

# UMass Lowell Center for Public Opinion

## 2017 Sports Poll Release – Esports and Competitive Video Gaming

### Results from Two Surveys

N=1,000 American adults  
Margin of error +/- 3.7% for all respondents  
August 14-21, 2017

N=522 Teens/Young Adults Ages 14-21  
Margin of error +/- 6.0% for all respondents  
August 22-September 8, 2017

See <http://uml.edu/polls> for full questionnaire/topline results and detailed methodology disclosure.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

In partnership with the Washington Post, the UMass Lowell Center for Public Opinion conducted two surveys on American attitudes about sports. This, the seventh and final release in a series, focuses on the emergence of video gaming and esports, particularly among America's youth.

### FINDINGS:

#### **Competitive video gaming or esports is just as popular among 14-21 year olds as professional football**

- In an earlier release, we detailed that football is America's undisputed favorite sport, but among teenagers and young adults aged 14-21, just 40% count themselves as football fans and just as many, 38%, count themselves as fans of esports or competitive video gaming.

#### **A majority of 14-21 year olds have participated in an online video game in the last 12 months; nearly 3/4 are involved in gaming either through participating or watching other plays video games**

- 59% of 14-21 year-olds have either played an online video game with multiple player or participated in a video game competition in the last 12 months; 58% of 14-21 year-olds have watched people playing games online on platforms like Twitch or YouTube. Collectively, 73% of all 14-21 year olds have either played or watched video games with others in the last 12 months; only 27% have not.
- Among young/teen men, 79% have played an online video game or participated in a video game competition, 74% have watched others playing games online, and 89% have done at least one of those activities. That means that just one in ten young/teen men aged 14-21 have had no

interaction with online gaming in the last 12 months. Among young/teen women, 39% have played an online video game/participated in a video game competition, 42% have watched video game playing online, and more than half, 56%, have participated in at least one of these activities in the last 12 months.

- The differences between teen/young adult esports exposure as gamers and fans/watchers differs markedly from the general population. In our sample of all American adults, just 18% reported playing an online video game with multiple players or participating in a video game competition in the last 12 months. Likewise, just 16% reported watching video gaming online on platforms like Twitch or YouTube.
- Among those who reported being gamers, those who are teens/young adults also appear to devote considerably more time to gaming. The median gamer from our teen/young adult survey reported playing at least a few times a week, and among the most serious gamers (those who play every day or almost every day), the median gamer reported playing 3-4 hours per day. Among gamers from the adult sample, the median gamer reported playing about “once a week,” and among the serious gamers (those who play every day or almost every day), the median gamer reported playing 1-2 hours per day.

#### **Viewing preferences are very different generationally**

- Our surveys asked those that have watched esports/competitive video gaming how they would rather spend a free hour of time, watching a live esports competition or watching a live a sporting event, such as football or the Olympics. In the sample of adults, 78% said they preferred the live sporting event, with only 15% choosing the live esports competition. Interestingly, among teens/young adults (ages 14-21), a majority (65%) also chose the live sporting event, but a larger proportion of the sample (35%) chose a live esports competition. Even more notable is that this number is even higher (41%) among the youngest respondents in the survey – those 14-17. This appears to represent a fairly considerable difference in the sports viewing preferences among American teenagers.

#### **Americans play video games primarily because they are fun; but gaming is also seen as a social activity**

- Among adults and teenagers who play and watch online video games, the top two reasons that they identify as a “major” reason that they do so is “for entertainment and fun” (80% of teens/young adults; 74% of adults) and “enjoying time with friends” (54% of teens/young adults; 55% of adults). A majority of adults also identify “the challenge of the game” (56%) and “enjoying the competition” (51%) as “major reasons” that they engage with video games.
- Additionally, teens and young adults (45%) are more likely to say that they have made friends by playing competitive online video games than are gamers from our adult sample (32%).
- Interestingly, however, teen/young women who participate in gaming are much less likely to report that they have made friends online – 36% compared to 50% of teen/young men. Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that 53% of all those surveyed in our teen/young adult poll said that women are treated with less respect than men in the video gaming community, compared to 42% who said they are treated equally and 5% who said women are treated with

more respect. Among this group, 63% of teen/young women say that women are treated with less respect compared to 44% of men who say that women are treated with less respect than men.