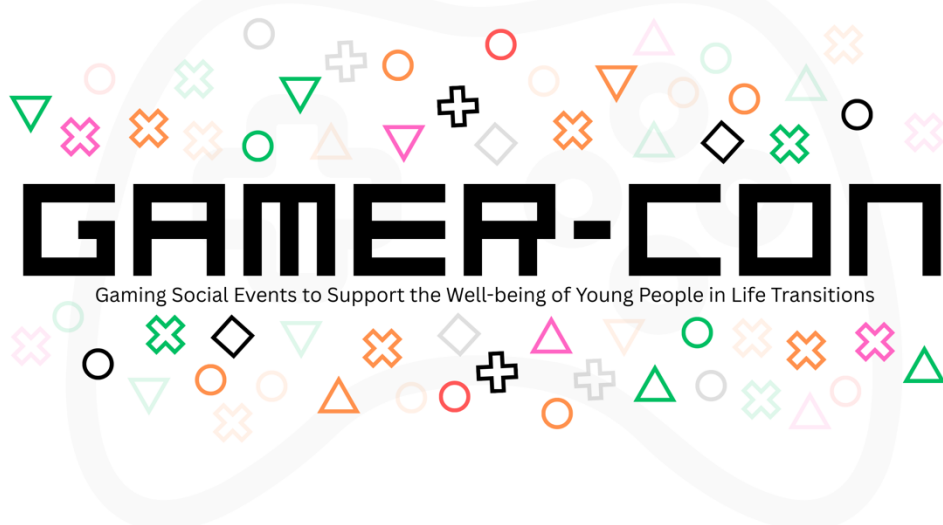


A vertical column of various geometric shapes (circles, triangles, squares, crosses) in different colors (green, orange, pink, grey, black) is positioned along the left edge of the page.

Gamer-Con Activity 1

National Report from Ireland



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Introduction

This report presents the findings from the Gamer-Con survey conducted in Ireland as part of Activity 1 of the Erasmus+ Small-scale Partnership project, Gaming Social Events to Support the Well-being of Young People in Life Transitions [Gamer-Con#]. The purpose of the survey was to gain insights into the gaming habits, preferences and social needs of young people aged 18–25, in order to design inclusive gaming-based social events and well-being programmes tailored to their interests and circumstances.

In recent years, gaming has become a central part of youth culture, particularly among young people navigating periods of transition such as leaving education, entering the workforce or facing unemployment. While outdated stereotypes often portray gaming as a socially isolating hobby, contemporary research and lived experiences increasingly demonstrate its potential to support mental health, build resilience and encourage the development of meaningful social connections. Multiplayer games, cooperative missions and online communities offer opportunities for teamwork, communication and shared achievement – all of which are skills that are transferable to real-world settings. For young people in rural areas or those who feel disconnected from traditional supports, gaming can provide them with a bridge to connection and community.

The Gamer-Con project aims to build on this potential through an innovative approach called ‘embedded well-being’. This concept refers to the practice of integrating mental health and well-being discussions into regular, engaging activities – in this case, gaming sessions; so that young people can reflect on and discuss their emotional well-being in a natural, low-pressure environment. Rather than isolating well-being interventions as something separate or clinical, ‘embedded well-being’ creates space for conversation and self-awareness to emerge through enjoyable, peer-led interactions. The Gamer-Con project team see this as a powerful way to reach young people who may be reluctant communicators or who feel excluded from more formal support systems. The following report presents the findings from the survey in Ireland.

Methodology

The Gamer-Con survey was designed as a short, accessible questionnaire aimed at young people aged 18 to 25 living in Ireland, Iceland and Spain. The survey focused on understanding their gaming habits, social preferences and interest in community-based gaming activities that support well-being. The survey included both multiple-choice and open-ended questions to ensure a mix of quantitative data and space for individual perspectives. In addition to UMT disseminating the survey among young people in our own networks and programmes, two Irish youth organisations kindly supported the dissemination and collection of survey responses in Ireland. These were:

- The Cavan Centre (Cavan)
- Foróige Portlaoise



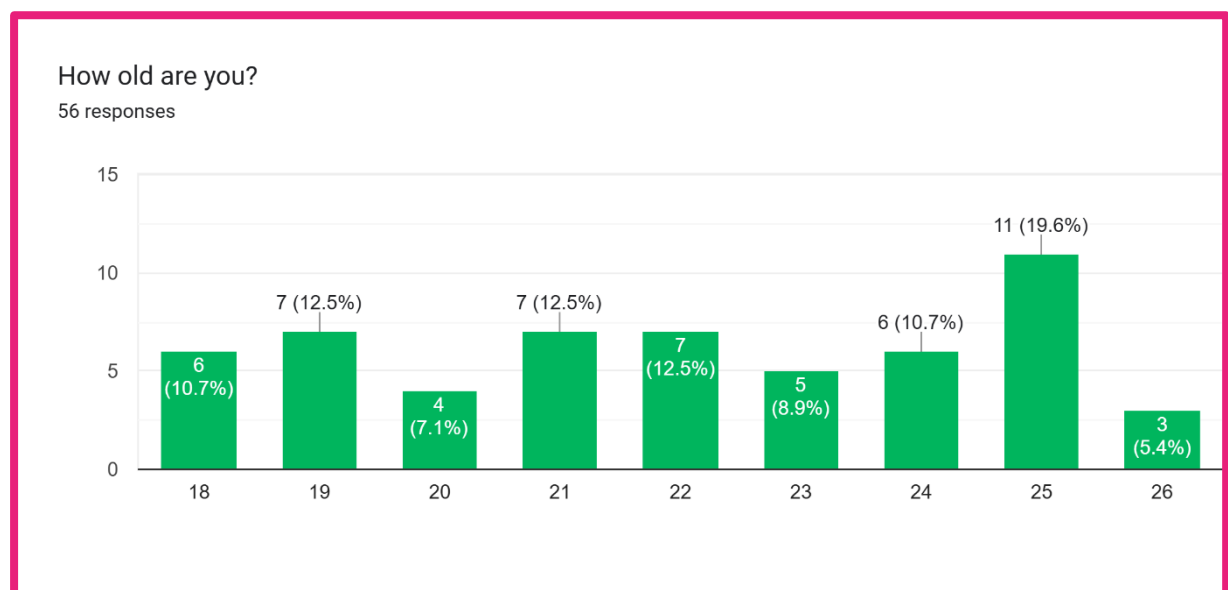
These organisations engaged directly with young people in their communities and helped to ensure that a diverse group of respondents contributed to the data. Their involvement was so important in reaching young people in both urban and rural settings, particularly those who may experience social or economic barriers to participation in traditional youth services. The input gathered reflects a wide range of experiences and will inform the planning of inclusive and relevant Gamer-Con activities in Ireland.

Survey Findings

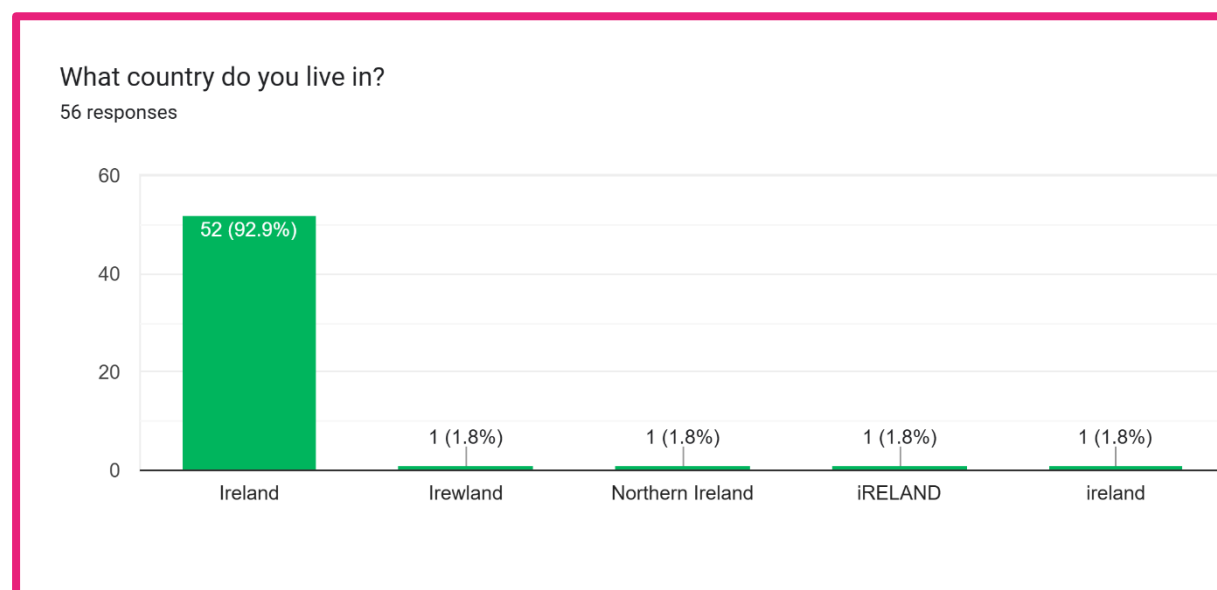
The following section presents an overview of the key findings from the survey disseminated in Ireland.

Profile of Participants

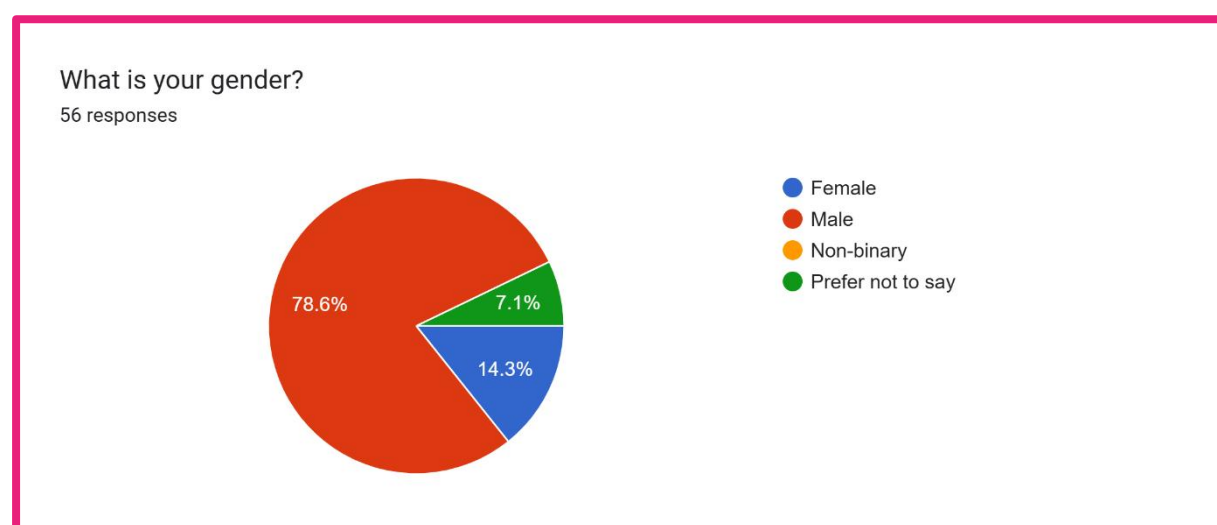
A total of 56 young people aged between 18 and 26 took part in the survey. For the purpose of this report, as the target group for this survey were young people aged 18 to 25 years, only the 53 respondents who were within this age range will be reported from now on.



All but one respondent was based in Ireland, though there was some variation in spelling and formatting of the country field. One respondent was from Northern Ireland:



Most respondents (over 75%) identified as male, with a smaller number of female participants and a few preferring not to state their gender.

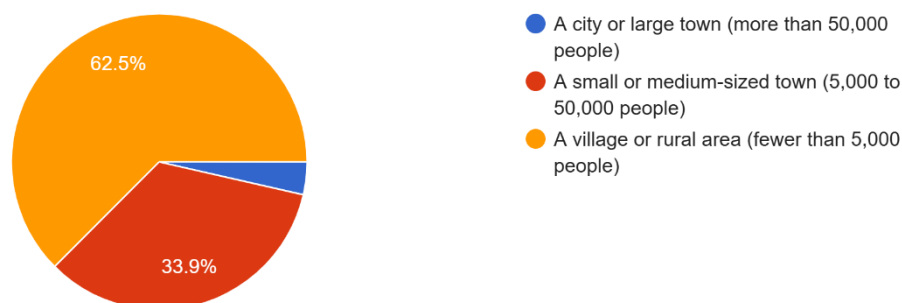


Given that the Gamer-Con initiative aims to reach marginalised youth, including those who may feel isolated, it is important to acknowledge this gender imbalance and consider strategies to reach more diverse groups in future outreach efforts.

The vast majority of the respondents (over 95%) reported living in rural villages or small towns with populations under 50,000. This confirms that the project is successfully engaging young people in areas where access to social activities and mental health supports may be more limited. Rural isolation is a known risk factor for poor mental

health and limited peer engagement, so the use of digital gaming platforms as a tool for building social connections is both relevant and timely.

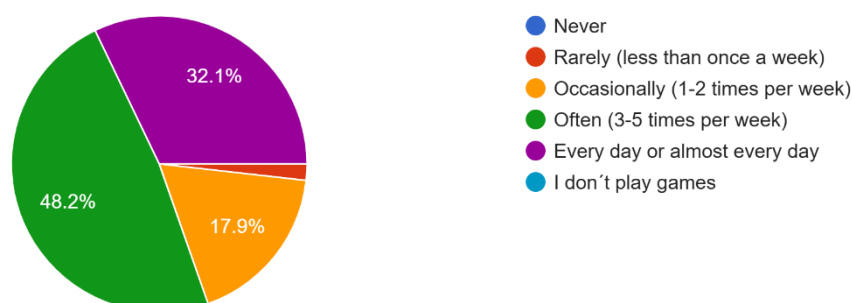
Do you live in:
56 responses



Gaming frequency and mode

When asked about how often they play games, the most common responses were “often (3–5 times per week)” and “every day.” This high level of engagement highlights the relevance of gaming in these young people’s lives and reinforces the potential of using gaming as a medium for youth work and social inclusion.

How often do you play video games?
56 responses

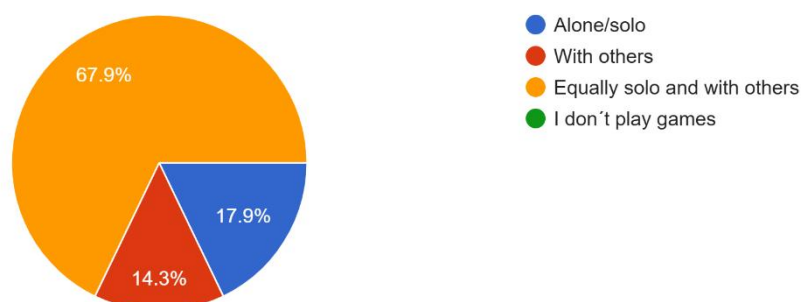


In terms of gaming style, the majority of participants reported that they play both solo and with others, suggesting a balanced experience of individual and social gaming. This is significant because it shows that participants are not solely engaging in gaming as a solitary activity but are also open to, or already enjoying, multiplayer and co-operative formats.



Do you mostly play games alone or with others?

56 responses

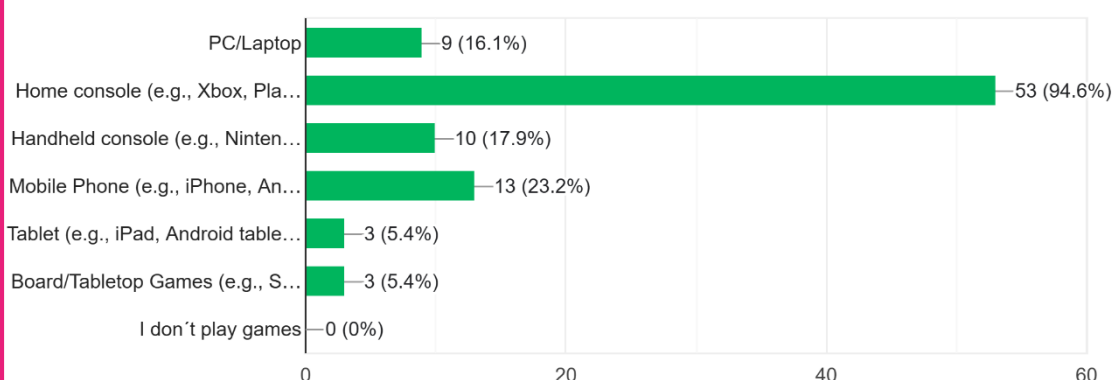


Preferred platforms

The dominant platform for gaming among participants was the home console, such as PlayStation or Xbox. PC/laptop and mobile gaming also featured, but to a lesser extent.

Where do you play games mostly?

56 responses

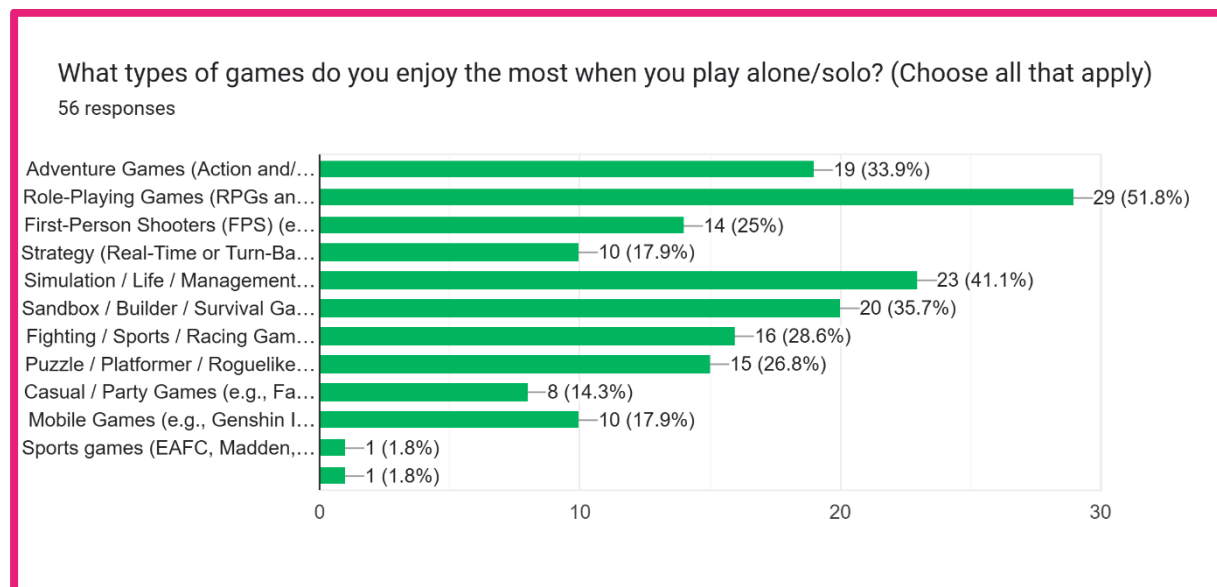


This indicates that many young people have access to mainstream gaming equipment, which is an important consideration when planning in-person events. Ensuring a good mix of console-based and accessible formats (e.g. mobile, online platforms) will support greater participation and inclusivity.

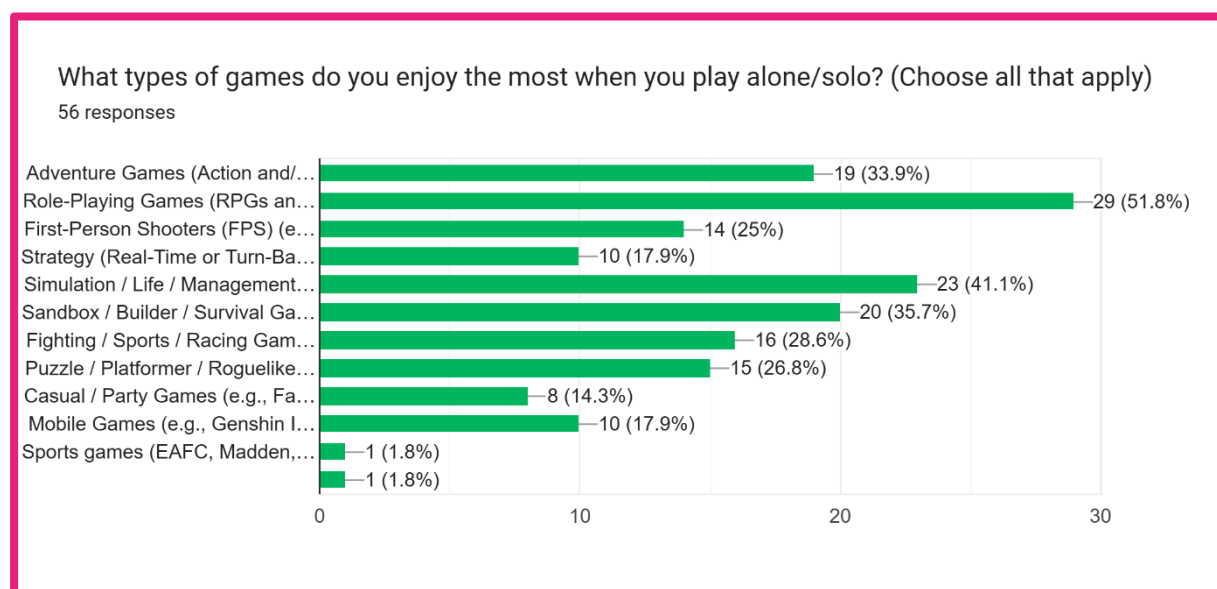
Preferred types of games

When playing solo, the most popular genres among respondents were role-playing games (RPGs), cited 29 times, and simulation or life management games like The Sims or Stardew Valley (23 times). Sandbox and builder games such as Minecraft and Terraria

were also popular (20 mentions), followed by narrative-driven adventure games, sports titles, and roguelike or puzzle-based games. This suggests that when playing alone, many young people prefer games that allow for deep immersion, creativity and a sense of progression or escapism.



In contrast, when playing with others, preferences shifted slightly. The most popular group gaming genres were fighting, sports, and racing games (30 mentions), followed closely by sandbox/survival titles (22), first-person shooters (21) and casual/party games like Jackbox Party Pack or Among Us (21).



This pattern shows that multiplayer gaming often involves high-energy, fast-paced or socially interactive games that promote friendly competition or team-based fun. These findings reinforce the importance of offering a range of experiences during Gamer-Con



events: balancing relaxed, creative games with more social and competitive formats to meet the diverse expectations of participants.

List of favourite games right now

Across all responses, the most frequently mentioned game was Minecraft, appearing 11 times. Its enduring popularity among young people likely reflects its accessibility, customisability and appeal across both solo and social gameplay styles. Terraria followed closely with 7 mentions, further highlighting the popularity of sandbox and survival-style games that encourage creativity and exploration.

Other highly cited titles included Skyrim (6), Call of Duty, Animal Crossing, Final Fantasy XIV, FIFA, Hades, and Cyberpunk 2077; each with 5 mentions. These games span a range of genres, from immersive role-playing and life simulation to sports and narrative adventure. Titles like Valorant and Genshin Impact were each mentioned 4 times, while Stardew Valley, Rematch and Baldur's Gate each received 3 mentions.

This spread reinforces earlier findings that gaming preferences among Irish youth are highly varied, and that both fast-paced competitive games and slower, story-driven or creative titles play a key role in how young people engage with games. The mix of solo and multiplayer favourites also suggests that any youth intervention hoping to engage young people through gaming, like Gamer-Con, will benefit from offering both competitive and cooperative formats, alongside games that support self-expression, immersion and personal storytelling.

Terraria and Skyrim

Final Fantasy XIV Stardew Valley Dead Cells FIFA

Valorant, Skyrim, Terraria

Sims & Animal Crossing

Portal, The Sims 4, Firewatch, Minecraft

Hades, Minecraft, Terraria, Final Fantasy XIV

Portal, FIFA, Cyberpunk 2077, Baldur's Gate 3

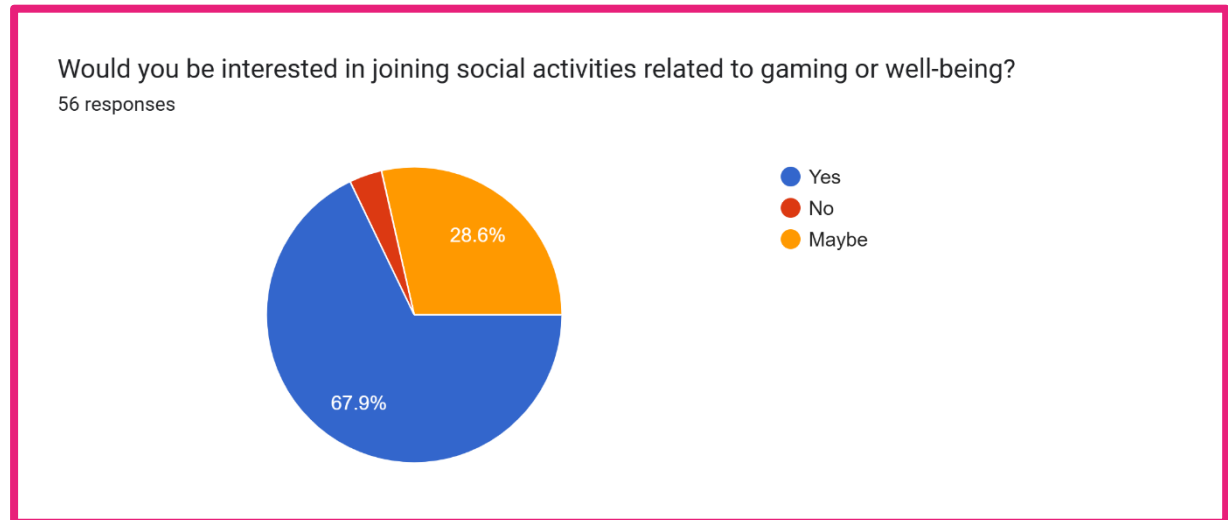
Splitgate 2, FC 25, Elden Ring, Rematch

Animal Crossing



Interest in social activities

The majority of respondents (68%) expressed a definite interest in joining social activities related to gaming or well-being, with a further 28% answering “maybe.” Only 4% indicated no interest.



This is a very encouraging finding, suggesting that there is a strong appetite among young people for community-based gaming events that also include discussions around mental health and well-being. This aligns well with the Gamer-Con approach of using ‘embedded well-being’ techniques to support youth mental health through informal activities.

Interest in types of activities

When asked about the types of activities they would be most interested in joining, the overwhelming majority of respondents (48 out of 53) selected “weekly gaming meetups (online or in person).” This shows a clear preference for regular, structured opportunities to socialise through gaming, and affirms the Gamer-Con model of delivering weekly events as a core component of its programme.

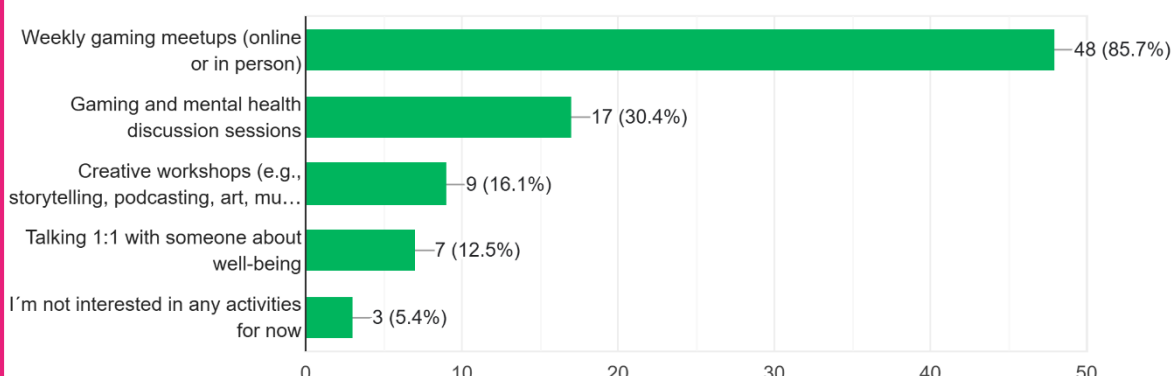
Beyond this, 17 participants expressed interest in “gaming and mental health discussion sessions,” suggesting that a significant number of young people are open to engaging with well-being topics when they are naturally embedded within gaming environments.

Additional interest was shown in creative workshops (such as storytelling, podcasting, or music), cited by 9 respondents, and 1:1 conversations about well-being, noted by 7. Only 3 participants indicated that they were not currently interested in any activities.



What kind of activities would you be interested in? (check all that apply)

56 responses



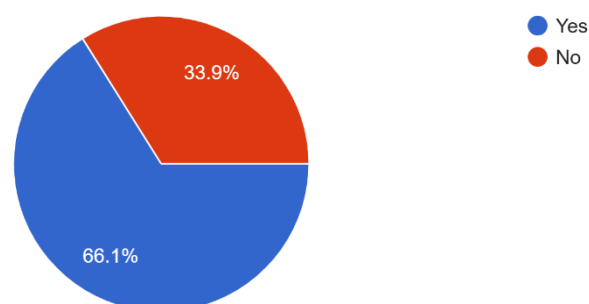
These responses further validate the Gamer-Con approach of combining play, peer interaction and well-being promotion, and also highlight the value of offering creative or expressive outlets alongside group sessions to accommodate different levels of comfort and communication styles.

Consent for future contact

Over two-thirds of participants agreed to be contacted about future activities. This presents a strong opportunity to build a community of young people who are not only engaged in gaming, but who are open to staying connected with the wider Gamer-Con initiative. This finding will be particularly valuable when recruiting participants for the next project phase – the social events and follow-up evaluation activities.

Would you like to be contacted about future activities?

56 responses



Quotes from young people

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if there was anything else that they would like to share or suggest for future activities, to which we received the following feedback and inputs:

1. I think gaming is very important for connecting with others online, and it is a real social outlet for people who otherwise feel awkward engaging in social activities.
2. It would be good to have themed game nights or events like you mentioned but for different types of gamers. I don't usually play online with others, but it would be good to get into that sort of thing, I guess.
3. I have been playing most types of video games for over 20 years now and from my experiences I recommend setting up for example, league races for racing games, dedicated servers for suitable games like for example arma reforge etc., a dedicated Discord as a central point to organise events and to get people talking to each other, I believe things like that will have the biggest success to create a community.
4. Gaming has helped me a lot to come out of my shell, so I think it is a good way to get other people who may be shy to talk about their well-being...
5. I think online sessions and with a coach to introduce well-being concepts would be very effective.
6. It would be new to meet people online and engage in gaming, but in person would be weird.
7. Local gaming competitions, workshops on gaming with mental health.
8. Online tournaments with various different games to cater for all.
9. Creative activities would be good.
10. Online gaming meet ups would be best.
11. Online gaming sessions please.
12. I would prefer to attend online sessions around gaming and mental health.



Conclusion

The results of the Gamer-Con survey provide a rich insight into the gaming habits, social preferences and well-being interests of young people aged 18 to 25 in Ireland. With most respondents playing games several times a week, either solo or with others; and showing strong interest in regular gaming meetups, it is clear that gaming plays a significant role in their social and recreational lives. Popular titles such as Minecraft, Terraria, Skyrim and Call of Duty point to the appeal of both creative exploration and competitive gameplay, making these ideal touchpoints for building inclusive gaming events.

The concept of ‘embedded well-being’, where mental health is naturally integrated into informal activities, was strongly supported by the findings. Many participants expressed interest in gaming sessions that include mental health discussions, creative workshops and even 1:1 support conversations. This openness indicates a readiness among young people to engage with well-being topics when they are presented in a comfortable, non-clinical setting that aligns with their interests. The strong rural representation among respondents also highlights the potential of the Gamer-Con model to bridge social and geographical gaps where formal support may be limited.

Overall, the survey validates the project’s strategy of using gaming as a positive tool to promote connection, inclusion and emotional resilience among young people in life transition. The insights gained will directly inform the structure of the upcoming Gamer-Con social events in Ireland, ensuring they are grounded in young people’s lived realities and genuine preferences. With the support of youth organisations across the country, and by centring young people’s voices in the process, Gamer-Con is well-positioned to create safe, fun and meaningful experiences that support both mental health and community building.



GAMER-CON



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