Performance addicted: exploring gamers' priorities

What do gamers think about performance and how does it help them to succeed

Introduction

Whether you're a pro-athlete, hard-core gamer, or casual player, what unites everyone is exploring the performance of equipment, and obtaining specialist inside knowledge that gives you the edge over any opponent.

Logging into forums, and chatrooms or joining public gaming sessions are two ways

people gain information on new releases or build their teams, but they also run the risk of being scammed or hacked without the right level of knowledge or savviness. Young players with little understanding of gamification are also less cautious and could be more likely to hand over or use credit card data in pay-to-win situations for skins or to level up.

This study commissioned by Kaspersky explores the world of gaming, with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of attitudes towards performance amongst different types of video gamers, and how the industry supports players with an impactful range of products and services focused on performance.

Methodology

Kaspersky commissioned Arlington Research to undertake quantitative online research with 10,000 gamers in 21 countries, from eSports athletes to gaming influencers and hardcore or gadget gamers.

Those taking part were from the USA, UK, Germany, Italy, Spain, China, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Russia, Turkey, France, Netherlands, Portugal, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Peru, South Africa, UAE and Saudi Arabia.

All mentioned gamers groups in the survey:

- **eSports pros**

Definition: see gaming performance as extremely or very important; have taken part in tournaments at least once in the last two years; are either building up an income from gaming or value making some money from it

- **eSports amateurs**

Definition: see gaming performance as at least important; have taken part in tournaments at least once in the last two years and like taking part in tournaments and competitions; do NOT look for money making opportunities from their gaming

- **Hardcore gamers**

Definition: play at least 20 hours per week; have NOT taken part in any tournaments in the last two years; are NOT interested in earning money from their gaming

- **Gadget gamers**

Definition: invest a high or very high sum of money to improve their gaming performance (hardware/training/nutrition, etc.). They agree/agree strongly with the statements: 'Improving PC performance significantly improves how well you play' and 'Special gaming equipment definitely improves how well I play'

- **Gaming influencers**

Definition: stream at least once a month; have a minimum of 1,000 followers

- **Top gaming influencers**

Definition: stream at least once a week and have at least 10,000 followers

Gaming industry background

At $235bn the global computer games industry is bigger than the movie and music sectors combined, with a three billion-strong worldwide community.

Whether you're building new worlds in Minecraft, action role-playing with Genshin Impact, strategizing Warhammer, or rising to the top in Valorant, like football, there are professional and semi-pro athletes. And like the rest of the sport world there are also big money competitions where rivalries are just as fierce.

This year's Gamescom event, Europe's biggest video and computer games show held annually in *Köln*, organized by Verband der Deutschen Games-Branche (Association of German video game industry), saw more than 40 blockbuster titles launched.

The 'Open Night Live' preview event was witnessed by 12,000,000 eager online viewers and more than 100,000 people at the city festival site. More than 1,000 exhibitors from 53 countries also showcased thousands of products and services to 250,000 visitors.

Key findings

- **Performance is key to winning**
  As with any sport, the key to winning is performance, with 91% of respondents saying that whether it's computer power or a headset, hardware performance is an important element in their gaming experience that helps them achieve stronger results.

- *With great processing power comes practice and bandwidth*
  The key to a great gaming experience is the processing power (49%) for all gamers, and – like sport – practice gives you the edge (41%), while great bandwidth (40%) will also offer an advantage over rivals who may have slower data connections.

- **Good mental health helps**
  If you're a regular cybersport tournament competitor, maintaining good mental health will help you react under pressure, 76% of gamers say is essential in order to succeed.

- **Build and upgrade to win**
  When it comes to kit, gamers prefer to build their own desktop PC or laptop computer system, carefully specified to the games they play to improve performance, with 66% purchasing a graphics card, memory, hard drive, whole PC or monitor that specifically meets their needs.

- **Gaming equipment makes a difference**
  Almost three-quarters (72%) of professional gamers put accomplishing strong results down to choosing specific gaming equipment such as the right headset, keyboard, mouse, steering wheel, and audio speakers or seat.

- **Losing is not an option**
  The survey results reflect that gamers take games very seriously and are ready to use every possible method or trick to win – 84% agree that if they know how to beat an opponent, they should use every chance they can use that knowledge.

Impact of gaming on the lives of
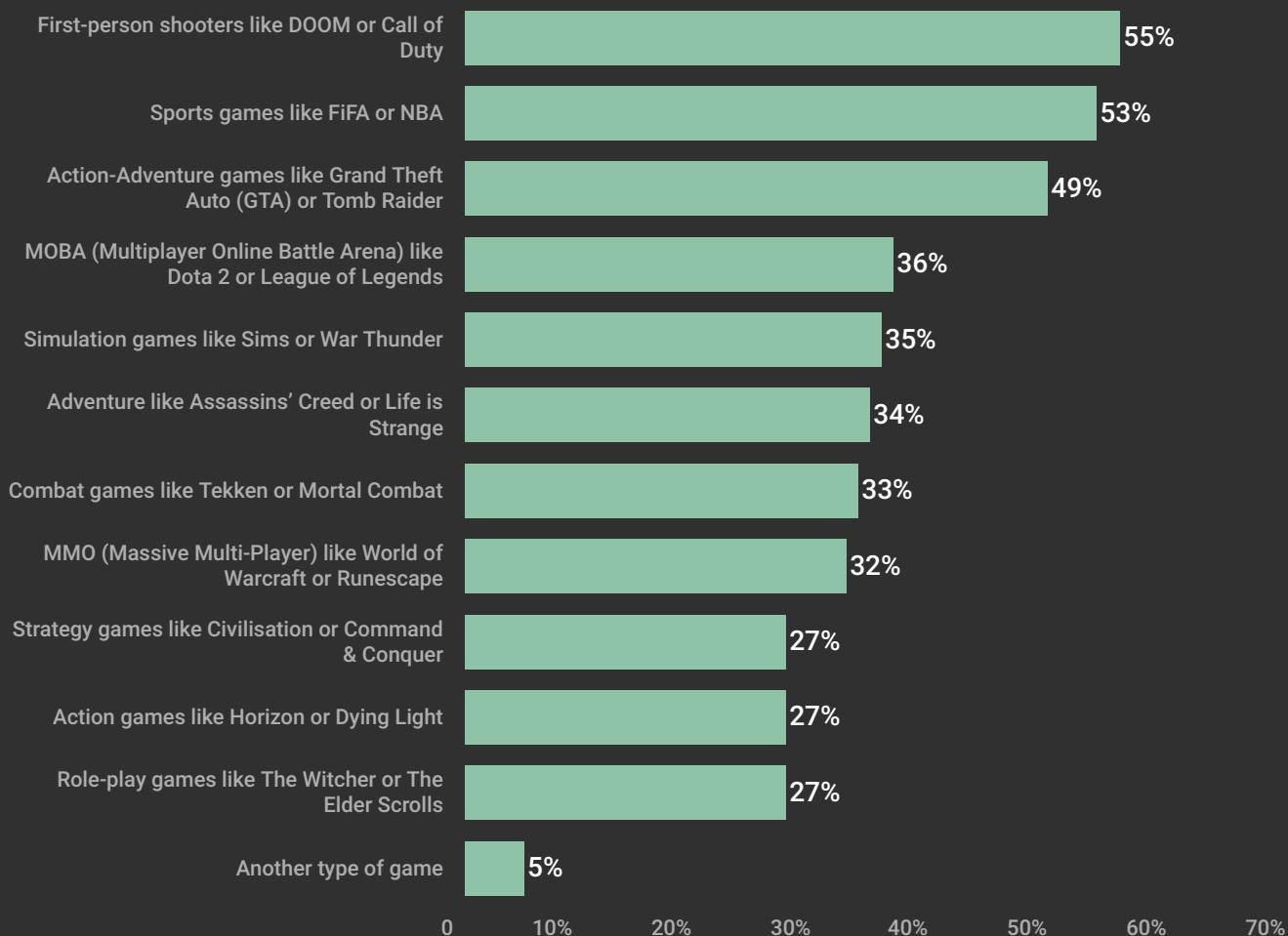
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When did games first appear in the lives of gamers?

The computer games industry is 51-years-old and has come a long way since Computer Space and Galaxy Game appeared in arcades. While 6% of gamers surveyed started to play in the '80s, just a fourth (25%) started playing before 2000. When asked about the importance of video gaming in their lives, a clear generational split emerges between each 'tribe'. For influencers who *stream at least once a month and have a minimum of 1,000 followers*, 51% say it's extremely important, while only a fifth of hardcore gamers (20%) rate gaming as extremely important.

Which are the most popular gaming genres in the community?

According to research, the most popular gaming genres are first-person shooters like DOOM or Call of Duty (55%). Sports games such as FIFA or NBA (53%) and action-adventures games like GTA or Tomb Raider (49%) closely follow.

Top gaming influencers mostly prefer to play sports games (68%), while hardcore gamers least like this genre (38%), preferring action adventures (50%) or first-person shooters (49%). eSport athletes mostly like sport-themed games (58%) and least like role-play gamers like The Witcher or The Elder Scrolls (6%).

More than half of gamers team up for multi-player games (58%), but overall, this genre makes up only a fourth (25%) of the total number of all games.

Game Type	Percentage
First-person shooters like DOOM or Call of Duty	55%
Sports games like FiFA or NBA	53%
Action-Adventure games like Grand Theft Auto (GTA) or Tomb Raider	49%
MOBA (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena) like Dota 2 or League of Legends	36%
Simulation games like Sims or War Thunder	35%
Adventure like Assassins' Creed or Life is Strange	34%
Combat games like Tekken or Mortal Combat	33%
MMO (Massive Multi-Player) like World of Warcraft or Runescape	32%
Strategy games like Civilisation or Command & Conquer	27%
Action games like Horizon or Dying Light	27%
Role-play games like The Witcher or The Elder Scrolls	27%
Another type of game	5%

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A few words about gaming equipment

To achieve the most immersive gaming experience that brings you closer to the action, top gaming influencers followed by gadget gamers are more likely to have invested in tablets, chairs, VR headsets, etc.

Additionally, those who like to 'Speedrun' the playthrough of a game, or section of a video game, with the goal of completing it as fast as possible, prefer to have hi-specification laptops than team, or competition players.

Gaming influencers are also more likely to use gaming laptops (70%). Despite the hype around the launches of virtual reality headsets six years ago, they're yet to make an impact with gamers, with just 19% using one.

Making your gaming hobby a profession

During the pandemic, the games industry saw a huge influx in the number of people taking part in eSport or gaming competitions. More than half of all committed gamers (56%) have taken part in competitions in the last two years, with eSports amateurs (50%) playing the most, followed by top gaming influencers (54%).

Attitudes towards gamers has also changed with many considering it as forming a stable income. Top gaming influencers (52%) are most likely to have built up or are building up a steady income from streaming or playing in tournaments, while professional eSport athletes (15%) are actively doing something to reach this goal, with 85% are happy to earn some money. Hardcore games are in it for the glory of the win, but not a financial reward, with 57% not interested in earning any money from what they do.

In order to turn gaming into financial income, maintaining or even increasing performance and achieving better results is most important for top gaming influencers (53%), with eSport amateurs (52%) following. Unsurprisingly, professional eSport players say their performance is a very important factor (66%).

Performance is everything for gamers

The price of performance for gamers

As with any form of sport, there's more to competing than meets the eye, and
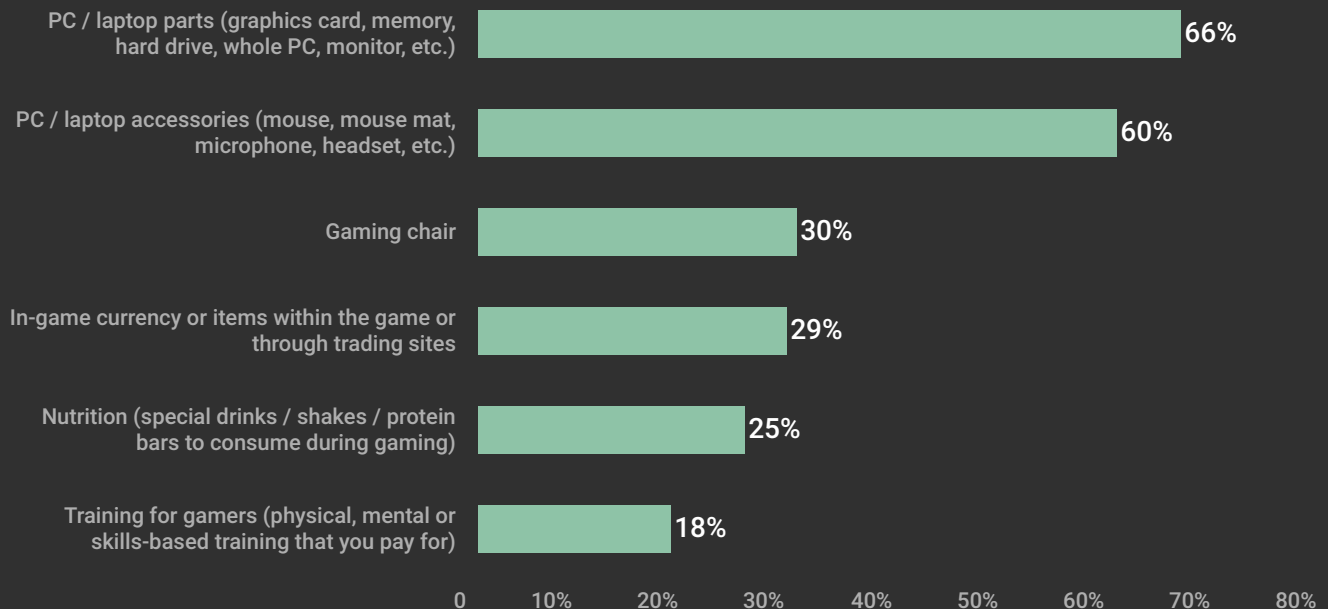
gaming is no different. For gamers the most crucial element to achieving stronger results is computer performance, with 91% naming it as an 'important' part of their experience.

How much does performance cost?

Survey data shows that the biggest money spenders are top gaming influencers, with 41% investing a very high sums of money in their equipment to optimize gaming performance, while 34% of top influencers spend will spend 'high' amounts.

Surprisingly, hardcore gamers (35%) have a more relaxed attitude towards spending money on performance and are less willing to invest.

The most popular upgrades are on PC or laptop parts such as high-end graphics cards, memory, hard drives, whole PCs, or high-performance monitors, with 66% of gamers purchasing these items. Other accessories include a mouse, mouse mat, microphone, and headset (60%) with most groups investing in a gaming chair (30%) or gaming currency (29%) to achieve better results.

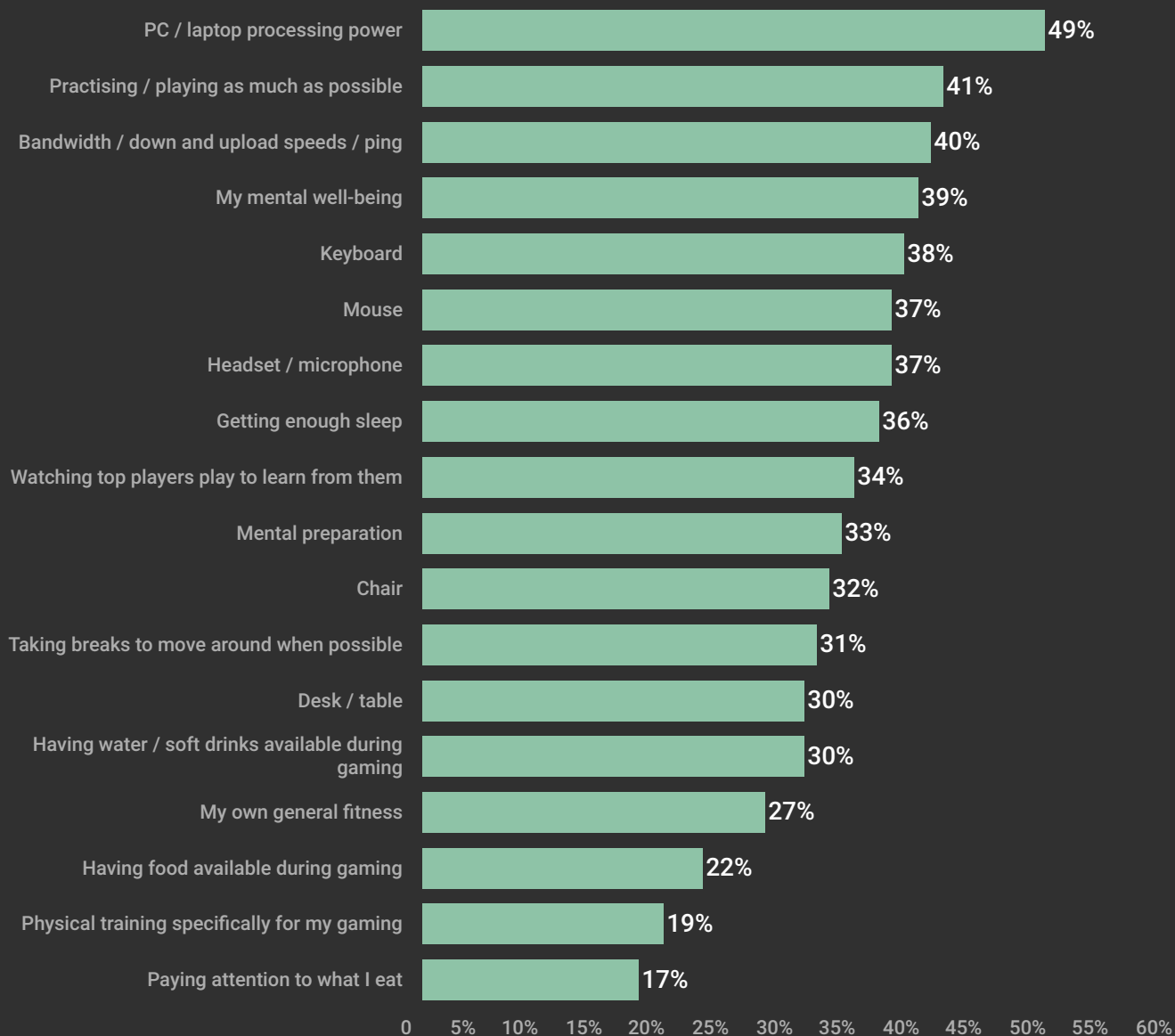| Category	Percentage
PC / laptop parts (graphics card, memory, hard drive, whole PC, monitor, etc.)	66%
PC / laptop accessories (mouse, mouse mat, microphone, headset, etc.)	60%
Gaming chair	30%
In-game currency or items within the game or through trading sites	29%
Nutrition (special drinks / shakes / protein bars to consume during gaming)	25%
Training for gamers (physical, mental or skills-based training that you pay for)	18%

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What specific performance elements are the most effective?

The most successful performance upgrades or investments are to PC or laptop processing power (49%); while 40% spend on bandwidth/down and upload speeds/ping to gain the edge over rivals. High-speed computer accessories such as keyboards (38%), mice (37%) headsets or microphones (37%), or chairs (32%) are also seen as a help.

Interestingly, only half of the professional eSport athletes (55%) and top gaming influencers (52%) strongly agree that improving PC or laptop performance significantly improves how well you play.

Mental health and maintaining a positive lifestyle are mentioned by 39% of gamers as an important part of their performance; 36% ensure they get a great night's sleep and 33% mentally prepare ahead of any game.

Attitudes towards managing healthy habits have also shifted, with 31% of gamers mentioning they take breaks to move around when possible, keep in good shape (27%), or even have a physical training program specifically for their gaming (19%). Gamers still need to work on their nutrition, but 30% noted that they make sure they have water or soft drinks available during sessions, with 22% ensuring they have food with them. You are what you eat, but sadly just 17% of gamers of all genres pay close attention to nutrition.

PC / laptop processing power	49%
Practising / playing as much as possible	41%
Bandwidth / down and upload speeds / ping	40%
My mental well-being	39%
Keyboard	38%
Mouse	37%
Headset / microphone	37%
Getting enough sleep	36%
Watching top players play to learn from them	34%
Mental preparation	33%
Chair	32%
Taking breaks to move around when possible	31%
Desk / table	30%
Having water / soft drinks available during gaming	30%
My own general fitness	27%
Having food available during gaming	22%
Physical training specifically for my gaming	19%
Paying attention to what I eat	17%

0 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45% 50% 55% 60%

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Practice, practice, practice for competitions

Most gamers (72%) believe hardware performance is the defining crucial factor to obtaining stronger results in a competition, while 76% confirmed that good mental health is essential to succeed in a cybersport tournament. The more you play, the better the results, no matter what for 61%, but hardcore gamers agree less with this statement than others – only 32% – in comparison to gadget gamers (40%) or top gaming influencers (43%). Also, the majority of gamers prefer to play clean and thrive without cheating, with 75% believing it will make them more successful in the long run.

Games&Life balance in the gaming world

Investing in the best possible computer is a key step to becoming a great gamer, but to be truly legendary, 39% say maintaining mental well-being is an increasingly important aspect of performance; 36% pay attention to sleep and 33% mentally prepare in some way.

More than half agree that good mental health is essential to succeeding (64%), with gadget gamers putting the most emphasis on mental health.

Despite all of these statements, healthy lifestyle is still an ambiguous topic across the gaming community. Most top gamer influencers (44%) and gadget gamers (30%) believe it's important only for professional gamers. On the contrary, hardcore gamers and professional athletes think this is crucial. Interestingly hardcore gamers have the smallest gap between agreed (42%) and disagreed (34%) in comparison to other groups.

Sometimes the thrill of the game is the biggest driver. 59% of top gaming influencers and 55% of eSport amateurs prefer to keep playing to get better rather than take more breaks for sleep or to eat healthier food. Surprisingly, hardcore gamers (42%) mostly disagree with this position in comparison to other groups.

The dark side of gaming – cheating and hacking

Cheating – issue or opportunity?

Like sprinters, footballers and baseball players, becoming or being seen as a good role model for most gamers is a key goal for professional eSport athletes (61%). The issue of cheating and attitudes to this problem are seen as having a big impact on the rest of the gaming community.

Our research results show that cheating is a problem with ambiguous attitudes, with the vast majority of the gaming world (75%) agreeing that playing without cheating makes them more successful in the long run.

One of the best ways of improving gaming performance for 70% of respondents is for the community to share tips and tricks, with the majority (65%) agreeing it's not okay to use cheats in a game if it means your team wins. But at the same time, more than a fourth (35%) would cheat for their team to win.

Gaming loopholes highlighted an indifference, with the community divided almost in two equal groups – with 49% of gamers agree using loopholes in a game to get ahead is perfectly OK, while 51% don't appreciate such an approach.

For 84%, playing fair and square is the best option as – if you know how to beat your opponents – you should take every chance you can to use that knowledge.

The majority of the gaming community (76%) agree that taking chances or using dishonest methods to achieve the goal, only highlights a lack of skill.

Hacking – a huge reason to be vigilant

Hacking is still a significant problem for the online gaming community, with more than 70% confirming hacking is a huge problem, a view supported most by esport

amateurs (77%). While the industry invests millions in graphics and game development, it has a long way to go in terms of user account security – 63% of respondents agree that their accounts are not properly protected.

According to the survey, a third (33%) of all gamers' accounts globally have been hacked at some point in the last two years. Influencers' accounts were the most common targets (50% globally), with 57% of top gaming influencers also targeted in the same period. While it caused issues for all players, 10% of hardcore gamers say it did not affect them, compared to a 2% global average.

What about consequences?

The biggest impact of a cyberattack to gamers is the loss of progress (55%) in a game, important items or currency (46%). After experiencing a cyberattack, 41% have become more security conscious about their accounts – 38% changed the way they think about cybersecurity.

Impact on team morale is an important factor for players (36%) who may have lost contact with people they play with when locked out of an account (29%) and spent less money on items and currency in games (22%) as a direct result. Just 2% of gamers didn't suffer any issues. Top gaming influencers suffered more than any other gaming groups from the effects of hacking, while esport amateurs were seen to be the most security conscious (50%).

The cost of gaming performance

The report shows that gamers are focused on winning and the key to gaining performance edge is investing computer power and exceptional equipment that truly enhances the gaming experience.

The ethical crossover from reality to the virtual world is similar, with gamers wanting to do the right thing, and being seen as a good role model, yet hacking is still a huge problem for the online gaming community.

While the industry and gamers are willing to invest in ways of enhancing performance

in terms of games, and performance-enhancing equipment, the majority of the gaming community (63%) that responded to the survey still don't feel their accounts are safe enough and 89% want to attract game developers' attention to this issue.

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