Gaming among Adults in their 50's, 60's, and 70's

A new study examines differences in interest and gaming habits across those in their 50's, 60's and 70's

Video games are very popular among adults 50+, especially when played at home. One-half feel playing video games has a positive impact on their well-being as some use it to connect with family and friends. While most gamers spend money to support their hobby, those ages 60-69 spend the most on everything from in-app purchases to gaming mobile apps.

A high percentage of 50+ adults are gamers, although gaming decreases with age.

Almost one-half (49%) of adults 50-59 years play video games, while roughly two in five of those 60-69 (44%) and 70+ (39%) do the same. A majority of all ages play at least once a week or more (50-59: 77%; 60-69: 80%; 70+: 80%).

Among 50+ gamers, roughly seven in ten (70%) of those 50-59, almost two-third of those 60-69 (64%) and one-half (52%) of those 70+ play video games using their smartphones, an unsurprising trend given the higher ownership of smartphones by adults 50+ (78%).

iPhone ownership is about the same regardless of age (50-59: 42%; 60-69: 39%; 70+: 37%). People 50-59 (45%) and 60-69 (41%) are more likely than those 70+ (27%) to own an Android smartphone.

Overall, video game console ownership is low among adults 50+ (26%), ranging from about two in five (43%) among those 50-59 – possibly due to children still living at home – down to one in ten (10%) among those 70+. Interestingly, regardless of the rate of ownership or age, very few gamers play on video game consoles (50-59: 23%; 60-69: 22%; 70+: 18%).

A video game is...

interactive digital entertainment played via a computer, a game console, a phone, or tablet.

Online video gaming

requires an internet connection; if games are played with or against opponents who are not physically present or if the game played is on an app, then it is most likely a game that can be played online.

Smartphone ownership and use for playing video games by age

50+ gamers spend a significant amount of money supporting their hobby.

When looking at all categories together, adults in their 50's and 60's on average spend far more (\$163 and \$162 respectively) than those in their 70's (\$68), but when looking at specific categories those in their 60's outspend those in their 50's and 70's on content like paid digital apps, mobile in-app purchases, and even full physical games. Adults in their 60's are only significantly outspent by those 50-59 when it comes to hardware (portable and video game consoles).

Adults 50+ learn about new video games and gaming hardware through non-website sources like family and friends, their children and grandchildren, and articles and sales promotions (50-59: 57%; 60-69: 50%; 70+: 48%), as well as through advertisements, like online banners, TV, magazines, and billboards (50-59: 42%; 60-69: 40%; 70+: 35%).

The influence of children and grandchildren on gamers' awareness of new games or gaming technology and which games are purchased varies indirectly with age, as those who are younger are more greatly influenced by family than those at the older end of the spectrum (50-59: 39% and 34%, respectively; 60-69: 32% and 26%, respectively; 70+: 22% and 13%, respectively):

Average spent supporting video game hobby by category

Gamers 50-64 are more than four times as likely than those 65+ to own a portable gaming device, like a Nintendo Switch and Playstation Vita.

Gamers in their 50's (39%) are slightly more likely than their older counterparts to try games before they buy.

50+ gamers who play on their own do so by choice.

A majority of gamers 50+ play at home (50-59: 90%; 60-69: 93%; 70+ 93%) and two-thirds of those say they play video games while doing something else like watching TV (50-59: 64%, 60-69: 66%, 70+: 64%). Most gamers play before going to bed (50-59: 72%, 60-69: 65%, 70+: 60%).

Gamers in their 50's, 60's and 70's play video games by themselves most of the time (79%, 81% and 85% respectively) and, when asked with whom they prefer to play, almost one-half say they prefer it to play alone (49%, 47%, and 48%, respectively). However, almost one-quarter (23%) of those 60-69 indicate they prefer to play with other adults online.

Among those 50-59 who play with someone in person, two in five (42%) play video games with their children compared to only 16% of those in their 60's and 6% of those in their 70's.

Among gamers in their 50's, 60's and 70's who play video games with other people, the top reasons for everyone include because they think it is more fun or interesting, for competition, to stay connected with friends and family, or because the game requires it.

About three in ten 50+ gamers play video games in-person with their spouse or partner

Top reasons for playing video games with other people

Most older gamers believe playing video games positively impacts their overall well-being.

Four in five adults 50+ find enjoyment in playing video games (50-59: 83%; 60-69: 87%; 70+: 84%).

Two in five of those 50-59 (41%) and 60-69 (39%) and one-third of those 70+ (33%) have played a video game specifically to improve their brain health or stay mentally sharp. This could explain why puzzles and logic games such as Candy Crush or Sudoku are most popular among those 50+ (50-59: 54%; 60-69: 51%; 70+: 42%), although tile and card games – which also require critical thinking – are preferred by those 70+ (63%), compared to their younger cohorts (50-59: 38%; 60-69: 47%).

Four in five or more of those 50+ do not think playing video games has an impact on their sleeping (50-59: 80%; 60-69: 85%; 70+: 89%) and at least three-quarters say gaming does not impact their exercise time (50-59: 76%; 60-69: 79%; 70+: 81%) or spending time with friends and family (50-59: 79%; 60-69: 83%; 70+: 86%).

Three in five of those in their 50's and 60's (59%) and one-half of those 70+ (51%) find that playing video games provide them with relief from anxiety or stress

Top three types of video games adults 50+ like to play

Implications

New games recommended by friends and family and those advertised in traditional media will be more likely to spark the interest of adults 50+ so long as it aligns with their interests. For example, one-third of those in their 50's and 60's play video games for competitive reasons, while this does not seem to interest those 70+. Well-being is another important reason adults age 50+ play video games as many say playing games relieves stress and anxiety. In order to create more interest in playing video games, it is essential to understand what games are played, when, and with whom. Most older gamers like to play one-player games alone at night, but some do like to play games with others.

The buying power of 50+ gamers is tremendous. Those 50-59 outspend their older cohorts on gaming consoles. However, 60-69 year-olds outspend all others when it comes to buying video game content like the full physical game for a PC or console, in-app purchases, and game mobile apps, all of which are recurring purchases.

For more information, contact Brittne Nelson-Kakulla, bkakulla@aarp.org
For media inquiries, contact_media@aarp.org.