

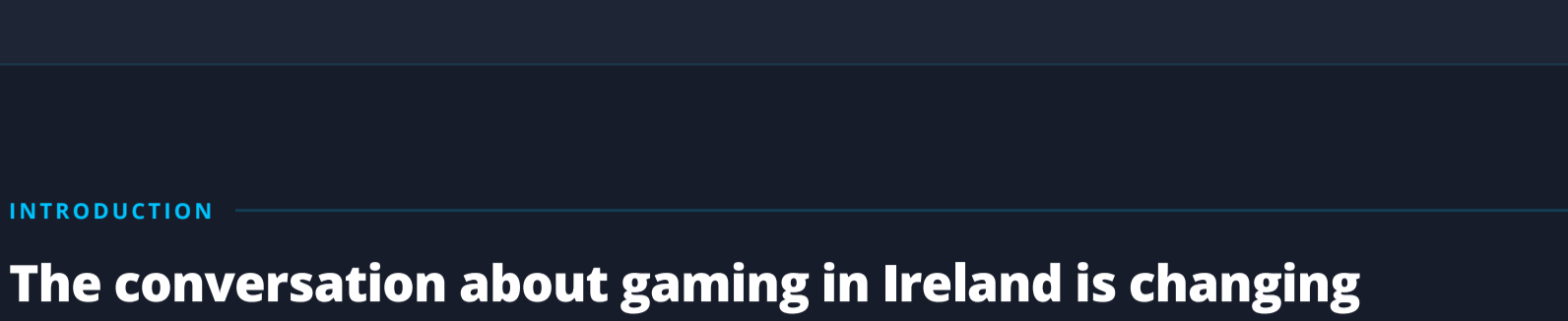


SURVEY REPORT · 2025 / 2026

# Gaming in Ireland: What the Data Tells Us

The Ireland Esports Federation gathered over 440 responses across surveys and programme engagement throughout 2025–26. Here's what we learned about how Irish people game, what they value, and where the opportunity lies.

- 440+ total responses
- Republic & Northern Ireland
- Findings from 2025/26



## INTRODUCTION

### The conversation about gaming in Ireland is changing

For too long, gaming has been framed as a solitary, unproductive habit — something to be managed rather than embraced. The data we've gathered across 2025 and 2026 tells a very different story. Gaming in Ireland is social, skills-building, and deeply woven into youth culture. What it lacks is institutional recognition, structured pathways, and the kind of support that every other competitive youth activity takes for granted.

This report draws on over 440 responses gathered from the Irish gaming community, with a significant focus on secondary school students across the island of Ireland. The findings offer, for the first time, a grounded picture of what gaming looks like in Ireland — who's doing it, why, and what they want from it.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

### Students want to compete. Almost none of them have the chance.

The most striking finding in our research isn't about how much young Irish people game — it's about the gap between what they want and what currently exists. **92% of secondary school students surveyed have no access to an esports club or team at their school.** This isn't a lack of interest. It's a lack of infrastructure.



When the Ireland Esports Federation launched the **School Esports Cup 2026** — a national post-primary gaming competition — student interest flooded in from schools across Cork, Dublin, Donegal, and Limerick within weeks.

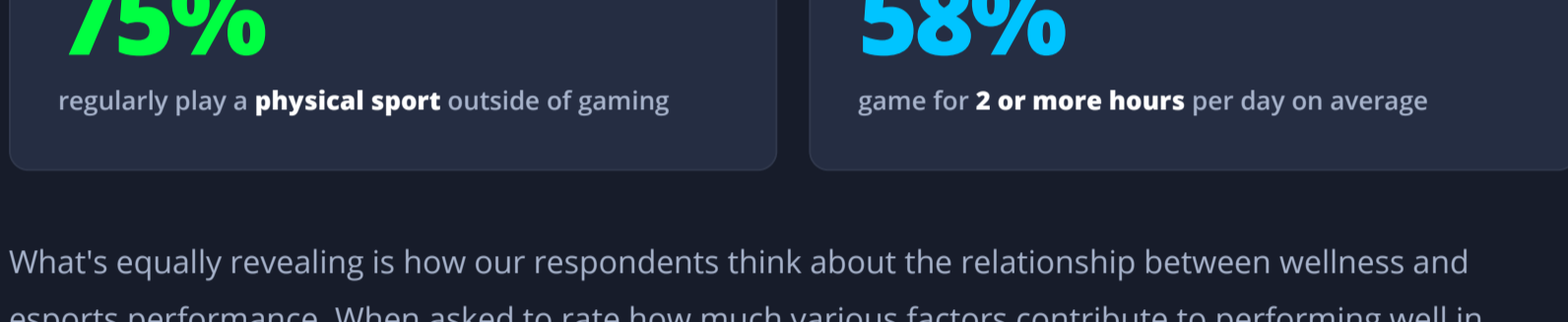
*"The demand isn't latent. It's vocal, it's ready — and it's being met with silence from most institutions."*

This represents a significant unmet opportunity — not just for young people who want structured competitive gaming in their schools, but for the brands, broadcasters, and organisations that want to reach them in an authentic environment. The IEF is building that environment. The students are already there.

## SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

### Gaming builds real friendships. The data confirms it.

One of the most persistent myths about gaming is that it is isolating — that it pulls young people away from social life rather than contributing to it. Our survey data is unambiguous on this point. **60% of respondents have made real-life friends through gaming.** Over 70% play most commonly with others — either with real-life friends, online connections, or a mix of both.

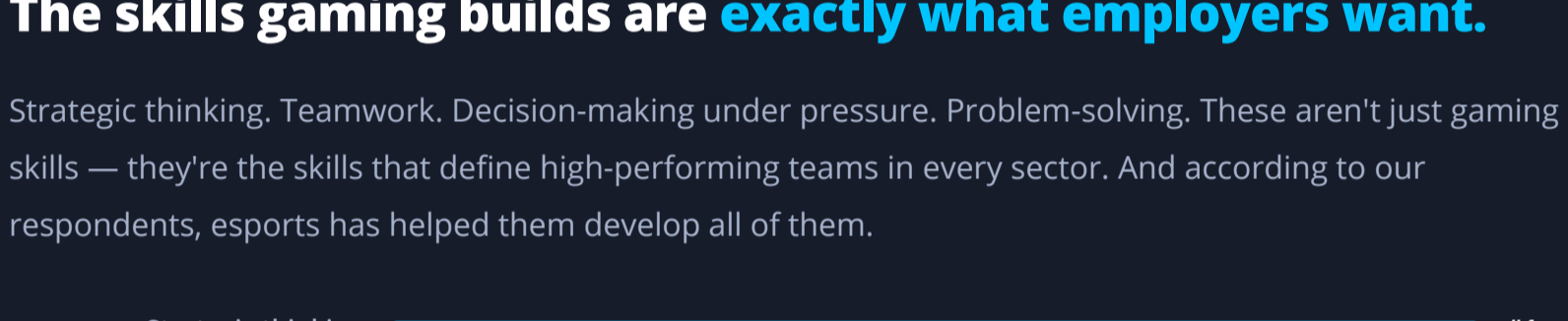


Far from being a retreat from real-world socialising, gaming in Ireland is predominantly a social activity. **Over 70% of respondents play with others** — friends, family, or a mix of online and offline communities. This is a cohort that is already comfortable with digital teamwork, collaborative communication, and shared competitive goals. They're not waiting to learn how to work together. They already know.

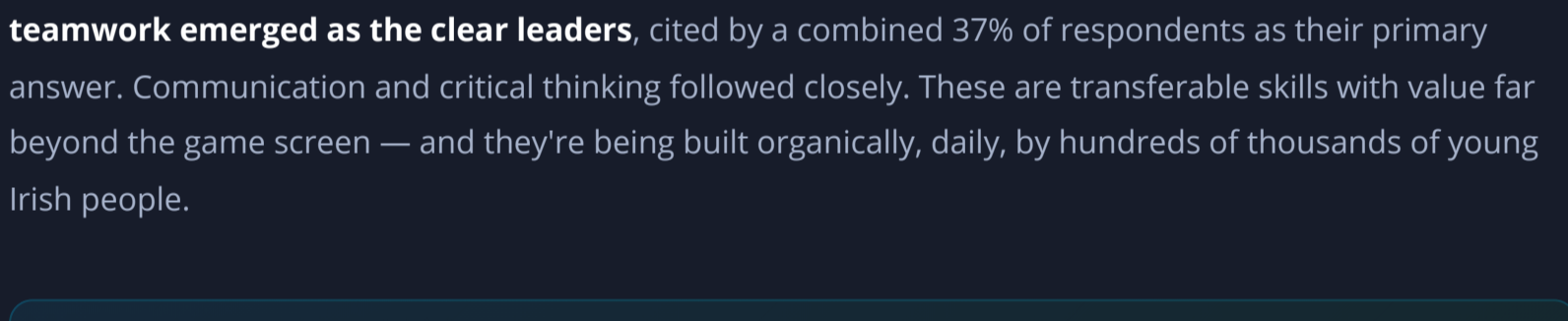
## HEALTH & WELLBEING

### Gamers are athletes too — and they know it.

Another long-standing misconception is that esports and physical activity are in opposition. **75% of gamers in our survey regularly participate in a physical sport outside of esports.** The gamer and the athlete are, very often, the same person.



What's equally revealing is how our respondents think about the relationship between wellness and esports performance. When asked to rate how much various factors contribute to performing well in competitive gaming, the results were striking. **86% rated mental health as important, very important, or vital** to esports performance — with over a third classifying it as outright vital. Sleep (78%) and play/life balance (84%) ranked similarly highly.

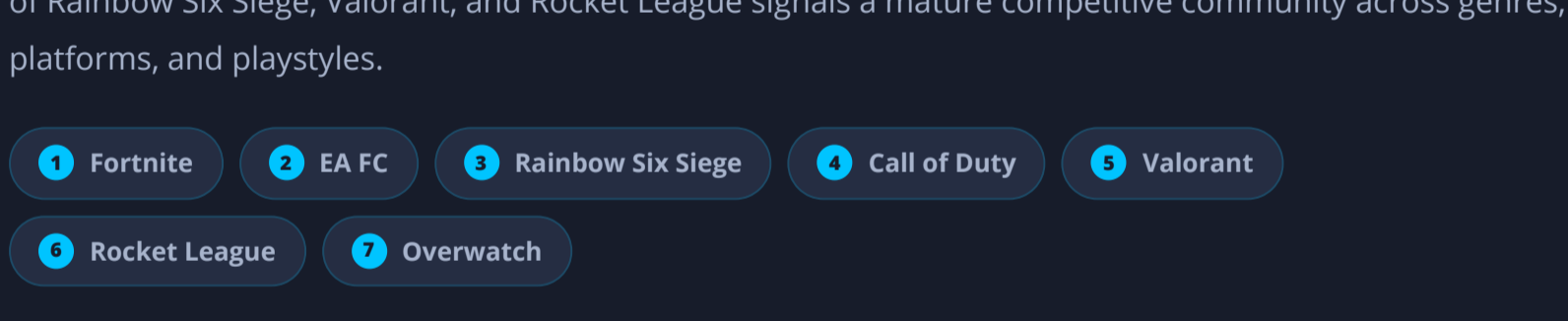


These are not the responses of a cohort disengaged from their own wellbeing. Irish gamers are aware of and thoughtful about the connection between how they live and how they perform. This creates a significant opening for brands, health organisations, and educational programmes that want to meet young people where they are — and speak to them in a language they already understand and value.

## SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

### The skills gaming builds are exactly what employers want.

Strategic thinking. Teamwork. Decision-making under pressure. Problem-solving. These aren't just gaming skills — they're the skills that define high-performing teams in every sector. And according to our respondents, esports has helped them develop all of them.



When asked which single life skill esports had helped them develop most, **strategic thinking and teamwork emerged as the clear leaders**, cited by a combined 37% of respondents as their primary answer. Communication and critical thinking followed closely. These are transferable skills with value far beyond the game screen — and they're being built organically, daily, by hundreds of thousands of young Irish people.

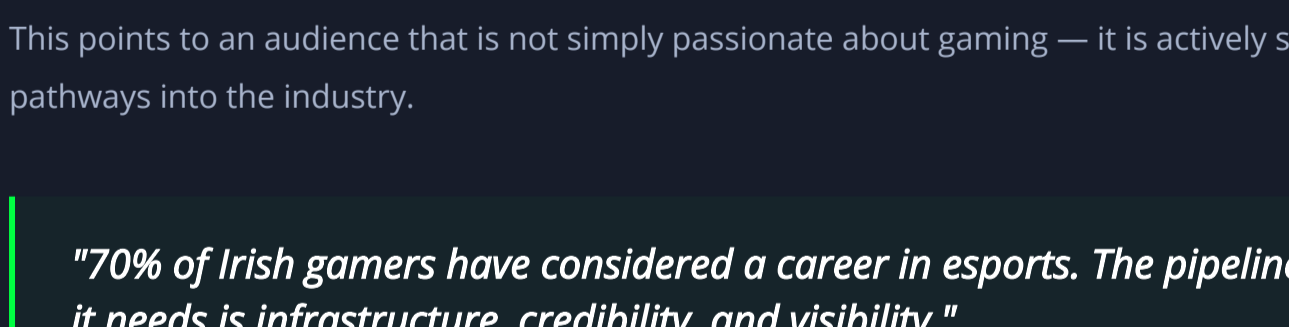
**What esports builds — in students' own words**

- Communication** — coordinating under pressure, clearly and fast
- Teamwork** — shared goals, complementary roles, mutual trust
- Strategic planning** — reading situations, adapting in real time
- Critical thinking** — problem-solving with limited information
- Adaptability** — responding to opponents, adjusting mid-match
- Focus** — sustained concentration over extended sessions

## WHAT IRISH GAMERS PLAY

### Ireland's gaming landscape is diverse, competitive, and growing.

Ireland's top titles span every genre — from battle royale to football to tactical shooters. Fortnite leads the field, followed by EA FC, reflecting both trends and Ireland's deep footballing culture. The presence of Rainbow Six Siege, Valorant, and Rocket League signals a mature competitive community across genres, platforms, and playstyles.



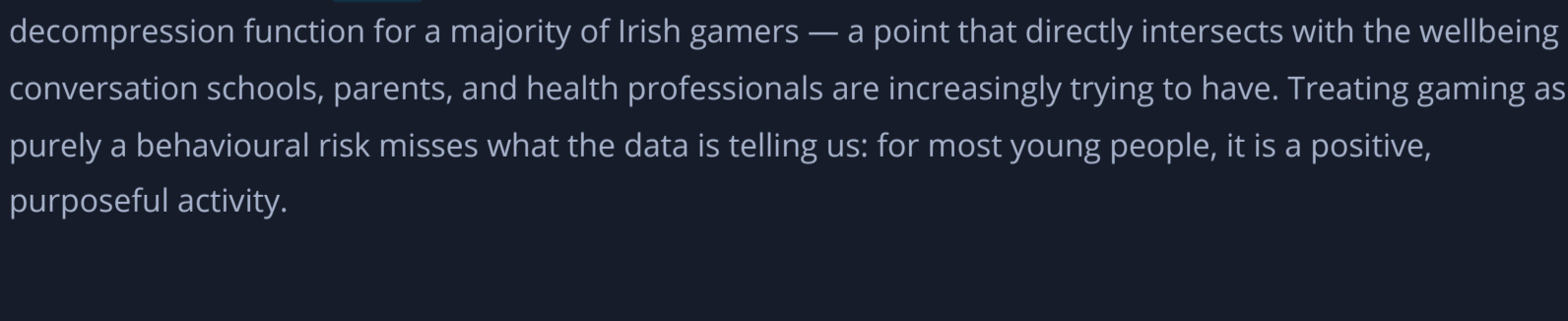
Among school-age respondents interested in the School Esports Cup 2026, **Rocket League led at 47%**, followed by EA FC26 (42%) and Clash Royale (37%). Most students who play are already set up to compete from home — no specialist equipment required. The broad spread of interest across titles underlines the importance of multi-title competition formats that don't require expensive hardware or specialist equipment — most students who play are already set up to compete from home.

PC gaming remains the primary platform among the Irish esports community, with **PS5 the leading console choice** among those who prefer console. Mobile gaming, while present, is less dominant in the competitive segment — reinforcing the distinction between casual gaming and esports participation.

## CAREERS & PATHWAYS

### The pipeline is real — and it starts in school.

The Irish esports industry is still nascent, but the ambition is not. Among respondents who were asked about career aspirations in the gaming and esports space, **70% said they had considered a career in esports or the gaming industry.** This is not a niche aspiration — it is a majority position among engaged Irish gamers.



Interest in formal esports education and development is growing in parallel. When asked about joining an esports academy to improve skill level and explore professional opportunities, **51% said yes or maybe.** This points to an audience that is not simply passionate about gaming — it is actively seeking structured pathways into the industry.

*"70% of Irish gamers have considered a career in esports. The pipeline exists. What it needs is infrastructure, credibility, and visibility."*

The IEF's work in schools, at the National Esports Centre, and through structured competitions is laying the groundwork for a pipeline that goes from the classroom to the podium to the industry.

## MOTIVATIONS

### Why Irish people game — and what it means for engagement.

Understanding why people game is essential to understanding how to engage them. Our survey reveals a community driven by a rich mix of motivations — with relaxation and challenge consistently ranking among the strongest.



The competitive motivation — **55%** rating competition as important or very important — underlines the appetite for structured play. This isn't a cohort content to game passively. They want ranking systems, opponents, stakes, and recognition. That's exactly what organised esports provides — and exactly what most Irish schools currently fail to offer them.

The relaxation figure (**79%**) is equally significant. Gaming serves a genuine mental health and decompression function for a majority of Irish gamers — a point that directly intersects with the wellbeing conversation schools, parents, and health professionals are increasingly trying to have. Treating gaming as purely a behavioural risk misses what the data is telling us: for most young people, it is a positive, purposeful activity.

## LOOKING AHEAD

### The opportunity in Irish esports is now.

The picture that emerges from this data is one of enormous unrealised potential. Ireland has a generation of gamers who are social, skilled, health-aware, and career-oriented — and who are competing in a near-complete institutional vacuum. **92% of secondary school students have no esports club at school. 65% would join one tomorrow.**

The Ireland Esports Federation exists to close that gap — through school competitions, national events, educational programmes, and the National Esports Centre in Cork. We're not building an audience. We're organising one that already exists. And we're doing it with the data to back it up.

For commercial partners, broadcasters, and organisations who want to engage authentically with Irish youth culture — this is the moment. Not in three years, not when esports "goes mainstream." Now. The community is ready. The infrastructure is being built. And the data is clear.

**Key findings at a glance**

- 440+ responses from the Irish gaming community, 2025–26
- 65% would join immediately if one became available
- 75% also play physical sport — gamer and athlete often the same person
- Strategic thinking #1 skill built through esports, followed by teamwork
- Fortnite & EA FC lead Irish gaming; Rocket League tops school competition
- 92% of students have no esports club at their school
- Over 60% made real-life friends through gaming
- 86% rate mental health as important or vital to performance
- 70% have considered a career in esports or gaming

