

The Impact of Digital Games

An engaging and diverse cultural experience



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1. Introduction

Are digital games a waste of time or do they provide meaningful experiences on par with film, literature and music? Until now, no one in Denmark has really explored the nuances of this question.

With this report, for the first time, we put both numbers and words to what digital games mean to Danes. The goal of the study is to contribute to a knowledge-based foundation for discussing what digital games mean to Danish citizens.

Digital games are a significant part of our lives. Over the past 20 years, the number of people playing digital games has grown significantly. Today, more than half of the world's population plays digital games ¹. In Denmark, the number has not only kept pace with the world, but exceeds the global level. Playing digital

¹ - Global Games Market Report, Newzoo (2023)

games is no longer a niche activity that takes place in dark basements or children's bedrooms. Gaming is everywhere. And our survey shows that 4 out of 5 Danes play digital games.

The game industry has also developed into an important growth industry for Denmark. Danish gaming companies are behind some of the most successful games in the world – both commercially and artistically. The gaming industry also creates attractive jobs, drives exports, and promotes technological innovation.

Games are both a media form and a cultural product. They tell the stories in and about our society. Games can be equal parts pastime and formative experiences. At a national level, it is therefore important to understand games as both a cultural form and a leisure activity. We need the conversation about games to be nuanced in order to have a considered and reflective approach to the role games play in our society and in the everyday lives of Danes.

The question of what games mean has not been adequately researched in the past. Previous studies have often been characterised

by a focus on children's game consumption or screen time, rather than on what the experiences mean for citizens in a broader sense. This report will address that question.

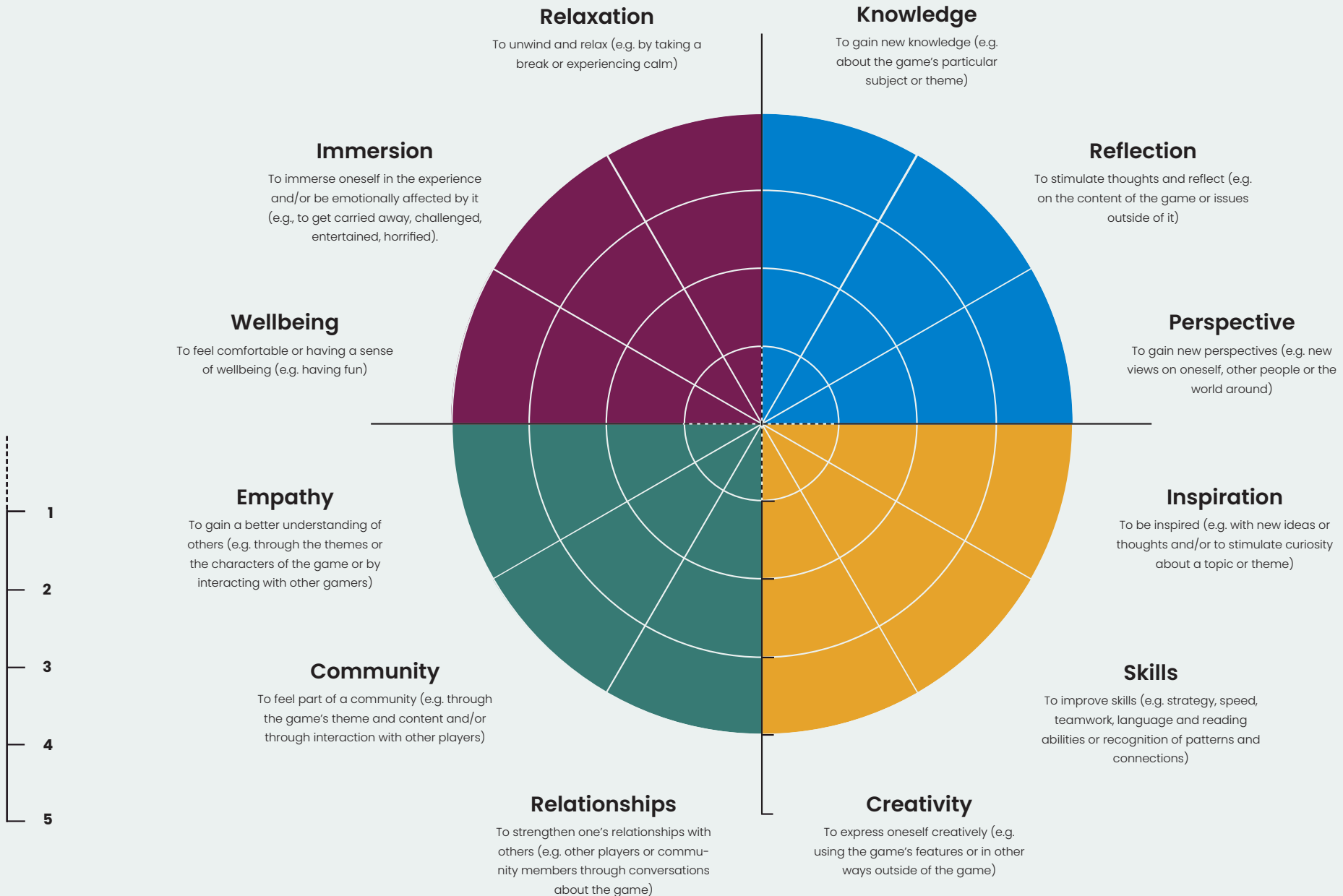
The goal of the study is to shed light on what games mean to Danes and what cultural product games are in order to contribute to a more informed conversation on the topic. Hopefully, the analysis will both shed light on the experience of gaming and break down some of the prejudices about it.

The study was commissioned by the Danish Producers' Association and conducted by Seismonaut. Our study is based on The Experience Impact CompassTM. The compass allows us to capture the nuances of how experiences matter to people. The analysis is based on both a representative survey of Danes and in-depth focus groups with selected citizens who play different genres of games. The result is a report that puts into words and numbers the experiences Danes have with gaming and what these experiences mean to them.

Enjoy the reading!

Emotional impact

Intellectual impact



Social impact

Creative impact

The Experience Impact Compass

The Experience Impact Compass was developed by Seismonaut and has been used and qualified in a wide range of analyses where we have investigated what different experiences really mean to people. The compass is a tool used to unfold and nuance the many dimensions of how experiences affect people.

The compass consists of four dimensions that capture how experiences matter *emotionally*, *intellectually*, *creatively* and *socially*. In other words, the four dimensions help us understand:

- Emotionally – How we feel
- Intellectually – How we think
- Creatively – How we engage
- Socially – How we interact

Each dimension contains three parameters. In the survey, respondents who play digital games indicated the extent to which they experienced impact from their gaming experiences as expressed by these parameters.

Briefly About the Method

The Experience Impact Compass has formed the basis for a questionnaire survey with a representative sample of the Danish population. To provide a nuanced picture of the diverse impact of different games, we asked about seven different genres of games: puzzle games, platform games, sports games, action games, adventure games, strategy games and creative games.

The questionnaire included questions about Danes' gaming habits, their use of different genres of games, and their experiences within each genre. A total of 1,501 Danes responded to the survey, of which 1,172 stated that they play digital games.

We supplemented the survey with three focus group interviews. The purpose of the focus groups was to capture Danes' own words on their gaming experiences and how these experiences are meaningful. In total, 18 individuals participated across the three focus groups. The participants were selected to ensure a broad distribution across gender, age, geography and education level, as well as how much and in what ways the participants play digital games.

In the report, we use the terms "digital games" and "games" to refer to the same thing. The survey covers all digital games that Danes play on a screen, regardless of whether it is on a mobile phone, tablet, computer, console or virtual reality. The survey *does not* include gambling, betting, lottery or similar. In the questionnaire survey and in the focus groups, we have therefore asked respondents to disregard these kinds of games.

Read more about the methodology behind the study at the end of the report.

2. Summary

Digital games are for – and matter to – all Danes

Digital games are for all Danes – and all players get value from their gaming experiences. Four out of five Danes play digital games. And when they play, it's because games are an accessible experience and cultural product that gives them a meaningful break from everyday life. Games are a way for Danes to relax. What's more, different games mean different things to the people who play them.

Digital games are for all Danes. 79% of Danes have played digital games in the past year. And two out of three Danes play digital games every week. A larger proportion of Danes under the age of 40 play digital games compared to those older than 40. If you look only at those who play digital games, there is not much difference in gaming habits across age groups. In these groups, Danes play games about equally often and equally much.

The seven game genres provide different gaming experiences

There are differences in what games Danes play – and how they play them. Where and how you play depends to a large extent on the games you play. Some games are primarily a solitary experience. Other games are experiences that you share with others. Some

games, such as puzzle games, are therefore primarily used by Danes to take a short and meaningful break. Other games, such as adventure games, are experiences that Danes immerse themselves in for a mental break. When it comes to games such as action games and sports games, Danes mainly play with people they already know or people they meet through the games.

Danes in different age groups play different games

The differences in which games Danes play are particularly evident across age groups. Danes aged 40 and over play puzzle games in particular, and most of them play alone. They primarily use games as a break from everyday life and as a way to relax by themselves. Danes under 40 play a wider range of game genres. For them, games provide multiple forms of experiences. Gaming can be a way to clear your mind, an experience that builds skills and confidence, a framework for personal expression, and a way to socialise with friends and family.

Games are a source of relaxation

Danes play games to relax. And while they relax with games, they get much more out of it than just relaxation. Danes play because

games are easy experiences to access and quickly provide a meaningful break. Gaming is a cultural activity that Danes reward themselves.

When we look at what games mean, games are primarily a break that gives Danes a mental free space. All genres of games thus provide an experience of both relaxation and wellbeing, which are parameters in the emotional dimension of The Experience Impact Compass. In addition, games stand out as a cultural product by being an active experience. This is evident in that all genres of games also score high on skills.

When Danes play games, they experience both a sense of unwinding and a feeling of improvement and learning. But beyond the parameters of relaxation, wellbeing and skills, the seven game genres have diverse impacts on those who play.

Emotionally, games are about relaxing and feeling good

Danes see games as a form of treat. Additionally, some games are particularly effective at evoking emotions. This applies to games that tell stories and build universes in which players immerse themselves. In these games, players particularly experience being emotionally affected, which further enhances their sense of relaxation and wellbeing.

Intellectually, games provide a free space for the mind

Games are a mental space that can provide room for new knowledge and food for thought. According to Danes, games provide a space for the mind to think and reflect on both in-game topics and everyday life. However, the intellectual dimension is not generally the highest scoring. It takes more than just relaxation to turn mental space into reflection. This occurs especially in games that require immersion. When players immerse themselves in stories and universes, it stimulates their thoughts. Games that are particularly immersive also score higher on the reflection and knowledge parameters of the intellectual dimension of the compass.

Creatively, games can build skills and allow for personal expression

Games are a form of play. It's a setting where testing, exploring and practising is fun. Games are an active experience, and across genres, Danes find that games give them new skills and confidence. All game genres score high on the skills parameter. In addition, some genres are also a way for Danes to express themselves personally. This is especially true for Danes under the age of 40, where the

creative games are more widespread. These games score particularly high on the creativity parameter in the creative dimension.

Socially, games bring us closer together.

Danes play most games by themselves. However, many also share the gaming experience with others. And when Danes play games with others, they become more connected through their gaming experiences. Overall, games as a cultural product do not score high on the social parameters. This is because a large proportion of the Danish population only play alone. The game genres and experiences that Danes share with others score particularly high on the relationships and community parameters in the social dimension. When Danes play with others, games have greater importance across the dimensions. And Danes who play with their children are particularly likely to feel that games bring them closer together. In that setting, the relationships parameter in the social dimension achieves the highest level across age groups.

3. How Danes Play Digital Games

3.1. Digital Games Are for All Danes

79% of all Danes have played a digital game in the past year, and for many Danes, games have become a regular part of everyday life. Digital games have a broad appeal and attract players from all age groups. Although young people are avid gamers, it's the older generation who are the most frequent gamers.

Digital games have taken centre stage in the media and cultural consumption of Danes, and today appeal to all age groups. 62% of Danes play games every week, while 79% of Danes have played some game in the past year. This underscores that digital games have become an integral part of Danish culture and leisure time.

Two out of three Danes play digital games every week

If we look at the age group that most often plays digital games, young people come out on top. Among 16-24-year-old Danes, 72% play games either daily or weekly. However, if we look at those who have played digital games in the past year, the picture is somewhat different.

Although more young Danes are gamers,

games are a more common part of everyday life for the older generations of gamers. Two out of three Danes in the 55-79 age group play digital games. And among them, 85% play digital games either daily or weekly – and the majority play daily (65%). In comparison, 74% in the age group 16-24 years play digital games daily or weekly, and only 36% say they play daily.

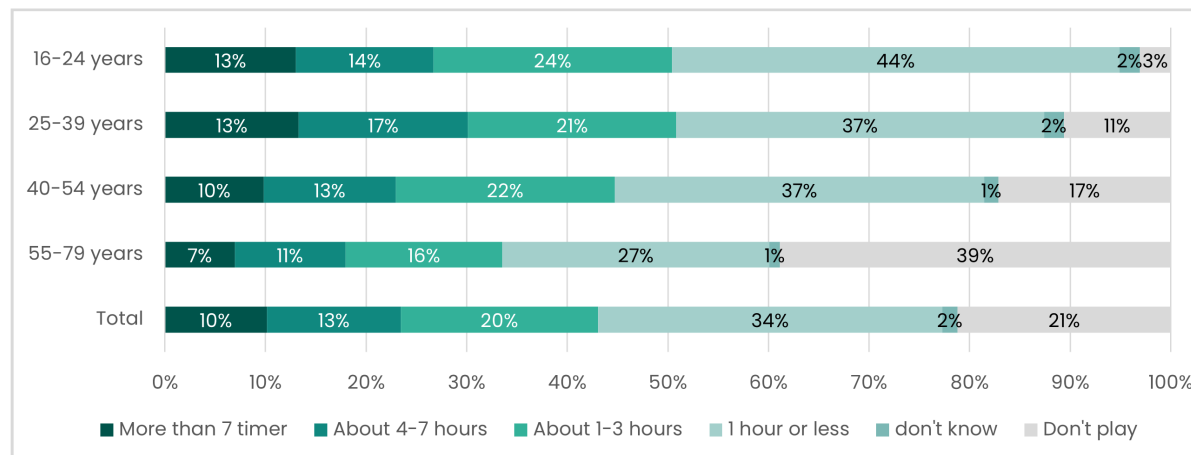
Danes spend a lot of time on digital games

Looking at how much Danes play, just under half (43%) of the population spends more than 1 hour a week playing digital games. Another 34% spend up to an hour a week playing digital games.

Age is not a decisive factor when it comes to the amount of time Danes spend on digital games. Danes in the 16-54 age group spend about the same amount of time overall. In the bigger picture, the oldest Danes who stand out, with one in three Danes (39%) aged 55-79 stating that they do not play digital games at all.

When we look solely at Danes who have played digital games within the last year, the difference evens out. Danes who play spend about the same amount of time gaming across age groups. Among those Danes who play digital games, over half spend more than an hour per week, and 30% play digital games for more than four hours a week.

Figure 1: How much time Danes spend on games per week



Respondents' answers to the question: "On average, how much time per week do you spend playing digital games?" (N=233, 16-24-year-olds; 363, 25-39-year-olds; 365, 40-54-year-olds; 540, 55-79-year-olds; Total, 1,172)

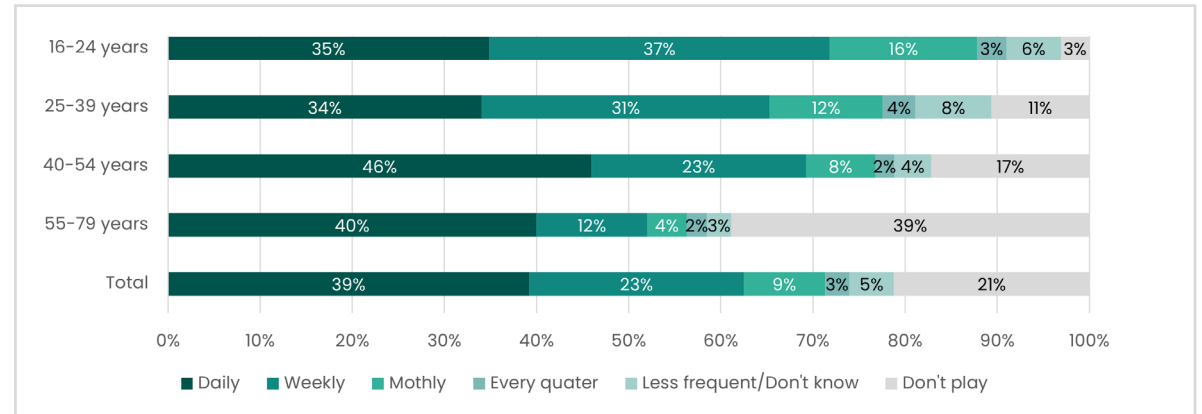
Young men and older women game the most¹

There are roughly equal numbers of women and men who play digital games. However, men spend slightly more time than women on digital games. 80% of women have played digital games in the past year, while the same is true for 77% of men. On the other hand, more men than women play more than an hour a week, with 46% of men doing so compared to 40% of women.

The amount of time men and women spend on digital games changes with age. In the 16-24 age group, 67% of men play digital games for more than an hour a week, compared to 36% of women. The same difference is true for the 25-39 age group. However, the differences level out over time. In the 55-79 age group, it's even the other way around, with more women (41%) than men (26%) playing more than an hour a week.

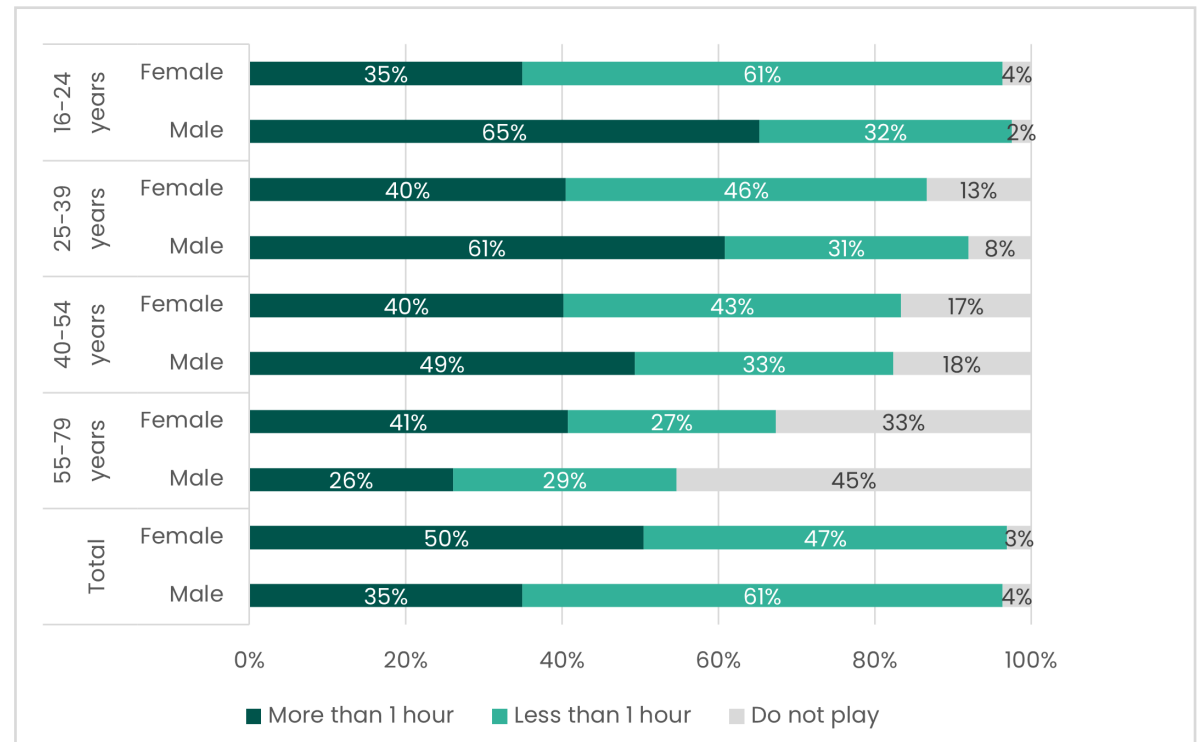
¹ - How much Danes play digital games varies most across age and gender. Across education levels, the differences are not as great. Danes with primary school or upper secondary/vocational upper secondary education as their highest level of education play the most. The reason for this pattern is that 16-24-year-olds make up the majority of this group.

Figure 2: How often Danes play games



Respondents' answers to the question: "How often do you play digital games?"
(N= 233, 16-24-year-olds; 363, 25-39-year-olds; 365, 40-54-year-olds; 540, 55-79-year-olds; Total, 1,172)

Figure 3: How much time men and women spend on games per week



Respondents' answers to the question: "On average, how much time per week do you spend playing digital games?"
(N=233, 16-24-year-olds; 363, 25-39-year-olds; 365, 40-54-year-olds; 540, 55-79-year-olds; Total, 1,172)

Photo: From the game *Minion Masters* by BetaDwarf



Photo: From the game *What the GOLF?* by Triband



Photo: From the game *Gerda: A Flame in Winter* by PortaPlay



Seven Genres of Digital Games

In the survey, we asked Danes about seven genres of games. The seven genres have enabled us to nuance the Danes' gaming experiences.¹

Instead of just asking **whether respondents** play digital games, we asked **which** of the seven genres they have played games within. In this way, we were able to examine both the gaming experiences and, not least, the diverse impacts of different gaming experiences.

¹ - The genres have been categorised so that the survey could capture the different ways Danes experience games. The main purpose of describing them was to help survey respondents recognise different types of games they have played.

1. Puzzle games

Games that involve solving puzzles, riddles or tasks, for example through simple actions such as moving shapes, performing simple actions or using numbers, words or letters, e.g. *Candy Crush*, *Wordfeud*, *Tetris*, *Threes!*, *Cut the Rope*, *Angry Birds*.

2. Platform games

Games that involve navigating a character through typically short courses by running, jumping, or leaping to avoid objects or enemies, or to solve the course's challenges, e.g. *Subway Surfers*, *Hollow Knight*, *Fall Guys*, *Super Mario 3D World*, *Inside*.

3. Sports games

Games with a competitive element or directly based on a sport where you are, for example, a coach or participant in a sport, e.g. *FIFA*, *Gran Turismo*, *Football Manager*, *Madden*, *Golf Story*, *Rocket League*.

4. Action games

Games with pace and dynamics, often involving shooting at or defeating enemies to achieve your goal, e.g. *GTA*, *Uncharted*, *HALO*, *Call of Duty*, *Fortnite*, *Counterstrike*.

5. Adventure games

Games that are about controlling characters with different abilities and exploring large, often fantasy-inspired universes, e.g. *World of Warcraft*, *God of War*, *Dragon Age*, *The Witcher*, *Elden Ring*, *Hogwarts Legacy*, *Zelda*.

6. Strategy games

Games that are about making the right choices, prioritising resources or devising and executing strategies to win, e.g. *Starcraft*, *Civilization*, *Clash of Clans* or *Clash Royal*, *Age of Empires*, *XCOM*.

7. Creative games

Games where you build or create things and interact with it or other players in the game universe, e.g. *Roblox*, *Minecraft*, *The Sims*, *Satisfactory*, *Stardew Valley*, *MovieStarPlanet*.

3.2. What You Play Is a Matter of Generation

Age plays a crucial role when it comes to what games Danes play and how. When Danes play digital games, age plays a significant role in determining which genre they dive into. Danes younger than 40 years generally play a wider range of game genres than those older than 40 years.

Games are often reduced to being primarily for children and youth. However, our study shows that games are for all age groups. What games people play, however, differ. Danes play different genres of games depending on whether they are younger or older than 40 year.

In general, Danes under the age of 40 have a wider range of preferences when it comes to game genres. In this age group, three out of four play games in more than one genre. They generally play all seven genres of games, ranging from action games to adventure games and strategy games. The opposite is true for Danes aged 40 and up who play games, where three out of four only play games within one genre, and most play games in the puzzle genre.

Thus, games are a more nuanced form of experience for Danes under 40. Here, the gamers seek everything from speed and tempo found in action games to the opportunities for creative expression found in creative games.

Specifically, creative games, action games, and sports games stand out. These genres are particularly popular in the age group 16–24 years, with respectively 57%, 51%, and 42% playing creative games, action games, and sports games.

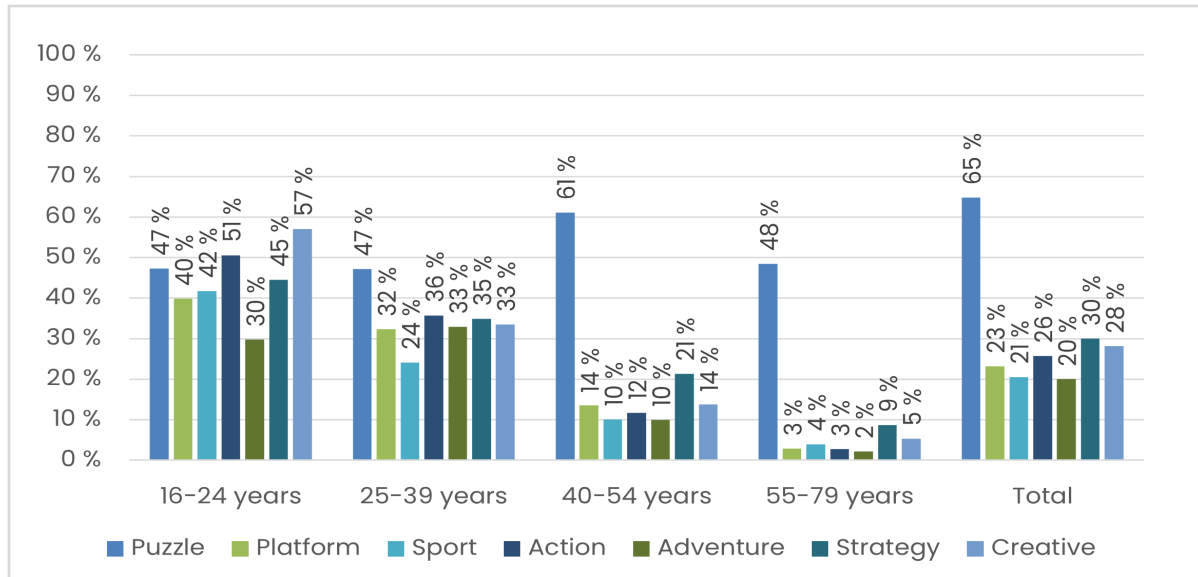
On the other hand, Danes older than 40 have a more focused taste in games. They mainly play games in the puzzle genre. So, for Danes aged 40 and up, gaming is more of a relaxing experience with simple games that still offer engagement, challenge and entertainment.

Gaming experiences are different across age

Games in different genres offer different kinds of experiences. For example, fast-paced action games can test the player's reaction speed, while adventure games can immerse the player in complex stories and deep characters. Puzzle games, on the other hand, can offer mental tests and relaxation at the same time.

At the same time, it matters to the experience – and the meaning taken from the experience – whether you play alone or with others, whether the game is something you immerse yourself in or something you do to pass time. As different age groups play different genres and in different ways, it will naturally affect the experienced impact of the games.

Figure 4: The genres that Danes play



Respondents' answers to the question: "Which of the following genres of games have you played in the past 12 months?"
 (N=233, 16-24-year-olds; 363, 25-39-year-olds; 365, 40-54-year-olds; 540, 55-79-year-olds; Total, 1,172)

Percentage of Danes playing digital games

Overall, 79% of Danes play digital games, but there are differences across age groups:

- 97% of those aged 16-24 play
- 89% of those aged 25-39 play
- 83% of those aged 40-54 play
- 61% of those aged 55-79 play

3.3. How You Play Depends on What You Play

How Danes play digital games depends on the genre of the game. Many games are something Danes play at home and alone, while other genres are more of a social experience either in person or online.

Games as a medium offer many different types of experiences. Some games are immersive experiences that allow us to immerse ourselves in another world for hours on end. These can be adventure games, creative games or strategy games where players have to invest time and energy in exploring detailed stories, building characters and worlds or making complex decisions.

Other games are simple experiences that you can quickly jump into and get a meaningful experience out of. These include platform games and puzzle games, where players can quickly get an engaging experience with simple tasks, short courses or small challenges.

In other words, games are very different across genres. As a result, Danes have very different gaming practices across genres. And by gaming practices, we mean the difference between whether games in a genre are played alone at home, with others, or online with either people you already know or people you meet through the game.

Some genres are primarily a solo experience, while others are a social experience

The typical Danish gaming practices is at home and alone. This can include experiences with adventure, creative or strategy games. In these genres, around 60% play alone. Around

25% sometimes play alone and sometimes with others, and around 15% only play with others. The genres that most people play alone can act as a form of unwinding, temporarily stepping out of reality and into the world of the game.

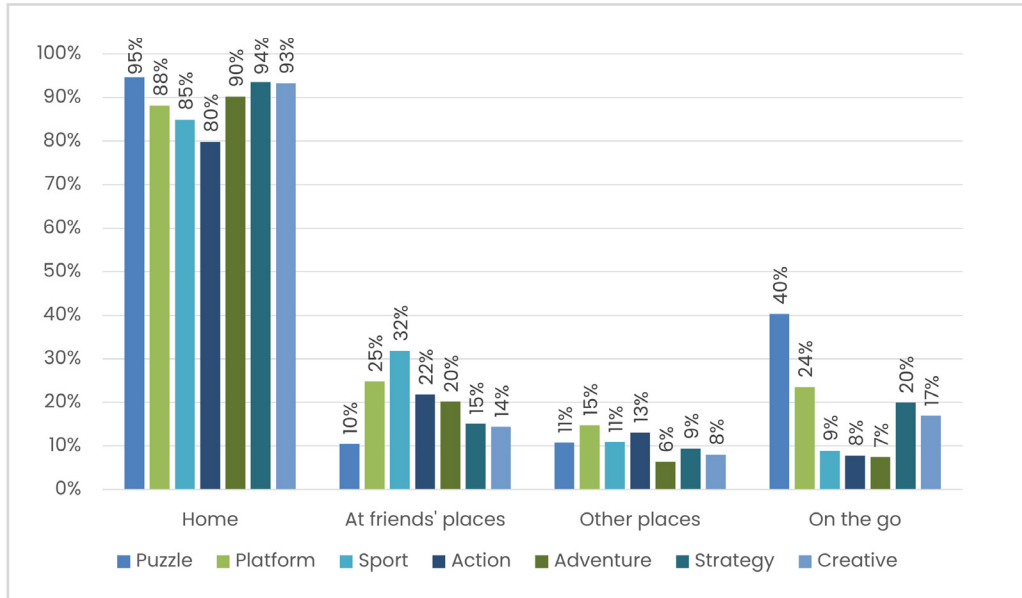
With sports and action games, the picture is different. Here, two out of three people play with others. In these genres, the gaming experience is often shared with others. But while games in both genres are very much social experiences, they are social in different ways.

Sports games stand out as the genre that most people play together in person with others and few play alone. Action games stand out as the genre that most people play online, either with people they know or people they have met through the game.

Games are played at home, but some games are used especially on the go

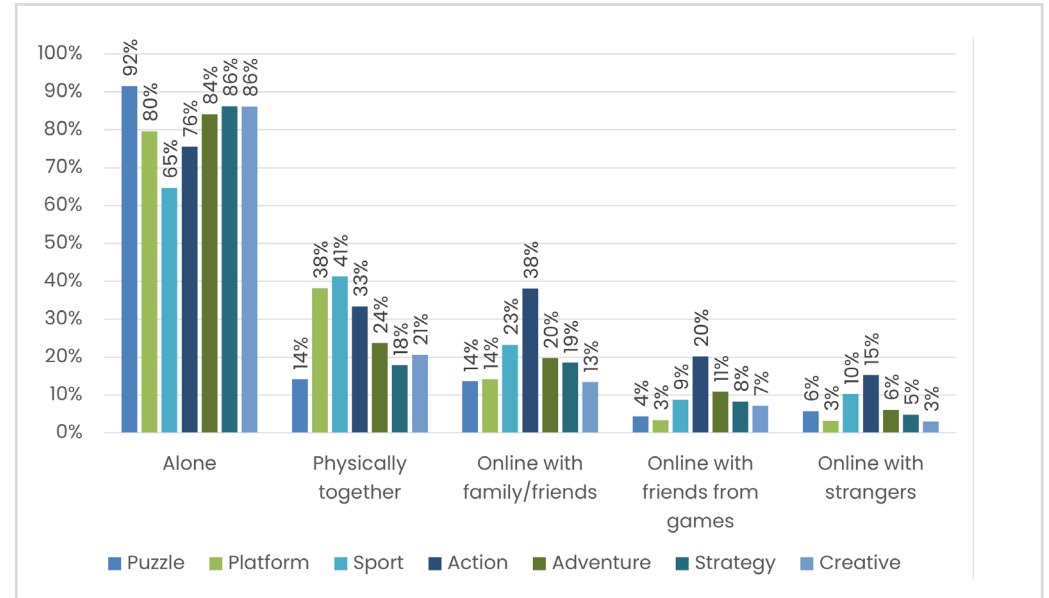
The typical Danish gaming practices is at home. Across game genres, 80-95% of gamers play games at home. Other games are games that Danes find time for during their busy day. These games are used as breaks when Danes need a short break. Some games are easy to play on the go. These types of games are typically simpler and quicker to start and don't require the same level of commitment or

Figure 5: Where Danes play digital games



Respondents' answers to the question: "How did you play when you played the specific game genre?" (N=233, 16-24-year-olds; 363, 25-39-year-olds; 365, 40-54-year-olds; 540, 55-79-year-olds; Note: Responses add up to more than 100% as respondents could provide multiple answers).

Figure 6: How Danes play digital games



Respondents' answers to the question: "How did you play when you played the specific game genre?" (N=233, 16-24-year-olds; 363, 25-39-year-olds; 365, 40-54-year-olds; 540, 55-79-year-olds; Note: Responses add up to more than 100% as respondents could provide multiple answers).

immersion to enjoy the game.

The puzzle genre is particularly well suited to this need. 90% of Danes who play puzzle games do so alone, and additionally, 40% play them on the go. Here, games become an opportunity to turn idle moments in everyday life into a mental break.

Some genres are more popular among Danes – and they can be time-consuming

When examining how often Danes who play each genre play, there are not significant differences. Around 50% of players within each genre play daily, and an additional 30–35% play weekly. However, there is a difference in how much time players within each genre spend. Although puzzle and platform games allow for short gaming sessions, it's the other genres that players spend the most time on weekly.

For some players, games can also become time-consuming. Games are easily accessible. Danes have access to them on smartphones, tablets, computers, and consoles. And games are designed to capture and retain the player's attention. So, sometimes, games end up taking more time than initially planned.

“Sometimes I need to get ready, and I have 10 minutes, so I should probably start, but I play a bit. Then suddenly 20–25 minutes pass and it all gets mega stressful.”

Male, 48 years old, plays puzzle, adventure, and strategy games, typically 4–7 hours a week

Our study did not focus on uncovering the potential negative consequences of gaming. Nevertheless, it's a relevant perspective to include, as it's something several participants commented on in focus groups. There can be several reasons why the time-consuming aspect of games is prominent among many respondents. Like other media forms, such as streaming and social media, games are designed to capture and retain the user's attention. Thus, there are Danes who spend more time than they perhaps wished. At the same time, there seems to be a stigma attached to gaming; that playing is a pastime or maybe even a waste of time.

“There may be a bit of a feeling of guilt that you could have actually used the time more constructively. So a little stress and a little guilt.”

Female, 45 years old, plays strategy and creative games, typically plays 4–7 hours a week

On the other hand, our survey – and the next chapter – also shows that Danes do experience quite pronounced impacts of gaming.

Why are games a part of everyday life in Denmark?

There are, of course, many different reasons why some play a puzzle game like Candy Crush while others play an adventure game like Hogwarts Legacy. But looking broadly at why games are part of Danes' everyday life, the reasons tend to be the same.

Games are a free space

Danes play digital games to relax. And because they find that while relaxing with games, they get more out of the experience than just relaxation.

Games are available

Danes play because digital games are easy to 'pick up' and a quick way to get a meaningful break.

Games are active and versatile

Danes play because digital games offer so many different ways to have an active, engaging and meaningful experience.

4. How Digital Games impact the Danes

4. How Digital Games impact the Danes

Games matter – a lot. Games are a way to relax. But the experience of gaming is more than just relaxation. Through the Experience Impact Compass, we can paint a clear picture of how gaming constitutes wellbeing, a mental space, and self-confidence, and is a social activity that binds Danes closer together.

Talking about how games impact as a collective medium can almost seem pointless. The term covers everything from playing sudoku digitally to getting carried away by the story in *The Last of Us*. Therefore, different types of games – or game genres – must have diverse impacts for those who play them. But as a collective medium, digital games do something quite special: they unite Danes and have become an unavoidable part of everyday life for many across age, gender, education, and geography.

Games are a rich and varied media form and cultural product. Games are also one of the most, if not the most, active media form. Gaming is an active experience that can include mental and strategic challenges, social elements, and engaging narratives. For this very reason, games have great impact on the gamers. Some games are a matter of accessing an accessible and engaging break from everyday life. Other games are something that Danes often play together with others – being either physically in the same room or online.

Four dimensions of the impact of digital games

Because games and gaming experiences can be so diverse, it's interesting to ask: How do they impact the Danes? However, the answer can quickly become an exercise in reducing games to a pastime. Therefore, our analysis aimed to capture the many nuances of what games are and can mean.

The Experience Impact Compass has been the framework for our analysis. The compass provides a nuanced picture of how experiences matter to people emotionally, intellectually, creatively, and socially. Based on the compass, we have developed an overall impact profile across all seven game genres, and furthermore individual impact profiles for each of the seven genres.

The compass also helps us to identify the contexts where games are particularly important to Danes. By studying the cases where games are particularly important within a certain dimension or parameter, we gain a better understanding of what games really mean to the people who play them.

How to read the impact profiles

The Experience Impact Compass and impact profiles show how different genres of digital games affect players. The profiles are helpful to understand both similarities and differences across game genres and players.

The Experience Impact Compass consists of four dimensions: Emotional Impact, Intellectual Impact, Creative Impact and Social Impact. Each dimension contains three impact parameters that are tailored to capture the ways in which games matter to gamers.

The compass serves as a framework for developing so-called impact profiles for games both overall and for each of the seven genres. In the survey behind the analysis, 1,172 people out of a total of 1,501 respondents indicated that they play digital games. These respondents rated their experiences with games using a five-point scale from "To a very high degree" to "Not at all". The profiles express the average ratings across players of the respective genre.

When looking at average values, it is rare to see results close to 5 or 1. This would require that close to all respondents have answered either "To a very high degree" or "Not at all". The most likely range is between 2 and 4. Thus, an average of 4 or more is particularly high, while an average of 2 or less is particularly low.

Emotional impact

Intellectual impact



Figure 7: Overall impact profile across all seven game genres

The parameter scores has been calculated as a mean across the total amount of assessments by the 1,172 respondents in regard to the game genres that they have played.

Social impact

Creative impact





The impact of digital games – in a nutshell

Emotionally, games are a reward treat you give yourself

Games help you relax and provide wellbeing. They offer a break that Danes feel they reward themselves with in everyday life.

Intellectually, games offer a space for reflection

Games create a free space to let your thoughts flow. Games provide an intellectual respite where many Danes can start reflecting.

Creatively, games can be something that makes us think and act in new ways

Games are a playground for exploration and testing. And for many Danes, the result is confidence and skills.

Socially, games can bring us closer together

Games are experiences that many shares with each other. And when we share gaming experiences, they bring us closer together in friendships, families, and with new acquaintances.

Understanding the Impact of digital games



Digital games are first and foremost a way to relax. And when you relax with games, they open up a world of different kinds of impact. Relaxation may be the need, but the effect is wellbeing, reflection, skills and stronger relationships.

Games fulfil a basic need to relax. When Danes play games, it's first and foremost to calm down, unwind and have a good time. But once they do – whether it's for a short break or a longer immersion – games open the door to a whole world of impactful experiences, regardless of the genre.

Games are a versatile medium that is easy to access

Games are easy to access, they are versatile because there are so many different types of games, and they are easily accessible. This makes games a preferred way for many Danes to take a quick break in their daily life.

“When I play, it’s often to re-charge and to get more energy. And I get the most energy from being alone.”

Female, 20 years old, plays puzzle, platform and strategy games, typically 1-3 hours a week

We see this in the fact that all impact profiles across genres contain a large element of relaxation and wellbeing. All seven game genres score high on the parameters of relaxation and wellbeing. Games serve as a good and meaningful break that Danes feel they reward themselves with. And the break becomes meaningful because Danes get so much more than just relaxation when they play games.

“ For me, games are something I need - simply to immerse myself in a universe. Yes, a bit like how some people feel about books.”

Male, 33 years old, plays adventure, platform and action games, typically 4-7 hours a week

Different game genres have diverse impacts

Whether taking a short break with the platform game *Subway Surfers* or immersing yourself in a world of magical creatures and fantastical landscapes with adventure games such as *Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, digital games open up a whole world of different kinds of emotional, intellectual, creative and social impact. Some games are pure relaxation and wellbeing. Especially games in the puzzle genre, such as *Wordfeud* or *Pokémon GO*, are played by many Danes during short breaks at home or on the go.

Beyond puzzles, games are both a way to relax and take a meaningful break. The profiles for each genre show that all genres contain titles of great impact, titles that provide food for thought, build new skills and bring players closer together in both existing and new relationships. The profiles for the seven genres also show that each genre has somewhat diverse impact profiles.

The differences across profiles also emphasize that different games do different things. It may seem trivial, but the fact that games are and mean different things also shows the diversity of the gaming medium and underscores that not every game needs to do everything to be an experience that matters.

The experienced impact of games differs across generations

Games matter to everyone who plays them. But as Danes play different games in different ways across age groups, the games also have quite diverse impacts for different age groups.

Danes play various game genres and play them differently depending on their age. Danes younger than 40 years play a wider range of game genres, and they often play with both friends and people they meet through games. Conversely, Danes aged 40 or older play fewer game genres (primarily puzzle games) and mostly play alone.

In general, games are therefore also more important to Danes younger than 40 years. However, the differences are smallest in the parameters that are common across game genres. These are *relaxation, wellbeing and skills*.

Conversely, the greatest difference is seen in the parameters of the social dimension. Here, Danes younger than 40 years experience games as being more meaningful, as more people in this age group play with others.

The particular impacts of games for specific age groups

For the youngest age group of 16-24, games are something particularly social. In this age group, most people play with others, both together in person and online.

For Danes aged 25-39, games are particularly a matter of relaxation. In this age group, both relaxation and wellbeing are the most meaningful.

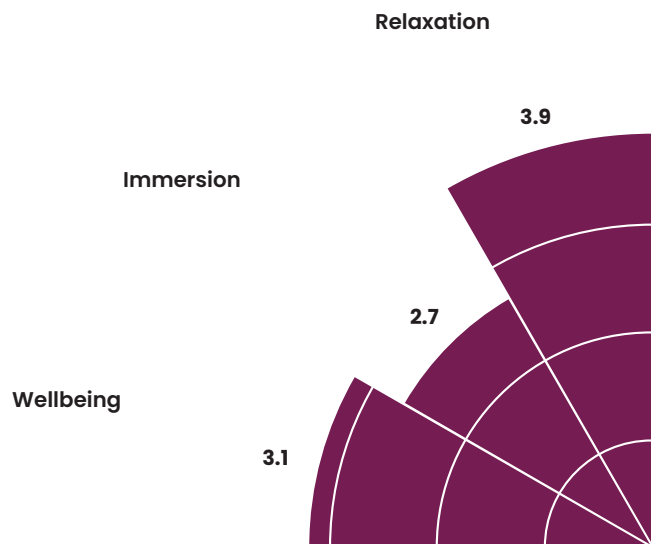
For Danes aged 40 and up, gaming is all about relaxation, wellbeing and skills. The result is characterised by the large proportion of this age group who only play puzzle games. So, for Danes aged 40 and up, gaming is a matter of relaxing with interesting challenges.

4.1. Emotional Impact

Games are a Treat You Give Yourself

Figure 8: The Emotional impact across all seven game genres

Each parameter score is a calculated mean across the total amount of assessments (1,172 respondents in total).



Games are a treat you give yourself. They offer a break from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. And at the same time, games can do something special in terms of activating emotions. Because games are an active experience, many also feel that games are a way to engage in and immerse themselves in other worlds and stories.

Gaming is first and foremost about relaxing and feeling good. All seven game genres have in common that they score high on both *relaxation* and *wellbeing*. And on average across all genres, games score higher on the *relaxation* parameter (3.9) than any other media form we have studied using The Experience Impact Compass.

“With mobile games it’s about unwinding and it’s a pastime.”

Female, 32 years old, mainly plays puzzle, adventure and strategy games, typically more than 7 hours per week

Games are utilized as meaningful reward

For Danes who play several different game genres, it is especially clear that they use games as a way to relax, which gives them something more than just a feeling of well-being.

“There’s not so many worries when you’re sitting and playing.”

Male, 38 years old, primarily plays adventure, platform and action games, typically more than 7 hours per week

Danes see games as an active break rather than a passive activity. And perhaps that is why many also describe games as a kind of reward. It’s something good they do for themselves. It can be by giving themselves time to immerse themselves in adventure games with rich stories. Or it can be by playing action games, where speed and tempo give players a sense of letting go of what otherwise fills their daily lives.

“Perhaps it’s really more about me treating myself in some way. It’s something I do for myself. It’s a treat.”

Male, 47 years old, plays both adventure and creative games, typically 4-7 hours a week

Games open doors to worlds one can immerse in and be affected by

Games – especially those with stories and rich universes – provide players a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in other worlds. Thus, emotions also become the gateway to what games can mean beyond that. This is especially true for adventure games and action games, which both score high on *immersion* (3.6 and 3.5 respectively). These are genres where many players experience being immersed in rich universes with both characters and stories. And if you look at the adventure and action games that Danes play to immerse themselves in the story and universe, they score particularly high on *immersion* (3.8 and 3.9).

“The material, the content, the story. That’s what I really like when I play games. There just has to be a good story – something that captures me, like an interactive story on steroids”

Female, 29 years old, plays both action and adventure games, typically 4-7 hours a week

Games Can Tell Stories and Engage Players In Narratives

Depth gives meaning. When Danes are captured by the game’s content or universe, the game has a higher impact.

Games can tell stories. That’s probably not a surprise in itself. But games can be engaging in many ways and be something that players in different ways can immerse themselves in.

In our survey, we asked why Danes play the genres of games they do. One of the many motives was the opportunity to immerse themselves in other worlds, universes and stories. And those who cited this motive as the reason for choosing some games over others generally get more out of their gaming experiences.

Engaging Experiences Provide Greater Impact

The games that players immerse themselves in has a higher impact. This pattern is consistent across genres, whether you play adventure games, which are characterised by large universes, action games, which most people play for speed and excitement, or platform games, which are often relatively simple gaming experiences.

“At least that’s what I think. That games give you a kick if you want to get away from reality. That’s my premise. I want to immerse myself in a fantasy world.”

Male, 27 years old, plays both adventure and strategy games, typically more than 7 hours a week

This is especially true for the parameters of *immersion* and *wellbeing* in the emotional dimension. Here, the engaging games can help to make the break and free space that games provide even more liberating. But this also applies to parameters in some of the other dimensions. The games that Danes particularly empathise with also help to provide more *knowledge* and *inspiration* – and even *empathy*.

“Playing something because you want to relax; I can relate to that. That’s how it is in my own games, like Dragon Age. Those kinds of games, where you enter the story – where it’s really just a game where you just relax!”

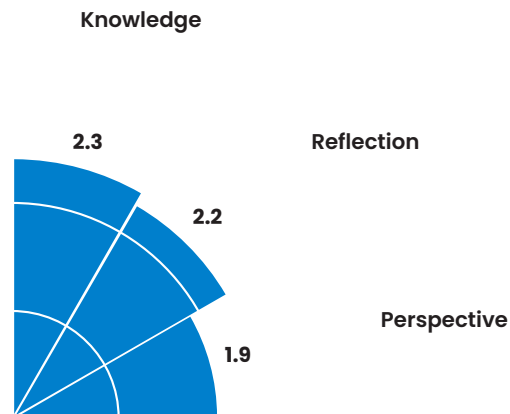
Female, 32 years old, primarily plays puzzle, adventure and strategy games, typically more than 7 hours a week

4.2. Intellectual Impact

Games Are a Mental Sanctuary

Figure 9: The Intellectual impact across all seven game genres

Each parameter score is a calculated mean across the total amount of assessments (1,172 respondents in total).



Games are a mental sanctuary that can provide room for knowledge and food for thought. When Danes themselves put it in their own words, games provide a free space for the mind to think and reflect – both on topics within the game and about daily life. Although the intellectual dimension is not the highest-scoring on average, games in some genres and among some age groups have a greater intellectual impact.

When games have an intellectual impact, it is, curiously enough, directly linked to being a break, relaxation, and wellbeing – the emotional dimension. Games are a mental sanctuary, giving room for thoughts to flow. When Danes play, they experience it can trigger reflection, as they let go of what otherwise occupies them. Games become a way to provide a mental respite where one can process daily life.

“Gaming is a hobby. Some people collect stamps. I game. It’s a way of letting go of everyday problems by saying that now

I can sit down and put this in order. It’s a way of organising some thoughts.”

Male, 47 years old, plays creative, adventure and strategy games, typically 4-7 hours a week

Games are also an experience that can provide food for thought and new knowledge. Knowledge is the parameter that scores highest in the intellectual dimension. However, there are differences in the age groups that feel that games give them knowledge and food for thought. Danes in the age category 16-24-years are the most likely to feel that games provide *knowledge* (2.8), while Danes in the 40-54 age group are the least likely to feel that games provide *knowledge* (2.0).

Mental sanctuary requires more than just relaxation

Within the intellectual dimension, there is a greater difference in which game genres matter – and how. Compared to the emotional dimension, games – overall – do not score as high on the intellectual dimension.

When you look across all players and game genres, it’s not the intellectual dimension of games that matters most to Danes. However, it’s important to remember that many Danes play puzzle games first and foremost – especially Danes aged 40 and up. Whilst puzzle

games provide a great deal of relaxation, they are not in themselves enough to provide the mental sanctuary that the other genres provide.

If we instead look at Danes who play other game genres than puzzle games, a different picture emerges. Here, games help to provide free space for the mind. When players themselves describe the importance of games, the pause that games provide helps to get the mind flowing and provides space for reflection – on everyday life and topics in the game.

“It’s mostly when I play single-player because then I think about what I would do in a post-apocalyptic world where there are no laws and rules anymore.”

Female, 29 years old, plays both action and adventure games, typically 4-7 hours per week

Immersion Leads to More Reflection

Games that require immersion stimulate more thought. When players engage with the game content and immerse themselves in a universe, they absorb more knowledge. There is a correlation between players who want to immerse themselves in games and those who gain more knowledge and reflection from their gaming experiences.

All genres have games that can engage players in the game’s content and universes – whether it’s getting to grips with a sport, immersing yourself in a story or devising plans and strategies. Gaming is, above all, about relaxing and engaging in an active experience that provides a sense of wellbeing. Part of the feeling of wellbeing is also getting a mental break. In most cases, the mental break provides a respite from the thoughts of everyday life. But some gaming experiences provide more food for thought.

We looked at why Danes play the game genres they do. One of the potential motives was the opportunity to immerse themselves in other worlds, universes and stories. And we found that when this motive is the basis for Danes’ gaming experiences, players come away with more knowledge from the games and reflect more on what happens in the games.

Simple games can also be immersive experiences

When a game is an immersive experience, it matters in terms of the two parameters, *knowledge* and *reflection*. An immersive experience gives rise to a relatively higher degree of knowledge and reflection. For example, creative games score higher on *knowledge* (2.9) and *reflection* (2.7) than the average across genres (2.3 and 2.2 respectively). Looking specifically at players who are driven to immerse themselves in the world of creative games, they score even higher on both *knowledge* (3.0) and *reflection* (3.0).

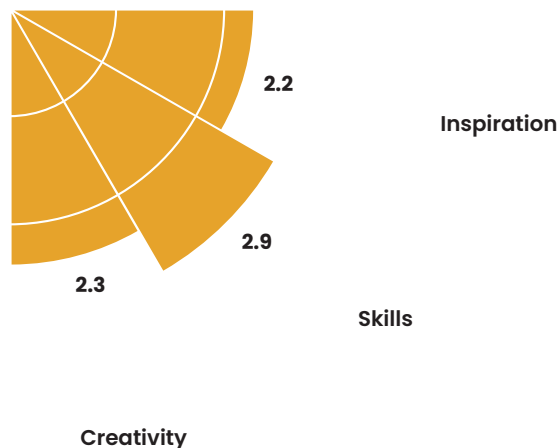
In platform games, the correlation is even more apparent. For Danes, platform games, like puzzle games, are often a simple and easily accessible break. Therefore, the genre as a whole does not score very high on knowledge (2.3) or reflection (2.2). However, the genre also includes games such as Danish-made game *Inside* or *Planet of Lana*, which tell strong stories and offer even richer worlds to immerse in. Those players who play platform games to immerse themselves in the worlds of the games gain more knowledge (2.7) and reflection (2.7) from their experiences.

4.3. Creative Impact

Games Provide Ability and Space for Expression

Figure 10: The Creative impact across all seven game genres

Each parameter score is a calculated mean across the total amount of assessments (1,172 respondents in total).



Games are a form of play. It’s a setting where testing, exploring and practising is fun and something you want to keep coming back to. This manifests as both skills and space for creativity.

Games make it fun to fail. And they create a feeling of accomplishment when one succeeds. Along with *relaxation* and *wellbeing*, *skills* are among the parameters where games – across all genres – score highest in the creative dimension.

If we compare the game genres that on average score highest (3.1) and lowest (2.8) on *skills*, the difference is small. In other words, *skill* is a common parameter across genres.

“Playing gives me creative expression. Exploring new things, trying to figure out how to get up somewhere, and why it was here I ended up.”

Female, 32 years old, mainly plays puzzle, adventure and strategy games, typically more than 7 hours a week

Games Provide a Sense of Ability and Build Self-Confidence

Puzzle games, such as Wordle or the number-based *2048*, can train pattern recognition or language comprehension. Strategy games, such as *Civilisation*, can provide opportunities to practice planning. Action games, such as *Call of Duty*, can train speed and reaction time. And Danes express this quite clearly. Games contribute to a sense of getting good at something. And this helps build self-confidence.

“It’s about something as basic as self-confidence. I’m fucking good at it, and I get confirmation in that when I play. And then I think, damn, I’m good.”

Male, 57 years old, primarily plays action, adventure and strategy games, typically 4-7 hours a week

Games are a Place for Personal Expression – Especially for Danes Under 40

At the same time, some game genres allow for personal expression. Gaming is an active experience and many games allow players to design their own character, build their

own world or create new things and objects. Here too, there is a big difference across age groups.

For Danes under 40, games are more a way to express themselves personally than for Danes aged 40 and up. Also, when looking beyond those who primarily play puzzle games. Among Danes under 40, *creativity* scores higher as a parameter (2.7) than for Danes under 40 (2.0)¹.

¹ - The average score for creativity across all ages are 2.3.

Games Provide Active Experience That Develop Skills

Games provide active experience that makes the player more skilled. This parameter is consistent across all seven game genres, just like the use of games as a medium for taking a break and relaxing.

All seven genres provide a sense of developing skills. Besides the emotional dimension, the creative parameter is the clearest commonality across genres and Danes' experiences with games.

Games as a medium differ from many cultural and media offerings by always being an active experience. Games are play, challenge, and repetition. This characteristic is evident in that all game genres provide players with skills and the opportunity to improve.

Skills mean different things across genres

Different genres give players the experience of developing their abilities in various ways. Those who play sports, action, and adventure games particularly feel they acquire skills. Among these players, *skills* score higher than in other game genres. There are various reasons for this.

"It could be, for example, something in the game where you can show: I have reached this and this level. It's just as much about a bit of bragging to one's friends."

Male, 34 years old, primarily plays sports and adventure games, typically more than 7 hours a week

Sports and action games are typically played with others. And many games – especially those played with others – are characterised by competition between players. Here, the competitive element can help develop skills such as speed and reaction time. Adventure games, on the other hand, are played to immerse yourself in another world. Here, skills can be about something completely different, such as solving more complicated tasks or challenges in the games.

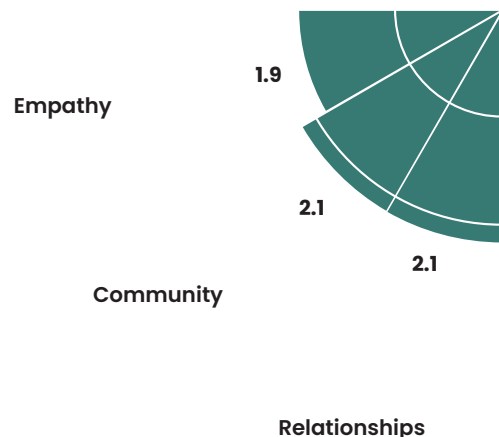
"I completely disappear into it and immerse myself in the game's world. Ethical dilemmas in the game weigh heavily on me. (...) The game makes me think 'okay, what should I do?'. I can spend a long time sitting and thinking about things."

Female, 29 years old, plays both action and adventure games, typically 4-7 hours a week

4.4. Social Impact Games Bring Us Closer Together

Figure 11: The Social impact across all seven game genres

Each parameter score is a calculated mean across the total amount of assessments (1,172 respondents in total).



Games are more than just something experienced together – they are something done together. When games are a shared experience, they bring people closer together. This is especially true among people who already know each other.

For most Danes, gaming is something they do alone. Puzzle games in particular are something Danes play at home (91%) and most often alone (70%). On the other hand, other game genres invite a social experience. Both action, sports and platform games are something Danes play together with others. And this is an important point. If you look at the social impact of games in general, it may seem as if games don't matter socially – neither in terms of new *relationships*, a sense of *community* or *empathy*. But the average conceals the fact that many game genres both strengthen friendships and bring families closer together.

“I started playing along, and then his little brother was just invited in. Then suddenly someone else was invited, and you end up on a teamspeak channel and then on a Discord [ed.: a social media that is widespread

among gamers]. Then you start to get to know people from the internet, who eventually become someone you know in real life.”

Male 33 years old, plays both action and strategy games, 4-7 hours a week

Gaming experiences with others strengthen relationships and community

When games are an experience shared with others, they have great social impact. It brings players closer when sitting with friends around a sports game, a meeting online for action games, or when parents play platform games with their children.

Half of Danes play with others. And when they do, it provides both relationships and a sense of community. If you look at the Danes who play with others, excluding the puzzle genre, which Danes primarily play alone, both *relationships* (2.8) and *community* (2.7) score higher than average (2.1).

Games fosters new friendships

Some friendships are even formed through games. And if you play online with people you meet through the game, games also have

a strong social impact. Although it's most common for Danes to play with people they already know, many (12%) also meet new people through games.

“The people I play with right now are folks I met online, and then I met them in real life too. But other times, it can be my little brother, for example, whom I play Minecraft with occasionally. People I know from the real world that I also play with. Yes, I do both.”

Female, 32 years old, plays both strategy and creative games, typically plays for more than 7 hours a week

It is worth noting that for many people, these relationships will extend beyond Denmark's borders and can also help to strengthen understanding across cultures and language skills – the latter we have not investigated in this report. Danes who play online with people they have met through the game also score higher on both *relationships* (3.0) and *community* (3.1).

“I have some friendships I've had for more than 10 years where I've never met the people. But I know them through the game.”

Male, 33 years old, plays both adventure and creative games, playing 4–7 hours a week

Gaming experiences with others can build empathy

The understanding of other people in the form of empathy, either through those you play with or through characters in the game, is the meaning that the fewest Danes experience when we look across genres.

A parameter like *empathy* therefore also shows the diversity of gaming experiences. Some games, such as many puzzle games, offer simple experiences that have nothing to do with other people. Other games have a greater social element. These include adventure games, which tell stories with strong characters and focus on their experiences, or action and sports games, which most people play with others.

The difference between these types of gaming experiences is also evident in the different levels of the *empathy* parameter. Danes aged 40 and up who only play puzzle games experience the lowest level of empathy (1.4).

For this group of Danes, gaming experiences have almost nothing to do with understanding others.

In contrast, Danes under the age of 40 who play with people they meet through the game experience one of the highest levels of *empathy* (2.8). This group of Danes primarily plays action games, which might seem surprising. But action games are a genre that often brings players together across national borders. When games bring Danes together with people they don't know beforehand, games seem to create more understanding between people.

But are games a medium where all experiences *should* create empathy? When watching a film or theatre play, for example, you have to put yourself in the character's place to try to think what they think and feel what they feel. Putting yourself in another person's place is often an important part of the experience.

When you play a game, you as a player are actively present in the action. And this is the case whether playing as a character in a story in an adventure game or beating friends in a sports game, where you're physically in the same place playing together. Because games are an active experience, it can be more about the player themselves than other people or characters in the game.

Playing with Others Might Be the Ultimate Gaming Experience

When games are an experience shared with others, it means more. This applies across genres and dimensions in The Experience Impact Compass. Playing together can even be the ultimate gaming experience – in the sense that games played together score higher on several parameters than games played in any other context.

Danes who share their gaming experiences with others are more likely to build relationships from gaming. This may seem like a trivial point, but it has some interesting nuances.

Gaming with children creates the strongest relationships

11% of Danes play digital games with their children. Those who play with their children are more likely to feel more connected. For Danes who play with their children, the *relationships* parameter scores higher (2.9) than both the average (2.1) and in comparison, with many other groups of gamers.

When you meet people through games, games mean more

12% of Danes play digital games with people they only meet online through the game. In these cases, games are not just something that provides new relationships; games also generally mean more. Especially within the social dimension, this group of players experiences that games mean more. But games also mean more in the intellectual dimension, providing space for *reflection* and *knowledge*.

5. The Impact of specific genres of Digital Games

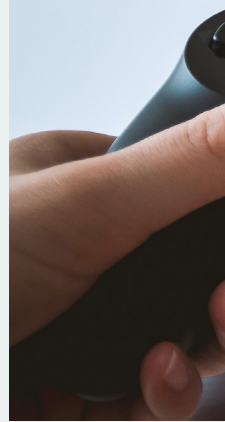
5. The Impact of specific genres of Digital Games

The seven genres of games offer widely different types of experiences, ranging from short breaks to engaging stories that Danes immerse themselves in over a longer period of time.

All games provide players with the opportunity to relax. In addition, the seven genres of games also mean different things to the Danes who play them.

On the following pages, we present the seven genres of games, what characterises the experiences within each genre and what each genre means to those who play them.

- **Puzzle games**
- **Platform games**
- **Sports games**
- **Action games**
- **Adventure games**
- **Strategy games**
- **Creative games**





5.1. Puzzle Games

Puzzle games offer a relaxing and accessible gaming experience. Characterized by quick and simple gameplay, puzzle games appeal to a broad audience.



Photo: From the game *Fly TOGETHER!* by Northplay

Puzzle games are the most popular game genre among Danes who play. A common feature of puzzle games is that they are easily accessible. They are designed to appeal to a broad target group. In addition, the genre offers various types of games, providing experiences for all ages and thus different meanings for different players.

Puzzle games are especially popular among older generations. Half of Danes over 55 play puzzle games, while two-thirds of those aged 40–54 play games in this genre. This demonstrates the special appeal of puzzle games in these age groups.

When Danes play puzzle games, it is all about relaxing and filling their breaks with meaningful experiences. That explains why only the parameters of *relaxation*, *wellbeing* and *skills* score high in the puzzle genre.

“It’s either as a pastime, when I’m on the train travelling back and forth to Copenhagen, or typically in the evening when I’m sitting alone.”

Male, 57 years old, primarily plays action, adventure and strategy games, typically 4–7 hours a week

On the other hand, the puzzle genre scores highest of all genres on the *relaxation* parameter (along with adventure games). This emphasises how puzzle games – and games

in general – can be widespread a source of calm and relaxation for everyone.

“It’s a very easy way to pass time. If you have some time, or if you’re restless or something, you can sit down with your phone, pull out a game, and time goes by really quickly. That way, you don’t get bored. Because sometimes you can get that annoying feeling of not knowing what to do.”

Female, 20 years old, plays puzzle, platform and strategy games, typically 1–3 hours a week

“It’s all about having fun and passing the time - and then it can be a bit of a competition with yourself to progress through the different levels.”

Female, 48 years old, plays mainly creative games, typically 30–60 minutes per week

Emotional impact

Intellectual impact

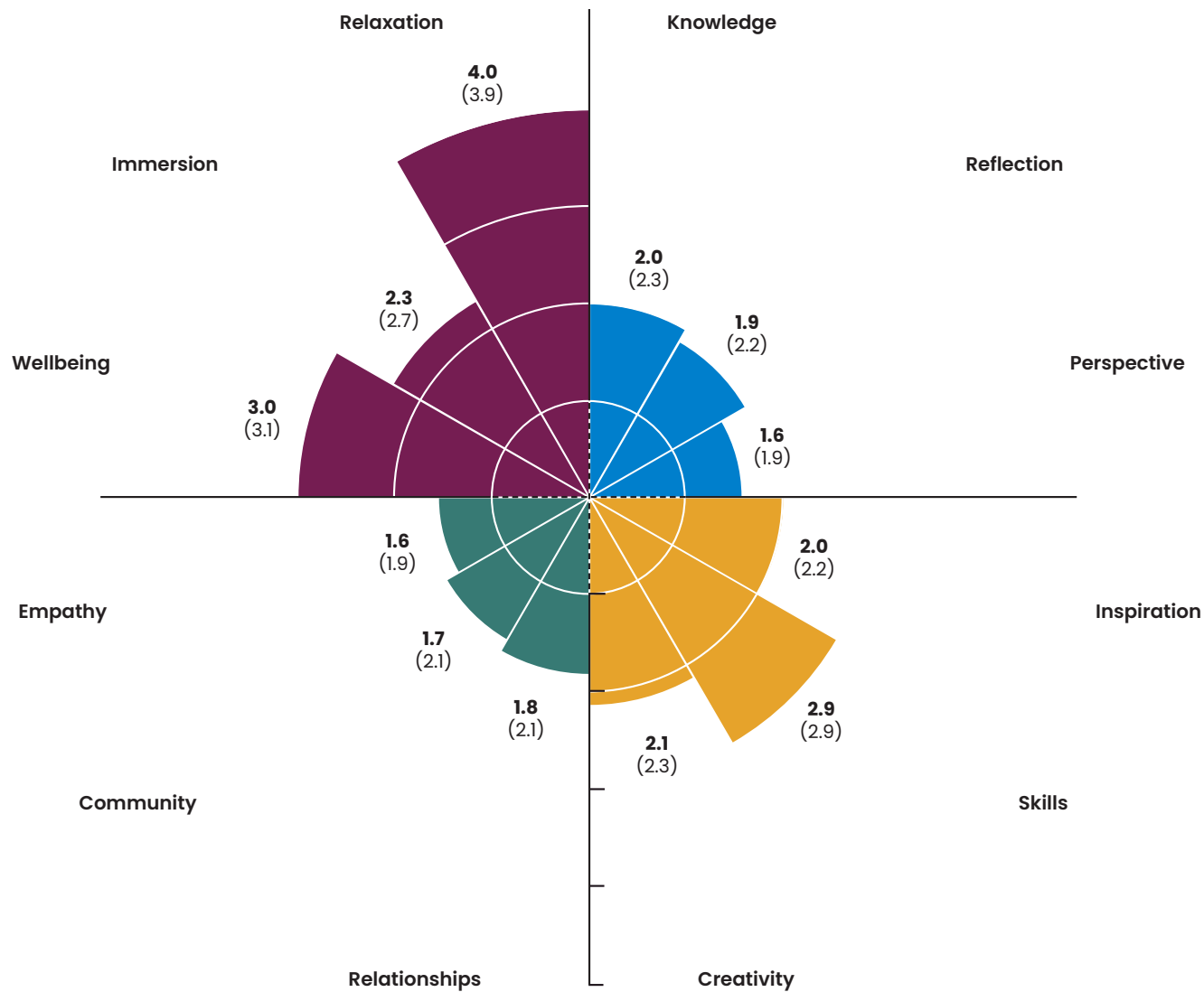


Figure 12: Impact profile for puzzle games

The number highlighted in bold indicates the average of the 780 respondents who plays puzzle games. The number in parentheses is the average across all seven genres.

Social impact

Creative impact

Examples of puzzle games

Fly TOGETHER! is a Danish-made game where you, as an air traffic controller in a small world, must guide the planes safely to their destination by drawing the planes' trajectories to avoid collisions. The game can be played alone or together with up to eight people. Fly TOGETHER! was released in 2021 and was developed by Northplay.

Candy Crush involves matching colorful pieces – in this case, candy – to create combinations, clear the board, and achieve the target within a limited number of moves. Candy Crush was developed by King Digital Entertainment in 2012.

Facts about those who play puzzle games

- Puzzle games are the most popular genre, with 65% of Danes playing puzzle games.
- Among Danes, the genre is most prevalent in the 40-54 age group, with 61% of playing puzzle games. Among those who play digital games alone, this is the most prevalent genre in the 55-79 age group, out of which 79% playing puzzle games.
- Danes primarily play puzzle games at home or on the go. 95% of those who play puzzle games do so at home, while 45% play on the go.
- Puzzle games are the genre most Danes immerse themselves in alone. 70% of those who play puzzle games do so alone, while 8% only play with others. The remaining 22% play both alone and with others.

5.2. Platform Games

Platform games offer a special kind of relaxation while engaging players in a fascinating universe. The genre is known for combining entertainment with a more immersive gaming experience.



Photo: From the game *Inside* by Playdead

Platform games, like puzzle games, are a genre that Danes play to relax. However, compared to puzzle games, platform games offer a more nuanced gaming experience. By allowing players to step into more extensive game universes, typically found in adventure games, platform games provide a deeper gaming experience that particularly appeals to those seeking more than just simple pastime. This is evident in that the genre has greater impact in several parameters, including *immersion*.

“I use games the way others might use a series or a film. I mean, it’s relaxation. It’s just a bit more interactive and what I need.”

Male, 36 years old, primarily plays platform, creative and adventure games, typically more than 7 hours per week

Platform games, with examples such as *Super Mario* or *Monument Valley*, are a familiar genre for many. However, not everyone plays them regularly. Platform games are only the fifth most common genre among the seven game genres.

However, platform games have a special place among Danish parents. The genre is the most common to play with children. 16% of Danes who play platform games do so with their children. It’s a way for parents to share

gaming experiences with their children. For parents, platform games are more than just entertainment. This is also reflected when looking at what the genre means to players.

“I dig out the old Super Nintendo, PlayStation or Sega. Then I go to my dad’s house, where we sit on the couch and play together like in the old days. We sit there with platform games and sometimes laugh about how bad we are at it.”

Male, 33 years old, mainly plays platform, action and creative games, typically 4-7 hours a week

Platform games are first and foremost about relaxing. And the genre also scores highest in the emotional dimension. However, among parents who play platform games with their children, the genre also scores relatively high on the social parameters of *relationships* (2.9) and *community* (2.8).

Emotional impact

Intellectual impact



Examples of platform games

Inside is a Danish-made game set in a dystopian world where you must solve puzzles and jump around to survive. The story reveals a mysterious narrative as you progress through the game. The game is known for its dark environments and minimalistic storytelling. Inside was released in 2016 and was developed by Playdead.

Super Mario is perhaps the most iconic example of a platform game. The game involves navigating the character Mario through colorful worlds by running and jumping through short courses, hopping on turtles, and ultimately saving Princess Peach from Bowser. Super Mario was developed by Nintendo and first released in 1985. Since then, a multitude of follow-up games have been released.

Facts about those who play platform games

- 23% of Danes play platform games. The genre is most popular among those under 40, with 38% of them playing this genre.
- 25% of those playing this genre play when visiting someone else's house.
- Platform games are the genre that most people play with their children. 16% of those who play platform games do so with their children.

Social impact

Creative impact

Figure 13: Impact profile for platform games

The number highlighted in bold indicates the average of the 259 respondents who plays platform games. The number in parentheses is the average across all seven genres.

5.3. Sports Games

Sports games is more than just entertainment. It's a genre that enriches players' daily lives on multiple levels by creating physical community around a digital game world.



Photo: From the game FIFA 23 by EA Sports

Sports games are a dynamic and social game genre that promotes both cohesion and community among players. It's a genre that binds players closer together by encouraging both co-operation and competition. Sports games generate an experience where you don't just play individually, but with and against each other.

Compared to other game genres, sports games are particularly sociable. This is evident in the fact that sports games are the genre most often played while being physically together with others. This means sports games have special potential to strengthen relationships and bonds between players when games become a focal point for socializing beyond the screen.

"We're a group of mates who get together four to five times a year and play for a whole day. It can often be on a Saturday, and it's a tradition we've had since we studied together."

Male, 34 years old, primarily plays sports and adventure games, typically more than 7 hours per week

Sports games mix intensity and community in the experience. This is seen in the fact that speed, tempo, and competition with others are motives that make most Danes choose

this particular genre.

The immersive nature of the experience helps to give the game genre high importance across the four dimensions of the Meaning Compass. Sports games score higher than several other genres on the social parameters, including *relationships*, *community* and *empathy*. At the same time, sports games score high on both *skills* and *empathy*, indicating that the game genre allows players to both develop skills and empathise with the game. Conversely, sports games are among the genres that score lowest on *relaxation*, as it is a genre that most people play to be with others and few play alone to unwind.

"I can't run and play football anymore, but I can play a little in the other way with him [grandson]."

Female, 66 years old, mainly plays sports games, typically 30-60 minutes per week

Emotional impact

Intellectual impact



Figure 14: Impact profile for sport games

The number highlighted in bold indicates the average of the 213 respondents who plays sport games. The number in parentheses is the average across all seven genres.

Social impact

Creative impact

Examples of sports games

FIFA is perhaps the most well-known sports game. FIFA is a football game where you play against each other or against the game. Every year a new version is released, updated with real-life football players and clubs. FIFA is developed by EA and was first released in 1993. From 2024, the game will be called EA Sports FC.

Gran Turismo is a racing game where you race real cars and compete in realistic races. The game is a kind of simulator and aims to provide as realistic a racing experience as possible. Gran Turismo is developed by Polyphony Digital and was first released in 1997, while the latest game in the series was released in 2022.

Facts about those who play sports games

- 21% of Danes play sports games. The genre is most prevalent in the 16-24 age group, with 42% playing sports games.
- 63% play with others, and 41% play while physically together with others.
- Sports games are the most commonly played games when visiting other people's homes. 32% of Danes who play sports games do so in other people's homes.

5.4. Action Games

Action games are all about high excitement and speed. It's a social game genre that binds players together through intensity and cooperation. Action games manage to create a strong sense of community among players, giving the genre a special place in the gaming world.



Photo: From the game *Deep Rock Galactic* by Ghost Ship Games

Action games are – perhaps surprisingly to some – highly social. This is evidenced by the fact that two out of three players prefer to play action games with others. Many games in the genre are also characterised by a focus on multiplayer, where interaction with other players is a key element. Action games provide a framework for shared experiences and contribute to strengthening the bond between players, thus scoring particularly high in the social dimension.

“You start by sitting down to play, but at the same time, you end up talking about all sorts of other things, like how your day was and other things. It’s also about relaxing, but it’s also a way to just sit and chat.”

Male, 34-year-olds, primarily plays action and adventure games, typically more than 7 hours a week

Compared to other game genres, action games are particularly favoured by Danes under the age of 40. I.e. it is particularly the younger generations who enjoy gaming experiences that focus on the combination of speed, excitement and co-operation.

“It’s all about relaxation and enjoyment – and then doing the

same with others.”

Male, 34 years old, primarily plays action and adventure games, typically more than 7 hours per week

Despite action games typically being perceived as fast-paced and intense, many players actually experience action games as a source of relaxation. The genre appeals to players’ emotions and skills simultaneously. That results in a gaming experience that scores high on the usual parameters of *relaxation* and *wellbeing* – while also scoring among the highest on parameters like *immersion* and *skills*.

Action games with a focus on multiplayer are also the games where most people play online with others – either with someone they already know (38%), someone they met through the game (20%) or someone they do not know (15%). Therefore, action games are also the genre with the highest social impact. The action genre scores highest on all three social parameters: *relationships* (2.9), *community* (2.8) and *empathy* (2.6).

“It has to be social, but only with people I know in real life. Like my boyfriend or some of my friends.”

Female, 29 years old, plays both action and adventure games, typically 4-7 hours per week

Emotional impact

Intellectual impact



Figure 15: Impact profile for action games

The number highlighted in bold indicates the average of the 266 respondents who plays action games. The number in parentheses is the average across all seven genres.

Social impact

Creative impact

Examples of action games

Deep Rock Galactic is a Danish-made co-operative game. Four people play together as space dwarves, shooting aliens and mining gold in a 100% destructible world. Deep Rock Galactic was released in 2020 and is developed by Ghost Ship Games.

Counter-Strike is a tactical shooting game where you play against each other in two teams. The objective can vary, such as eliminating the other team, planting a bomb (or defusing it), or rescuing a group of hostages within a given time. Counter-Strike is one of the most popular e-sports games. It was developed by Valve and first released in 2000, with the next version set for release in 2023.

Facts about those who play action games

- 26% of Danes play action games, and the genre is most prevalent in the 16-24 age group, where half play action games.
- 67% of Danes who play action games do so with others. It is also the genre that Danes most often play online with others. 49% of action game players play online either with someone they already know or with someone they meet in the game.
- 15% play with people they don't know, making action games the genre where players are most likely to meet new friends through the game.

5.5. Adventure Games

Adventure games create a universe that you cannot help but immerse yourself in. As a player, you get a unique opportunity to delve into stories and universes that give the games meaning and depth, while also providing a break from everyday life.



Photo: From the game *Figment 2: Creed Valley* by Bedtime Digital Games

Adventure games captivate players with fantastic universes and narratives. They not only provide a break from daily life, but also contribute meaning and depth to the game, where players become involved in compelling stories, and their decisions and choices affect the game's outcome.

"I can't move forward in the game if I don't make a decision. So, I have to. But I've gotten better at it. In the past, I could spend a really long time sitting and pondering the pros and cons - and figuring out what would be the best choice."

Female, 29 years old, plays both action and adventure games, typically 4-7 hours a week

Adventure games are the genre most played for immersing oneself in other worlds. It is usually a personal experience alone. This provides the opportunity to explore, think, and reflect at the player's own pace. Adventure games typically touch players on a deep emotional level, where their thoughts and considerations are challenged, while the game's stories and characters can create strong emotional bonds and lead to deep reflections.

"It's more about being able to design your character the way you want it and with the name you want, right? I want it a certain way. I do it a special way. And then I want to enter a world of fantasy."

Male, 27 years old, primarily plays adventure and strategy games, typically more than 7 hours a week

Adventure games therefore score the highest of all genres in both the emotional and intellectual dimensions. These are games that have a special ability to draw the player into another world and set thoughts in motion. The immersive ability of adventure games also means that the genre has greater impact across all four dimensions.

Emotional impact

Intellectual impact

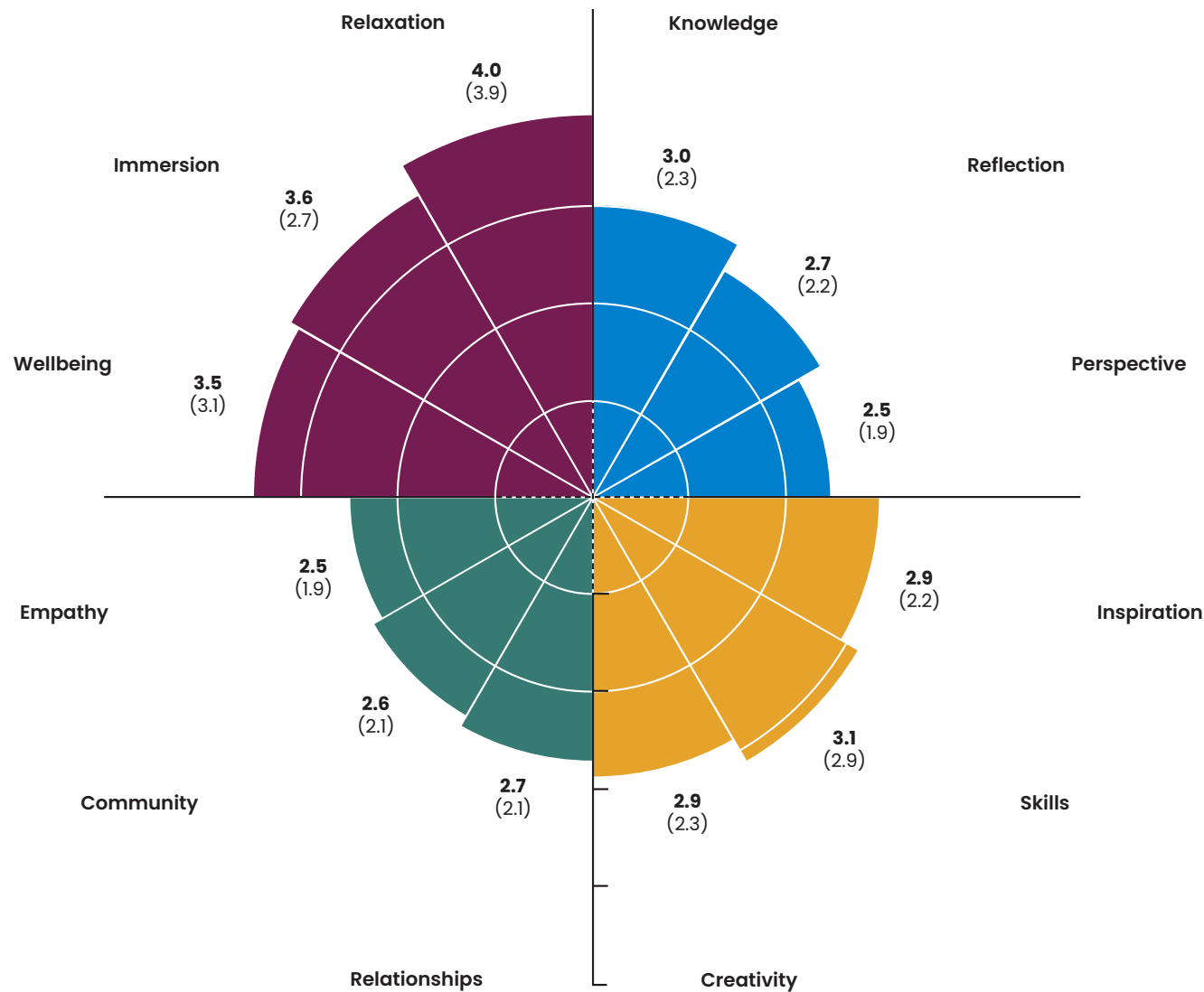


Figure 16: Impact profile for adventure games

The number highlighted in bold indicates the average of the 215 respondents who plays adventure games. The number in parentheses is the average across all seven genres.

Social impact

Creative impact

Examples of adventure games

Figure 2: Creed Valley is a Danish action-adventure game set in the human mind. Players control the character Dusty through the game's courses, solving puzzles and defeating creative and musical enemies. Figure 2: Creed Valley was released in 2023 and developed by Bedtime Digital Games.

Dragon Age is a fantasy role-playing game where you control a character through a third-person perspective as they explore a complex world of political intrigue, magic and dangerous monsters. The game is about relationships, developing one's character, and epic battles in the game's fantastic universe. Dragon Age was developed by BioWare and was released in 2009 with the latest game in the series released in 2014.

Facts about those who play adventure games

- 20% of Danes play adventure games. This makes it the least played genre among Danes.
- 90% of Danes who play adventure games play at home.
- 56% of players immerse themselves in these imaginative worlds alone, while 28% sometimes play alone and sometimes with others, and 16% only play with others.
- The adventure genre is the highest scoring of the seven genres on the immersion parameter.

5.6. Strategy Games

Strategy games particularly appeal to those seeking a challenging gaming experience and who desire a sense of accomplishment from their efforts.



Photo: From the game *Expeditions: Rome* by Logic Artists

Strategy games attract players who want to challenge their strategic thinking and experience a strong sense of satisfaction and success when they succeed in the game.

Strategy games are a genre that most people play alone, and it is also the genre that most people play to master the game's challenges, solve all tasks, or achieve all goals in the games.

It's worth noting that strategy games are the second most popular game genre in Denmark, played by 30% of Danes. It's a genre that has captured the interest of many Danish players, which may reflect the fact that these games are both easy to access and offer both deep and engaging experiences.

“For me, games are joy. It's because it makes me happy inside when I do something in the game that I think I'm good at.”

Male, 56 years old, plays strategy, creative and puzzle games, typically 4-7 hours a week

Compared to other game genres, strategy games are a genre that Danes use mainly to relax and achieve a sense of success. Therefore, it is primarily the three usual parameters of *relaxation* (3.8), *wellbeing* (3.2), and *skills* (3.0) that emerge in the impact profile for strategy games.

“I can see who's playing on Facebook. And we've agreed not to bomb each other. I'm not going to be responsible for their city being completely rebuilt, am I?”

Female, 45 years old, primarily plays strategy and creative games, typically 4-7 hours a week

Emotional impact

Intellectual impact

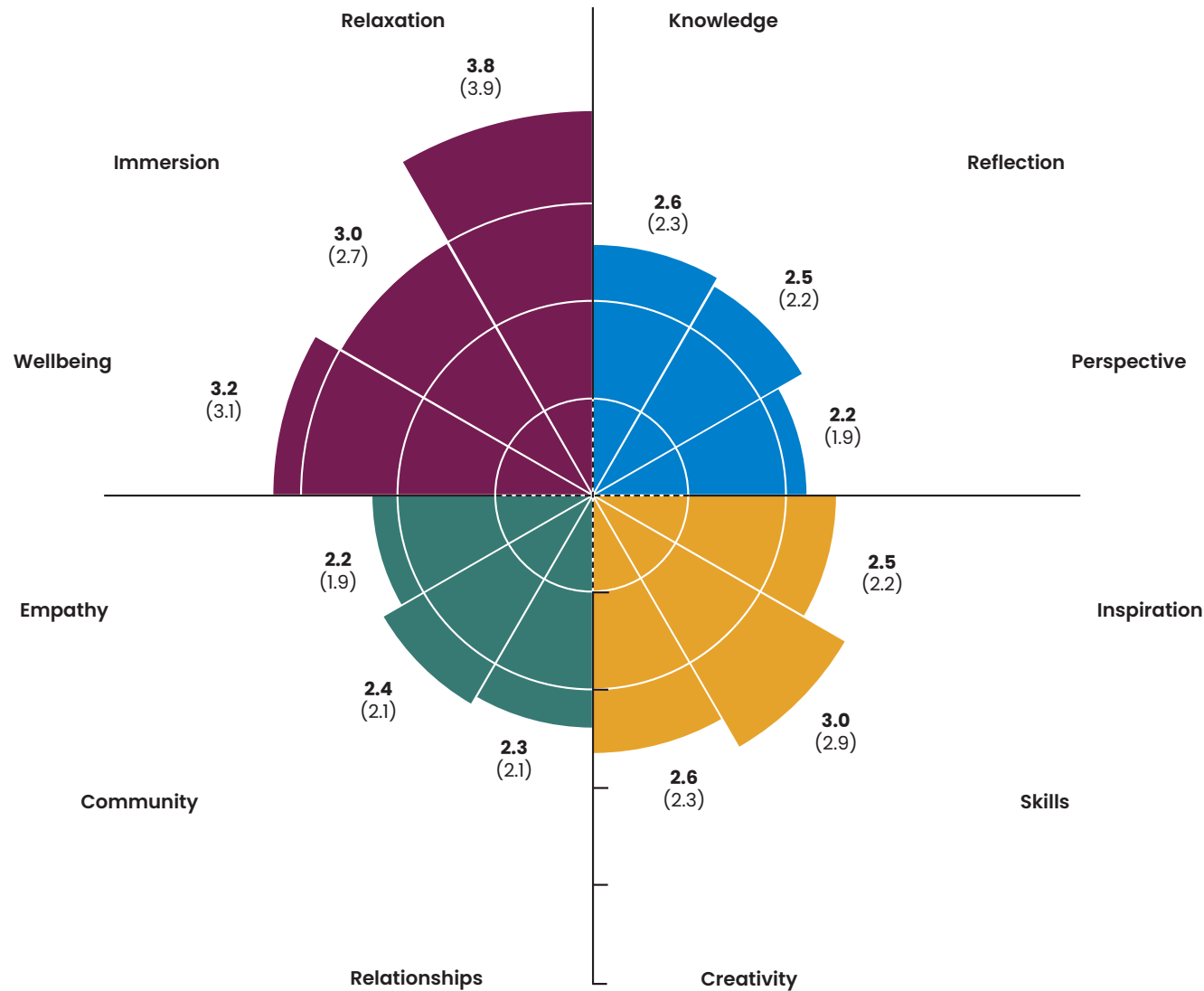


Figure 17: Impact profile for strategy games

The number highlighted in bold indicates the average of the 333 respondents who plays strategy games. The number in parentheses is the average across all seven genres.

Social impact

Creative impact

Examples of strategy games

Civilization is a strategy game. Players take turns, like in a board game, controlling a civilization from ancient times and attempt to establish nations by building empires and developing research, diplomacy, trade, and warfare. Civilization was first released in 1991, with the latest game in the series released in 2016, developed by Firaxis Games.

Expeditions: Rome is a Danish-made tactical role-playing game where you help decide the fate of Rome. You must lead your legion to victory and choose your own path forward in history. Expeditions: Rome was released in 2022 and is the third game in the Expeditions series developed by Logic Artists.

Facts about those who play strategy games

- 30% of Danes play strategy games. This makes the genre the second most played genre in Denmark.
- Among 40-54-year-olds, 21% play strategy games, making it the second most popular genre in this age group after puzzle games.
- Of those who play strategy games, 18% play with others in person and 19% play with others online.
- 20% of Danes who play strategy games do so on the go. This makes strategy games the third most played genre on the go, only surpassed by puzzle and platform games.

5.7. Creative Games

Creative games promote both skills and creativity in players, offering a gaming experience that balances relaxation with engaging game universes. Therefore, creative games appeal to a wide range of players.



Photo: From the game *Trailmakers* by Flashbulb Games

Creative games are the third most common genre, played by 28% of Danes. Among 16-24-year-olds, the genre is the most common, with 57% playing creative games. For many of those who play, the genre provides an opportunity to relax. Players find a break from everyday stress by immersing themselves in the creative possibilities the genre offers. When thoughts flow, it allows for reflection, inspiration, and creativity.

“I play Minecraft because it gives me the social aspect, but it also allows me to unwind. And it also gives me some creative fulfilment, exploring new things and trying to think about how the hell I’m going to get up here, where I’ve just ended up.”

Female, 32 years old, plays adventure, action and creative games, typically more than 7 hours a week

A special feature of creative games is their ability to allow players to develop and create their own ideas. Games encourage players to think outside the box and create unique solutions. The creative element is entertaining and can also contribute to players’ ability to think innovatively and creatively in other aspects of their daily lives, as well as helping players develop skills.

Creative games are mostly about nurturing one’s ideas and mastering the possibilities in the games. Therefore, creative games stand out by scoring higher than other genres within the creative dimension and second highest within the intellectual dimension.

“I’ve been in a group that played Minecraft. You sit there and talk all the time about what you’re going to do or build or whatever you’re doing. You make plans about what you’re going to do. Either together or something you build together, or something you do separately.”

Male, 47 years old, primarily plays creative, adventure and strategy games, typically 4-7 hours a week

Creative games can also have a social element. Some play creative games to play with others. Among this group of players, creative games provide a framework for social interaction, where creativity and cooperation go hand in hand. For this group of players, creative games score particularly high on the social parameters of *relationships* (3.4) and *community* (3.4).

Emotional impact

Intellectual impact

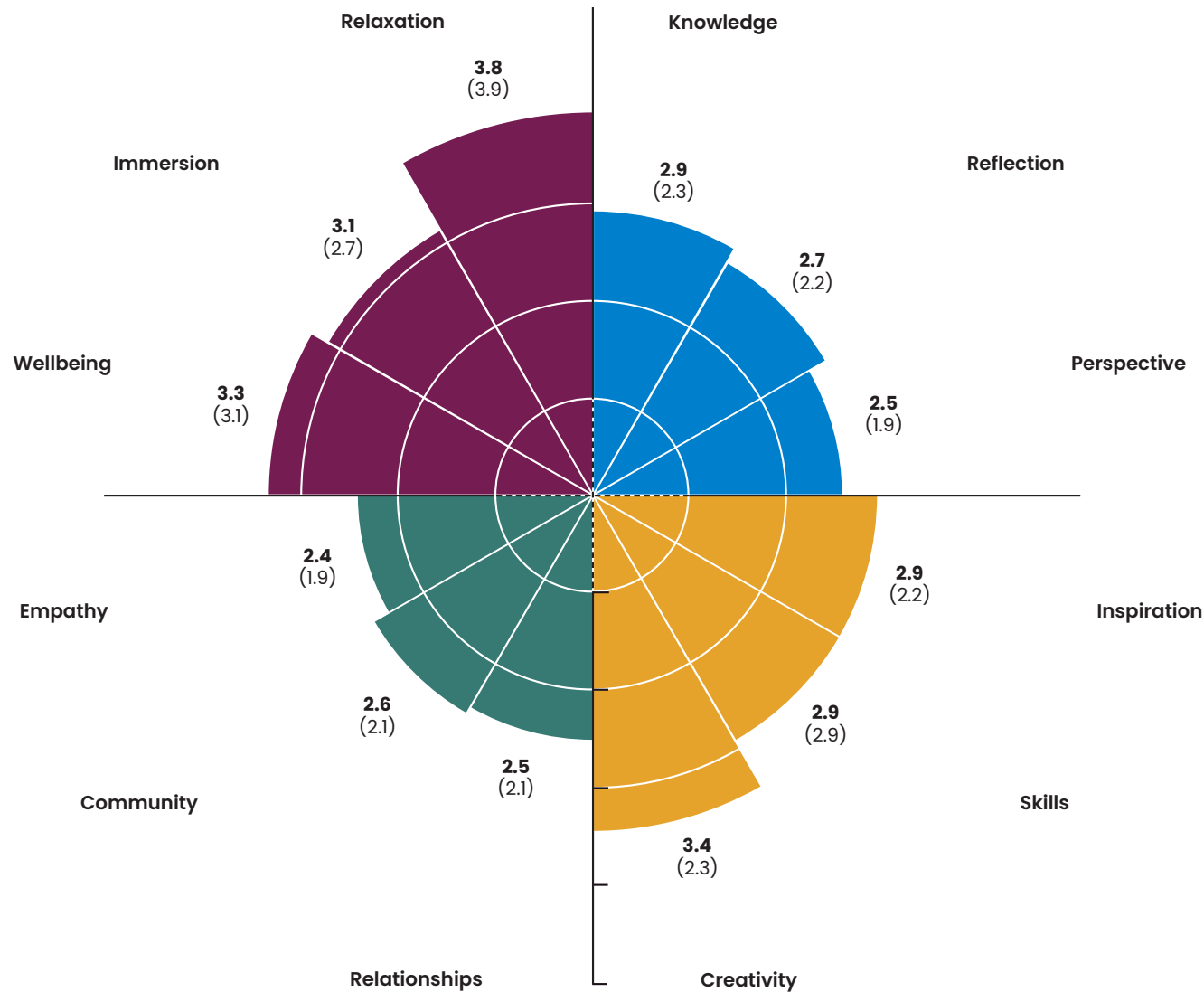


Figure 18: Impact profile for creative games

The number highlighted in bold indicates the average of the 319 respondents who plays creative games. The number in parentheses is the average across all seven genres.

Social impact

Creative impact

Examples of creative games

Trailmakers is a Danish-made game that offers an open world where you can build and control your own vehicle or vessel. You can build everything from cars to aeroplanes, which you can either use to explore with friends or compete to see who can go the fastest. Trailmakers was released in 2019 and is developed by Flashbulb Games.

Minecraft is a sandbox game that allows players to explore, build and create in a virtual world of blocks. The only limit to what you can build is your creativity. Developed by Mojang Studios, Minecraft was released in 2011 and has since been continuously updated.

Facts about those who play creative games

- 28% of Danes play creative games, making it the third most popular genre. However, the genre is the most prevalent in the 16-24 age group, where 57% play creative games.
- Two out of three Danes (65%) who play creative games only play alone. After puzzle games, where 70% only play alone, this is the largest share across genres.
- 93% play at home, while 17% also play creative games on the go.

6. Methodology and Appendices

6.1. Methodology

The study of the impact of games is based on The Experience Impact Compass™ developed by Seismonaut. To achieve a deep and nuanced understanding of what digital games mean to players, the study is based on both a representative questionnaire survey and three in-depth focus groups.

The Experience Impact Compass and game genres

The Experience Impact Compass is an overarching analytical framework that helps us understand what experiences mean. The compass consists of four dimensions that are universal and common across all types of experiences. Each dimension has three parameters that together capture the impact of a specific experience. The compass is research-based, and through the compass, we have previously investigated the impact of feature films, documentaries, Danish TV productions, museums and libraries in Denmark and abroad.

In the first part of the project, we have customised the 12 parameters of the compass to reflect the specific characteristics of gaming experiences. This has enabled us to capture the impact that games can have. We have done this with input from the Danish Producers' Association, select gaming companies among the association's members, and with assistance of the Danish Film Institute.

The compass was subsequently used as a basis for designing the questionnaire for the representative survey of the Danish population and for preparing the conversations in the focus groups.

In order to capture different types of impact across different games, we used a list of seven

game genres. Games in different genres and of different types are essentially different experiences, as the study confirms. The purpose of the seven game genres was therefore to separate experiences with different types of games so that we could analyse and communicate the many nuances of games as a cultural form and experience. The list of game genres, their definition and the examples behind them were also selected in collaboration with the Danish Producers' Association.

The survey covered all digital games that Danes play on a screen, regardless of whether it is on a mobile phone, tablet, computer, console or virtual reality. However, the survey *does not* include gambling, betting, lottery or similar. In the questionnaire survey as well as in the focus groups, we have therefore asked respondents to disregard these.

Questionnaire survey

The Experience Impact Compass formed the basis for a questionnaire survey with a representative sample of the Danish population. The questionnaire included questions about Danes' gaming habits, their use of games within different genres, and what their experiences within each genre have meant to them.

The survey's analyses of which Danes play digital games and in what ways are representative of the Danish population. The overall

analysis of how games matter to Danes is also representative. When we look at what the individual game genres mean to Danes, the survey is only representative of the sample of Danes who play the given genres.

1,501 respondents answered the questionnaire, of which 1,172 stated that they have played digital games in the past 12 months. The survey was conducted online in July 2023.

Focus groups

To nuance the results from the survey, we conducted three follow-up focus groups. The focus groups also aimed to get Danes' own words on what gaming experiences are and how they matter.

The focus groups were based on the participants' own stories about games, why they play the games they do, and what the games mean to them. In addition, we have actively asked about the four dimensions of the The Meaning Experience Impact Compass to explore how the different genres mean something to the players.

Participants were selected to ensure a broad distribution across gender, age, geography, education level, and how much and how they play games. The three focus groups have each been based on selected game genres, so the focus groups together have covered all seven genres. The participants were thus also

selected based on the genres of games they have played.

In total, 18 people participated across the

three focus groups. The focus groups were held in August 2023.

Table 1: Participants of the three focus groups

	Participant	Age	Gender	Region	Highest completed level of education	Weekly playtime
Focus group 1	Participant 1	57	Male	Capital city	Vocational education	Approx. 4-7 hours
	Participant 2	48	male	Capital city	Intermediate higher education (3-4 years)	Approx. 4-7 hours
	Participant 3	36	Male	Zealand	Vocational education	Approx. 4-7 hours
	Participant 4	32	Female	Central Jutland	Upper secondary education / vocational upper secondary education	More than 7 hours
	Participant 5	33	Male	Southern Denmark	Vocational education	Approx. 4-7 hours
	Participant 6	20	Female	Central Jutland	Upper secondary education / vocational upper secondary education	Approx. 1-3 hours
Focus group 2	Participant 7	66	Female	Southern Denmark	Elementary school	Approx. 30-60 min.
	Participant 8	66	Male	Capital city	Vocational education	Approx. 1-3 hours
	Participant 9	40	Female	North Jutland	Upper secondary education / vocational upper secondary education	Approx. 1-3 hours
	Participant 10	41	Male	Central Jutland	Vocational education	Approx. 1-3 hours
	Participant 11	35	Male	Zealand	Intermediate higher education (3-4 years)	More than 7 hours
	Participant 12	29	Female	Capital city	Intermediate higher education (3-4 years)	Approx. 4-7 hours
Focus group 3	Participant 13	67	Male	Central Jutland	Intermediate higher education (3-4 years)	More than 7 hours
	Participant 14	47	Male	Capital city	Upper secondary education / vocational upper secondary education	Approx. 4-7 hours
	Participant 15	45	Female	Zealand	Intermediate higher education (3-4 years)	Approx. 4-7 hours
	Participant 16	29	Female	Capital city	Long higher education (over 4 years)	Approx. 4-7 hours
	Participant 17	27	Male	Capital city	Long higher education (over 4 years)	More than 7 hours
	Participant 18	20	Female	Zealand	Upper secondary education / vocational upper secondary education	More than 7 hours

6.2. Appendices

Table 2: Average for each parameter across age groups

		16-24 years	25-39 years	40-54 years	55-79 years	All games
Emotional impact	Relaxation	3.6	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.9
	Immersion	3.1	3.1	2.5	2.2	2.7
	Wellbeing	3.2	3.2	2.9	3.0	3.1
Intellectual impact	Knowledge	2.8	2.4	2.0	2.0	2.3
	Reflection	2.6	2.4	1.9	1.8	2.2
	Perspectives	2.4	2.1	1.6	1.5	1.9
Creative impact	Inspiration	2.8	2.4	1.9	1.8	2.2
	Skills	3.0	2.8	2.6	2.9	2.9
	Creativity	2.9	2.5	2.0	1.9	2.3
Social impact	Relationships	2.7	2.3	1.9	1.7	2.1
	Community	2.7	2.3	1.9	1.6	2.1
	Empathy	2.5	2.0	1.7	1.5	1.9
	Respondents	202	291	338	341	1,172

Table 3: Average for each parameter across genres and for all games

		Puzzle games	Platform games	Sports games	Action games	Adventure games	Strategy game	Creative games	All games
Emotional impact	Relaxation	4.0	3.7	3.7	3.8	4.0	3.8	3.8	3.9
	Immersion	2.3	3.0	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.0	3.1	2.7
	Wellbeing	3.0	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.2	3.3	3.1
Intellectual impact	Knowledge	2.0	2.3	2.7	2.7	3.0	2.6	2.9	2.3
	Reflection	1.9	2.2	2.6	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.2
	Perspectives	1.6	2.0	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.2	2.5	1.9
Creative impact	Inspiration	2.0	2.2	2.6	2.5	2.9	2.5	2.9	2.2
	Skills	2.9	2.8	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.9
	Creativity	2.1	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.9	2.6	3.4	2.3
Social impact	Relationships	1.8	2.4	2.8	2.9	2.7	2.3	2.5	2.1
	Community	1.7	2.3	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.1
	Empathy	1.6	2.1	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.2	2.4	1.9
	Respondents	780	259	213	266	215	333	319	1,172



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