Matter

Twitter Handle	Games Company	Statement	Time	Date
EAsports	EA Sports	https://twitter.com/EASPORTS/status/1269046819214036992?s=20	7:21 PM	6/5/20
epicgames	Epic Games	https://twitter.com/EpicGames/status/1268936062803599367?s=20	12:01 PM	6/5/20
rockstargames	Rockstar Games	https://twitter.com/RockstarGames/status/1268573285496823808?s=20	12:00 PM	6/4/20
sega	Sega	https://twitter.com/SEGA/status/1268545931370258433?s=20	10:11 AM	6/4/20
wbgames	WB Games	https://twitter.com/wbgames/status/1268667384795066369?s=20	6:14 PM	6/4/20
	Take Two	https://www.linkedin.com/posts/take-2-interactive-software-inc-_activity-6674342139989696512-nuh6/	12:00 PM	6/4/20
infinityward	Infinity Ward	https://twitter.com/infinityward/status/1268297976901849089?s=21	5:46 PM	6/3/20
nintendoamerica	Nintendo of America	https://twitter.com/nintendoamerica/status/1268203291470528512?s=21	11:30 AM	6/3/20
2k	2k	https://twitter.com/2K/status/1268336446269583360?s=20	8:19 PM	6/3/20
capcomusa_	Capcom	https://twitter.com/capcomusa_/status/1268180735799812096?s=21	10:00 AM	6/3/20
	Rovio	Retweeted BLM and NAACP	7:59 AM	6/3/20
	Stadia	https://twitter.com/Googleorg/status/1268214571124260867?s=20	12:14 PM	6/3/20

Twitter Handle	Games Company	Statement	Time	Date
bandainamco	Bandai Namco	https://twitter.com/BandaiNamcoUS/status/1268195820005777408?s=20	11:00 AM	6/3/20
ncsoft_west	NCSoft West	https://twitter.com/NCSOFT_West/status/1268335205204414465?s=20	8:14 PM	6/3/20
nianticlabs	Niantic Labs	https://twitter.com/nianticlabs/status/1268196386454949888?s=21	11:02 AM	6/3/20
	Electronic Arts	https://www.ea.com/news/ea-actions-against-racial-injustice	9:07 PM	6/2/20
squareenix	Square Enix	https://twitter.com/SquareEnix/status/1267927872066314240/photo/1	4:15 PM	6/2/20
EA	Bioware	https://twitter.com/EA/status/1267986185642639360?s=20	9:07 PM	6/2/20
Roblox	Roblox	https://blog.roblox.com/2020/06/message-roblox-community/	10:31 PM	6/2/20
ubisoft	Ubisoft	https://twitter.com/Ubisoft/status/1267785187880062976?s=20	7:48 AM	6/2/20
splashdamage	Splash Damage	https://twitter.com/splashdamage/status/1267768875774545920?s=20	6:43 AM	6/2/20
zynga	zynga	https://twitter.com/zynga/status/1267481829629505538?s=20	11:43 AM	6/1/20
xbox	Xbox	https://twitter.com/Xbox/status/1267500800688836608?s=20	12:58 PM	6/1/20
playstation	Playstation	https://twitter.com/PlayStation/status/1267468949865639936?s=20	10:52 AM	6/1/20
insomniacgames	Insomniac	https://twitter.com/insomniacgames/status/1267512716094291970?s=20	1:45 PM	6/1/20
bungie	Bungie	https://twitter.com/Bungie/status/1267574135850299392?s=20	5:31 PM	6/1/20

Twitter Handle	Games Company	Statement	Time	Date
riotgames	Riot	https://twitter.com/riotgames/status/1267143804890513408?s=20	1:20 PM	5/31/20
naughty_dog	Naughty Dog	https://twitter.com/Naughty_Dog/status/1267274658610438144?s=20	9:59 PM	5/31/20
bethesda	Bethesda Studios	https://twitter.com/bethesda/status/1267244709451358211?s=20	8:00 PM	5/31/20
atvi_ab	Activision/Blizzard	https://twitter.com/ATVI_AB/status/1267300339104968709?s=20	11:42 PM	5/31/20
nexon_america	Nexon America	https://twitter.com/Nexon_America/status/1267294371755540483?s=20	11:18 PM	5/31/20

Endnotes

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The ADL Center for Technology & Society

Take Action

Partner with ADL to fight hate in your community and beyond.

- Sign up at adl.org for our email newsletters to stay informed about events in our world and ADL's response.

- Report hate crimes and bias-related incidents in your area to your regional ADL office.

- Engage in respectful dialogue to build understanding among people with different views.

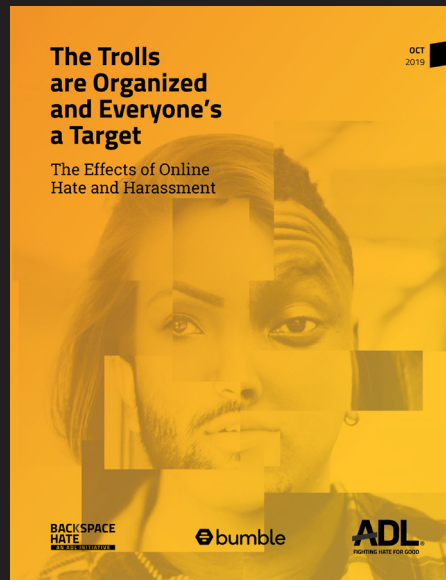- Get involved with ADL in your region.

Featured Resources from the ADL Center for Technology and Society

Free to Play?

Hate, Harassment and Positive Social Experiences in Online Games

www.adl.org/free-to-play

The Trolls are Organized and Everyone's a Target

The Effects of Online Hate and Harassment

www.adl.org/trollsharassment

Online Hate and Harassment

The American Experience 2020

www.adl.org/online-hate-2020