

CONNECTED_{BY} GAMES



DAA22
DIGITAL AUSTRALIA 2022

> ABOUT

INTERACTIVE GAMES & ENTERTAINMENT ASSOCIATION (IGEA)

National Innovation Centre
Australian Technology Park
4 Cornwallis Street,
Eveleigh, NSW 2015

www.igea.net

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AUTHORS

Professor Jeffrey E Brand
Dr Jan Jervis

Faculty of Society and Design
Bond University
Gold Coast, QLD, 4229
jbrand@bond.edu.au

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Raelene Knowles
IGEA info@igea.net

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Mike C. Morphett
M:29creative M29creative.com.au
Jan Jervis jjervis@bond.edu.au

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> INTRODUCTION

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 population with connection through shared communications and media experiences, even if we are physically segregated to limit the spread of disease. For Australia, the lucky country, almost everyone has access to most 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 Australia 2022 (DA22) 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 1,200 households with generous Australian 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 17 years and eight earlier studies, they take on a different meaning in the pandemic.

Importantly, the numbers don't uncover the individual, lived experience of Australians 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.

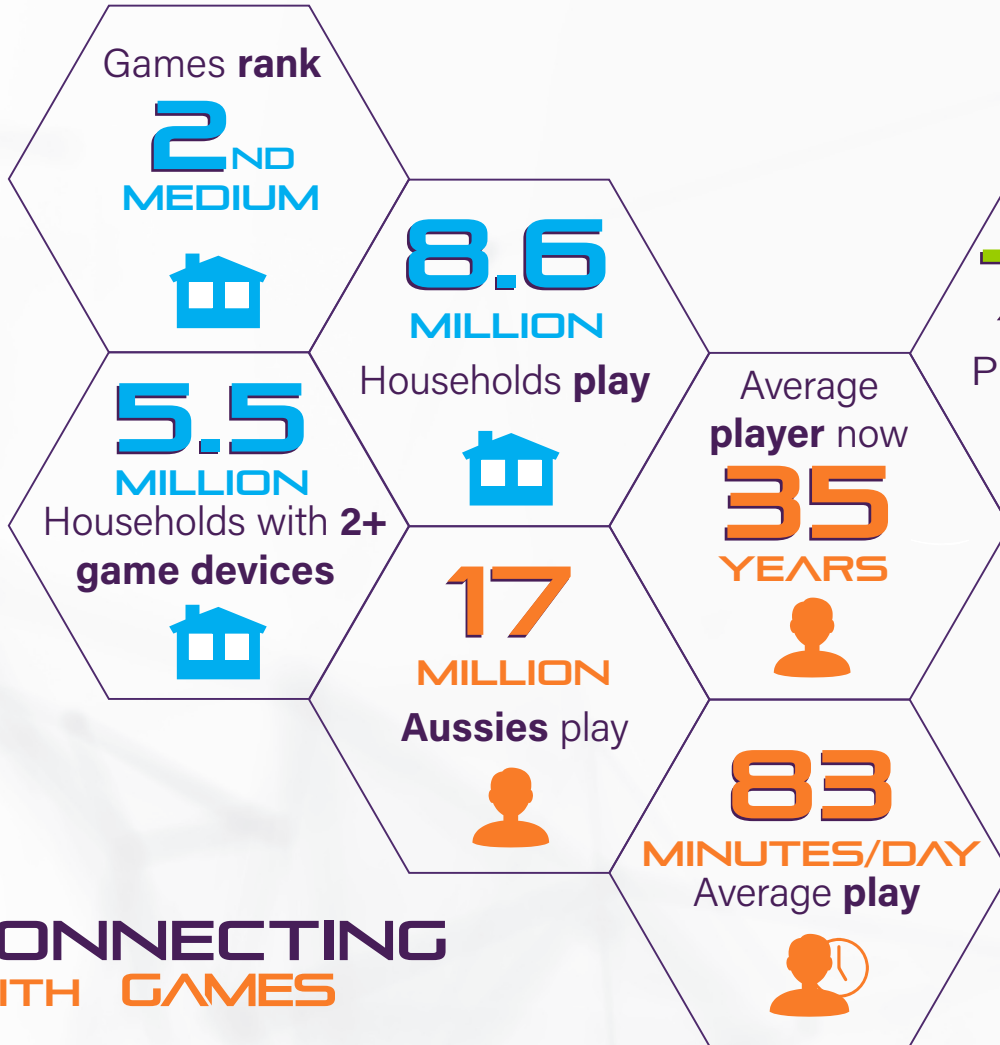
What we learned through this process is that Australians have been connected by games, that they have connected to games, with games, through the pandemic, in their families, for personal benefit, to connect to player culture, and connect the growing value of our digital economy.

Video games in a pandemic are an important social connector and form of respite.

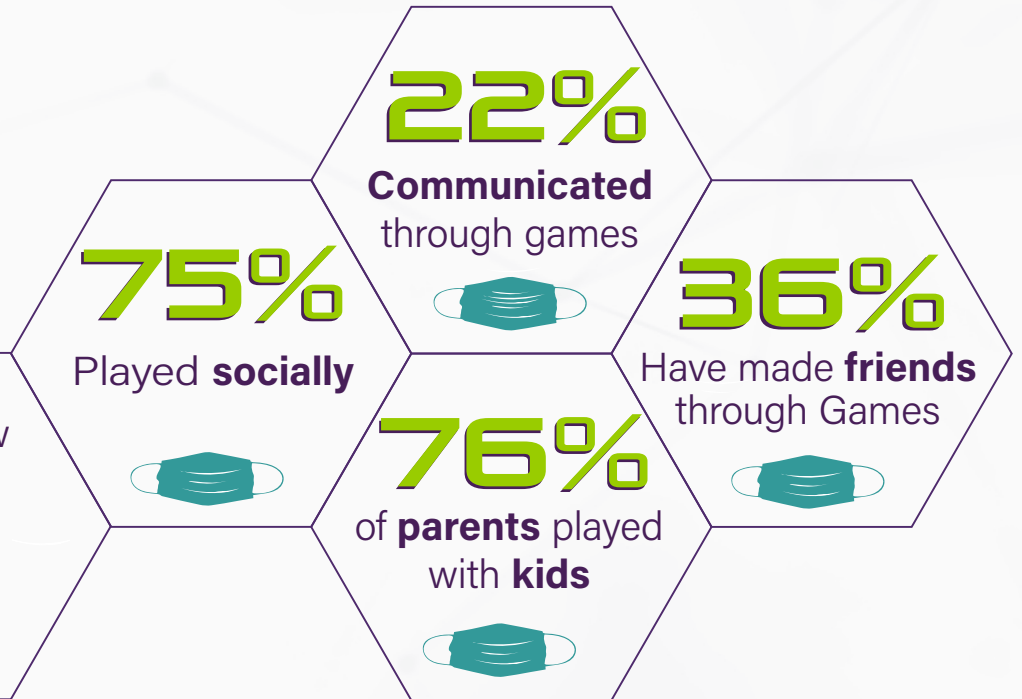
We hope, in particular, you enjoy reading people's stories of being *Connected by Games*.

> KEY FINDINGS

> CONNECTING TO GAMES



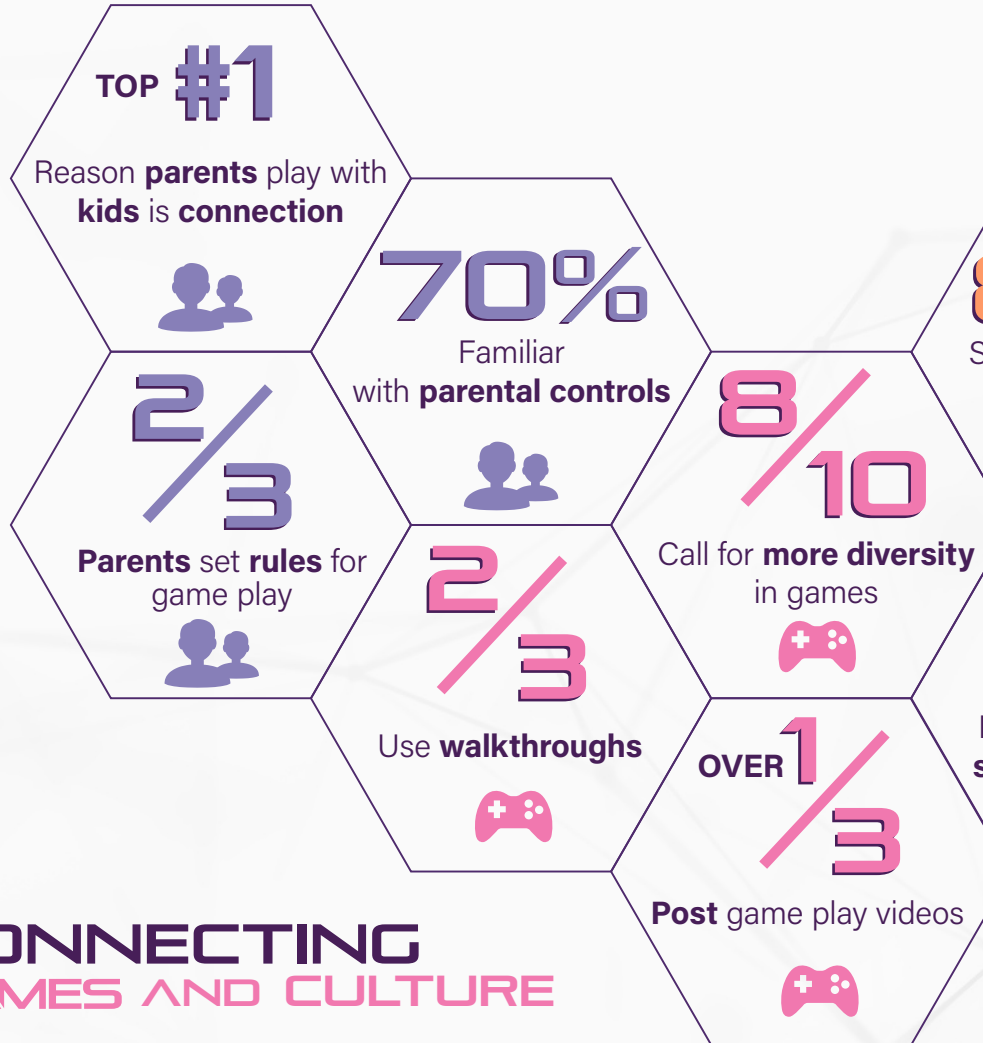
> CONNECTING THROUGH GAMES



> CONNECTING WITH GAMES

> KEY FINDINGS

> CONNECTING GAMES WITH FAMILIES



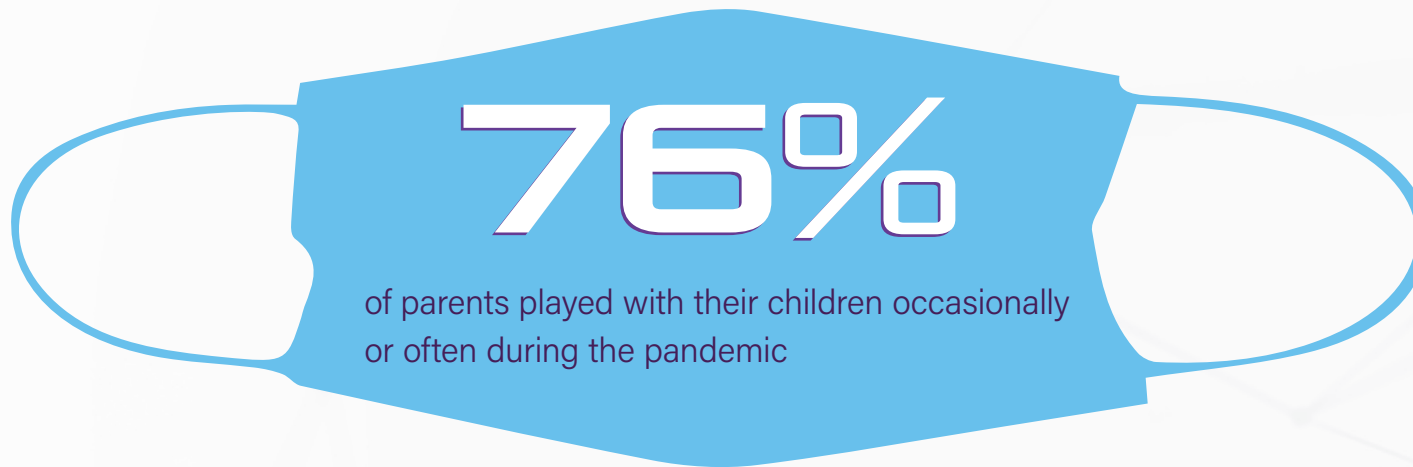
> CONNECTING GAMES AND PERSONAL GROWTH



> CONNECTING GAMES AND CULTURE

> CONNECTING GAMES AND ECONOMY

> PANDEMIC IMPACT ON GAME PLAY



"I played a lot of online multiplayer games with my friends during lockdown and over the course of 2020 in order to stay in touch with them when it wasn't possible otherwise and to relieve stress."

Female. Age 17 years. Household of 3. Melbourne.

70%

• Lived in a locked down area

31%

• Used games to help children

42%

• Were required to isolate (early 2020)

25%

• Used games for virtual travel

36%

• Will play more than before after the pandemic

22%

• Communicated through games

> PANDEMIC IMPACT ON GAME PLAY

“Being stuck at home, doing the same things every day has been challenging.

Stepping up and taking on the role of teacher to add to my already comprehensive list (physiotherapist, speech therapist, behavioural therapist etc.) was a bit of a tipping point with physical health limiting my abilities and the above exacerbating my mental health to boot.

Being able to escape into Animal Crossing and exploring, collecting fruits and being comforted by fuzzy creatures who seemed to care if I was in their world, or not, is a soul-soothing exercise and has calmed me.

It’s certainly better than eating all the food in the house to squash my feelings.

As a parent of special needs kids, who was forced to do all sorts of therapies in lockdown and only able to correspond with therapists via Zoom, I’ve noticed the benefit of gaming in said therapies.”

Female, Age 32 years. Parent. Household of 4. Regional NSW.



> METHODS

Digital Australia 2022 (DA22) is an empirical study about digital games in Australian 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.

> METHODS

Data reported here come from 1,204 Australian households and 3,152 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 (1,204 households) and of those, the adults who themselves play video games (867), they and one other person in the home whose game habits they know (1,545 people), then all people in those households (3,152 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 $\pm 2.7\%$ for the national sample comparing households and all household members, $\pm 3.3\%$ for adult players, $\pm 2.5\%$ for key players, and $\pm 2.3\%$ for all players

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