

GAMING FOR GOOD

What role have digital games played for university students during lockdown



About this report

This report was developed in 2021 based on results of an ASK4 survey and desktop research conducted by Red Brick Research. Survey data was collected during May / June 2021 against the backdrop of the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The survey was completed by 667 university students in the UK, Ireland, Germany and Spain. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of students were from the UK, 16% from Spain, 15% from Germany and 3% from Ireland. The survey focussed solely on digital games played using a games console, laptop or desktop computer. It did not focus on games played on mobile devices. All statistics in this report are taken from this survey unless otherwise referenced.

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Foreword

University can be an isolating time for students if they struggle to immerse themselves in independent living and find their social circles early.

When the ability to explore a new city and socialise in person is removed completely, it can be extremely damaging for young people at what should be an exciting and formative time in their lives. It should come as no surprise that students like to socialise while studying. In our recent Connected Living research series, The Students of 2022, we found that 95% of students said they are excited about meeting new people ahead of the new academic year, and 92% said they are excited to go out to bars and social events. As the ability to socialise in person was removed for students over the last year, there were worrying implications for student mental health with almost three-guarters (73%) of all students saying that the recent lockdowns have had a negative effect on their mental wellbeing.

Video gaming, and particularly online gaming surged in popularity over lockdown as many people picked up a controller to help reduce the stresses and anxieties of the past year, as well as using online games to socialise with friends. Speaking from personal experience, there are only so many group chats and Zoom quizzes you can tolerate, but online gaming provides a more casual and fun way of keeping in touch with friends and family. Even when not playing online with other people, video games offer a level of escapism and focus that other forms of entertainment cannot.

The Gaming for Good report looks at the reasons why students who have never previously been interested in video games turned to gaming during the pandemic and how it not only helps to improve poor mental health but can also develop practical skills that are useful in studies and future employment.



Adam Willerton CONTENT AND DIGITAL MARKETING MANAGER







Introduction

Within weeks of the world entering lockdown in 2020, reports of huge increases in the numbers of users on online gaming platforms such as Steam and Twitch began to emerge.

The most interesting part of these reports was that this increase was not simply due to existing gamers playing more frequently, but also because of the rise in new gamers. In the case of Steam alone, the number of users logging in rose by 50% from 16 million to 24 million within the first four weeks of lockdown.¹ Similarly, video game live-streaming platform Twitch reported 35.4% growth of in the number of its users between February and April 2020.² People who had never played games before were turning to gaming to help them get through lockdown, and stereotypes and preconceived ideas around gamers and gaming were being challenged.³ ⁴

While the negative impacts of gaming have been well documented, it has become apparent during lockdown that the benefits of gaming extend far beyond entertainment. ASK4 decided to investigate the gaming habits of university students in the UK, Ireland, Germany and Spain who play online using traditional gaming devices such as PCs/laptops and games consoles (excluding mobile phones). This report aims to help us understand the challenges faced by students during the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the role gaming has played in their lives in that time. We have also explored what the body of research on gaming tells us about these issues more broadly and looked at some of the innovative ways that gaming and gaming technology is being used around the world.

The insight and data we have collected shows that, although some individuals are vulnerable to addiction and to the potential negative effects of excessive gaming, there is no doubt that it has played an integral role in helping many students stay connected and happy during the COVID restrictions, and in helping manage stress and anxiety. In addition, gaming offers a host of other benefits to those playing, such as improved cognitive function and the development of a range of skills. The Gaming for Good report will dispel some of the myths and connotations around gaming and will show that not only has it been an important pastime for students during the past year and a half of restrictions, but it will continue to be a crucial tool for self-care and development long into the future.

Setting the Scene

Who is playing?

Gaming is no longer a niche hobby or interest. In the UK alone, almost 86% of people aged between 16-69 years have gamed on either consoles, laptops, desktop computers or mobile phones at some point in the last year. Fifty percent (50%) of those who play on most days are female.⁵

Eighty-five percent (85%) of university students say they have gamed using a laptop or desktop computer or console in the last six months. Just under half were females.

Who are they playing with?

Gaming with others is popular - 86% of student gamers say that they have played online with others in the past six months, while a third (36%) have done so on most days. For some, gaming online with others is a new pastime – one in six student gamers (17%) had never played with others remotely prior to the pandemic.

Frequency of Play

A key difference between male and female students lies in how frequently they play. Males are more likely (72%) than females (45%) to game on most days, while females are more likely (29%) than males (9%) to game once a week or two or three times a month. This difference is likely to be due to device preference, as other studies have shown that males and females game every day with similar frequency,⁶ however, women are more likely than men to play on a smartphone.⁷

What type of games are they playing?

Role playing games are the most popular type of game for both males and females, while puzzle/quiz games and social network games such as Farmville or Candy Crush are more popular with females than males. Watching other people game through streaming platforms is also a popular pastime, with 87% of gaming students reporting that they had watched others play via streaming platforms in the last six months.

86 percent of student gamers say that they have played online with others in the past six months

Frequency of gaming



For general entertainment purposes	79% 76% 92%	
Gaming is a good way to pass time	79% 67% 55%	
Gaming reduces my stress	69% 49% 37%	-
I enjoy the challenge / competition	60% 43% 32%	
Gaming allows me to maintain relationships with friends	55% 32% 23%	_
To create memories with friends	43% 26% 21%	
Fantasy / role playing	35% 24% 23%	
l enjoy being part of an online community	40% 13% 10%	
Gaming allows me to make new friends	36% 19% 11%	
Gaming develops key skills that I want to improve	22% 10% 8%	
Self-presentation (creating a unique character to represent yourself online)	19% 17% 3%	
Gaming helps to improve my confidence levels	19% 6%	
It encourages me to undertake physical activity	8% 4%	Every Day
Other (please specify)	2% 2% 2%	1–3 3 times a n

Reasons for gaming

Most students game for general entertainment (79%) but those that game less than weekly are more likely (92%) to play primarily for entertainment, rather than the other benefits that gaming offers. Those that game more frequently place a higher value on other benefits. For example, students who game on most days, are more likely (69%) to do so to reduce stress than students who game 1-3 days a week (49%). This group also highly values the social aspect of gaming, being more likely to say that it helps them to maintain relationships and that they enjoy being part of an online community.

Favourite Devices

Games consoles such as PlayStation, Xbox or Nintendo are the most popular devices for both males and females. Females are more likely (58%) to play on a laptop, while males are more likely to game on a desktop computer (49%).





Warning



Your country ran into a problem that it couldn't handle, and now needs to shut down.



The Effect of Lockdown

Students have faced a difficult 18 months since the beginning of the pandemic, with female students reporting a more negative impact on wellbeing than males.

Lockdown has negatively affected student wellbeing

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of all students say that the recent lockdowns have had a negative effect on their mental wellbeing. This figure is slightly higher than in other similar pieces of research in which around 52%⁸-58%⁹ of students have reported worsened mental health.

Female students have found the recent lockdowns more difficult, with 40% saying they have had a very negative effect on their mental wellbeing, compared to 27% of males. This is consistent with other studies which have found that female university students have been more likely to be depressed, anxious or stressed than male students during the pandemic.¹⁰ There is some evidence to suggest that this may be because females are generally "more susceptible to the effect of loneliness on mental health".¹¹

Learning has been negatively impacted

COVID restrictions have unsurprisingly had an even worse effect on students' learning, with 80% saying the restrictions have had a negative effect. Interestingly, those who game online with others every day are significantly less likely (71%) to report a negative effect on learning. While the reasons for this are not clear, it may be that this social interaction acts as a protective factor in terms of overall wellbeing. THOSE WHO GAME ONLINE WITH OTHERS EVERY DAY ARE SIGNIFICANTLY LESS LIKELY (71%) TO REPORT A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON LEARNING.

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What effect have the recent lockdowns had on your mental wellbeing?



What effect have COVID restrictions had on your learning?



The Role of Gaming During Lockdown

Gaming has played a key role in helping students maintain social connections and reduce stress through lockdown.

Like many other people around the world, two-thirds (65%) of student gamers say that the amount of time they spend playing games increased during the period of social restrictions. This figure is supported by a survey conducted by The University of Glasgow which found that 71% of respondents are spending more time playing games as a result of the pandemic.¹² Regardless of how frequently they have been playing games, 81% of students who game say that gaming has helped them get through lockdown.

The key benefits of gaming reported by these students are:

- reducing boredom (84%)
- keeping their mind active (65%)
- making them feel happier (63%)

The happiness factor reported by students is very real. While gaming, in addition to secreting the "feel-good" chemical, dopamine¹³, gamers report increased feelings of competence and may enter a "flow state" - a condition which is similar to meditation.¹⁴

Increased social connections

Gaming during lockdown has also had significant social benefits for students in terms of reducing feelings of isolation (44%) and helping them maintain relationships (45%). These figures rise significantly for those who play every day, with over half reporting that gaming helps to keep up relationships (57%) and saying that it reduces isolation (54%). Men are more likely than women to say that gaming has helped them maintain relationships. This may be because males appear to deliberately use gaming to communicate with friends – two-thirds of male students (68%) said that they used games to communicate with friends either a few days a week or daily during lockdown, compared with half of women (49%).

Gaming and mental wellbeing

'Students who say they game every day are also less likely (26%) to say that the recent lockdowns have had a very negative effect on their mental wellbeing than those who game 2-3 times a month or less (39%).'

Given that feeling connected to others is an important contributor to wellbeing,¹⁵ it is possible that the social aspect of gaming acts as a protective factor. Gamers may also have access to social support from their gaming communities,^{16 17} and studies show that the more time you play, the more likely you are to form friendships online.¹⁸ Those who played games pre-pandemic may be more accustomed to socialising and forging friendships online, allowing them to cope with lockdown better and less likely to feel a sense of isolation.

Managing stress

One way that gaming reduces stress in players is by providing a distraction or an escape by taking players' minds off problems or stressful situations for a period of time.¹⁹ Therefore it is not surprising that those who say their overall wellbeing is poor are significantly more likely (67%) to say that they game to help cope with the stresses of COVID and that gaming provides an escape from Coronavirusrelated anxieties (65%).

Results from other studies also suggest that gamers consciously use games to manage stress, even going so far as to choose games that best fit their current emotional needs. For example, one UK study found that many gamers switched to playing 'more relaxing, comforting or passive games' during lockdown as well as returning to 'old favourites' because they bring a sense of comfort and familiarity to try to bring about some feeling of 'normal' during a very turbulent period.²⁰

'Those who say their overall wellbeing is poor are significantly more likely (67%) to say they game to help with the stresses of COVID'

HOW HAVE PLAYING DIGITAL GAMES MADE YOU FEEL BETTER DURING LOCKDOWN?



Gaming reduces my boredom - 84%



Gaming has helped me keep up relationships - 45%



It keeps my mind active - 65% I feel less isolated - 44%



It makes me feel happier - 63%



I feel less stressed - 54%



It has provided an escape from Coronavirusrelated anxieties - 52% 12------

focused - 31%

Gaming helps me to stay

Other (please specify) - 1%



Gaming and Student Wellbeing

While a small group of students are vulnerable to problematic gaming, there is evidence that for more students, gaming positively impacts their happiness, mental wellbeing, social connections and levels of stress and anxiety outside lockdown.

Current Overall Wellbeing

Just over half (57%) of all student gamers describe their wellbeing as good or very good.

Those who game every day are more likely (65%) to rate their wellbeing positively, compared to of those who play 1-3 days a week (55%).

Problematic Gaming

For some vulnerable individuals, gaming behaviour can enter the realm of what is considered "excessive gaming" or "problematic gaming behaviour" – often referred to as Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD).²¹

IGD is the subject of much debate among those in the gaming industry and the medical profession because it is different to other addictions in that there is nothing about games themselves that is inherently addictive. Rather, there are attributes in an individual with an IGD that make them vulnerable to the "flow" effect of gaming, increasing their motivation to play to the extent that it interferes with one or more areas of their lives.²²

Our research shows that 14% of students who game say they are often or very often preoccupied with their gaming behaviour, and 7% say that they often or very often feel irritable, anxious or sad when they try to reduce or stop their gaming activity. Three percent (3%) of students say they very often lose interest in previous hobbies and other entertainment activities as a result of their gaming activities. Six percent (6%) say they systematically fail when trying to control or cease their gaming activity.

Poor mental health and feelings of loneliness are known risk factors²³ for excessive gaming, and so unsurprisingly, those who rate their overall wellbeing as poor are significantly more likely (21%) to say that they are often or very often preoccupied with their gaming behaviour than those who say their overall wellbeing is good (13%). While these results highlight that the negative effects of gaming are a very real issue for some students, these figures need to be interpreted with caution given that the survey was undertaken when lockdown restrictions in the UK and Europe, although slightly eased, were still in place. At the time of the survey, regular activities were not an option for many students due to social distancing measures, and so gaming may have played a more important role for some individuals than it would in "normal" times. A survey undertaken by Global Web Index in late 2020, found that as lockdown measures ease, "things like going to the gym, attending music concerts, and seeing friends are already top priorities in future, meaning gaming – even among its most devoted fans - is going to take a hit".24

Other negative impacts of game playing

Even for those who do not game at levels that could be considered problematic, our research shows that gaming has had a negative impact on many students' physical wellbeing (26%), sleep (49%) and academic performance (27%).

It is likely that the negative impact on academic performance is at least partly linked to this lack of sleep and physical wellbeing, given that sleep deprivation can impact on memory and concentration levels. In addition, students who say that gaming has had a negative impact on their academic performance are also more likely to describe themselves as having a poor current overall wellbeing compared to other students.

However, addressing issues such as lack of sleep and physical wellbeing of university-age gamers may seem like an impossible task given their adult status. Many devices have parental controls, which allow time limits to be set when young children are playing, but there is a challenge in encouraging young adults to use these features to help manage their playing time and to set up healthy routines (including balancing studies with gaming time).

Education around the effect of lack of sleep on cognitive function is likely to be useful. Research in the esports field highlights that the key difference between gaming and physical sporting pursuits is the 'play till you drop' culture that surrounds gaming. There is an attitude in competitive gaming that immersion at the cost of physical activity and sleep is beneficial to performance, whereas in physical sport, sleep and recovery is promoted as critical to enhancing performance.²⁵ Researchers note that "fostering more helpful sleep related beliefs in behaviour" is key, as is encouraging players to monitor and track the connection between their performance and their level of sleep in order to challenge players' beliefs about sacrificing sleep.²⁶



Gaming as Medicine

In June 2020, the game EndeavourRX made history when the USA's Federal Drug Administration approved it to be legally marketed and prescribed as medicine for children aged 8-12 years of age with ADHD. EndeavourRX has been designed to challenge children's brains by encouraging them to focus on multiple tasks at the same time while playing. As with any new medicine, the game underwent several years of testing to prove its efficacy as well as to determine any potential negative side effects. Children who used the game were split into two control groups – one group taking stimulant medications, and the other not taking medications. Both groups demonstrated significant reductions in ADHD symptoms during the trial as well as nine months after treatment.^{33 34}

Gaming and health

Over the last decade, there has been an increasing academic focus on the positive impact of gaming on individual health and wellbeing. Studies have shown that video games can help patients with a range of different illnesses including cancer, diabetes, asthma, depression, autism and Parkinson's disease.²⁷ Numerous clinical studies have also documented the effectiveness of commercial video games in combatting symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress. ²⁸ ²⁹

Mental health benefits

We know that gaming has a positive impact on social connections and levels of happiness, however games also offer important benefits in terms of helping to reduce stress and anxiety levels. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of student gamers say that gaming has had a positive effect on their levels of stress and anxiety. The reasons for this are complex, however some studies suggest that in addition to providing an escape, gaming provides a safe environment in which to try new things, and can promote a sense of hope and optimism.^{30 31} There is also evidence that shows increased competence, feelings of enjoyment, autonomy and relatedness, which are all key factors in wellbeing.32

Positive impact on university experience

Alongside the benefits that gaming offers to an individual's health and wellbeing, there is also evidence to suggest that it has the ability to enhance the university experience for students. For example, those who game on most days are significantly more likely to say that gaming has had a positive effect on the following aspects of their university life:

- sense of wellbeing at university (45% positive effect).
- social life at university (40%).
- overall university experience (38%).

This positive effect on various aspects of university is particularly heightened for both German and Spanish students.

Gaming Teaching Children to Regulate Emotions

Noticing that children with angercontrol problems often fail to engage with psychotherapy but are very eager to play video games, two medical professionals at Boston Children's Hospital developed a game called "RAGE Control" to teach children emotional control skills that they can later use in challenging life situations. As children play this fast-paced game, a monitor on one finger tracks their heart rate and displays it on the computer screen as they shoot at enemy spaceships while avoiding friendly ones. When their heart rate goes above a certain level, players can no longer shoot at the enemy. To improve their game, children must learn to stay calm.³⁵





Other Benefits of Gaming

Improved cognitive ability

With the coordination, dexterity and spatial awareness needed to play video games, it should come as no surprise that gaming helps to develop a wide range of skills. When asked to select up to five skills that gaming had helped them improve, students say that gaming has enhanced their:

- 1. Problem solving (59% of all gamers select this)
- 2. Strategic planning (54%)
- 3. Concentration (52%)
- 4. Critical thinking (41%)
- 5. Pattern recognition (37%).

The answers collected in our research are consistent with the results of clinical studies which have shown that gamers have enhanced cognitive skills including task switching and processing speed; enhanced visuo-motor coordination and problem-solving skills.³⁶ The good news is that there is credible evidence that these benefits are derived from commercial video games as well as non-commercial or commercial 'braintraining programs'.³⁷

Enhanced 'soft skills'

Students also report that gaming has improved their teamwork skills. Twothirds (67%) of students who game say they agree with the statement 'gaming will help me to work successfully with other people in a team'. Those who game regularly (at least most days) are significantly likely to agree.

There is a growing body of evidence that supports this, with studies highlighting that gaming helps to develop soft skills such as teamwork, communication skills, resourcefulness and adaptability.³⁸. This is because in a gaming environment players need to work hard to learn and understand, collaborate with others to coordinate strategy in multiplayer games, solve problems and continuously adapt to changing conditions. It is worth noting that that these improvements have been observed after low to moderate levels of playing time.

A study by the University of Glasgow looked at two groups of university students – one group gamed together for two hours per week, while the other group did not. The first group played eight different types of games (with the majority being multiplayer games). After just 14 hours of play, students in the game-playing group scored higher for communication, resourcefulness and adaptability³⁹.

Employers are increasingly recognising that gaming develops the types of skills necessary in a professional environment and are starting to consider gaming as relevant in applications.⁴⁰

"Should I hire a Fortnite player with sharp collaboration skills or a Words with Friends Player who's more practiced in problem-solving?"⁴¹

This extract from global recruitment firm Manpower's blog demonstrates how transferrable skills of those who play games are increasingly valued in the workplace and how previously held stereotypes of people who play games are dissipating, A Manpower representative explains:

"Gaming cultivates not only technical skills but also the soft skills ... Gamers bring improved critical thinking, creativity, emotional intelligence and complex problem-solving to the table. Games even teach players how to communicate feedback effectively. These soft skills are hard to find and even harder to train – 43 percent of employers say it is more difficult to teach the soft skills they're looking for".⁴² Manpower has undertaken extensive research into the transferrable skills of gamers by analysing over 11,000 games across 13 genres⁴³ and have used this to develop a "Skills Translator Quiz" which uses an algorithm to translate "their gaming experience into workplace skills they can add to their resume ... ultimately connecting them with potential job matches".⁴⁴

The Royal Air Force is an example of an employer actively encouraging gamers to apply for positions, explaining in an interview with the BBC that:

"The ability to assimilate information, react swiftly and co-ordinate actions whilst remaining calm under pressure are often attributes of people that are good at gaming and that these skills are part of what the RAF is looking for".⁴⁵

The RAF's website demonstrates the value placed on gaming skills, with descriptions for many positions including an icon indicating that these positions are "great for those interested in gaming and computers".⁴⁶



Gaming helping to improve social skills of children with autism

Children with autism often have difficulty in gauging the emotional states of others and may be anxious about making mistakes. Medical professionals are using games to help children on the autism spectrum learn new social skills in a less threatening gaming environment where communication is less intimidating for children. This is due to the lack of face-to-face interaction and placing them in an environment where other gamers share an interest in what they are doing. Games are also used to teach children with autism to "become more comfortable with the idea of not being perfect", which is an important life skill. Games such as those on the Nintendo Wii have been used to develop fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination and flexibility in children with autism.47

Gaming technology boosting the skills of medical professionals

The game Night Shift was created for emergency room doctors and involves a training simulator in the form of a story-driven adventure where players are placed in the role of a trauma doctor. As players navigate through a "Night Shift," they diagnose and treat patients, evaluating whether patients need to be moved to a trauma centre. It also lets players experience the emotional narrative of a real-life patient. For instance, if a virtual patient is misdiagnosed, and dies, the player is confronted by distressed relatives.

A clinical study of the game found that doctors who played the game were less likely to under-triage patients (e.g. failing to refer patients with severe injuries to a trauma centre).⁴⁸

KEY THE ERWYRY

GAMING IS NO LONGER A MALE DOMINATED. **NICHE HOBBY**

Eighty-five percent (85%) of the university students who responded to

our survey had gamed using a laptop/ desktop computer or console in the last six months. The proportion of male and female students who game is almost the same, however a key difference is frequency, with males playing more regularly than females.

> **GAMING HAS PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN BENEFITING THE** WELLBEING OF **STUDENTS THROUGH** THE PERIOD OF COVID RESTRICTIONS

A key benefit of gaming is that it helps students manage their stress, particularly important during uncertain periods of COVID restrictions. 81% of students who game say that gaming has helped them get through lockdown by reducing boredom, making them feel happier and keeping their mind active by providing an escape from Coronavirus-related anxieties.



WELLBEING AND LEARNING HAS BEEN **NEGATIVELY IMPACTED BY COVID RESTRICTIONS** Almost three-quarters

of students say their wellbeing has been impacted by COVID restrictions, with female students more likely to report a very negative effect than male students.

> **GAMING HAS ALLOWED STUDENT GAMERS TO FEEL MORE CONNECTED** WITH OTHERS

Students who game have increased the

amount of time they game during lockdown, and some have taken up gaming online with others. Regardless of how much they play, gaming has had significant social benefit for students with two-thirds of gamers saying that gaming has had a positive effect on the relationship they have with their friends.



GAMING CAN IMPROVE COGNITIVE ABILITY

There is a lot of evidence that gaming improves cognitive abilities such as task processing and

switching speed, concentration and problem-solving,



IF GAMING HABITS ARE NOT MANAGED WELL. IT CAN NEGATIVELY IMPACT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

If gaming is not wellmanaged as part of a routine, then there can be negative effects on both sleep levels and academic performance.



EMPLOYERS INCREASINGLY **RECOGNISE THE SOFT-SKILLS THAT DEVELOP** IN GAMING

Employers increasingly recognise that gaming

assists with developing soft skills such as collaboration, communication and adaptability, and are beginning to actively recruit gamers as a result.

THE BENEFITS OF GAMING **EXTEND BEYOND THE STUDENT WORLD, WITH GAMING OFFERING** MANY REAL WORD **APPLICATIONS, ESPECIALLY** WITHIN THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

Gaming is also spawning a range of innovations in other areas. The medical profession has benefited from gaming with games now being used to help with the treatment of patients but also with the training of medical professionals.





ASK4 is pleased to be partnering with gaming and esports organisation Gfinity in November of this year, as we stage an online FIFA 22 tournament for student residents living in ASK4-managed sites across Sheffield, Leeds, Manchester and Birmingham. Our aim is to highlight the popularity and benefits of gaming to our clients, connect students with shared interests across different cities, and help our clients to facilitate gaming activities for their residents into the future.

Commenting on the Gaming for Good report, Gfinity CEO, John Clarke said:

"The global pandemic has changed lives. No one has been impacted more than young people. They have been forced to experience an unimaginable situation. More than a year spent in either isolation or significantly restricted in their ability to socialise face to face.

ASK4's report shows that this generation, digital natives, are resourceful. They found new ways to stay connected during challenging times. Socialising through gaming, a pastime that helped protect their mental health and lessen the blow of not being able to enjoy the normal human interaction which is such an important part of University and College life. The report is important as it provides deeper insights into the positive impact of gaming over the past 18 months.

At Gfinity, we have seen first-hand the joy gaming brings and the creativity it inspires. We are pleased to provide opportunities for young people to learn, play and be entertained through gaming content. Gaming is a way of life and as this report highlights, plays an increasingly positive role in our society."

ABOUT GFINITY

Gfinity is a leading media and technology company in the fast growing esports and gaming sector.

Founded in late 2012, Gfinity solidified itself as esports and community engagement experts. There are now 2.7 billion gamers globally, meaning gaming is the entertainment pastime of this generation. Gfinity believes in the power of gaming to entertain and inspire this new generation, and uses its long-established reputation for high quality, its owned properties and its trusted partnerships with brands to deliver on this goal.

A FEW WORDS FROM

student minds

74% of students reported that Covid-19 has had a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing at university

Student Minds is the UK's student mental health charity. We empower students and members of the university community to look after their own mental health, support others and create change.

No student should ever have to feel alone with their mental health. That is why we are here to help your students with Student Space – a platform to help your communities find the support they need during the pandemic and beyond.

We are here to support with:

- Direct support via phone, text, webchat and email
- Advice and information to help students navigate university life
- Student stories and tips
- University support directory to find out what is available on their campus



It is great to see that more research is being carried out into student mental health and ASK4 has explored the impact of gaming on students in their latest report. In August 2021, we at Student Minds published the report 'University Mental Health: Life in a Pandemic'. Our report shares the learnings of our listening and insights work from throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, with a focus on how higher education communities were impacted during this time. We found:

- The pandemic affected every corner of students' lives, including their education, living arrangements, social lives, financial security and access to support. The impacts were widespread and often deeply felt.
- Loneliness amongst students was widespread two-thirds of students reported often feeling lonely or isolated since March 2020.
- Students often face barriers to accessing support although 65% of students needed support during the pandemic, just 19% actually got help. The most common reason students gave for not accessing support was 'I felt my circumstances were not serious enough to ask for help'.
- The pandemic had unequal impacts. Students who experienced preexisting inequalities were disproportionately negatively impacted by the pandemic.

82% said that the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively impacted their academic experience At Student Minds, we believe more can be done to ensure students can thrive and succeed during their time at university and beyond.

www.studentminds.org.uk

44% did not feel well equipped to manage the pressures of their course

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