

**How Public Library Staff Engage with Video Games and
Video Game Services**

by

Lisette Templeton

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Victoria University of Wellington
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Abstract

Research problem – The average age of video game players is above 30 in many parts of the world, but the literature surrounding video games in public libraries often focuses on engaging children and teenagers. This suggests that there may be an underserved population of video game players in public libraries.

In addition to this, successful video game ventures require organisers familiar with and knowledgeable about video games. It is unknown whether public library staff in general possess these qualities, or if they are engaged with video game services.

This report aimed to investigate how public library staff in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) engage with video games and video game services.

Methodology – Invitations to participate in an online questionnaire were sent to 20 public library systems and the NZ-Libs email list. Five organisations agreed to distribute the questionnaire to their staff. A sample size of 183 respondents was achieved. Questions were asked about video game experiences, perceptions, and library services.

Results – NZ public library staff appear to engage with video games in a similar way to the general NZ population. In addition, there appears to be an overall positive perception of their place in public libraries (87% of respondents supported video games in public libraries).

Video game players appear to think more positively about video games and be more aware of their impact on individuals compared to non-players. They also appear to be more confident in delivering related services and more likely to be running related events.

Video game services in NZ public libraries seem to largely target younger age groups, mirroring the perceived main target audience for video games indicated by respondents. This revealed a potentially underserved population (video game players aged 46 – 84) for NZ public libraries that offer video game services.

Implications – It appears that encouraging engagement with video games may improve staff confidence in delivering video game services, although further research is required to confirm this.

In addition, there is a potentially underserved population of video game players aged 46 – 84, who account for nearly half of the 46 – 84 year old population. Evaluation of this potentially underserved population is an interesting topic for future research.

Keywords - Video games, Public libraries, Staff engagement

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1. Introduction/Problem Statement

Video games are a powerful medium for play, connection, and education. The prevailing opinion in literature is that video games have a place in libraries (for example, see Adams, 2009; Buchanan & Elzen, 2012; Neiburger, 2007), and many benefits to playing them have been found. Along with recreational and social aspects, video games can teach practical skills that can be applied in the real world, increase knowledge, and develop problem solving and information literacy skills (Gumulak & Webber, 2011). However, barriers have been found to fully embracing video games in libraries, including negative stereotypes, a lack of resources, knowledge and skills, and disruption to other services (McNicol, 2011). The average age of video game players is reported as above 30 in many parts of the world (see Table 1). However, despite some acknowledgement that video games are for everyone, much of the literature surrounding video games in public libraries focuses on the use of video games to engage with children and teenagers. This implies that in the literature, and likely in public libraries, children and teenagers are incorrectly identified as the primary audience for video games, rather than all ages. This apparent discrepancy between perceived and true primary audience for video game services in public libraries may indicate that there is a population of video game players being underserved by current services.

Table 1: Average age of video game players.

Location	Average Age	Source
United States of America (USA)	33	(Entertainment Software association [ESA], 2019)
United Kingdom (UK)	43	(Borowiecki & Bakhshi, 2018)
New Zealand (NZ)	34	(Brand, et al., 2019)
European Union (EU)	31	(Interactive Software Federation of Europe [ISFE], 2020)

One of the key factors in successful video game ventures is that they require organisers familiar with and knowledgeable about video games (Kirriemuir, 2012). However, it is not known whether public library staff in general possess these qualities, or whether they are engaged with video game services. The most recent study examining the state of video games in libraries is a survey of UK libraries conducted over ten years ago (McNicol, 2011). This study found that the negative attitudes of some library staff were a major barrier to

developing gaming in libraries, with the proposed solution being an increase in understanding of the value of gaming and how it can help fulfil library goals (McNicol, 2011). With the evolution of technology, and the explosion in popularity of video games such as Minecraft, Pokémon Go, Overwatch, and Fortnite in the last ten years, there is a need for up-to-date knowledge on the perceptions and engagement of public library staff regarding video games to determine if staff require further education on the value of gaming, and to inform the development of video game services. This is because without staff engagement, any library service will likely not reach its full potential.

1.1 Definition(s)

Video game – Any electronic game played on a device with a screen (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), including but not limited to computers, consoles, and mobile devices.

2. Literature Review

This literature review will cover two topics: (a) who plays video games and (b) video games in public libraries. The second topic will include looking at the value of video games, what services are offered, the age of target audiences, and the challenges of providing these services.

2.1 Who plays video games?

Playing games is an activity that crosses all demographic and socioeconomic lines, and video games are no exception to this. The popularity of video games has skyrocketed in an increasingly digital world. 75% of Americans have at least one person who plays video games in their household (ESA, 2019), and 2 out of 3 people in NZ play video games (Brand et al., 2019). The main reasons that people play video games are to have fun, to pass the time, to relax, to keep the mind active, and to be challenged (Brand et al., 2019).

Despite the long-standing stereotype that video games are primarily for teenage boys, the average age of video game players appears to have been above 30 for several years and to be slowly but steadily increasing (Brand et al., 2019). The average age of video game players in different parts of the world are presented in Table 1. Additionally, there is no significant difference between the percentage of males and females who play video games (Brand et al., 2019; ESA, 2019; ISFE, 2020).

2.2 Video games in public libraries

2.2.1 The value of video games

The idea of games in libraries is not new. Gaming, a category including traditional, board, and video games, has been part of library services since the 19th century (Nicholson, 2013). Libraries also typically hold recreational DVDs and music CDs as popular forms of media. As video games are a part of the larger media and leisure ecology in homes, it follows that libraries should also support video games where they are found to match strategic missions and goals. Adams (2009) found that the main purposes of libraries appear to be educational, social, and democratizing, and argues that video games can support all three of these.

Educational

Public libraries are institutions that support lifelong learning (Anthony, 2014). One way they do this is by supporting literacies. By nature, video games have the potential to increase digital literacy as they require interaction with digital platforms. They can also help develop traditional, audio, video, media, and information literacy due to their many different characteristics (Levine, 2006). Video games often require interpretation of traditional text-based messages and visual images, searching for and evaluating large amounts of information, and include aspects of creation (Adams, 2009). This creation can involve participatory storytelling, where a player is able to take action and discover consequences in a relatively risk-free environment (Adams, 2009). Individuals can also create and experiment with identities in the virtual world (Adams, 2009; Levine, 2006).

Alongside developing literacies, video games have been shown to have a host of other educational benefits. They can increase general knowledge and promote skills like teamwork, leadership, problem solving (Gumulak & Webber, 2011; Levine, 2006), pattern recognition, spatial reasoning (Neiburger & Gullett, 2007), critical thinking (Levine, 2008), and perseverance (Winner, 2015). Video games offer cognitive workouts unmatched by any other medium (Levine, 2006), and there are several fitness games that promote physical activity or are centred around health education (Danforth, 2011). One of the most popular games to use in public libraries has been Minecraft, due to its promotion of STEM based learning and programming (Hunter, 2014).

Video games and related material have the potential to be used in career education and scholarly pursuits. For example, many universities offer courses on game design and development (Levine, 2008), and professional gaming is now a legitimate career where one is paid money to perform competitively or entertain (Nicholson, 2013). Other career paths, such as those in the military and doctors' surgeries, can make use of "serious" video games, which aim to teach real-life work skills through simulation (Nicholson, 2013).

In libraries, games can be used to attract users in an attempt to introduce them to other services (Nicholson, 2009a, 2013). There is some evidence supporting claims that users who attend gaming programmes will return to interact with other, non-gaming resources in the library such as books (Levine, 2008; McNicol, 2011; Nicholson, 2009b), but further research needs to be done on the extent of this. Arguably, increasing the use of other library services is advantageous, but video games should be recognised as a valuable service on their own.

Social

For at least the last decade, the focus of public libraries has been changing from passive transactions to active relationships and communication (Berndtson, 2012). This has meant breaking away from the traditionally quiet stereotype and transforming into social community spaces (Lindsey et al., 2018). Video games have a hugely social aspect. This is perhaps more obvious in co-operative, team-based games, and MMORPGs (massively multiplayer online role-playing games) where the player is playing alongside others, but single player games can be social too, as people gather to watch each other play and converse. Games can encourage use of the library as a third place and bring together people who would otherwise have little opportunity to meet (McNicol, 2011). For youth in particular, the library is a safe, noncommercialized space in which they can meet new people and learn social skills (Levine, 2009).

From an organisational standpoint, perhaps more important than how people use the library is how they feel about the library (Levine, 2009). Multiple sources report that games can reach new users and influence perceptions of the library positively, leading to greater engagement with it (Levine, 2009; McNicol, 2011; Nicholson, 2009a, 2009b). Library staff who are knowledgeable or enthusiastic about video games can build community connections with users based around shared interests (Levine, 2009).

Democratizing

Access is one of the most celebrated services of libraries and it aims to remove barriers for those who may not be able to afford certain resources. One aspect of this is providing access to the internet and teaching people how to navigate it safely and effectively. Many video games contain online components that require these skills. They can also be used to introduce people to unfamiliar technology and lessen the digital divide, as it is less frightening to play with video games than to learn to use a computer (Levine, 2008).

Price has been found to be a large influence in the decision to purchase video games (ESA, 2019). Alongside software, devices can be expensive too, resulting in less affluent people unable to have ready access to them. This can result in disadvantages due to not being familiar with certain technologies, and given how prevalent video games have become, individuals without access to them are also missing out on a part of their culture (Farmer, 2010). Libraries can minimise or eliminate these disadvantages by providing access to devices and games, either for use in-library or at home (Adams, 2009; McNicol, 2011). One study found that the greatest draw for gaming events appeared to be in low-income areas, where access to technology is an important factor (Levine, 2008).

2.2.2 Video game services

Support for video games

Nicholson (2009a, 2009b) and McNicol (2011) have conducted studies on gaming in US and UK libraries respectively, which are the most recent studies of their type to be found. Both discovered that while most public libraries do not address gaming in their policy documents, the majority support some form of gaming. However, both studies also found that some libraries have restrictions on gaming such as time, bandwidth, and only allowing gaming on certain computers or if other users do not require them. Larger libraries are more likely to support gaming (Nicholson, 2009a).

Libraries often hold items which are related to video games. Examples given by Buchanan & Elzen (2012) and Kirriemuir (2006) include game guides, magazines, and fiction, comics and films that have inspired or been inspired by video games.

Circulation

The most obvious video game service a library can provide is to collect and circulate games to users. A survey looking at the prevalence of video game collections in American public libraries found that less than approximately 40% of public libraries keep console games as part of their collection, and that they are more likely to be found in libraries serving larger populations (Schneider, 2014). While libraries may provide equipment for use in the library with their video game collection, it is uncommon for equipment to be circulated for outside-library use (Boss, 2014).

Nicholson (2009b) and McNicol (2011) provide more circulation-related data, summarised in Table 2. Public libraries were the main respondents to both surveys, followed by school libraries. All respondents self-selected to answer, resulting in data that may not be representative. It is worth noting that most libraries have limited resources to borrow – even console games, the most popular resource in the UK, were only available in a third of libraries surveyed (McNicol, 2011).

Table 2: Libraries circulating gaming resources.

Type of resource	Percentage of libraries with resource for loan	
	US (Nicholson, 2009b)	UK (McNicol, 2011)
General gaming resources	41%	59%
Computer games	25%	21%
Console games	19%	33%
Handheld games	5%	12%

Nicholson (2009a) hypothesised that console games would become more popular as a media format over time due to the increasing sophistication of technology. The difference in number of libraries circulating console games between the US and UK may reflect this. Since these surveys were conducted (they are both over ten years old), current circulation of video games in libraries will have changed due to various factors. For example, the ability of libraries to share or lend video game resources may have been impacted by the gaming

industry moving towards download-only games (Lindsey et al., 2018). This trend of digital access is not restricted to video games. In a changing information environment, physical collections of libraries are getting smaller and digital resources are growing (Lindsey et al., 2018). Nicholson (2009a, 2016) suggests that services such as Overdrive allow libraries to circulate digital games as well as eBooks, and Robson & Durkee (2012) state that libraries can use online games and subscription services to avoid hardware obsolescence. However, current literature does not indicate whether libraries are offering digital video game services or not.

Programmes and Events

Various programmes and events relating to video games can be offered in libraries. The most discussed in the literature are tournaments and free play, but social groups akin to book chats are also mentioned. There are also examples of education-focused events, such as presentations from people who have made careers out of gaming (Levine, 2008). The primary goals for gaming programmes in libraries are to encourage social interactions within the community and attract new, underserved, and existing library users (Nicholson, 2009a). While gaming can be seen to work best as a programme rather than an always-available service, some libraries do have dedicated gaming spaces (Nicholson, 2009a).

According to a phone survey of randomly selected public libraries in the US undertaken by Nicholson (2009a), 43% hosted gaming programmes - 13% of these used console games and 4% used computer games. Nicholson's later, web-based survey of US libraries asked only for responses from libraries that ran gaming programmes (Nicholson, 2009a). Of these, and when looking at only the public libraries, approximately 63% used console games and 17% used computer games. These figures changed to 64% and 13% when the survey was redone the next year (Nicholson, 2009b). Nicholson (2009a) suggests that the discrepancy in findings between the phone and web-based surveys may be due to libraries who use more traditional games being less likely to respond to a call about gaming programmes. In the UK, 61% of libraries reported gaming programmes and 15% of these used console games (McNicol, 2011). Responses indicated that some library-based gaming events are run by volunteers, third-party organisations, or the game players themselves rather than library staff (McNicol, 2011). Similar to the previous section on circulation, it is important to note

that much of this data has self-selection bias and may not reflect the current state of gaming in libraries due to age.

2.2.3 Age of target audiences

Despite the evidence that the average video game player is an adult, much of the literature concerning video games in public libraries specifically remarks on engaging children and teenagers, especially boys. In the UK, teenagers were reported to be the most common target audience for gaming in libraries (McNicol, 2011). 21% of respondents from the UK study explicitly referred to using gaming to attract young people and 5% saw gaming as having the potential benefit of attracting boys (McNicol, 2011). Levine (2006) and Werner (2013) speak of attracting “the elusive teenage male”, as well as the idea of avoiding M-rated games for collections, assuming the target audience will be young (Levine, 2009; Werner, 2013). Danforth (2010) discusses how the decision to exclude M-rated titles may be problematic, as all library collections should be judged by the same standards. This emphasis on youth appears to be because teenagers are a hard-to-reach population for libraries. There is concern that if libraries cannot become relevant to teenagers, they will be irrelevant to that population for the rest of their lives (Neiburger, 2007). However, if the majority of gaming activities are offered only to teenagers, this begs the question of whether the library will still be relevant to them when they grow up, and whether the expectation is that they will transition to using other library services instead.

Another population that is typically underserved by libraries, people in their 20s and 30s with no children, are also a large part of the gaming population (Levine, 2008). While there are examples of gaming services for adults, discussion of these services appears to be the exception rather than the rule. Levine (2008) seems to be the only author who has written specifically on public library gaming events for adults, presenting two case studies: one using video games for adults in general and the other using video games to target seniors.

2.2.4 Challenges of providing video game services

There are many challenges to providing video game services in a public library setting. These will be discussed below under the general headings of resources, behaviour, and attitudes.

Resources

Many of the challenges to providing video game services come from a lack of resources, as gaming must compete with other library services. In a survey of UK libraries, 12-14% of respondents said that IT facilities, physical space, staffing, and staff knowledge and skills were challenges to providing gaming services (McNicol, 2011). Library staff with a personal interest are usually relied on to run gaming activities, and this can cause continuity issues when they eventually move on (McNicol, 2011). In addition, relatively few librarians are interested in gaming compared to books and reading (McNicol, 2011).

The advance of digital distribution may have also made provision of video game services more difficult for libraries. However, current literature does not indicate whether digital platforms allow libraries to circulate games electronically or whether libraries are being cut out of the market.

Behaviour

One of the biggest concerns about gaming events in libraries is noise and behaviour, with the fear of disrupting other library users or library facilities being damaged (Adams, 2009; McNicol, 2011; Nicholson, 2013). Other concerns relate to the violent and sexual content found in certain games and subsequent complaints from parents (Nicholson, 2013; Werner, 2013). However, multiple sources (Levine, 2006; Saxton 2007; Scordato, 2008) report that children and teenagers are often on their best behaviour when attending gaming events, and Levine (2006) and Scordato (2008) provide examples that show parents appreciate how engaged their children are with the library.

In general, mass media tends to focus on negative or controversial aspects of video games, overlooking the fact that the vast majority of people play games in a safe, social, and mentally stimulating manner (Kirriemuir, 2006). The much-touted link between video games and violence is dubious (Kühn et al., 2019), and different people are affected differently by different games (Levine, 2009).

Attitudes

In the UK, the biggest barrier to gaming in libraries was felt to be a lack of awareness of the potential benefits of gaming among library staff (McNicol, 2011). Many objections to gaming

from library staff come from the belief that games are trivial, do not belong in libraries, and that spending resources on gaming instead of other services is inappropriate and will upset some users (Adams, 2009; McNicol, 2011; Nicholson, 2013). To overcome such attitudes, education of staff to increase the understanding of the value of games and how they can help the library fulfil its mission or goals is necessary (McNicol, 2011).

2.3 Summary

Video games are an increasingly popular part of society, and many different people play them. The literature surrounding video games in libraries demonstrates that they can be used to support educational, social, and democratizing missions and goals. Studies have found that most public libraries support gaming in general, and that larger libraries are more likely to do so. However, video game resources appear to be somewhat limited, and the recent trend of download-only games may also affect the ability of libraries to share or lend resources. In addition, despite the evidence that the average video game player is an adult, much of the literature concerning video games in public libraries focuses on engaging children and teenagers. Discussion of gaming services for adults appears to be the exception rather than the rule. There are also many challenges to providing video game services in public libraries, including a lack of resources, behavioural and content concerns, and negative staff attitudes.

3. Research Questions

Main research question: How do public library staff engage with video games and video game services?

Sub-questions:

- a. What are their perceptions of video games?
- b. What are potential reasons for their perceptions?
- c. What video game services are offered in public libraries today?

4. Research Design

This study investigated how public library staff in Aotearoa New Zealand engage with video games and video game services. It used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data gathered through an online survey to determine engagement and perceptions, explore

potential reasons for perceptions, and discover what video game services are offered in NZ public libraries today. As both quantitative and qualitative data were collected, a mixture of positivism and interpretivism principles were applied.

4.1 Methods

4.1.1 Population and sample

This study focused on public library staff in NZ, who were chosen as a population due to researcher location. A sample of this population was obtained using a mixture of convenience, self-selection, and snowball sampling. Approximately 40 public library systems were identified from the National Library of New Zealand's (n.d.) directory of NZ Libraries to ask if they would participate in this research. Participation for organisations involved distributing a survey invitation to their staff. 20 organisations were contacted before NZ entered a country-wide COVID-19 alert level four lockdown and plans for further contact were suspended. Five organisations agreed to participate. In addition to this, a call for participation was sent out to the NZ-Libs subscription-based email list. This email list is for the discussion of library and information services in NZ and was intended to capture not only staff in general, but also those working in smaller, isolated libraries who may rely on digital methods for networking and professional development.

There is no census of the number of staff working in NZ public libraries, meaning a response rate is not calculable. A sample size of 183 respondents was obtained. 189 responses were received in total, however, five could not complete the survey as they indicated they did not currently work for a public library in NZ, and one was removed due to accidental submission. A \$50 Prezy Card was offered in a prize draw to encourage participation.

4.1.2 Data collection

Data collection involved distributing an online questionnaire to the public library systems that agreed to circulate it amongst their staff, as well as to the NZ-Libs email list. The survey was active for a period of three weeks. A reminder was sent to the email list two weeks into the survey period to prompt responses.

An online questionnaire was used because it had the capability of reaching a large audience with minimal effort and could be completed and returned at participants' leisure (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). This was appropriate for this research as it allowed for a greater collection

of data over a range of respondents quickly and without high costs. The alternative would have been to conduct interviews with a limited number of participants and a large time commitment, along with other potential barriers and costs. In addition, respondents may have felt more comfortable answering questions honestly in an online confidential environment rather than face-to-face with an interviewer (Mahmutovic, 2021). Standardisation of online surveys also assists with data analysis (Mahmutovic, 2021).

Much of the questionnaire used was quantitative, using checkboxes and Likert scales to measure responses to questions or statements. The remainder of the questionnaire was qualitative, requiring written answers to questions that needed more in-depth responses. The number of open-ended questions was minimised to prevent survey fatigue (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).

Question topics included video game perceptions, experiences, and library services (see appendix A for survey questions). Questions were based on themes identified from the literature review as well as previous research on video game playing in NZ (Brand et al., 2019). All questions were worded to mitigate several biases (e.g., acquiescence, defensive, central tendency, and social desirability bias), and avoided both unclear and leading language, as is best practice (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Respondents' demographic data was collected, although it was possible to opt-out of these questions. Questions were designed to be appropriate for all potential respondents to answer regardless of the position in libraries they hold. A small group of individuals were asked to look over the questions for understandability, as is recommended to test the questionnaire (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).

4.1.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations for this survey were related to confidentiality and privacy. Data was collected and analysed in such a way that any issues regarding confidentiality and privacy were mitigated or eliminated.

Survey responses were kept confidential, and only accessible by the researcher and their supervisor. This was communicated to respondents and organisations through the provision of information sheets (see appendices B and C) to help them decide whether they wanted to participate. Informed consent was obtained from respondents through a question at the beginning of the questionnaire (see appendix A) and from organisations through a signed

form (see appendix C). Any participation was strictly voluntary and should not have been subject to external pressures (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).

To ensure privacy, all presented data (except for selected quotes) was aggregated. Individual quotes were presented in isolation and do not include any identifying information. Contact details for those who wished to participate in the prize draw or receive a summary of the results of this research were collected via a separate, second questionnaire, so that respondents' contact information and answers could not be linked. To ensure fairness, the prize draw was conducted using a random number generator.

Data collection was undertaken using Qualtrics, which is password-protected online survey software licenced by Victoria University of Wellington. This research was approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee #29764. All research data will be securely destroyed after 2 years.

4.1.4 Data analysis

The statistical software R was used to visualise data and test for statistically significant differences between population subgroups. The main subgroups used were video game players and non-players. This was done to determine whether subgroups engage with video games differently or hold different perceptions about them.

Throughout the survey, three invalid answers were received across two questions. These responses were coded as "Invalid" and retained for analysis. However, they were not reported in results.

Quantitative data collected was categorical in nature. Accordingly, averages described are medians. Also due to the nature of the data, Fisher's exact test was used to test for independence between variables (Weisstein, n.d.), resulting in probability values (P-values) that indicate how likely a result was to have happened by chance. Fisher's exact test was used instead of the Chi-square test because the assumptions of the Chi-square test were not met by the data. P-values were interpreted at the 5% significance level.

Qualitative data collected had to be coded before it could be analysed, and this was an iterative process undertaken using Microsoft Excel. Open-ended answers were designated one or more codes to identify patterns and relationships, and most answers were coded

using keywords and themes that appeared in the data. Early codes were sometimes found to have significant overlap and categories were collapsed to minimise this. Notes were created throughout the process to keep track of interpretations and decisions made, and appropriateness of coding was checked by the project supervisor. Once responses were coded, they were compiled and visualised in R. An example of coding can be found in Table 3.

Table 3: Example of coding.

Question	Answer	Coding
Why or why not? (As follow up to “Do you think that video games have a place in public libraries?” – This respondent indicated yes.)	“I have seen them successfully create relationships between age groups and with previously unreached community members.”	Two codes were applied: Social and Engagement.

The researcher acknowledged that due to their own positive perceptions and experiences of video games, there may be some bias in interpretation of data. Accordingly, all expectations were set aside while undertaking analysis.

5. Results

The aggregated demographic information of respondents is presented in appendix D. The average age range of respondents was 30 – 39 years old. Most respondents were female. A majority identified partially or wholly as European. As would be expected, more library assistants and librarians responded than management staff and shelvers due to the relative prevalence of these positions.

Of the 183 respondents, 69% (126) indicated that they play video games, while 31% (57) indicated that they do not. Figure 1 illustrates that there appears to be a difference in average age between players and non-players. The median age range of players was 30 – 39 years old, while the median age range of non-players was 50 – 59 years old.

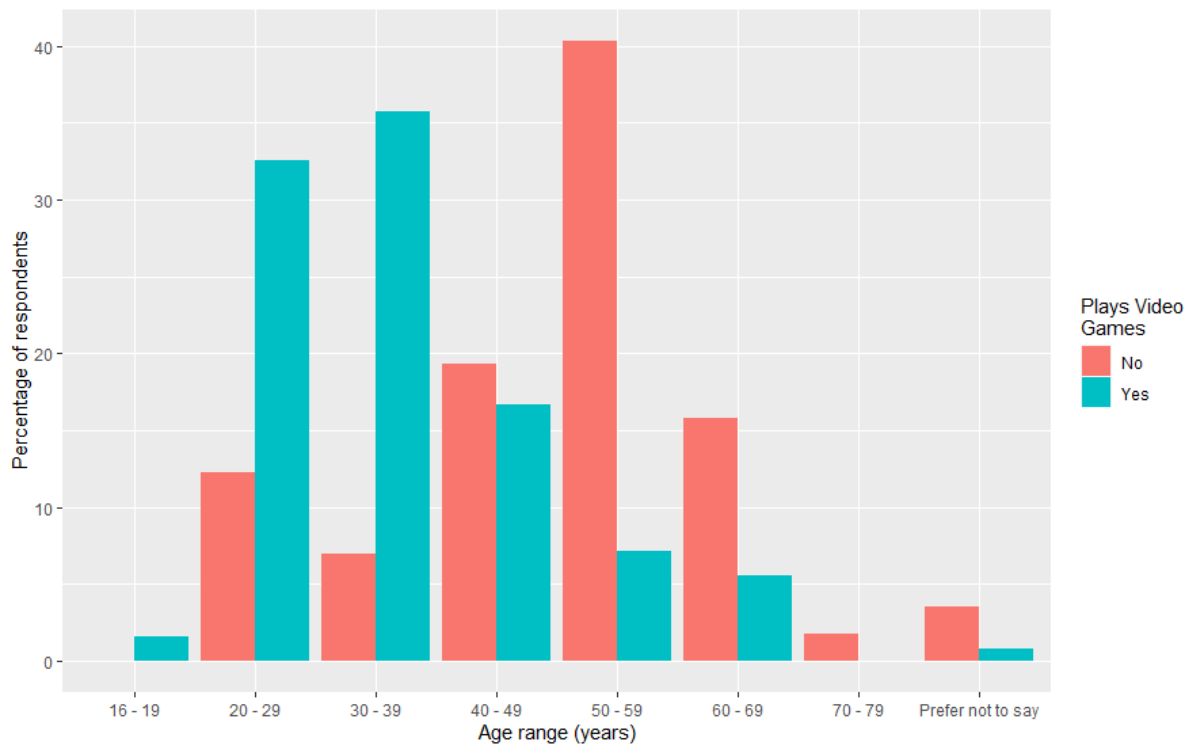


Figure 1: Players and non-players of video games by age.

Reasons given for not playing video games are presented in Figure 2. Responses were categorised into at least one of the following categories based on keywords and themes:

- No interest (are not interested in video games),
- Prefer other things (indicated a preference for other activities),
- Too busy (reported a lack of time),
- No experience (has not been exposed to video games much or at all),
- No enjoyment (does not enjoy or dislikes video games),
- Avoid screen time (mentioned limiting time on devices),
- Waste of time (said video games are a waste of time).

Of the respondents who do not play video games, 47% said that this was because they are not interested in them, 30% said they preferred doing other activities and 21% said that they do not have the time. Only 9% said that they do not enjoy or dislike video games, and 5% expressed that they think video games are a waste of time.

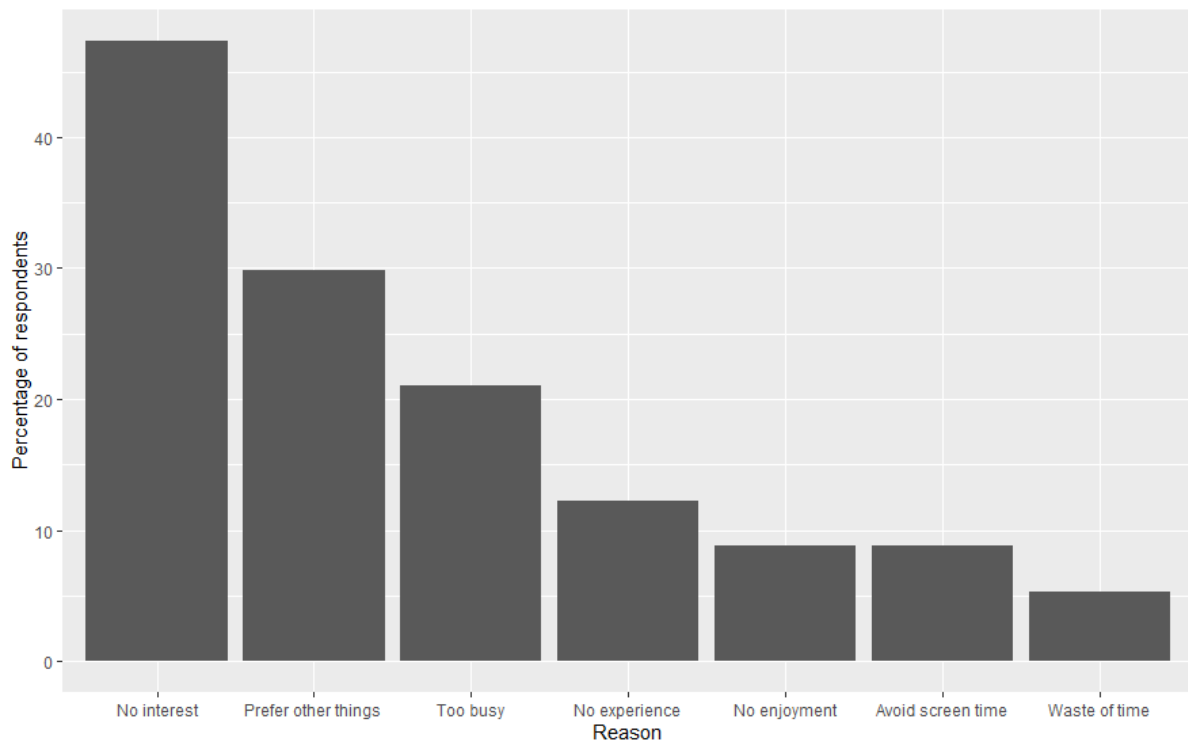


Figure 2: Reasons for not playing video games.

There were many reasons why respondents do play video games, as presented in Figure 3. Responses were categorised into at least one of the following categories based on keywords and themes:

- Enjoyment (plays to have fun),
- Relaxation (plays to unwind and de-stress),
- Social (plays to connect with others),
- To pass time (plays to fill time, to procrastinate, or when bored),
- Escapism (uses games to escape reality),
- Mental stimulation (plays for cognitive benefits),
- Narrative (plays for the story),
- Achievement (plays for a sense of accomplishment),
- Creativity (mentioned interactive creation elements of games or creativity),
- Education (plays to learn something),
- Art (plays for the artwork),
- Compulsion (plays because they feel they must),
- Other (other reasons).

The main reasons for playing video games are for enjoyment (43%), relaxation (29%) and social connection (24%). 16% said that they play games to pass time.

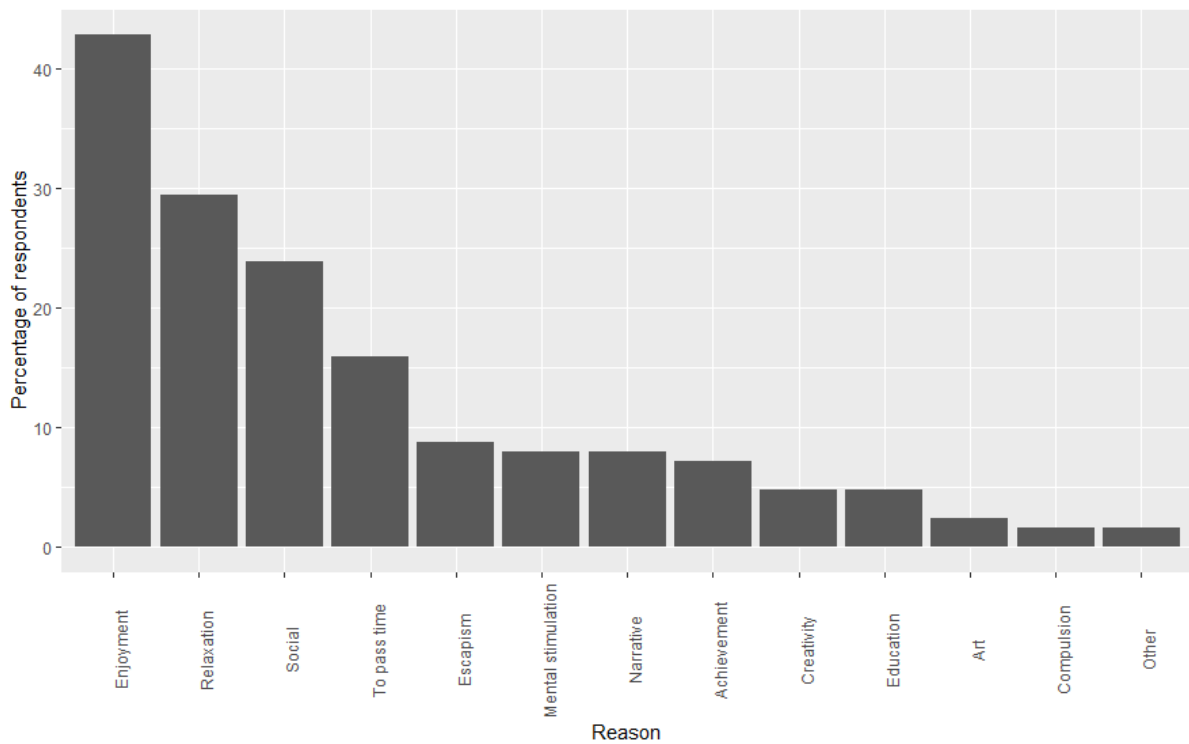


Figure 3: Reasons for playing video games.

Figure 4 shows the frequency and duration of respondents' video game playing. Most respondents who play video games play at least once a week (83%), with almost half playing once a day or multiple times a day (47%). A majority also play games in-depth (for 30+ minutes at a time) (77%). Almost a quarter (23%) play casually (for between 1 – 20 minutes at a time).

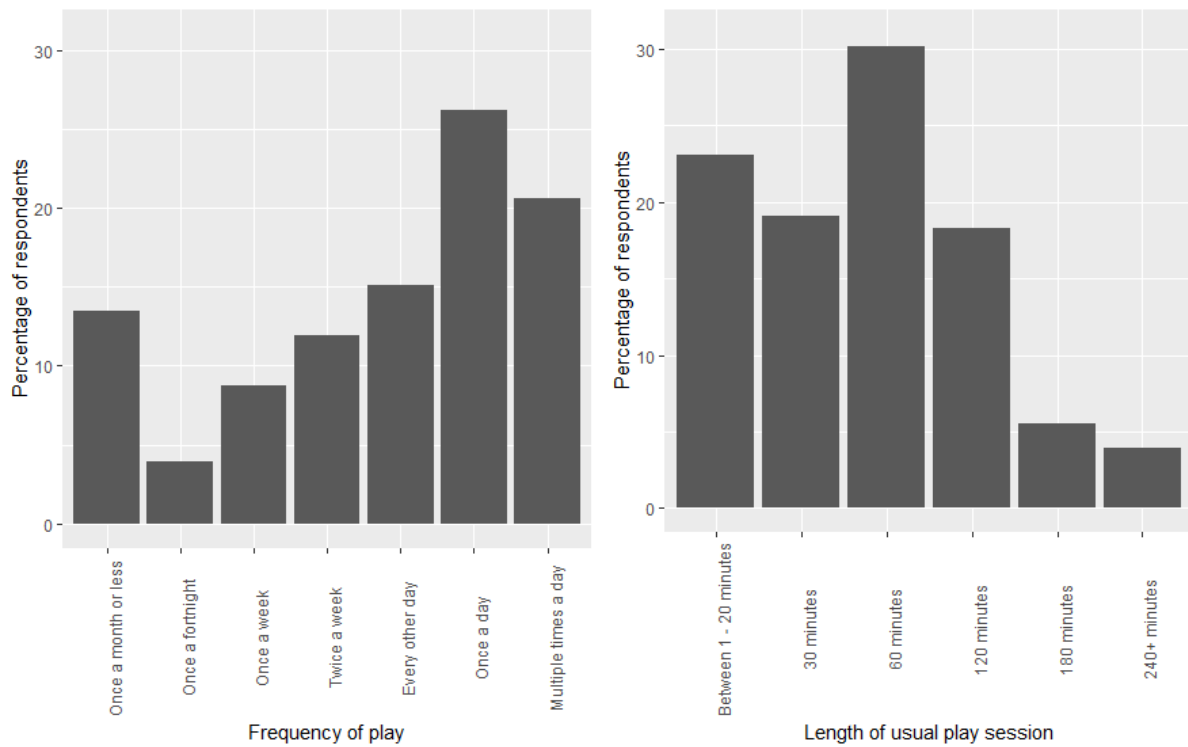


Figure 4: How often and for how long respondents play video games.

Respondents who play video games were asked to provide one to three examples of video games they like to play. Each of these games was assigned a category based on its primary genre or distinguishing feature. Responses were coded with the category or categories the games fell into. Some commonly accepted gaming genres used are based on acronyms, these are:

- RPG (role-playing game),
- MMO (massively multiplayer online game), and
- FPS (first person shooter).

As seen in Figure 5, the five most popular types of games listed in examples were action/adventure (40%), puzzle (33%) simulation (21%), RPG (20%), and strategy (12%).

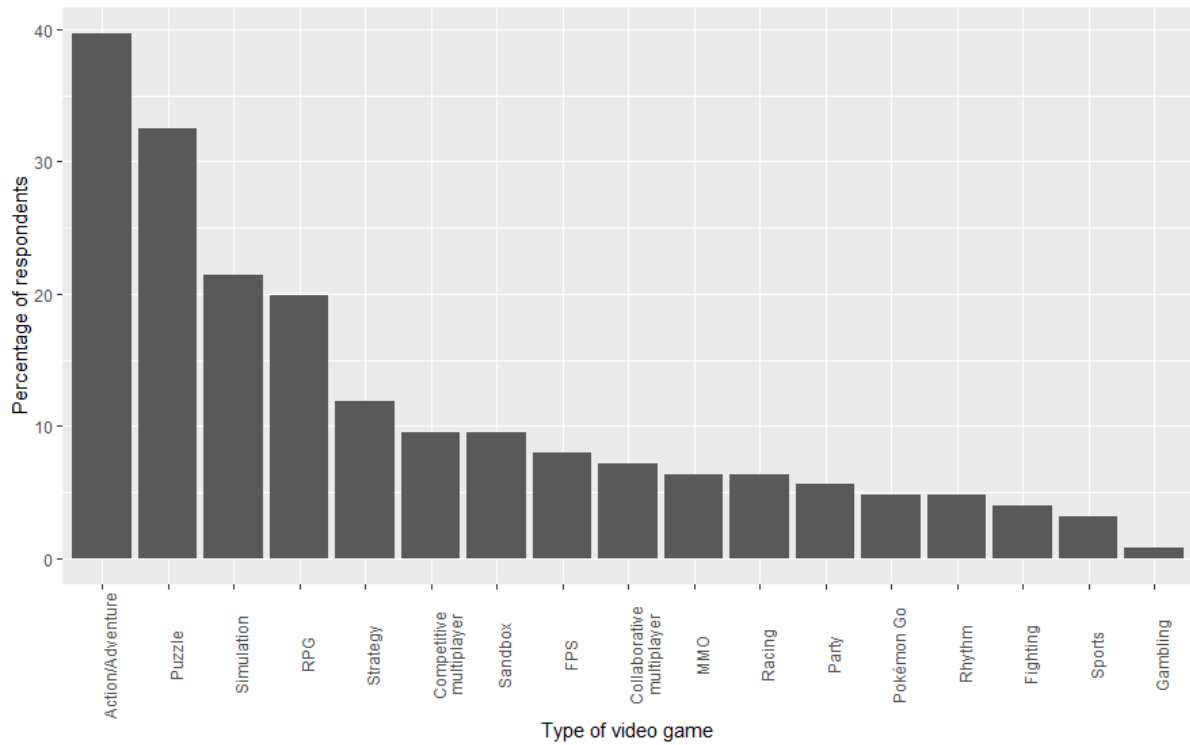


Figure 5: Types of video games played.

Of those who play video games, 33% (42) consider themselves a “gamer” while 67% (84) do not. There is evidence that gamers and non-gamers have different frequencies of play (P -value = 0.02258) and very strong evidence that gamers and non-gamers have different durations of play (P -value = 0.0001583). Gamers appear to play more frequently (median = once a day) and longer (median = 90 minutes) than non-gamers (medians = every second day and 30 mins) (see Figure 6).

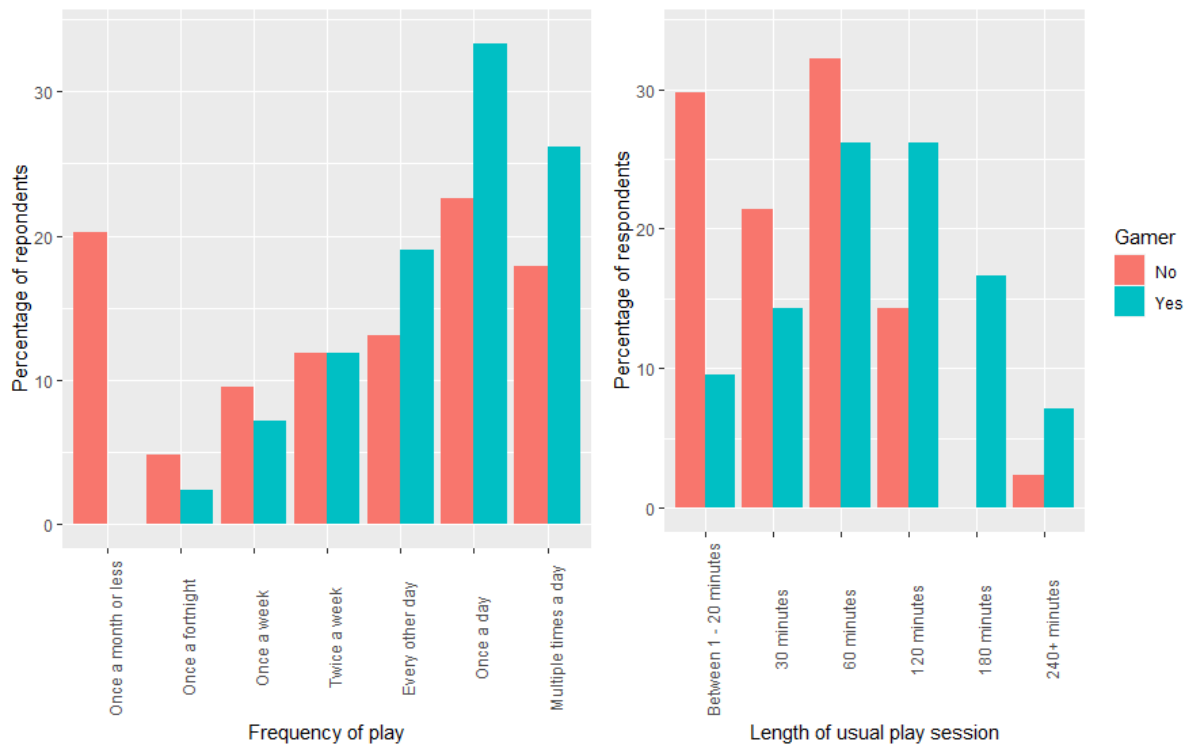


Figure 6: Frequency and duration of play for gamers and non-gamers.

Figure 7 presents information on how many respondents have had video game experience with certain types of hardware. Most have had experience with mobile phones (77%) or personal computers (PCs) (77%), and this holds true whether they play video games or not (mobile phones 89%, 51% and PCs 88%, 53% respectively). Of the home consoles, PlayStation (66%) consoles are the most experienced overall, followed by Nintendo (48%) and then Xbox (46%). Overall, home consoles have been experienced by 53%. Experience with tablets is more common than any home console for respondents who do not play video games (39% vs 19 – 35%), but less common than PlayStation for those who do (68% vs 80%). Relatively few respondents (8%) have had no video game experience with any type of hardware. Overall, respondents who play video games appear to have more experience with all types of hardware.

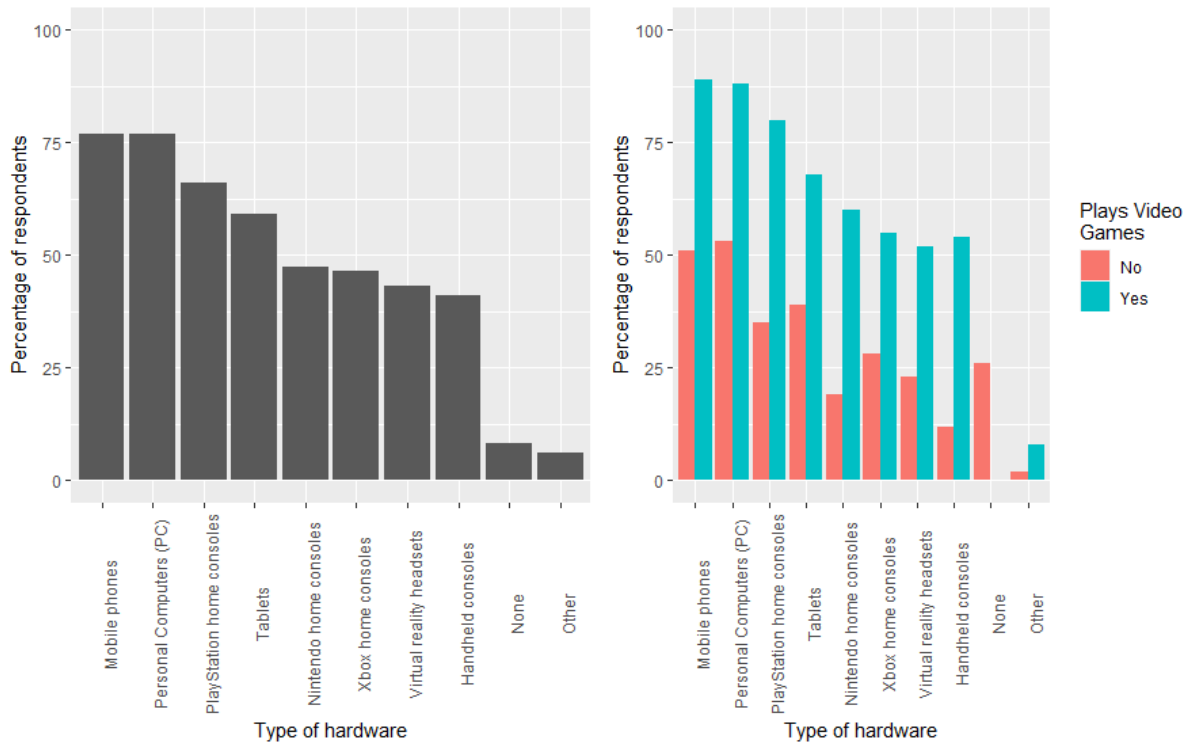


Figure 7: Video game experience with different types of hardware (all respondents and by players/non-players).

Figure 8 presents information on the number of hardware types respondents have had video game experience with. Overall, 92% of respondents have experience with at least one type of hardware, and 88% have experience with more than one. Video game players appear to have a greater breadth of experience with hardware (median = 6) compared to non-players (median = 2).

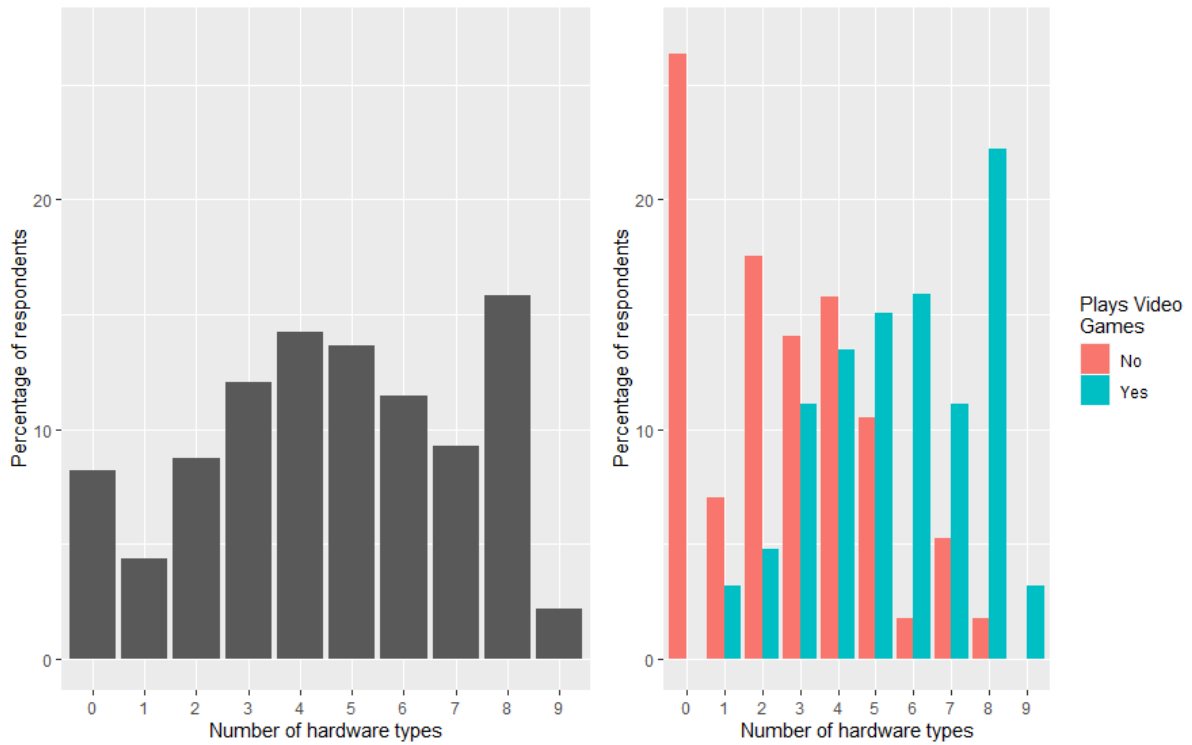


Figure 8: Number of hardware types experienced (all respondents and by players/non-players).

Looking at how respondents engage with wider video game culture (Figure 9), 95% of non-players do not participate in any of the specified activities, compared to 34% of players. For video game players, the most popular activities are using walkthroughs (54%) and watching gameplay (41%). Activities that include content-production are less popular than those that do not.

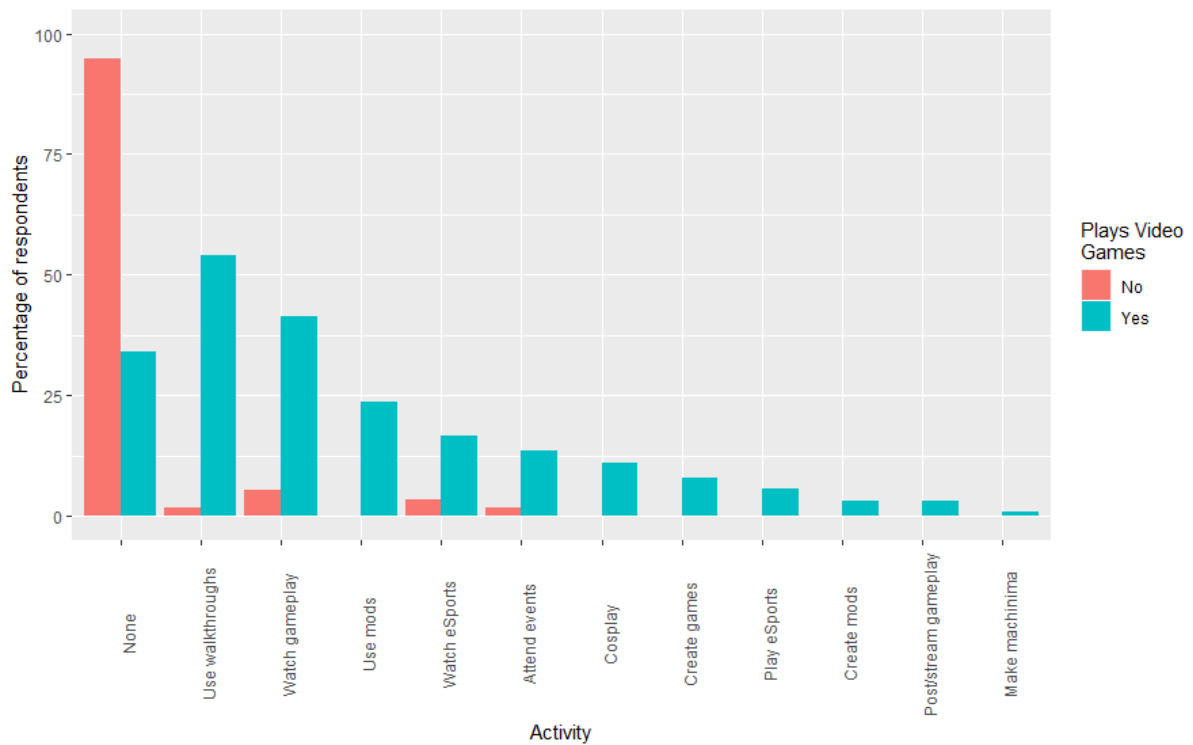


Figure 9: Respondents' video game related activities.

Respondents were asked to indicate which age groups they think are included in the main target audience for video games. The results are shown in Figure 10. The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that young adults (95%) and teenagers (92%) are included. A majority also indicated that adults between the ages of 30 - 45 (73%) and children (62%) are included. Less than a quarter of respondents (23%) indicated that the adults between the ages of 46 – 64 are included. Babies and toddlers and older adults (ages 65+) were only indicated as being included by 13% and 8% of respondents respectively. There is no statistical evidence that playing video games and the age groups indicated are related. Only 3% of respondents (6) indicated that all age groups are included in the main target audience for video games.

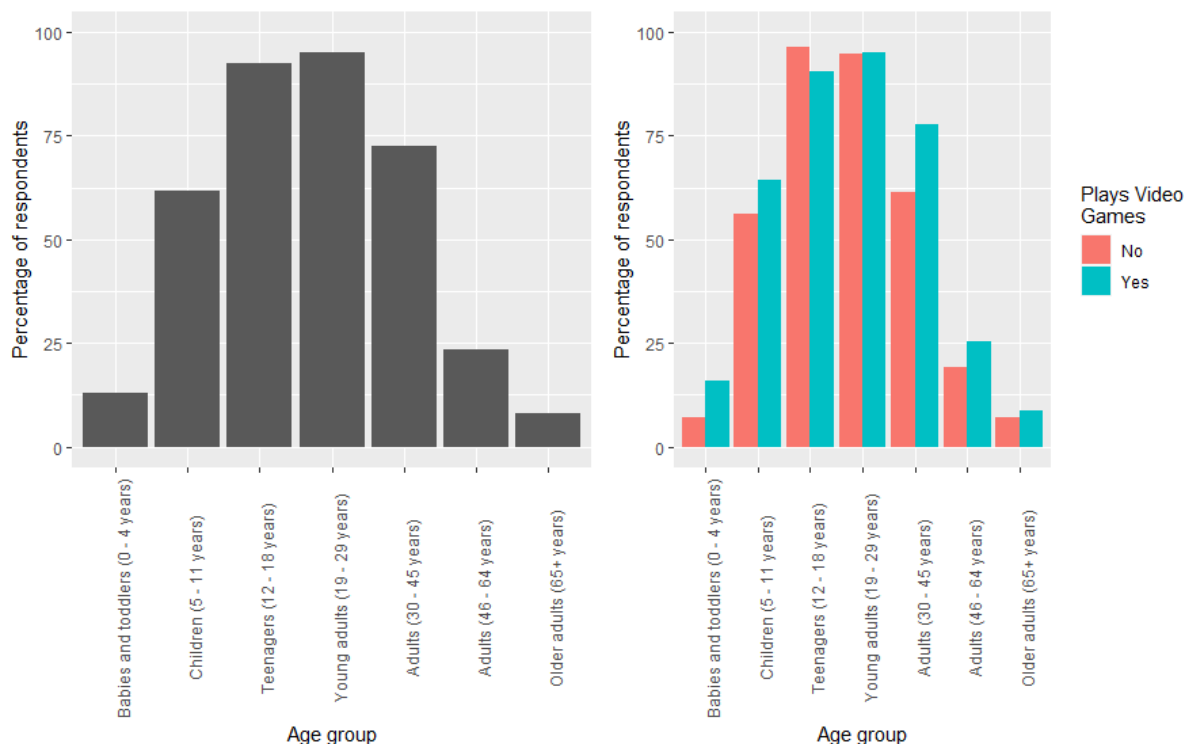


Figure 10: Age groups included in the main target audience for video games (all respondents and by players/non-players).

87% of respondents (160) indicated that they think video games have a place in public libraries, while 13% (23) indicated that they do not. As shown in Table 4, the majority of respondents think that video games have a place in public libraries regardless of whether they play video games themselves. There is very strong evidence that playing video games and thinking they have a place are related. Video game players appear more likely to think video games have a place than non-players ($P\text{-Value} = 5.695 \times 10^{-5}$). The majority of respondents also think that video games have a place in public libraries regardless of the type of position they hold (see Table 5), except for those who preferred not to say their position type.

Table 4: Video games have a place in public libraries (players and non-players).

Plays video games	Video games have a place in public libraries (Percentage (number) of respondents)	
	Yes	No
Yes	94% (119)	6% (7)
No	72% (41)	28% (16)

Table 5: Video games have a place in public libraries (by library position).

Type of position held	Video games have a place in public libraries	
	Percentage (number) of respondents	
	Yes	No
Shelver	100% (1)	-
Library assistant	82% (65)	18% (14)
Librarian	90% (55)	10% (6)
Management	96% (25)	4% (1)
Other	100% (13)	-
Prefer not to say	33% (1)	67% (2)

Reasons why respondents think that video games have a place in public libraries are presented in Figure 11. Responses were categorised into at least one of the following categories based on keywords and themes:

- Education (indicated that video games are a source of information or teach general skills or literacy),
- Engagement (indicated that video games attract new or existing library users, or contribute to positive perceptions of the library),
- Access (mentioned providing access, preservation, or lessening the digital divide),
- Culture/community (acknowledged video games as a part of society or as popular),
- Social (mentioned forming relationships or developing social skills),
- Youth (mentioned children, teenagers, or youth),
- Entertainment (indicated that video games are used for leisure),
- Role/function of libraries (referred to what a public library is or does),
- Narrative (mentioned that video games tell stories),
- Third place (mentioned public libraries being safe spaces or places to hang out),
- Creativity (mentioned interactive creation elements of games or creativity).

The reason given most often was that video games are or can be educational (42%). Between 20 – 30% of respondents said that video games can be used for engagement with new or existing users (28%), that libraries should be providing access to video games for those without (26%), that video games are popular and what communities may want from

their libraries (23%), or that there are beneficial social connections made from having video games in libraries (22%). 19% of these respondents specifically mentioned children, teenagers, or youth in their responses.

Some responses that illustrate the main themes are:

“Libraries are about learning, recreation and engagement, games help with all 3.”

“Modern video games can be an important source of entertainment, skill development and information. Access to video games is not equitable and libraries have a role to fill that gap.”

“Excellent social activity, learning through co-operation in games for children, makes the library a fun place that children like to go to, increasing youth trust in staff, makes the library 'cool'.”

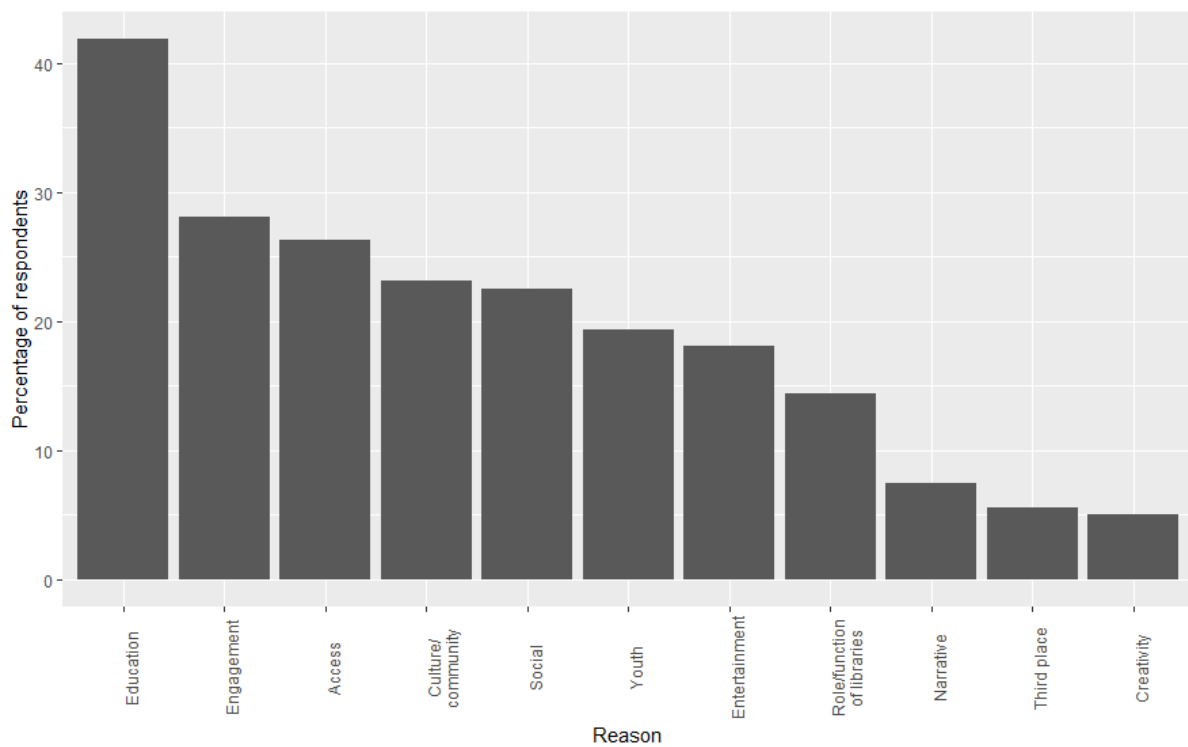


Figure 11: Reasons why video games have a place in public libraries.

Reasons why respondents think that video games do not have a place in public libraries are presented in Figure 12. Responses were categorised into at least one of the following categories based on keywords and themes:

- Role/function of libraries (referred to what a public library is or does),

- Not educational (indicated that video games have no or limited educational content),
- Lack of resources (mentioned barriers to offering such as access to equipment, staff knowledge, and theft),
- Affects other users (indicated disruption to other library users such as noise),
- Other negative effects (mentioned device time, artificial stimulation, obesity, or addiction),
- Youth (mentioned children, teenagers, or youth),
- Violent behaviour or content (mentioned violent behaviour or content),
- Other objectionable content (mentioned problems with content in general).

These respondents primarily referred to video games not being appropriate to the role or function of public libraries (48%). 22% said that video games have no or limited educational benefits. 22% also referred to barriers (lack of resources) to offering video games in libraries, such as access to equipment, staff knowledge, and theft. 17% said that video games would disrupt other users, 13% commented on violent behaviour or content and 4% commented on content problems in general. 17% specifically mentioned children, teenagers, or youth in their responses.

Some responses that illustrate the main themes are:

“The library is a place to learn and read books. It’s sad seeing kids only coming to play on the computer.”

“Games would tie up the computers and create too much noise from excited players.”

“Most [of] the [games] kids play on our public PCs are violent first person shooting games, not good for them or the community we are living, the people seeing them being played.”

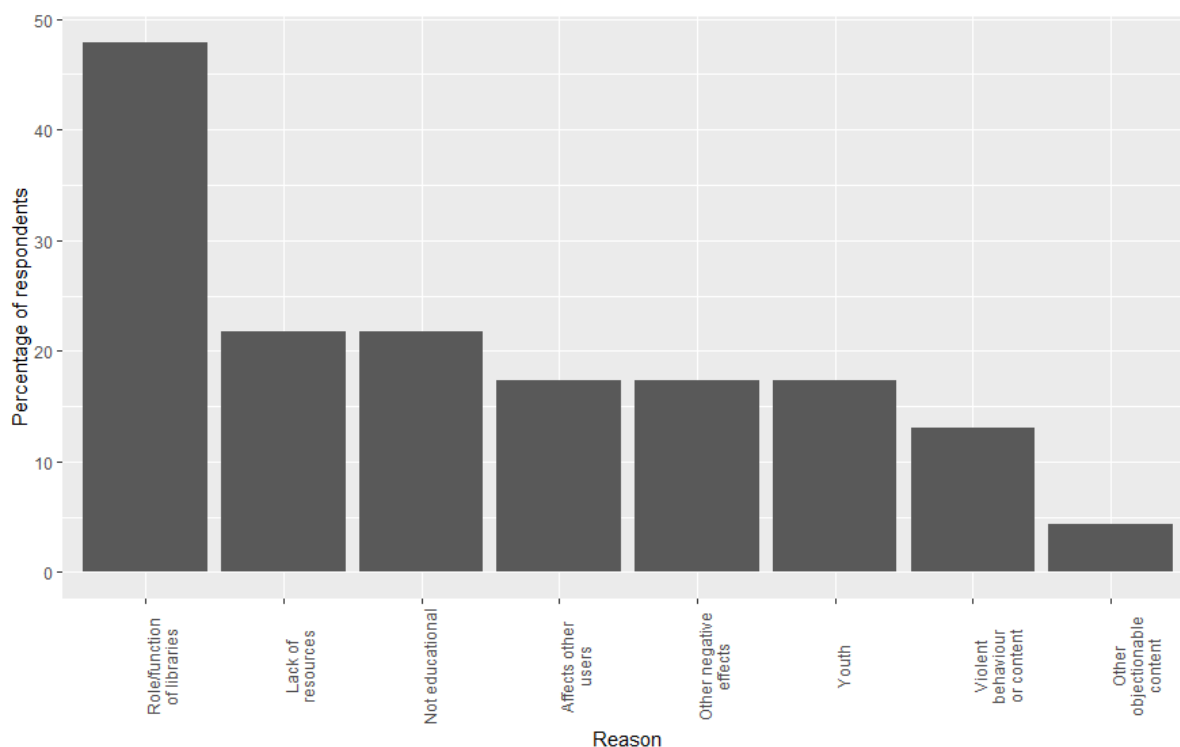


Figure 12: Reasons why video games do not have a place in public libraries.

Only 14% of respondents (25) reported that their workplace has a borrowable video game collection. 56% of these indicated that the collection includes titles rated M and restricted while 16% indicated that it does not (Table 6).

Table 6: Borrowable video game collection contents.

Does the collection include titles rated M and restricted?	Percentage (number) of respondents reporting a current collection
Yes	56% (14)
No	16% (4)
I don't know	28% (7)

Of the respondents who reported that their workplace does not hold a borrowable video game collection (158), 35% reported that it used to have one (Table 7). 43% of those who indicated a retired collection said the collection included titles rated M and restricted, 13% said it did not, and 14% said that it included M rated titles but not restricted titles (Table 8).

Table 7: Retired video game collections.

Did your workplace have a collection in the past?	Percentage (number) of respondents reporting no current collection
Yes	35% (56)
No	34% (53)
I don't know	31% (49)

Table 8: Retired video game collection contents.

Did the collection include titles rated M and restricted?	Percentage (number) of respondents reporting a retired collection
Yes	43% (24)
No	13% (7)
I don't know	30% (17)
It held M rated titles but not restricted titles	14% (8)

59% of respondents (108) reported that their workplace runs video game related programmes and events. Respondents who indicated that they could describe the video game related programmes and events at their workplace were asked to do so. The amount of detail provided was limited. 146 programmes and events were described, which includes multiple descriptions of the same event from different respondents.

Various types of programmes and events were described: competitions (10%), clubs (10%), coding clubs (10%), eSports (10%), experiential (5%), and educational (5%). Those that had a general purpose or a purpose that was not stated totalled 51%.

The timing and frequency of programmes and events varied: weekly (23%), available all the time (14%), during school holidays (12%), after school (6%), sporadic (6%), one-off (5%), annual (4%), monthly (3%), fortnightly (1%), and every two months (1%). Those for which the timing or frequency was not stated totalled 25%.

The target audiences described for programmes and events are presented in Figure 13. 51% were reported to be aimed at children, teenagers, or youth. 11% were aimed at everyone. 6% were restricted to ages 13+. No events were specifically aimed at adults and only one

(1%) was aimed at seniors. The target audience was not stated for 32% of programmes and events.

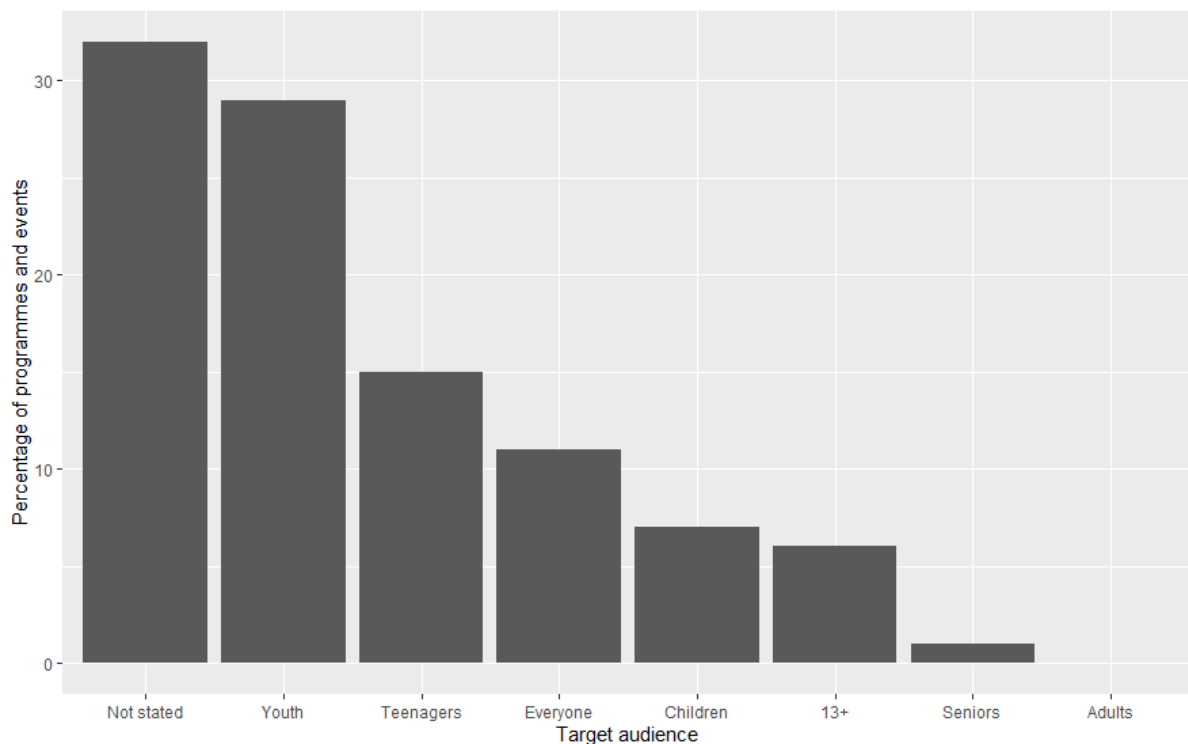


Figure 13: Target audiences of video game related programmes and events.

37% of programmes and events were reported to be led by library staff. 10% were a collaboration between staff and the community, and 2% were led by the community. Those for which the leading party was not stated totalled 51%.

When asked which commonly used video game classification labels they could confidently explain to a customer, 56% of respondents indicated that they could confidently explain all of them. Only 13% indicated that they could not confidently explain any labels (see Figure 14). There is no statistical evidence that playing video games and confidence in explaining classification labels are related.

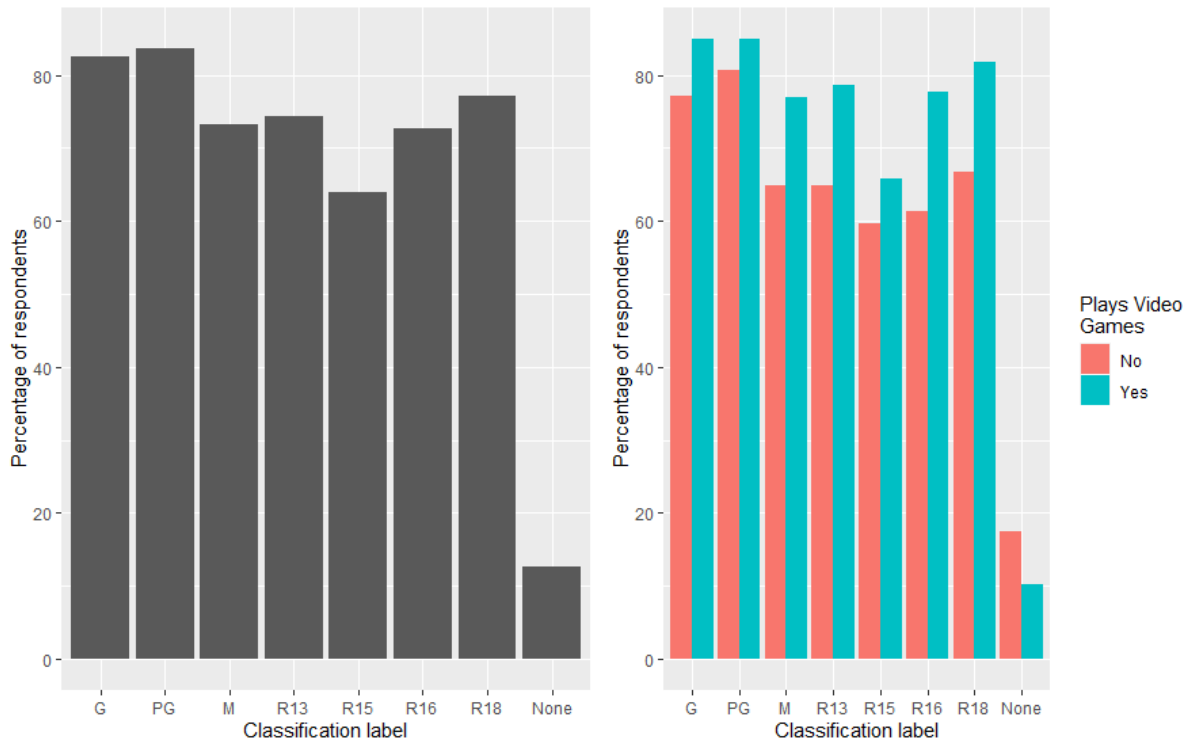


Figure 14: Confidence in explaining classification labels (all respondents and by players/non-players).

When asked to indicate their confidence level in discussing video games with customers and making recommendations, a relatively even distribution was recorded (see Figure 15). However, there is very strong evidence that playing video games and confidence level in discussing video games with customers are related ($P\text{-value} = 1.086 \times 10^{-13}$). Video game players appear to be more confident than non-players.

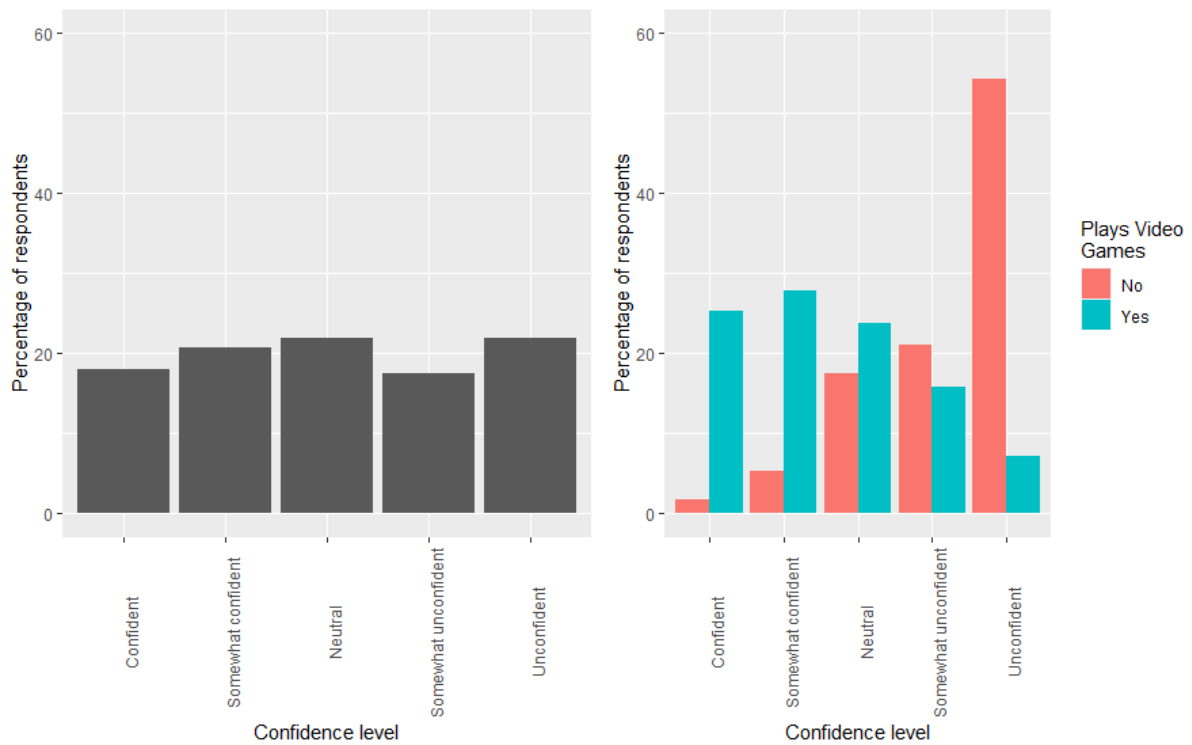


Figure 15: Confidence discussing video games with customers (all respondents and by players/non-players).

When asked to indicate their confidence level in running video game related programmes and events, 32% reported that they are unconfident in doing so (see Figure 16). There is very strong evidence that playing video games and confidence level in running video game related programmes and events are related ($P\text{-value} = 3.339 \times 10^{-12}$). Video game players appear to be more confident than non-players.

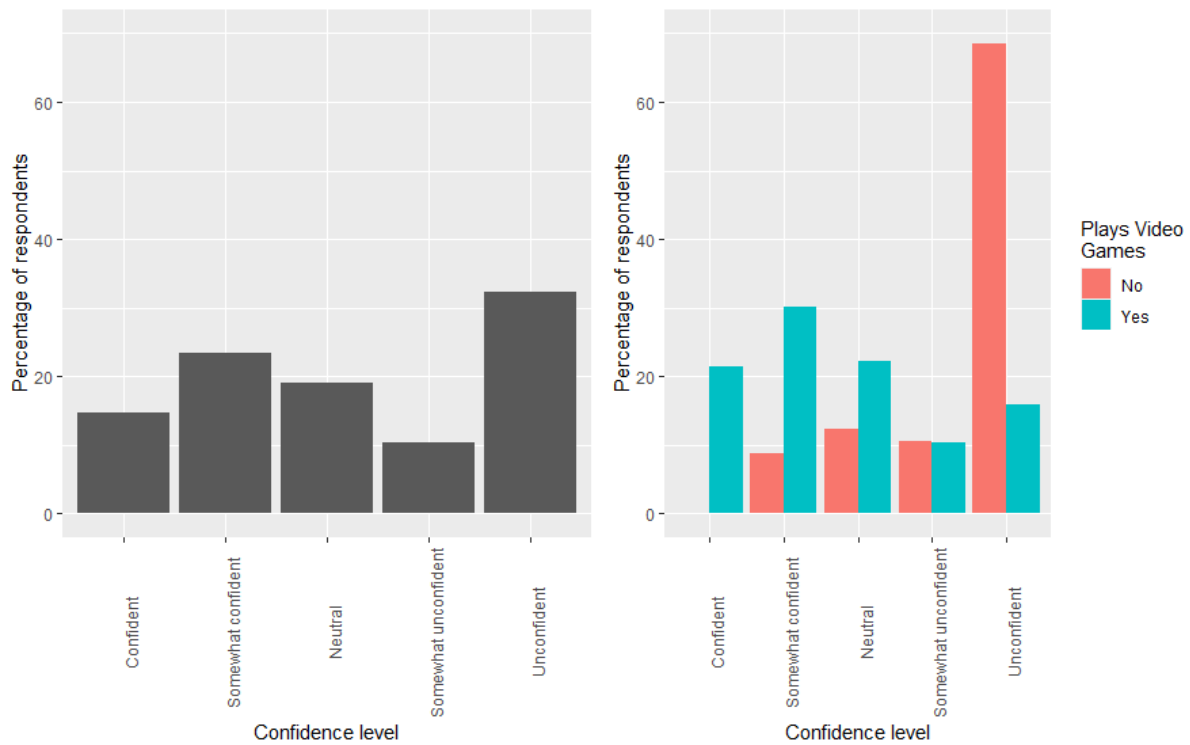


Figure 16: Confidence running video game related programmes and events (all respondents and by players/non-players).

The majority of respondents do not personally run video game related events (70%). There is very strong evidence that playing video games and running related events are related (P -value = 0.000447). Video game players appear more likely to run related events than non-players.

45% of respondents (82) indicated that they have had a customer comment on or make suggestions about video game services to them. Figure 17 presents the types of comments or suggestions reported. Responses were categorised into at least one of the following categories based on keywords and themes:

- Asking for more (mentioned a request or suggestion for new or existing services),
- General interest (mentioned interaction(s) arising from curiosity),
- Negative (referred to unfavourable feedback),
- Positive (referred to favourable feedback),
- Asking for M/R rated games (mentioned customers requesting games with mature or restricted content).

Most interactions described were customers requesting or suggesting more of a new or existing video game service (71%). Approximately the same percentage were negative or

positive feedback about existing services (16% and 15% respectively). 9% were customers asking for video games with mature or restricted content.

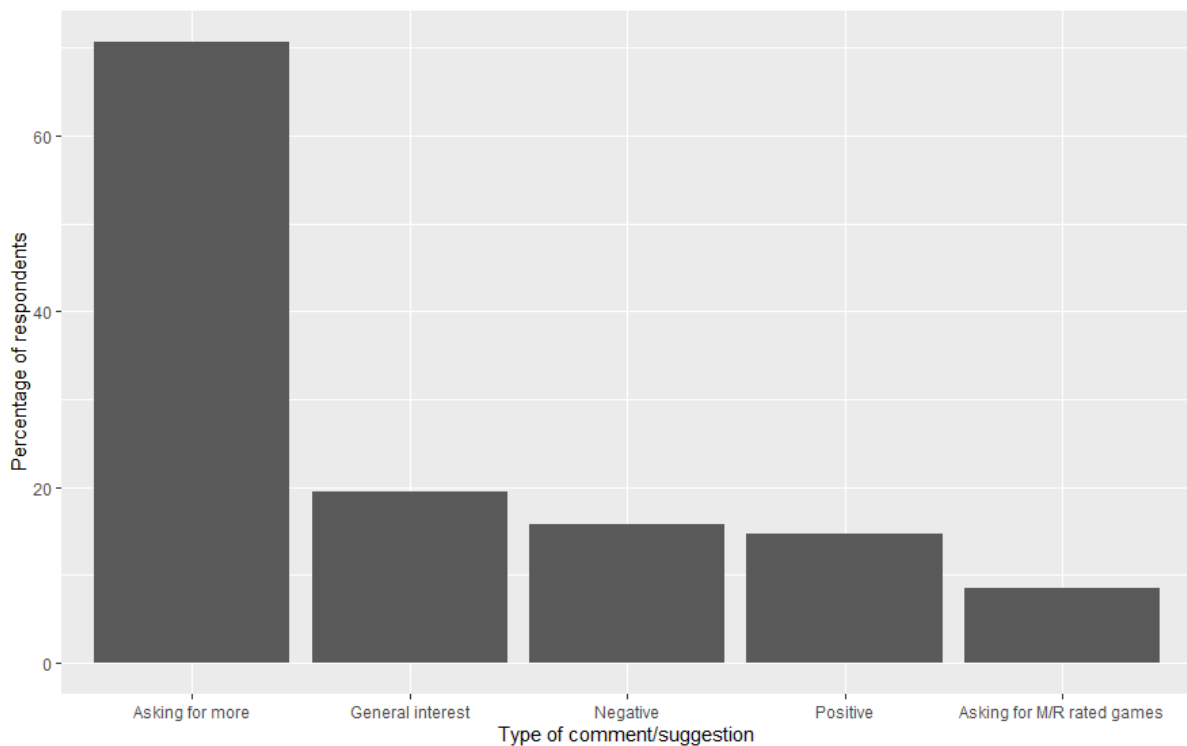


Figure 17: Customer comments or suggestions for video game related services.

To explore general knowledge and perceptions of video games, respondents were asked about the extent to which they agree or disagree with seven statements (Figure 18).

Possible responses were: 1 = Agree, 2 = Somewhat agree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Somewhat disagree, 5 = Disagree. Responses were to the following statements:

1. Playing video games supports multiple forms of literacy,
2. Video games can increase general knowledge and develop skills such as leadership, teamwork and problem-solving,
3. Playing violent video games results in an increase of violent behaviour,
4. Video games have a social aspect,
5. There are advantages to being familiar with video game technology,
6. If someone is playing video games on a public computer, they should vacate the computer to allow another person to print important documents, and
7. The target audience for video games is typically teenage boys.

These statements are based on viewpoints strongly supported or contradicted by the literature (statements 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7), and a situation reported in the literature where video game use in libraries may be problematic (statement 6). There is very strong evidence that playing video games and responses are related for statements 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (P -values = 3.386×10^{-8} , 3.437×10^{-6} , 2.098×10^{-7} , 6.454×10^{-6} , and 7.097×10^{-8}). Video game players appear to agree more with statements 1, 2, 4 and 5 than non-players. Video game players appear to disagree more with statement 3 than non-players. There is no statistical evidence that playing video games and responses are related for statements 6 and 7.

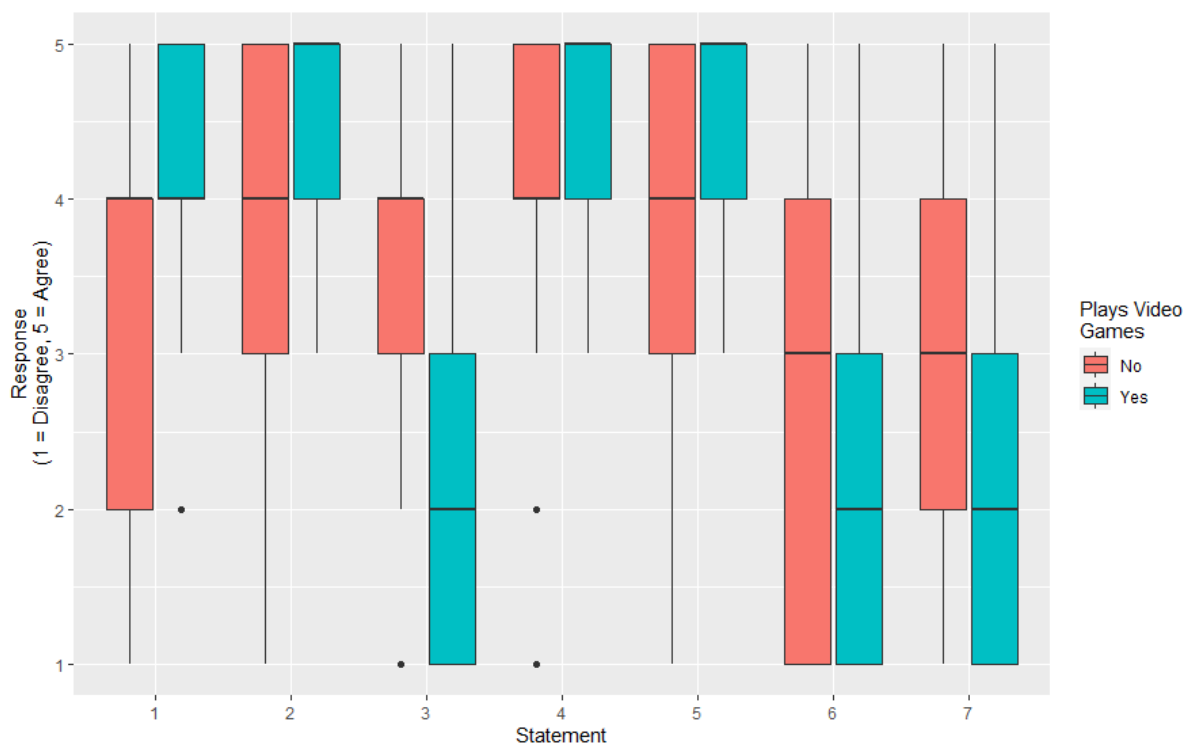


Figure 18: Respondents' positions on statements.

Respondents' thoughts about the impact of video games on society are shown in Figure 19. Excluding those who answered "I don't know", the median answer of all respondents was neutral. There is very strong evidence that playing video games and perceived impact on society are related (P -value = 4.375×10^{-7}). Video game players appear to perceive a more positive impact on society than non-players. The median response for video game players was somewhat positive, while the median response for non-players was neutral.

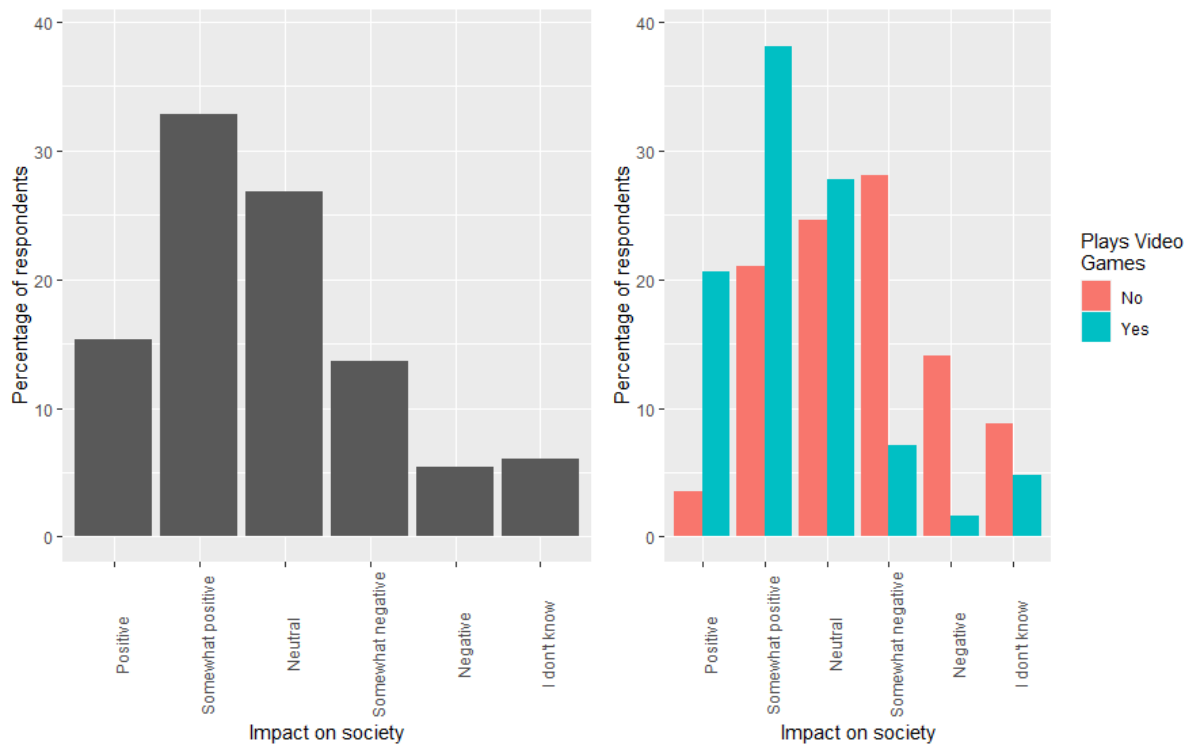


Figure 19: Perceived impact of video games on society (all respondents and by players/non-players).

When asked to explain their response to this question, various impacts were described (as shown in Figure 20 & Figure 21). Responses were categorised into at least one of the following categories based on keywords and themes:

Positive impacts:

- Social (mentioned interacting with others positively),
- Education (referred to learning),
- Entertainment (mentioned fun or enjoyment),
- Creativity (mentioned creative aspects of video games),
- Relaxation (referred to de-stressing or general wellbeing),
- Economic (mentioned job or technology creation, industry, or work benefits),
- Mental stimulation (referred to cognitive benefits).

Negative impacts:

- Antisocial behaviour (mentioned interacting with others negatively or avoiding interaction, excluding violent behaviour),
- Problematic content (referred to content having negative effects),

- Obsession/addiction (mentioned obsession or addiction),
- Unhealthy (referred to general health detriments),
- Waste of time (thought people could use their time better),
- Violent behaviour (referred to violent behaviour).

The main positive impacts mentioned were social connection (36%), education (23%), and entertainment value (13%). The main negative impacts mentioned were antisocial behaviour (25%), problematic content in games (15%), and obsession or addiction (11%). Many responses contained both positive and negative impacts, reflecting the median answer of “neutral”. For example, two responses from video game players were:

“There are pros and cons of video games in society, it brings people together but can also separate them. It can become addictive, cause anti-social behaviours with those living in the same household and cause health issues, but it can also promote good problem solving, social connection and team work skills. Like with most things, it is best to for video games to be played in moderation.”

“[Video games enhance society] in that the technology developed has various useful applications (e.g. accessibility), jobs are created, art is created, consumed, and talked about, allowing people to build perspective. There are also educational benefits. On the downside, it's another avenue that addictive personalities are drawn to, and can create social bubbles filled with lonely people winding up in anti-social behaviour like during Gamergate etc. Also, there are many exploitative business practices linked to the medium (e.g. lootboxes, microtransactions etc).”

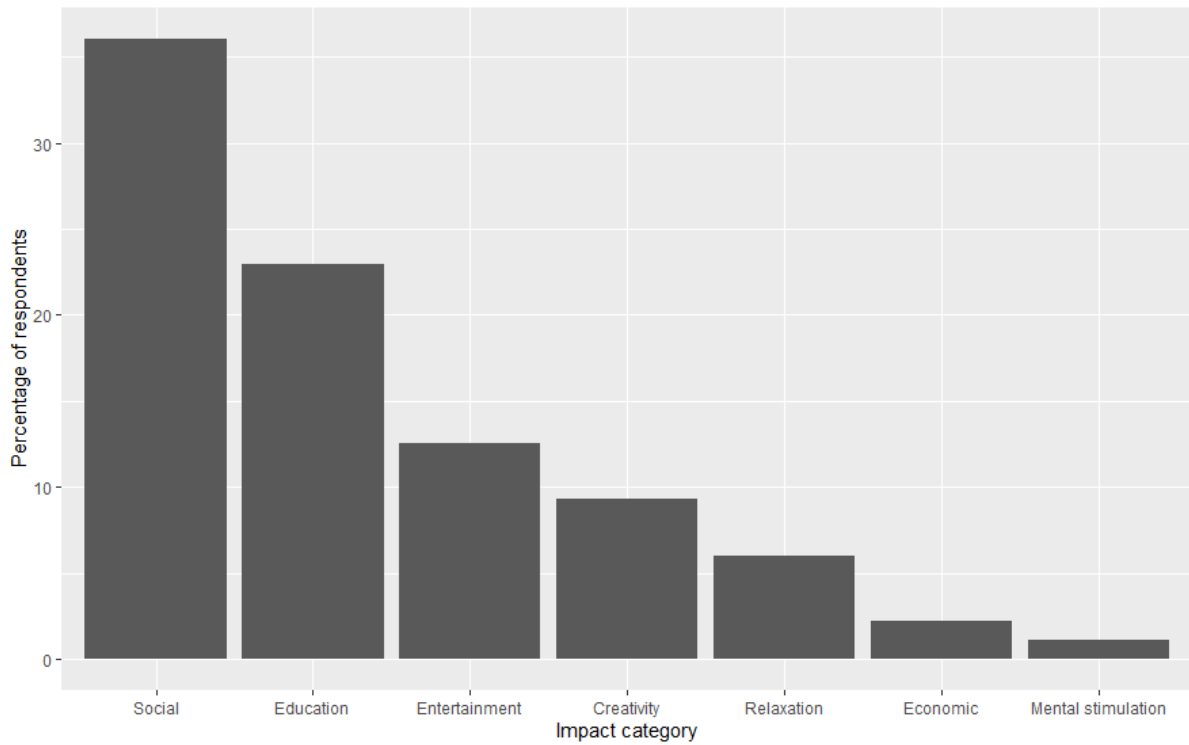


Figure 20: Positive impacts of video games on society.

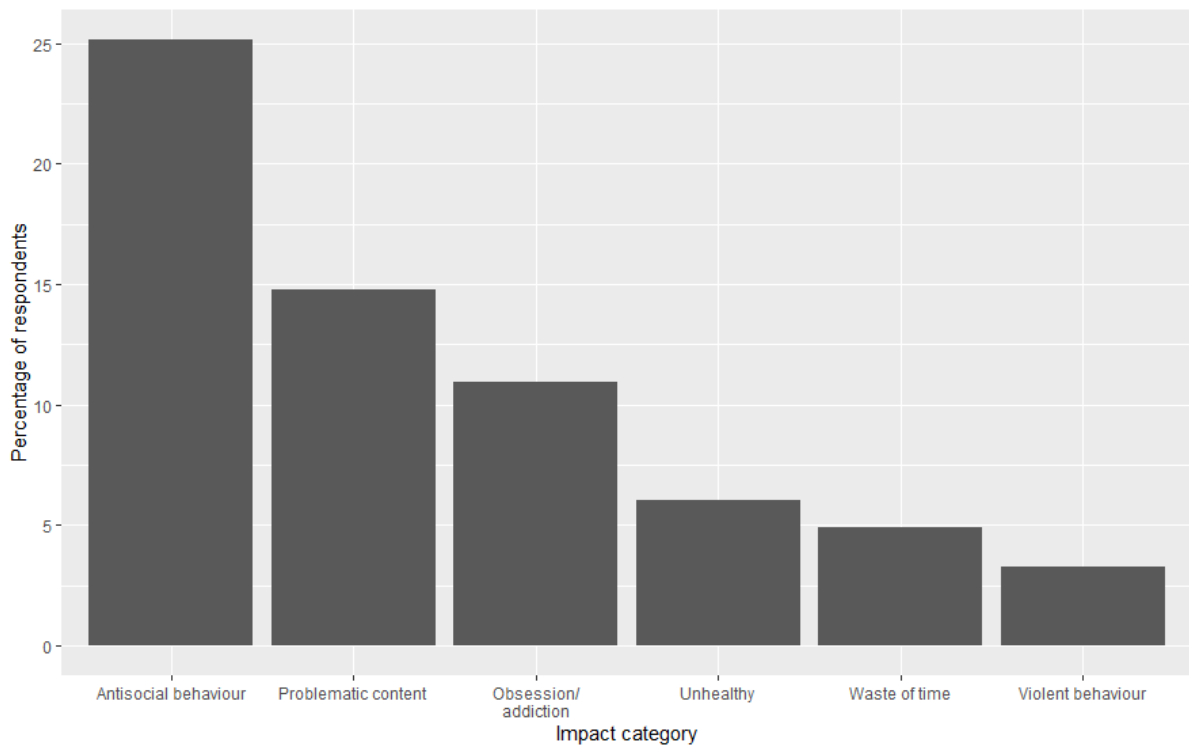


Figure 21: Negative impacts of video games on society.

One theme that arose within open-ended answers of the survey was barriers to offering video game services. Fifteen individual respondents commented on barriers, and those mentioned are summarised in Table 9. Some examples of the comments given were:

“For disc or cartridge based games the expense of these items makes them targets of theft and expensive to maintain as a collection.”

“Running the games options takes up a lot of librarian time and effort at a time when we are facing staffing shortages and staff cuts.”

“Gamers requirements (sound, vocal interaction) are different from other public PC users (email, printing) and having the same equipment in the same place for both group[s] in a library doesn't work.”

Table 9: Barriers to video game services.

Barrier	Number of respondents mentioned by
Theft of games or equipment	5
Expensive nature of video games	4
Staff (intensive demand on or lack of knowledge)	4
Lack of equipment	4
Lack of appropriate space	2
Disruption to other users	2
Quick obsolescence of games and equipment	1
Damage to games or equipment	1
Tension between time required to complete some video games and the time they are loaned for	1
Changing distribution model of video games	1

6. Discussion

6.1 General engagement

How NZ public library staff engage with video games appears to closely correspond with how the general NZ population engages with video games.

69% of respondents from this survey reported that they play video games. This is comparable to the finding that 68% of working-age adults in NZ play video games (working-age adults being defined as 18 – 64 years old) (Brand et al., 2019). Public library staff who

play video games appear to be on average younger than those who do not, and similarly, a higher proportion of New Zealanders between the ages of 5 – 44 play video games than those between the ages of 45 - 94 (Brand et al., 2019). It is not surprising that NZ public library staff appear to be a representative subset of the NZ population in terms of age and playing video games.

The main reasons respondents gave for playing video games are to have fun, to relax, to socialise, and to pass time. According to Brand et al. (2019), the top three reasons New Zealanders report for playing video games are to have fun, to pass time, and to relax/de-stress. These results are congruent. Social interaction may have been indicated more frequently as an important reason in this study due to the current global pandemic and its impact on social isolation. The main reasons respondents gave for not playing video games are a lack of interest or time, or a preference for other activities, rather than a negative view of video games. Only 9% of non-players said that they dislike or do not enjoy them. Even fewer indicated they perceive video games to be a waste of time, and this contrasts with the higher proportion of players who indicated they play specifically to pass time.

PCs and mobile phones are the most widely used types of video game hardware in NZ households, followed by home consoles and tablets, and then handheld consoles (Brand et al., 2019). The types of hardware that public library staff have video game experience with appears to follow the same distribution. However, while only 19% of NZ households have players who have used a virtual reality (VR) headset, 43% of public library staff appear to have used one. A possible explanation for this is that libraries are often access sites for new technology which is out of reach for many individuals, such as VR (Dahya et al., 2021). A greater proportion of public library staff also appear to have experience with handheld consoles compared to NZ households (41% compared to 8%), but it is unclear as to why this is the case. Overall, 92% of respondents have had video game experience with at least one type of hardware, and 88% have experience with more than one. Depth of experience cannot be inferred from these results, but they demonstrate that most public library staff appear to have been exposed to gaming with multiple types of hardware, even if they do not play video games. Those who do play video games seem to have a greater breadth of experience with hardware. Also, as is to be expected, they seem to engage with wider video game culture much more than non-players.

The majority of public library staff who play video games appear to engage with them often and in-depth. A third of those who play indicated that they consider themselves a “gamer”, which, although an abstract term, suggests that they tie some part of their identity to playing video games. Those who consider themselves gamers appear to play on average more often and for longer at a time, indicating higher levels of engagement.

6.2 Perceptions

Most respondents (87%) indicated that they think video games have a place in public libraries. This majority was consistent regardless of whether they play video games or what type of position they hold in libraries. Video game players appear more likely to think they have a place than non-players. The sample size was not large enough to identify whether there is a difference in support for video games between position type.

The main reasons respondents gave for why video games have a place in public libraries were that they are or can be educational, they can be used for engagement with new and existing users, that libraries should provide access for those without, that they are part of wider culture and popular in communities, and that they have social benefits. These viewpoints are all heavily reflected in the literature with evidence to support them, (for example, see Adams, 2009; Levine 2006, 2008, 2009).

Of those who indicated video games do not have a place in public libraries, the main concern expressed was that video games do not fit their idea of what a public library is or does. In contrast to video games having an educational aspect, 1 in 5 of this group said that video games are not educational or of little educational benefit. While these viewpoints do exist in the literature (for example, see Annoyed Librarian, 2008), they only appear in a minority of publications and lack evidence to support them.

Many of the other reasons given for why video games do not have a place in public libraries relate to barriers discussed in the literature, such as a lack of resources, disruption of other users, and content and behaviour concerns. Over ten years ago, the negative attitudes of some library staff were identified as a major barrier to developing gaming in libraries (McNicol, 2011). Although negative attitudes still exist, this study has found that an overwhelming majority of NZ public library staff appear to support video games in public libraries. Other barriers may now be more limiting factors.

Out of all respondents, 18% mentioned children, teenagers, or youth in their response to whether video games have a place in public libraries. This indicates that a not insignificant part of the workforce (almost 1 in 5) is concerned with whether video game services can engage or are appropriate for a younger audience rather than a general audience.

On average, respondents indicated that the impact of video games on society is neutral, but video game players appear to perceive a more positive impact than non-players. The main positive impacts described were social connection, education, and entertainment. This emphasis on social connection may again be related to the current global pandemic's impact on social isolation. The main negative impacts described were antisocial behaviour, problematic content in games, and obsession or addiction. It is notable that the top positive and negative impacts are opposites of each other (social connection and antisocial behaviour).

When respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with seven statements, video game players almost always answered more congruently with viewpoints supported in the literature. They appear to agree more that video games support literacies, can increase general knowledge and skills, have a social aspect, and that being familiar with video game technology can be advantageous. They appear to disagree more that violent video games result in an increase of violent behaviour. This indicates that video game players may be more aware of the impact of video games on individuals.

There was no statistical significance between players' and non-players' responses to the statement that someone playing video games on a public computer should give up the computer to allow someone else to print important documents. The average response to this statement was to somewhat disagree. Responses may have been influenced by the policies libraries hold regarding short-term use computers and alternate ways of printing, such as from a personal device.

There was also no statistical significance between players' and non-players' responses to the statement that the target audience for video games is typically teenage boys. The average response to this statement was to somewhat disagree.

When asked which age groups they think are included in the main target audience for video games, most respondents (at least 62%) indicated ages 5 – 45. More than 90% indicated

ages 12 – 29. Playing video games does not appear to be related to which age groups were indicated. Only 3% of respondents indicated that all age groups are included in the main target audience for video games.

There appears to be a discrepancy between the perceived main target audience for video games and who plays them for ages 46+. According to Brand et al. (2019), between 40 – 55% of NZ 45 – 84 year olds and 14% of NZ 85 – 94 year olds play video games. Only 23% of respondents indicated that ages 46 – 64 are included in the main target audience for video games, and only 8% indicated ages 65+. This discrepancy is possibly due to a lack of awareness or exposure to older age groups being interested in video games. There is also the possibility that older age groups are interested in different types of video games to younger age groups. If this is the case, and focus is placed on the types of games that appeal to younger age groups, it could result in an underserved population for public libraries that provide video game services. This would be an interesting topic for further research.

6.3 Library services

To assess what video game services are offered in public libraries today, respondents were asked to report whether their workplace holds a borrowable video game collection or runs video game related programmes and events. While these results may give an indication of trends, they cannot be taken as authoritative figures because respondents may not have possessed the knowledge required to answer with 100% accuracy. Additionally, more respondents are expected from larger libraries, which may skew results. However, larger libraries typically serve larger populations which is expected to make results somewhat representative of what is available to library users. Only 14% of respondents reported their workplace holding a current borrowable video game collection, and 59% reported their workplace running video game related programmes and events. Public libraries in NZ appear more likely to offer video game related programmes and events than borrowable collections.

Access to borrowable video game collections may be declining, as twice as many respondents reported that their workplace's collection had been retired compared to those who reported current collections. Collections may be retired due to various reasons, such as low use, collection management issues, or limitations due to the rise in digital distribution of

video games. The reason collections are retired does not appear to be directly linked to the classification labels of titles included, as the rate of inclusion of mature and restricted titles appears similar for both current and retired collections.

Respondents to this survey indicated a variety of types, timings, and frequencies of video game related programmes and events. The most interesting result from the description of these was reported target audience. 51% were reported as targeting children, teenagers, or youth. No programmes or events targeted only adults and only one targeted seniors. It appears that older audiences are not usually targeted alone, possibly indicating that they are underserved by video game services due to the discrepancy found in perceived main target audience for video games described earlier.

To provide a service effectively, staff should be confident in delivering it. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they could confidently explain commonly used video game classification labels to customers. The classification labels for video games are the same as those used for films in NZ (Classification Office, n.d.), and DVDs are often considered a core collection in public libraries, so it was no surprise that a majority of respondents could confidently explain each one and 56% could confidently explain all of them. Respondents were least confident explaining the label R15, which is to be expected as it is the least common of those presented. Playing video games does not appear to be related to confidence in explaining classification labels. However, it does appear to be related to confidence level in discussing video games with customers and running video game related programmes and events. Video game players seem to be more confident in both cases and appear more likely to be the ones running video game related events. This suggests that encouraging engagement with video games may increase the confidence of staff in delivering video game services. Further study would be required to confirm this.

45% of respondents reported that they have had a customer comment on or make suggestions about video game services to them. The most common type of interaction was a request or suggestion for new or existing video game services. This demonstrates that a demand for them exists. 9% of comments or suggestions involved customers asking for games with a mature or restricted rating, demonstrating a demand for providing these higher rated games. However, there may be logistical difficulties in ensuring games are accessed only by those of the recommended or required age.

Barriers to offering video game services in public libraries were mentioned by fifteen respondents. The primary barriers described were financial, such as theft, damage, and the high cost of video games and equipment, which is further exacerbated by their quick obsolescence. In addition to financial barriers, logistical barriers exist such as intensive demands on staff, a lack of staff knowledge, and inadequate spaces. These barriers reflect those reported in the literature (for example, see Adams 2009; McNicol, 2011; Nicholson, 2013).

Another potential major barrier to offering video game services in libraries is the changing distribution model for video games. The gaming industry is moving towards download-only games, which may impact the ability of libraries to share or lend resources (Lindsey et al., 2018). Digital distribution may help mitigate some of the previous barriers mentioned, such as preventing theft and damage of physical games. Video games could be distributed digitally in a similar way to eBooks. However, there does not appear to be any digital distributors offering purchase, subscription or lending models suited to public library use yet. A rise in the popularity of video game subscription services (e.g. Xbox Game Pass) (Statt, 2021) may indicate an opportunity for this to change.

7. Limitations

Self-selection bias may be present in this research due to the use of an online survey. Those with stronger opinions would have been more likely to respond, which may have impacted results (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).

Other biases that may be present in this research include sampling bias (the use of convenience sampling meant that not everyone in the population had an equal chance of being able to participate), response bias (e.g., acquiescence, defensive, central tendency, and social desirability bias), and researcher bias (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).

It is unknown whether the achieved sample is representative of NZ public library staff as there is no census data on this population available. Assuming that the number of library staff in a region is proportional to the population of that region, the distribution of public library staff throughout NZ should be similar to the distribution of the NZ population. The respondents of this study appeared to deviate somewhat from the distribution of the NZ

population (see appendix D), indicating that some regions may be over or underrepresented.

8. Conclusions

NZ Public library staff appear to engage with video games in a similar way to the general NZ population in terms of overall proportion of players, age distribution, reasons for playing, and hardware experience.

Overall, the perceptions of NZ public library staff regarding video games appear positive, with an overwhelming majority of respondents showing support for video games in public libraries. Some of the main benefits ascribed to video games by respondents were general education, engagement of new or existing library users, and social connection. In addition, those who play video games appear to have more positive perceptions of them and their impact on society. Respondents who play video games displayed greater awareness of their impact on individuals, were more confident in delivering related services, and were more likely to be the ones running related events. Further research would have to be done to identify whether encouraging engagement with video games could improve staff confidence in delivering video game services.

Regarding video game services offered in NZ public libraries today, programmes and events appear more prevalent than borrowable collections. These programmes and events appear to be targeting largely younger age groups, as only one described was reported as targeting adults or seniors alone. In addition, many respondents did not appear to consider adults aged 46+ as part of the main target audience for video games. Evaluation of this potentially underserved population is an interesting topic for future research.

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Appendix A – Survey Questions

Main questionnaire

(Information sheet included at beginning of questionnaire – see appendix B).

Definitions:

Video game - any electronic game played on a device with a screen, including but not limited to computers, consoles, and mobile devices.

Your library – The single library or library branch at which you spend the most working time.

Question Block 1

1. Have you read the information sheet at the beginning of this survey, and do you consent to participating in this research?

- Yes
- No (skip to an end screen that says: “Thank you for your interest, but informed consent is required for you to participate in this survey.”)

2. Do you currently work in a public library in Aotearoa New Zealand?

- Yes
- No (skip to an end screen that says: “Thank you for your interest, but you do not qualify to participate in this survey.”)

3. Do you play video games?

Note: the definition of video game is any electronic game played on a device with a screen, including but not limited to computers, consoles, and mobile devices.

- Yes (skip to 5)
- No

4. Are there any specific reasons why you don’t play video games? If so, what are they? (optional)

- (Free-form text field) (skip to 10)

5. Are there any specific reasons why you play video games? If so, what are they? (optional)

- (Free-form text field)

6. How often do you play video games?

- Once a month or less
- Once a fortnight
- Once a week
- Twice a week
- Every other day
- Once a day
- Multiple times a day

7. How long is your usual gaming session?

- Between 1 – 20 minutes
- 30 minutes
- 60 minutes
- 120 minutes
- 180 minutes
- 240+ minutes

8. Please give one to three examples of video games you like to play. (optional)

- (Free-form text field)

9. Do you consider yourself to be a gamer?

- Yes
- No

10. Please indicate whether you have had video game experience with the following types of hardware:

(Tick one or more of the following options.)

- Nintendo home consoles (e.g. Switch, Wii (U), Gamecube, N64...)
- Xbox home consoles (e.g. Xbox Series X/S, Xbox One, Xbox 360...)
- PlayStation home consoles (e.g. PS5, 4, 3, 2, 1...)
- Personal Computers (PC)
- Handheld consoles (e.g. Nintendo DS Series, Game Boy Series, PlayStation Vita, PlayStation Portable...)
- Mobile phones
- Tablets
- Virtual reality headsets
- Other (please specify)

- I have not had video game experience with any hardware

11. Do you participate in any of the following activities?

(Tick one or more of the following options.)

- Reading or watching video game walkthroughs
- Watching videos or livestreams of gameplay
- Posting videos of or streaming your own gameplay
- Making machinima (videos using game animation)
- Creating video games
- Watching esports
- Playing esports
- Attending video game event(s)
- Using third-party add-ons (mods) for video games
- Creating mods
- Cosplay (video game related)
- I do not participate in any of these activities

12. Which of these groups do you think are included in the main target audience of video games?

(Tick one or more of the following options.)

- Babies and toddlers (0 - 4 years)
- Children (5 – 11 years)
- Teenagers (12 – 18 years)
- Young Adults (19 – 29 years)
- Adults (30 – 45 years)
- Adults (46 – 64 years)
- Older adults (65+ years)

Question Block 2

13. Do you think that video games have a place in public libraries?

- Yes
- No

14. Why or why not?

- (Free-form text field)

15. Does your library hold a borrowable video game collection?

Note: the definition of “your library” is the single library or library branch at which you spend the most working time.

- Yes (**skip to 18**)
- No

16. Has it ever held a borrowable video game collection in the past?

- Yes
- No (**skip to 19**)
- I don't know (**skip to 19**)

17. Did the collection include titles rated M and restricted?

- Yes
- It held M rated titles, but not restricted titles
- It held restricted titles, but not M rated titles
- No
- I don't know

18. Does the collection include titles rated M and restricted? (Displayed only if 15 = yes)

- Yes
- It holds M rated titles, but not restricted titles
- It holds restricted titles, but not M rated titles
- No
- I don't know

19. Does your library run video game related programmes and events?

- Yes
- Yes, but I would not be able to describe them (**skip to 21**)
- No (**skip to 21**)

20. Please provide the names of these programmes and events. (optional)

Where possible, please briefly describe the programme or event. I.e. what it is, how often it takes place, who the target audience is, whether it is staff or community led, and whether your library provides any necessary technology.

- (Free-form text field)

21. Please indicate which video game classification labels you could confidently explain to a customer.

(Tick one or more of the following options.)

- G
- PG
- M
- R13
- R15
- R16
- R18
- I am not confident explaining any of these classification labels

22. How confident are you discussing video games with customers and making recommendations?

- Confident
- Somewhat confident
- Neutral
- Somewhat unconfident
- Unconfident

23. How confident are you at running video game related programmes and events?

- Confident
- Somewhat confident
- Neutral
- Somewhat unconfident
- Unconfident

24. How often do you personally run video game related events?

- Never
- Once a year
- A few times a year
- About once a month
- About once a fortnight
- At least once a week

25. Have you ever had a customer comment on or make suggestions about video game services to you? If so, what kind of comments and/or suggestions did they make?
(optional)

- (Free-form text field)

Question Block 3

26. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(Matrix table answer options: strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, and strongly agree)

- Playing video games supports multiple forms of literacy.
- Video games can increase general knowledge and develop skills such as leadership, teamwork and problem-solving.
- Playing violent video games results in an increase of violent behaviour.
- Video games have a social aspect.
- There are advantages to being familiar with video game technology.
- If someone is playing video games on a public computer, they should vacate the computer to allow another person to print important documents.
- The target audience for video games is typically teenage boys.

Question Block 4

27. What do you think is the impact of video games on society?

- Positive
- Somewhat Positive
- Neutral
- Somewhat Negative
- Negative
- I don't know

28. Please explain your answer. (Displayed if 27 does not = I don't know)

- (Free-form text field)

Question Block 5

29. What is your age? (optional)

- 16 – 19 years old
- 20 – 29 years old
- 30 – 39 years old

- 40 – 49 years old
- 50 – 59 years old
- 60 – 69 years old
- 70 – 79 years old
- 80+ years old
- Prefer not to say

30. What is your gender? (optional)

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

31. Please indicate your general ethnic group(s). (optional)

(Tick one or more of the following options.)

- European
- Māori
- Pacific Peoples
- Asian
- Middle Eastern/Latin American/African
- Other
- Prefer not to say

32. What city or region is your library based in? (optional)

If the answer is Auckland, please indicate whether it is North, South, East, West or Central Auckland.

Please leave the text box blank if you prefer not to say.

- (Free-form text field)

33. What type of position in libraries do you hold? (optional)

- Shelver
- Library Assistant
- Librarian
- Management
- Upper Management
- Other (please give a generic description)
- Prefer not to say

34. Do you have any other thoughts or comments to share? (optional)

- (Free-form text field)

If you wish to review any of your answers before submission, please use the back button to do so now.

End of questionnaire.

Thank you for your time spent completing this survey.

Your response has been recorded.

If you would like to enter the draw for a \$50 Prezzy Card, or receive a summary of the results of this research, please follow the link below to enter your email address. These details are being collected separately so they cannot be linked to your previous responses.

(Second questionnaire link)

[\(Summary of submitted answers are shown and available to download as a pdf\)](#)

Second Questionnaire

If you would like to enter the draw for a \$50 Prezzy Card or receive a summary of the results of this research, please fill out the questions below.

Q1. I would like to...: (please select one or both options)

- Enter the draw for a \$50 Prezzy Card
- Receive a summary of the results of this research

Q2. What is your email address?

- (Free-form text field)

End of questionnaire.

Thank you again for your time spent completing this survey.

Your response has been recorded.

The winner of the prize draw will be contacted after the survey period has ended.



How Public Library Staff Engage with Video Games and Video Game Services

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to take part in this research. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to participate, thank you for considering this request.

Who am I?

My name is Lisette Templeton, and I am a Masters student in information studies at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my research report.

What is the aim of the project?

This project aims to investigate how public library staff engage with video games and video game services.

Your participation will support this research by providing an understanding of how public library staff in New Zealand perceive video games, the experiences they have with them, and what video game services are offered in New Zealand public libraries today. This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee #29764.

How can you help?

You have been invited to participate because you currently work in a public library in New Zealand. If you agree to take part, you will complete a survey. The survey will ask you questions about video game perceptions, experiences, and library services. The survey will take you 10 – 15 minutes to complete. You have the option of entering a prize draw for a \$50 Prezzy Card.

What will happen to the information you give?

The information you provide for this research is confidential. While we will not ask for your identity in the survey, there is a chance the researchers will be able to identify you based on your answers. Identifying information will only be accessible to the researchers and will not

be reported or disseminated. As your identity is not linked to your responses, once you submit the survey you will not be able to retract your answers.

An email address will be collected only for those who wish to enter the prize draw and/or receive a summary of the results of this research. Your email address will be entered using a separate survey accessible at the end of the main questionnaire and will be held in confidence. This ensures that your email address will not be linked to your answers.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in my research report and may be used in academic publications and conferences.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Student:

Name: Lisette Templeton
templelise@myvuw.ac.nz

Supervisor:

Name: Anne Goulding
Role: Professor of Information Services Management
School: Information Management
Phone: +64 4 463 5887
anne.goulding@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University of Wellington HEC Convenor: Associate Professor Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.



How Public Library Staff Engage with Video Games and Video Game Services

INFORMATION SHEET FOR ORGANISATIONS

Thank you for your interest in this project. Please read this information before deciding whether or not your organisation will take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to take part, thank you for considering my request.

Who am I?

My name is Lisette Templeton, and I am a Masters student in information studies at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my research report.

What is the aim of the project?

This project aims to investigate how public library staff engage with video games and video game services.

Your organisation's participation will support this research by providing an opportunity to collect data on how public library staff in New Zealand perceive video games, the experiences they have with them, and what video game services are offered in New Zealand public libraries today. This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee #29764.

How can you help?

If you agree to take part, I will survey your employees. I will ask them questions about video game perceptions, experiences, and library services. This includes whether their workplace holds a borrowable video game collection, what video game related programmes and events are offered at their workplace, the city or region they are based in, and the type of position they hold in libraries. The surveys will take 10 – 15 minutes and take place online. Employees will be expected to take part outside of work time unless you give permission for them to complete the survey during work time. Each individual participant will be asked to provide consent before their involvement in the research. The surveys will be confidential, meaning that the research team may know of who participated, but the identities of the participants will be protected.

What will happen to the information the participants give?

Participation in this research is confidential. This means that the researchers named below will be aware of the identity of your organisation, but your organisation will not be revealed in any reports, presentations, or public documentation. However, you should be aware that as this is a small project, the identity of your organisation might be obvious to others.

Only my supervisor and I will have access to the survey data. The survey data will be kept securely and destroyed on the 29th of October 2023.

Be aware that the identities and contributions of participants will be kept confidential from your organisation.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in my research report and may be used in academic publications and conferences. I will also provide your organisation with a report summarising the results of the research if requested.

If you accept this invitation, what are the rights of your organisation?

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide that your organisation will participate, you have the right to:

- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- withdraw your organisation's participation from the study before the 31st of August 2021;
- be able to read a report of this research.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Student:

Name: Lisette Templeton
templelise@myvuw.ac.nz

Supervisor:

Name: Anne Goulding
Role: Professor of Information Services Management
School: Information Management
Phone: +64 4 463 5887
anne.goulding@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Convenor of the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee: Associate Professor Judith Loveridge, email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

How Public Library Staff Engage with Video Games and Video Game Services

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE [ORGANISATION]

This consent form will be held for 5 years.

Researcher: Lisette Templeton, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington.

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree that my organisation will take part.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw this organisation from this study at any point before the 31st of August 2021, and the information provided by members of the organisation will be destroyed, provided they can be identified.
- Any information the participants provide will be included in a final report, but the surveys will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor.
- The identities of the participants will remain confidential to the researcher(s).
- I understand that the results will be used for a research report and may be used in academic publications and conferences.
- The name of my organisation will not be used in reports, publications, or conferences.
- I would like to receive a copy of the final report and have added my email address below. Yes No

Signature of participant: _____

Name of participant: _____

Date: _____

Contact details:

Appendix D – Demographics Information

Table 10: Age range of respondents.

Age range	Percentage (number) of respondents
16 – 19 years old	1% (2)
20 – 29 years old	26% (48)
30 – 39 years old	27% (49)
40 – 49 years old	17% (32)
50 – 59 years old	17% (32)
60 – 69 years old	9% (16)
70 – 79 years old	1% (1)
Prefer not to say	2% (3)

Table 11: Gender of respondents.

Gender	Percentage (number) of respondents
Female	73% (134)
Male	21% (39)
Other	2% (3)
Prefer not to say	4% (7)

Table 12: General ethnic groups of respondents. (Multiple groups could be selected).

Ethnic Group	Percentage (number) of respondents
European	75% (138)
Māori	11% (21)
Pacific Peoples	7% (13)
Asian	6% (11)
Middle Eastern/Latin American/African	1% (2)
Other	5% (10)
Prefer not to say	2% (3)

Table 13: New Zealand region of respondents.

Region	Percentage (number) of respondents	Percentage of NZ Population (Stats NZ, 2021)
Auckland	44% (81)	33%
Canterbury	22% (41)	13%
Bay of Plenty	7% (13)	7%
Prefer not to say	4% (8)	-
Waikato	4% (7)	10%
Taranaki	4% (7)	2%
Manawatū-Whanganui	4% (7)	5%
Wellington	4% (7)	11%
Northland	3% (6)	4%
Southland	3% (5)	2%
Nelson	1% (1)	1%

Table 14: Respondents' type of position in libraries.

General position in libraries	Percentage (number) of respondents
Shelver	1% (1)
Library assistant	43% (79)
Librarian	33% (61)
Management	14% (26)
Other	7% (13)
Prefer not to say	2% (3)