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# Why Esports Should Have a Place in the Olympics

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Abstract

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After esports made an appearance as a demonstration sport in the Jakarta Asian Games, it has once again come into question whether esports can be a sport in the Olympics. Although in recent times, esports has seen a meteoric rise in not only popularity but also social acceptance in some parts of the world, it is still far from global acceptance as a sport. This study was conducted to discover if esports has a legitimate opportunity to become an Olympic sport, and if there are any prohibiting factors that it faces, as well as how it can benefit the Olympic Committee.

This study discusses the difference between esports and simple e-games, sets the foundation for the history of esports and its newfound social acceptance, as well as presents the statements of the Olympics for esports becoming a part of its games and the values they represent. The study used academic literature, and reputable sources for information and various articles to argue the place of esports in society today and dispel all doubts of the International Olympic Committee in attempts to provide a convincing argument for esports becoming a part of the Olympic games. This includes esports' ability to adhere to the Olympic values, answering the questions of the value esports can bring to the Olympics, and shows that some worries were unfounded or outdated. This study also tries to overcome any barriers to becoming an Olympic sport before ending with the conclusion.

With the assistance of esports organizations around the world to communicate with the International Olympic Committee, esports would be able to prove itself as legitimate and known to the world. These same organizations should help discovering the advantages that esports can provide as well as promote its popularity in a global scale. Likewise, game developers should strive to create esports games with the goal of longevity and stability, such as the very notable example of Super Smash Bros. Melee. This study may provide some meaningful value for the cause of esports representation in the Olympics, and worthwhile reading.

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Foreword

# 1 Introduction

After the 18ᵗʰ Asian games in Jakarta, Indonesia, the International Olympic Committee recognized esports as a sport during the IOC summit of October 2017. This was a turning point for esports, due to the highly prestigious backing of the Olympic Committee by its side. However, despite this, esports did not make an appearance among the list of sports for Paris. Furthermore, in the following IOC Summit, the organizing committee themselves would explain, "a discussion about the inclusion of esports/egames as a medal event on the Olympic programme is premature." (IOC, Communique of the 7th Olympic Summit, 2018)

This explanation from the IOC summit would make it sound like at least for the year of 2018, esports was simply not ready to become a part of the Olympic stage, despite being recognized as a sport during the 2017 IOC summit. However, despite the statement of the IOC, this study provides or makes a distinction between eSport with e-games, as well as provides the various advantages of esports in terms of personal development as a person and for the Olympics itself through its potential with the different genres present in esports.

## 2    Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation of this thesis seeks to explain the difference between esports and e-games (also known as video games), the factors which contributed to esports' meteoric rise, the benefits one can obtain from playing video games, and finally, a short brief about the Olympics, their statements regarding the addition of esports into the Olympics being too premature at this point in time, and the Olympic Values. This information sets the foundation for the research into what is necessary for esports to become eligible for entry into the Olympic Games and help come to a conclusion and provide an argument for esports becoming a part of the Olympics.

### 2.1    Esports vs e-games

For the purpose of this thesis, it is necessary to provide a definition to what an e-game or an esport is. It is rather surprising how there is a lack of a clear definition of e-games, however, which is perhaps in-line with the conclusion that definitions require revision on a constant basis (Arjoranta, 2019) "Even if our games do not change, our perspective on games keeps changing as the culture around them changes". Because of this, for simplicity's sake, a definition I'll provide is that e-games or electronic games are a form of game that runs on a computer or video game consoles specifically designed for playing electronic games, such as the Sony PlayStation series of consoles, or Nintendo Switch.

As for the definition of esports, this definition (Leroux-Parra, 2020) is sufficient "Simply put, esports are video games that are played in a highly organized competitive environment. These games can range from popular, team-oriented multiplayer online battle arenas (MOBAs) to single player first person shooters, to survival battle royales, to virtual reconstructions of physical sports."

Although there are other definitions of esports such as this definition (Wagner, 2006) "an area of sport activities that include sport activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies", it lacks much of the jargon that esports has that is heavily integrated into the culture of esports as a whole, and is perhaps due to it being a rather dated quote from a time when esports was not as prevalent as it is today.

Because of this nuance, this makes organized competition the prevailing difference between esports and simple video games. While any e-game that can be played with a minimum of two players competing against one another may be considered a competitive game, it may not satisfy the definition of esports in terms of the competition between the two players being highly organized. Not all e-games can be esports, but all esports are e-games.

## 2.2    The Meteoric Rise of esports

esports have come a very long way since the earliest form of human-to-human competition in video games in the form of arcade machines or old video game consoles. Since then, we've had prize pools inflate from hundreds to 40 million dollars (esportsearnings.com, 2022), professional players becoming household names and even given spotlight by the Olympics themselves (Binner, Meet eSports phenom Lee Sang-hyeok - The Ronaldo of gaming, 2020), and an unprecedented 465.1 million esports viewers for 2021, projected to reach up to 577.8 M in 2024. (Newzoo, 2021)

**Esports Audience Growth**
Global | For 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2024

Occasional Viewers
Esports Enthusiasts

577.8M
+7.8%
CAGR 2019-2024

465.1M
+6.7%
YoY

435.9M
+9.6%
YoY

397.8M

292.2M

235.5M

220.5M

200.8M

285.7M

229.6M

215.4M

197.0M

2019    2020    2021    2024
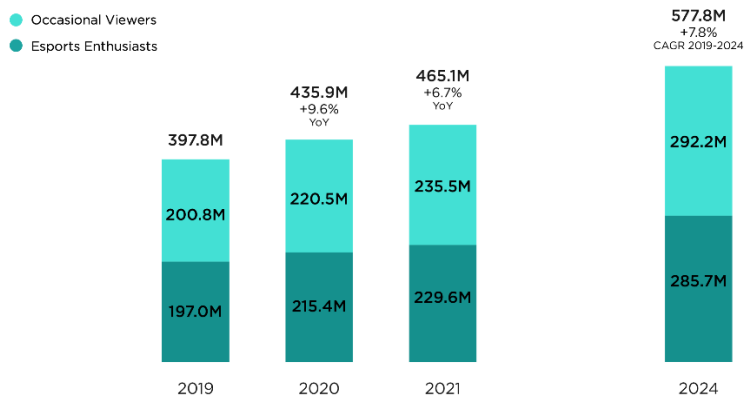
Due to rounding, Esports Enthusiasts and Occasional Viewers do not add up to the total audience in 2024.

©Newzoo | Global Esports and Live Streaming Market Report | September 2021
newzoo.com/esports-report

Figure 1. Projected Esports Audience Growth

**10 best selling consoles of all time**

180
160
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0

Copies sold (million)

81.51    82    82.2    83.8    84    101.63    102.49    118.69    154.02    155

Game Boy Advance    Playstation Portable    Playstation 4    Playstation 3    Xbox 360    Nintendo Wii    Playstation    Game Boy    Nintendo DS    Playstation 2

Console

Figure 2. 10 Best-selling consoles of all time

This rise in popularity of esports may have to do with the rise of the technology in video games as well, as can be seen in this graph by (Jurkovich, 2018). One can attest this to more people
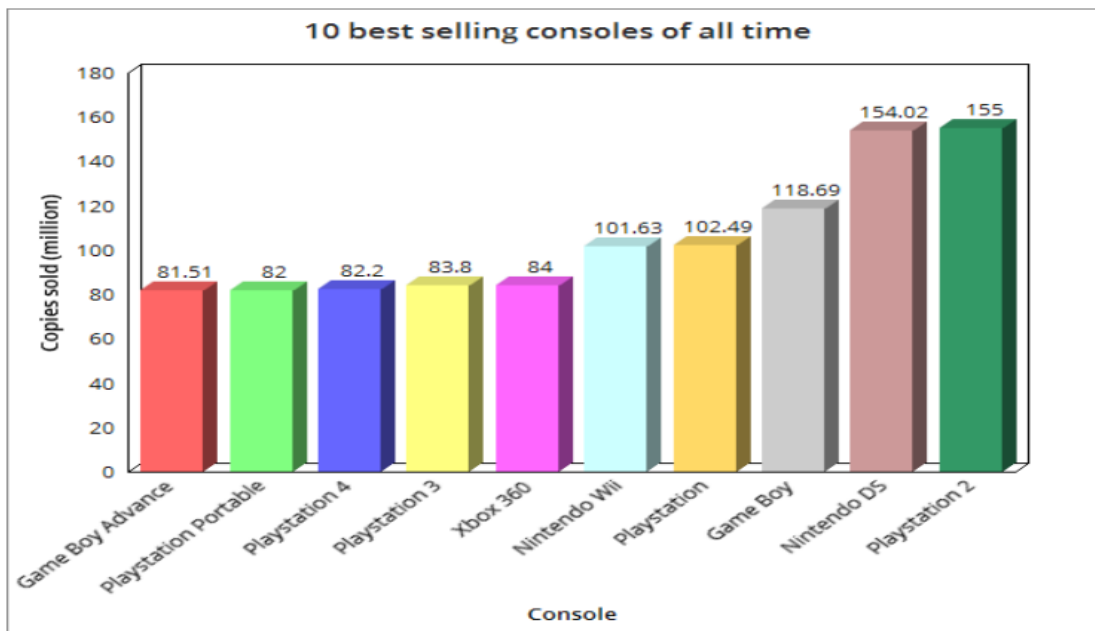
being interested in purchasing video game consoles, or video games in general, due to graphical improvements over the years, even from something that does not seem as impressive anymore, such as the leap from 2D to 3D and increased interactivity with the games. These technological improvements continuing forth to this day, with virtual reality now coming into the limelight. (Poh, 2022)

### 2.2.1 Korea

Korea has long been dominant in any esports they touch, and this has all to do with the culture of esports in Korea. Looking into the history of Korea, they benefited from a great economic growth which allowed their government to develop into more creative industries, video games being one of them. From here, PC bangs were created, centralized hubs with multiple gaming computers and laptops created to provide comfort for the players to allow them to play, and then eat when hungry. Korea also built a national broadband network, which included clips from various esports competitions, despite still being in its infancy in 1990. In the year 2000, the Korea Esports Association was created, in order to manage, foster, and develop the various esports in Korea, and making its mark in the history of esports as one of the first countries who really pioneered and accepted esports. (Popova, 2018) Korea is a  positive or useful example of successful implementation of esports into their society, for the Olympics to see the staying power and success it has always had, even as early as the 1990s.

### 2.2.2 Starcraft

Starcraft in Korea was like a national pastime, and Korea has been the home of many Starcraft competitions from its inception onwards. It would be one of the first times esports would see such incredible success, with Media companies launching their own television channels to broadcast Brood War (Starcraft 1's expansion) competitions. This competition between the two broadcasts generated plenty of viewership, and attention. (O'Keefe, 2018)

Large sponsorships such as Samsung and telecommunications companies in Korea would even come to play thanks to this exposure, as early as the year 2000 for professional brood war teams. (O'Keefe, 2018) This factor coming into Korea's favorite esport incentivized more organized training regimens, players and teams would gain plenty of fans, and Starcraft would be their favorite esport for many years to come.

### 2.2.3    FPS Games

Before MOBA games took over, FPS Games were the premiere eSport to watch on a global scale. Starting with Doom and Quake from 1993 and 1996 respectively, following the implementation and widespread use of the internet. These games were notable for encouraging team-based play and was in particular very popular in America and Europe. This popularity can be observed to this day, with games such as Valorant and CS:GO. (Ylönen, 2010)

This naturally became a jumping point in esports, which used to be much smaller scale, both in the case that it was primarily one versus one, to whatever amount consists of a team in the esports which came after FPS games. One FPS game that grew into a global phenomenon was Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, which is still played up to this day, and competition in CS:GO has garnered a total of 96.5 million dollars since its inception in 2012. (Geyser, 2022)

### 2.2.4    MOBA Games

MOBA games alongside FPS games paved the way for higher competition and thus higher pay-outs, for multiple years in a row now, League of Legends has maintained its reputation as the "Best eSport" for multiple years, while its competitor, DOTA 2, has maintained its own separate reputation as the eSport with the largest prize pool for any one tournament every single year, with 2021 seeing a record high 40 million dollars as mentioned earlier (esportsearnings.com, 2022).

With MOBA games' natural cadence to team play, with everyone having their own distinct roles in the team to play, MOBA's have influenced many new games to favor games that incorporate

team play or being able to control characters which have a small set of abilities, but being able to use those abilities in unique, and rather dazzling spectacles to watch as a viewer. This provides entertainment that is only quite possible in the medium of esports videogames.

### 2.2.5    Live Streaming

Live streaming was another factor to the rise of esports, because it allowed viewers to see other players and sometimes the professional players themselves play the esports that they themselves are invested in. Because professional esports players were once laymen themselves, spectators of the streamer could see a bit of themselves in their chosen player to watch. This would often create parasocial relationships, not too dissimilar to the relationship between fans and celebrities in Sports and Movies. Parasocial relationships being one sided psychological bonds between streamer and viewer. (Kabir) These parasocial relationships show that within esports, there is a very similar passion with fans and their teams or favorite players and games.

### 2.2.6    Esports Visas

Finally, in an act of legitimizing esports and making it simpler for competitors to travel around the world for tournaments, the implementation of Visas eligible for esports athletes to use became a prevalent issue. Unfortunately not all countries have allowed the use of certain Visas to esports athletes, such is the case of Vietnam and these players being able to apply for Visas in their country of destination would also have some issues, such is the case of League of Legends teams, GAM Esports and Saigon Buffalo, nearly missing their opportunity to attend the World Championships of 2022. (Chouadria, 2022)

In particular, the United States have gone to lengths allowing the use of their P-1A, O-1A and even EB-1A visas for the purpose of competitive travel for esports tournaments. (Jacobson, 2021) These Visas are differentiated in terms of eligibility and use. P-1A classification visas allows one to temporarily come to the United States to perform as an athlete, O-1A classification visas are reserved for individuals with extraordinary talent or achievements, and EB-1A visas are used for talents seeking permanent U.S residency. (USCIS, n.d.)

## 2.3   Benefits of Video Games

Although video games may have a negative stigma around it, from claims of video game addiction being a disease or that violence in video games would equate to violence in real life, or that playing video games is a waste of time. (Duggan, 2015) However, here are several advantages and benefits to playing video games that will nurture the player's lives. Provided will be benefit to mental health even to disturbed individuals, and for the everyday person.

To start off in the darker side of things, a research article on everyday sadists concluded that playing violent video games had a positive correlation to fulfilling their intrapersonal needs of satisfying their violent urges, after two studies which aimed to see if everyday sadists preferred violent video games over non-violent counterparts and if the mood of everyday sadists were improved at all after playing violent video games. This kind of research does not show whether it would quell any form of violent tendencies from everyday sadists, but it does give a view into how video games can improve a person's mental state, even those who may be more sadistic than others. It is important to note that as reported in the study, that the participants of the studies scored below the midpoint of the scale of everyday sadism. There were no high scores on everyday sadism, just higher scores than those who were less favorable towards video games. (Greitemeyer, Weiß, & Heuberger, 2019)

You can develop skills from playing video games, while there are some obvious skills to be learned such as hand-eye coordination, there are also skills that can be quite beneficial in the workplace and in real life. Video games for example have a lot of situations which require a lot of patience and concentration. While patience may vary from different genres of video games, concentration is a very common factor in video games where the lack of focus often causes the player to lose vital pieces of information that may be required to progress.

In the case of esports, the video games which turn into esports can teach many important life skills such as leadership, communication, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.  It is no surprise that when video games are rather fast paced, the players themselves need to be able to communicate in a way which is efficient, concise, and effectively, as to not take away from the players' gameplay. (Insight Software, 2021)

## 2.4    The Olympics

The Olympics is an international event which occurs every 4 years, meant to gather the best athletes from all around the world to compete for the honor of their countries and the prestigious Olympic medals handed out during the event. This event has roots 2,300 years ago in Olympia of Ancient Greece, before it was discontinued due to war and reinstated in 1894 thanks to Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who also devised the original Olympic Games symbol, 5 rings meant to represent the unity of the five continents. (2020games, 2015)

### 2.4.1    Too Premature for esports

This is a comment by the Olympic Committee regarding why esports is not part of the Olympic games yet during the 7th Olympic Summit. Some of the reasons presented include: Some e-games not compatible with Olympic values, the rapid evolution of the industry and the fluctuating popularity of the games, the naturally fragmented nature of the esports industry, and finally the way that the industry is commercially driven instead of values driven. (IOC, Communique of the 7th Olympic Summit, 2018) From these different explanations from the IOC, and with some research, the idea of esports becoming a part of the Olympics may not be too far off, so long as it addresses or provides solutions to the different issues.

### 2.4.2    Olympic Values

The Olympics being a tradition of Sports over the long history of it being around, aims to be a time where Athletes all around the world compete for their countries and people. This is due in no small part to the prestige it holds from its longstanding history and emphasis on the values of Olympism present during the event. The three core values of the Olympics are the following: Excellence, respect, and friendship. From these values, the Olympics derives its various activities, all aimed towards making a better world and promoting not only sports, but also the cultures of the countries involved in the event.

Excellence in the Athletes' performances, respect for the sport, the rules, and each other, and finally the value of friendship which is the ability to look beyond what is skin-deep and to develop bonds with one another. These are the three values of Olympism, and what this thesis will set out on finding answers for esports becoming a part of the Olympics. (IOC, What are the Olympic Values?, n.d.)

# 3    Research approach

The objective of this thesis is to provide an insight and overview of e-sports and gaming in general and provide a solid foundation for e-sports to become a part of the Olympic events. It will be quantitative research using data, analyzing the values of the International Olympic Committee and the value of esports. The main research method therefore is the quantitative research method accompanied by appropriate literature research.

## 3.1    Quantitative Research Method

Quantitative research is the collection of quantifiable, numerical data and analyzing it. This can be used to make predictions or connect different data sources to one another to form a relationship with both data sources. (Bhandari, 2020) The thesis will make use of quantitative data derived from empirical research from other studies for relevant material surrounding the Olympics and esports to answer the research question

## 3.2    Literature research

Literature research is simply going through established literature with the task of approaching a research subject in order to comprehensively understand the topic and to provide accurate information to approach the conclusion of the research. The literature used in this thesis are all carefully chosen from various credible sources of esports information, the International Olympic Committee's official website, google scholar, as well as credible sources from various literature in Theseus.fi, and the EBSCO database. It will not go over wikis unless necessary and if the wiki is a credible source of information for a niche purpose.

## 3.3    Survey

Through a survey among esports enthusiasts, players, and athletes in my hometown of Davao City, this research will aim to ask questions about esports using the Olympic Values as a reference. At the end of the survey, the survey takers will be informed about the Olympic Values, and whether after answering the questions, they believe that esports should have a place in the Olympics. This survey aims to see if the esports community being chosen for the research believes that meeting the criteria for the Olympic Values should merit the opportunity to becoming a part of the Olympics.

4   Research results

In this section, the study discusses or presents the  various findings  of the different issues the Olympics had with esports becoming a part of the Olympics. The research covers the different barriers of entry to becoming an Olympic esport, what exactly the International Sports Federation status is in the context of sports, the compatibility of esports with the Olympic Values, the social acceptability of esports, as well as any other barriers of entry that there may be.

4.1   Barriers of Entry to Becoming an Olympic Sport

It is no secret that there will have to be some factors in play if a new sport would want to participate in the Olympic games. To look further into this, the research conducted will go over these barriers of entry, such as the International Sports Federation Status, whether the esport is compatible with the Olympic Values, how socially acceptable esports is, and any other possible barriers of entry.

4.1.1   International Sports Federation Status

Besides meeting the values of the Olympics, one of the largest barriers of becoming a competing sport in the Olympics is reaching IF status. This comes right after becoming recognized as a sport, which has already been the case after the Jakarta games, when the IOC finally acknowledged esports as a sport. (IOC, n.d.) When a sport has reached IF status, which is the International Sports Federation status, the international organization of the sport would have to enforce Olympic-standard anti-doping rules as well as maintain any additional rules set out by the Olympic charter. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.)

This could be challenging for esports to overcome, even though it can easily go over some hurdles. The Olympic charter has one requirement that the sport must be widely practiced by men and women in at least 75 and 40 countries and three continents respectfully. This is not difficult

for esports to do, as the younger generation of adults have grown up with esports and actively play and spectate esports, even casually, as seen in Figure 1.

Although it may be difficult regarding women who compete in the esport, even this aspect is rising as indicated by Forbes showing that women comprise 40-45% of the gaming revenue in Asia, which is 48% of the world's total gaming revenue. (Yokoi, n.d.) Furthermore, support for women penetrating esports can be seen today, with a notable example being Riot Games launching a League of Legends tournament exclusive for women, though it is unclear if non-binary and transgender players are eligible for participation. (Blake, 2022)

### 4.1.2   Compatibility with Olympic Values

Because of the nature of esports being a competition of passionate players of games competing at the highest level, it goes into question how compatible esports is with the core values of the Olympics. Excellence, Respect, and Friendship are the three pillars of the Olympics and while not every eSport can attest to being able to fulfill the three Olympic values, there are some no-table examples of esports that do.

Using League of Legends as an example, Lee Sang-hyeok, also known as Faker, has become a household name in Korea due to his excellence in the sport of League of Legends. He is also an athlete with a rather lengthy article on the IOC's website itself, thus further solidifying his leg-endary status in the world of esports (Binner, Meet eSports phenom Lee Sang-hyeok - The Ronaldo of gaming, 2020). When it comes to excellence, players like Faker, and the League of Legends Champions Korea, abbreviated as LCK, the competition where Korean teams fight for the right to participate in the World Championship tournament and become champions in their country, uphold the value quite well.

Continuing from this point, League of Legends as an eSport has done well to spread out globally and provide opportunities for players all around the world to compete in their competitions, raising the bar for Excellence in league of legends gameplay yearly.

For the values of respect and friendship, the World Championship tournament of League of Legends which happens every year has always shown the typical fanfare that someone can expect from any sport. Playful banter, a little bit of trash talk here and there, and the different teams and organizations setting up scrimmages, which are allotted time slots for practice against one another, all for the sake of improving for the tournament. The values can be seen all around the world where competition of League of Legends is being held consistently, but it is even more so apparent when one would watch the world championship unfold over the weeks that its being held.

This is not to say that League of Legends is the only eSport that fits the values of the Olympics, but it is simply one very evident example of an organization (Riot Games) and their esport (League of Legends), which fulfills the values quite nicely spread all around the world.

4.1.3   The short lifespan of esports

One factor that could be a barrier of entry of esports into the Olympics is the short lifespan of esports in comparison to traditional sports. While there are examples of games which has stood the test of time so far such as League of Legends and its inception in 2009, it is not a guarantee that it will always be around due to its nature as a game that is frequently updated and patched to make changes to the game and shift the balance of the various characters and components of the game.

However, an example of a game that has been around even longer than League of Legends which is still holding competition to this day entirely being propelled by fans and organizations that care, rather than its creator in Nintendo, is Super Smash Bros Melee. For the sake of brevity, the game will be referred to as "Melee" for the rest of this section. Melee has been around

since 2001, and since then has seen several developments in its competitive scene despite not being a game that is supported by balance changes. It has seen the rise and fall of several different players, and even characters moving up and down tier lists, which are peer-reviewed lists made by several high-ranking players which determine which characters in the game of Melee are viable for competitive play. (SmashWiki, n.d.)

For several years in the yearly fighting game competition of EVO, Melee has always seen some of the highest registration numbers in the yearly tournament's history and is a good example that if a game is loved enough by its fans, there will be support for it, even if its own creator has long since abandoned the game for newer installments of the franchise. To continue on this point of games being loved by fans, even games not created for the purpose of esports, as old as the original Super Mario Bros, is still being played to this day in speedrunning, a subset of videogame competition which aims to achieve record times for videogames which is only achievable through constant practice and intimate knowledge about the game being played. (Koning, 2021)

## 4.2    Social Acceptability of Esports

The question of whether esports are sports has been around for a long time now, but as the years go on, the acceptance of esports has also grown. On an article from Stan Usovicz of the esports Scholar, it shows this figure which has viewership numbers of different U.S sports leagues with one eSport, league of legends, included. The numbers don't lie, as the saying goes. To have a higher viewership than Major League Baseball and the National Basketball Association would have been unprecedented in the past, but it is the reality at the present. There are also several worthwhile examples which shows that there is more to esports than simply playing a video game without end, it takes skill.

Figure 3. Comparison of League of Legends League Viewership with other Major Sports Leagues

One such example is from the overwatch league, where the players of team Shanghai Dragons reportedly practice for up to 72 hours a week, only to fall flat during the competition and suffering a 42-game loss streak. (Jones, 2018). This made them take constant criticism from outsiders looking in, but it also became a cause for celebration when the team finally broke the streak. (ONE ESPORTS, 2019)It is a field where simply playing is not good enough, and it can be very brutal when showcasing exactly that.

When it comes to how many countries around the world accepts esports as sports, look no further than Pakistan (Sengupta, 2021), Finland (Valentin, 2020), China (Wu Y. , 2022), South Korea (Esports Insider, 2022), among others like America. It is also very important to include the worldwide esports audience just to show that it is indeed becoming more accepted, with the graph showing a projected 640.8 million viewing audience for esports. (Gough, eSports audience size worldwide from 2020 to 2025, 2022)
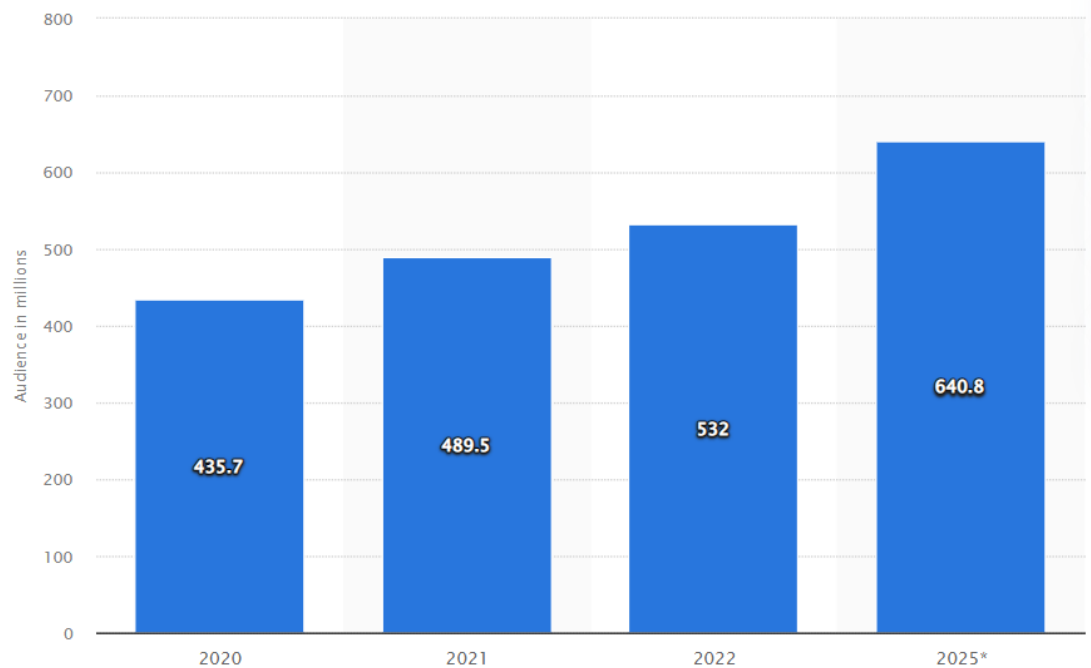
Figure 4. Esports Audience in Millions

### 4.2.1 Do Videogames Promote Violence?

For a long time in history, it is believed that violent videogames do in fact promote violence, with studies even showing a positive correlation of this being the case. (Anderson & Bushman, 2001) However, as more studies have been conducted, the answer also becomes more muddied, pointing to both sides of the equation, though pointing more to the idea that there is a positive correlation.

In an article by Royal Society Publishing (Drummond, Sauer, & Ferguson, 2020), a meta-analysis led by Aaron Drummond re-examined studies dating back to 2008 would conclude that current research is unable to find a meaningful impact on the aggression of the youth in the long-term. The meta-analysis suggests that the effects of violent video games being the cause of adolescents becoming criminals in the long term or becoming violent as a result falls below the $r = 10$ benchmark, which would stand for a small effect, making it less likely for video games to be the reason for any crime.

4.2.2    Benefits to esports

Esports is another example of an aspect of modern life, video gaming technology, being used for more than just gaming and aims to promote competition among its players. Just like how art or and sports are alternative avenues for students and people to develop into, esports is taking up a similar space.

 Promoting more diversity in a community by allowing esports to thrive, encourages individuals young and old to learn and compete with one another in a way that is not too dissimilar to traditional sports. Learning the values of sportsmanship, dealing with loss and victory, respecting one another, and accepting one another as fellow players in a game, it brings social interaction to individuals who may not necessarily be adept in social situations. (Chou, 2021)

From the survey conducted for this research, there is also a positive outcome of individuals making many friends because of being a part of an esports community, as can be seen in the graph, answering with primarily the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> options, which referring to gaining a close group of friends, or having plenty of friends, respectively. 1, 2, and 3 referring to making no friends, having one friend but the individual is not close with them, or having one close friend. This aspect of community with like-minded individuals is of course nothing new but is exactly why it is important for esports to have its place.
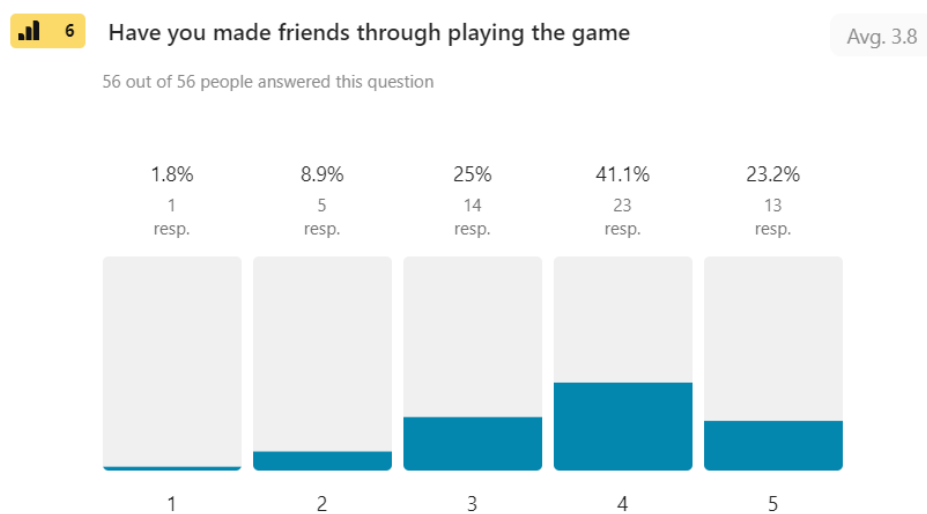


Figure 5. Survey question on development of friendships in esports

To have esports in the Olympics will be another way to bring in this group of people into an environment that they may never have interacted with and find a sense of belonging outside of their own circles for the various games they play, to cheer for players, or their own country, much like anyone else would when watching the Olympic games. This co-existence would be beneficial not just for the average individual to learn more about a growing industry that they may have not paid attention to, but also for the avid esports enjoyer to branch out and be more accepting the traditional sport and excellence that can be seen in the Olympics.

In this pie chart below, Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) held a survey in the public about the inclusion of esports in the Olympics, and while only 10.40% of the survey responded positively about esports entering the Olympics, the majority were not so keen. Important to note from the survey, is that survey respondents did not all simply answer that esport was not a sport (28% of responses), but that it should instead be developed independently away from the Olympics, or that a credible regulatory agency is needed. This does not show hostility towards the inclusion of esports forthright, but instead, an uncertainty about the validity of esports and its inclusion to the Olympics. This distinction is paramount to the real issue regarding esports becoming included – legitimacy and acknowledgement.
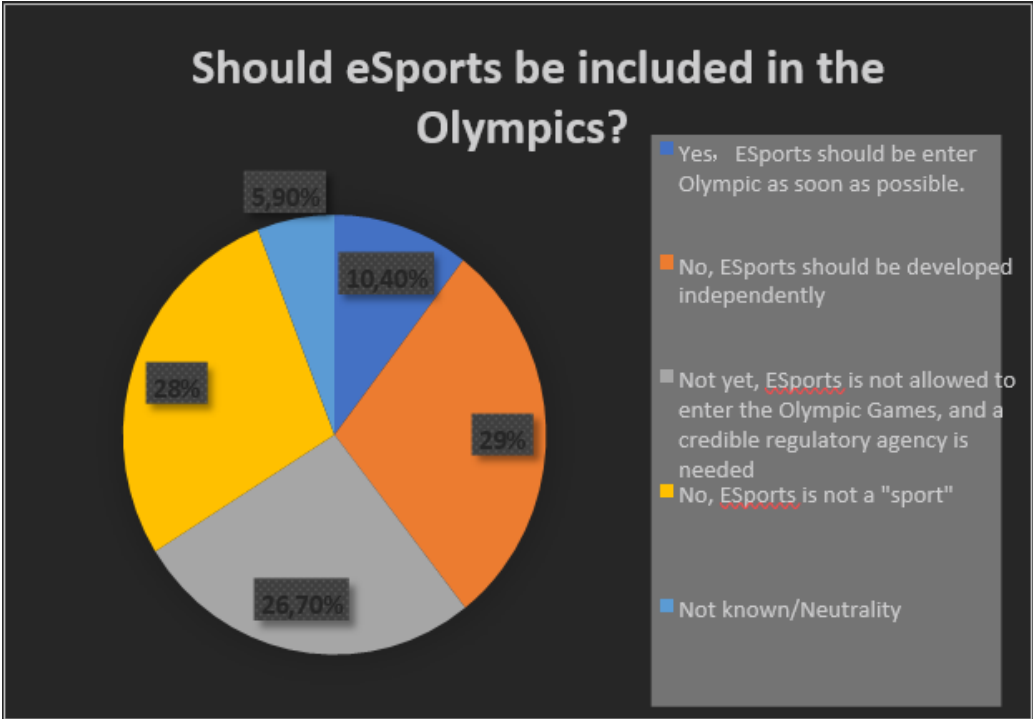


Figure 6. Should eSports be included in the Olympics?

To compare with the survey conducted for this research, where the main demographic are individuals in between 16-30 who have been involved in esports competition around the Philippines, it becomes interesting to note that among the 35 individuals aged 20 and above, 17 (48.5%) did not agree that esports should not be a part of the Olympics, but among the 21 individuals aged 19 and below, 14 (66.6%) of which believed that esports should become a part of the Olympics, with some respondents answering that having esports being a part of the Olympics would give them a reason to watch. This shows that there is a correlation with the younger generation being more open to esports becoming an esport, as well as the correlation of older generation individuals being more open to esports becoming a part of the Olympics if they have been a part of it.



Figure 7. Survey question on whether esports should become part of the Olympics

## 4.3 Other factors of esports' entry into the Olympics

For this section, the research will go into the aspects of esports; the fragmented nature of esports, the commercially driven aspect of video games, and the physical condition of players. Going over the different factors, the study will provide a deeper understanding of these issues presented by the IOC, and the challenges of the esports athletes that may be quite different in comparison to sports athletes.

4.3.1    The Fragmented, Commercial Nature of Esports

Esports by its nature is fragmented, wherein commercial operators compete with one another, fans are divided among different games, genres, teams, or even players. The most popular players sometimes are not professional esports athletes, the most popular games, may not necessarily be the latest installment of a franchise. Esports itself is also commercially driven, as they were initially made to be videogames first and an esport second. This can be rather difficult to then come with any single conclusion for esports eligible for inclusion for the Olympics – there is simply a huge amount to choose from, and not everyone will be happy. (Team Streams, 2022)

However, this fragmentation of esports does not take away from the potential of esports as a commodity for the Olympics, as plenty of statistics would show, just like this graph from Christina Gough showing the esports market revenue worldwide from 2020-2025. Reaching 1,384 million dollars' worth of revenue in 2022 and projected to reach 1,866 million coming 2025, three years from now.
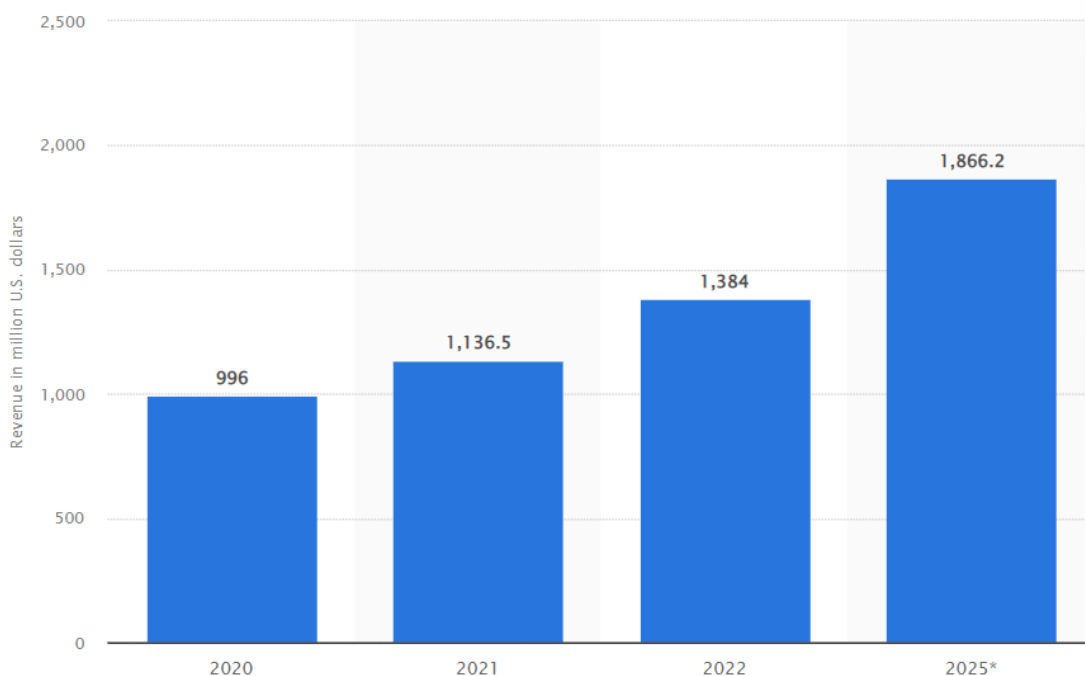


Figure 8. esports market revenue worldwide from 2020 to 2025

Instead, because of how fragmented esports is by nature, it becomes more important to understand the audience, and pick the kinds of genres of esport that would be the most beneficial and fitting for the Olympics. To decide on a stance on fighting games, and fps games for the sake of avoiding violence, or to see these games as what they are, an esport, and not an invitation for violence. To choose the most popular games, or to dictate the kinds of games that should be allowed, and rules that must be followed, these are what must be decided upon.

### 4.3.2    Esports Fitness

Unlike traditional sports, esports does not have the same kind of extreme physical exertion. This does not mean that there are no examples of this. (Exercise Right, 2022) A study from Professor Ingo Froböse in the German Sports University in Cologne conducted a study on esports athletes and was rather surprised by the results. (Schütz, 2016) The esports athletes were able to achieve 400 movements on the keyboard and mouse, with the professor stating that he had not observed this level of strain in any other sport.

Further tests were conducted, aiming at figuring out the amount of cortisol being produced by the athletes, which was the hormone responsible for stress. The test discovered that the amount of cortisol produced was of an equivalent level to race car drivers, combined with a heart rate of up to 180 beats per minute. The study from the professor led him to worry for the esports athletes, recommending that better physical training and nutrition is important, because the athletes were unaware of the demands being placed on their bodies.

### 4.4    What would the entry of esports into the Olympics Entail?

If esports becomes a part of the Olympics, there will be some sweeping changes to both esports and the Olympics. Esports athletes will have one more goal to strive for, potentially representing their own country as a player in a prestigious event that has been around for centuries,

while the Olympics would gain more traction and viewership, as a direct response to their aging viewership.

### 4.4.1    A Higher Goal for esports Athletes

Having spanned centuries, it comes to no surprise that the Olympics comes with a lot of prestige. Athletes which have succeeded on the Olympic stage have lived on to become legendary thanks to their accomplishments in the Olympics, with their country sharing in the glory, (Sports Management Degrees, 2022) and while there are examples of esports elevating a player and their country such as the example of Arslan Ash and Pakistan appearing in Tekken 7 tournaments and surprising the world with a level of gameplay that not even the reigning world champions in Korea could defeat (Narrator, 2019), it simply cannot come close to the amount of prestige the Olympics can provide.

In the survey conducted for this study with individuals involved in esports as players and competitors aged 16-30, cheering for the player and country both have almost equal sway, with a two-response difference in favor for the player. With this kind of support from the fans of esports, to want to cheer for their individual players, it will only elevate the goals for esports athletes all around the world if esports becomes a part of the Olympics, providing ambitions of wanting to become an Olympian worth remembering among the likes of Usain Bolt, or Michael Phelps.
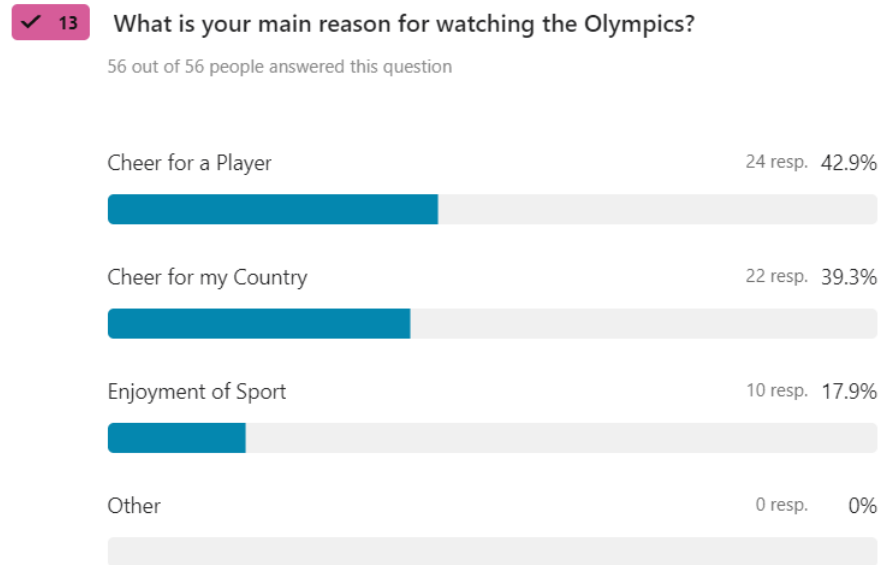
Figure 9. Survey question on the reason for watching the Olympics

4.4.2    Higher Viewership for the Olympics

Being a showcase of the excellence of the best sports Athletes in the world, that comes with a few caveats- the average age of almost every sport, has gone up, and the amount of viewership they have gotten as a result has become a lot less thanks to the popularity of esports. (Notte, 2017).  A table from Sports Business Journal further shows this increase in age over the years in the same article. This makes it quite difficult for the Olympics to grow more, because as the years go on, there will be fewer younger eyes interested in traditional sport.

This unfortunate turn of events can be seen from the Tokyo Olympics, which set a 33-year low in terms of viewership for the Olympics, at 16.7 million viewers, (Coster, 2021) whereas even back in 2016, the League of Legends World Championships has hit 43 million viewers. (Zucosky, 2021). This would only lead to further decline for the Olympics' viewership the more interested the public is with esports, especially with studies such as was conducted by Chase Buckle and Jason Mander of globalwebindex of 2018, which showed that 15% of internet users are esports fans, and 1 in 3 esports fans are in the age bracket of 20-25.
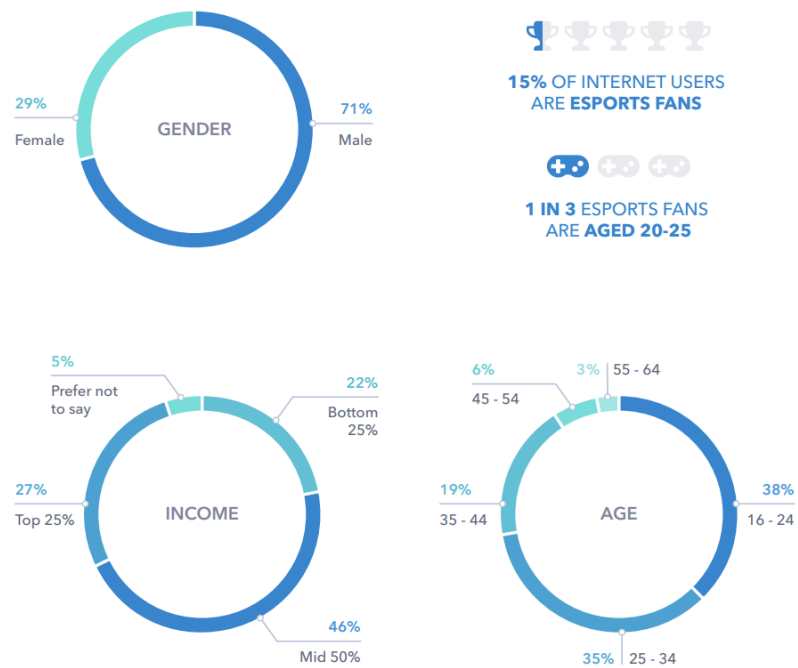
Figure 10. Esports Fans Statistics on Gender, Income, and Age

| Sport | Avg. age in 2000 | Avg. age in 2006 | Avg. age in 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|
| PGA Tour | N/A | 59 | 64 |
| LPGA | N/A | 59 | 63 |
| Horse racing | 51 | 56 | 63 |
| ATP tennis | 51 | 56 | 61 |
| NASCAR | N/A | 49 | 58 |
| MLB | 52 | 52 | 57 |
| WNBA | 42 | 49 | 55 |
| WTA Tennis | 58 | 63 | 55 |
| Olympics | 45 | 50 | 53 |
| College football | 47 | 48 | 52 |
| College basketball | 44 | 48 | 52 |
| NFL | 44 | 46 | 50 |
| Boxing | 45 | 47 | 49 |
| NHL | 33 | 42 | 49 |
| NBA | 40 | 40 | 42 |
| MLS | N/A | 39 | 40 |

*Source: Sports Business Journal*

Figure 11. Average age of esports viewership going up

5    Discussion and conclusion

As the thesis has covered the various challenges set by the IOC and set the foundation of legitimacy of esports in its path of becoming a part of the Olympics, it  aimed to answer  some questions: what are the barriers of entry to the Olympics? What exactly can esports provide for the Olympics? How exactly can esports meet overcome? these barriers of entry and can they encompass the Olympic values?  Throughout the thesis, these questions have been answered through foundational research of the Olympics, and further research on the values and examples of esports' evolution throughout the years.

While it is understandable that the IOC currently believes that it is premature for esports to be a part of the Olympics, the points being made are all refutable when placed under scrutiny of the facts. Esports currently does not have the International Federation status, due to reasons such as the lack of female representation in esports, but even that is receiving support due to the large market share that the female demographic has in video games.

Studies of the physical strain being placed on esports athletes have concluded that esports athletes are mainly unaware of how much strain they are submitting themselves to. Studies on video games and whether they instigate criminal activity also has concluded that video games do not nearly have the kind of impact that can truly influence the behavior of adolescents, and studies on the benefits of video games has shown that video games are indeed beneficial for the development of practical skills for life and mental satisfaction.

It only becomes a matter of the fragmented nature of esports and videogames in general, due to its inception as a commercial product prior to being a sport but even this can be addressed. With careful consideration and understanding the esports landscape. Some compromises may have to be made with some videogames which have a degree of violence in some gameplay elements, but ultimately these games are not aiming to promote violence. It is simply a gameplay

and story tool. This same "violence" in videogames that IOC president Thomas Bach would announce must be removed if esports wants to be a part of the Olympics is an integral part of competitive games in a lot of cases. (Wade, 2018)

Then, it becomes a matter of understanding the mutually beneficial relationship esports and the Olympics could have should it be a part of the Olympics. With the Olympics' viewership falling as the average age of traditional sports fans increases, esports is growing rapidly along with its viewer base and younger demographic, something must be done. As of now, it seems that the Olympics believes it is premature for esports to take part, but is willing to converse to Riot Games about bringing League of Legends to an Olympic event, which is hopeful for the cause of inaugurating esports in.

To conclude, esports should have a place in the Olympics not only for the benefit of the Olympics itself, but also because several different esports have had, and will have the capacity to fulfill the Olympic values. Esports is able to bring in talented men and women all around the world to compete, esports is widely accepted around the world as a real sport, and especially because esports can be quite beneficial for a fulfilling life. There should ,therefore, be no reason for esports to not be a part of the Olympics, once it has satisfied all requirements of the International Federation.

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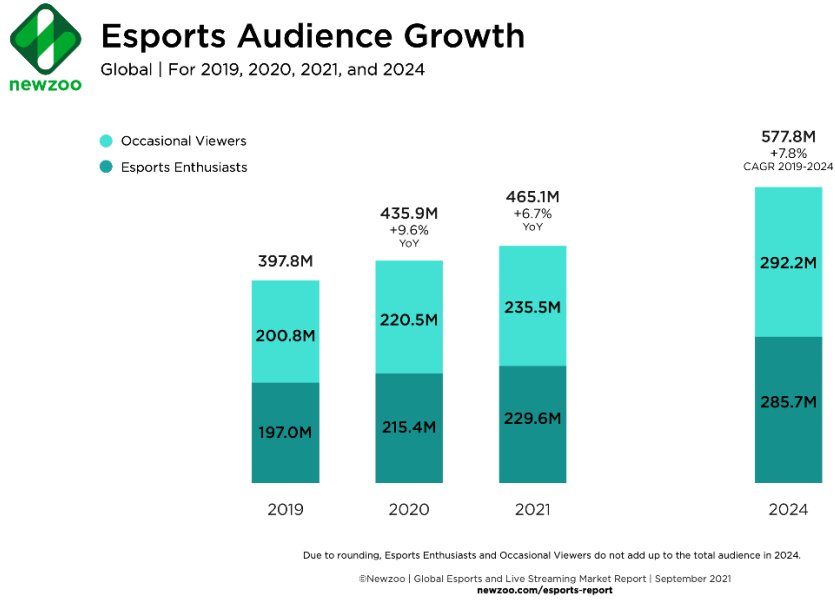
Appendices

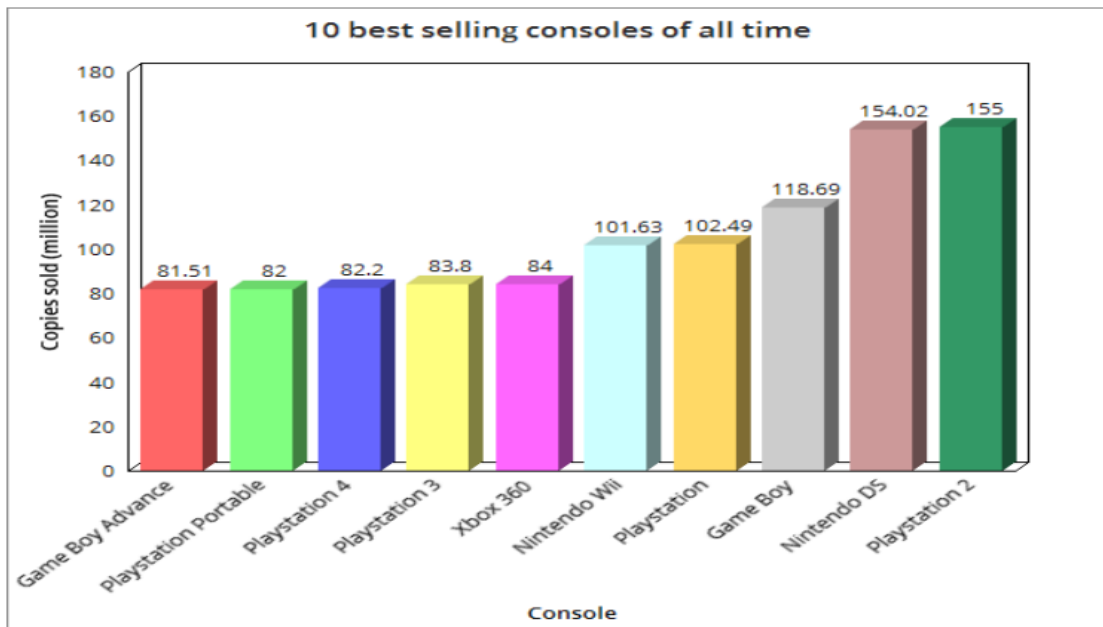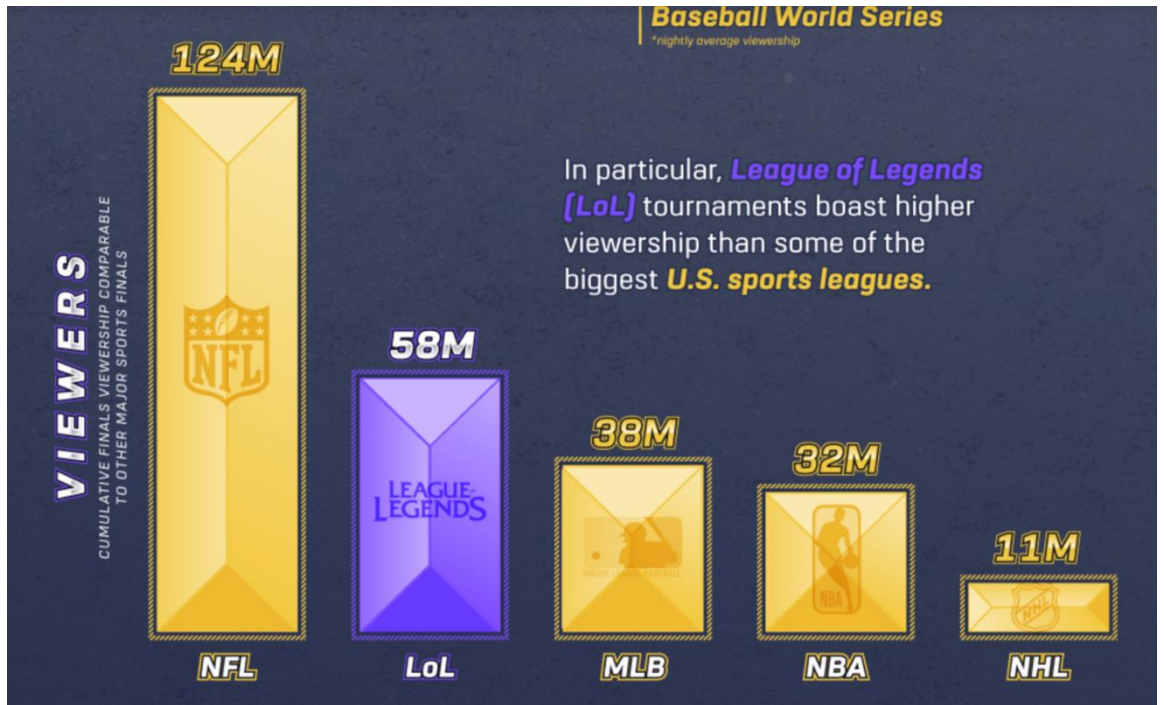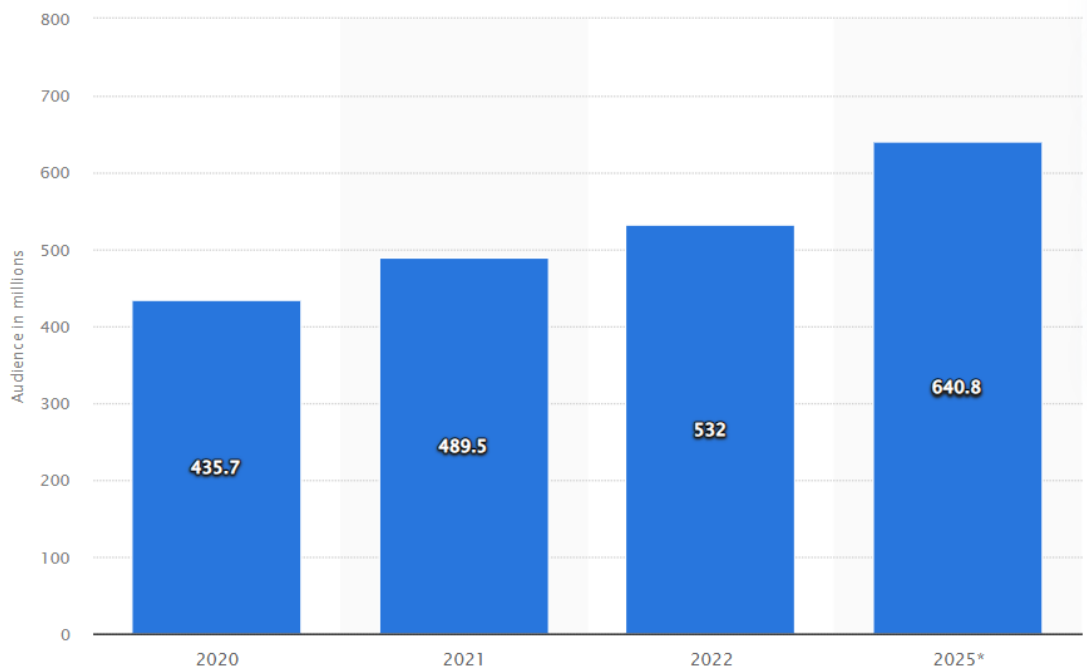Appendix A. All Figures



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Fig. 3



Fig 4.

ll 6  Have you made friends through playing the game        Avg. 3.8

56 out of 56 people answered this question

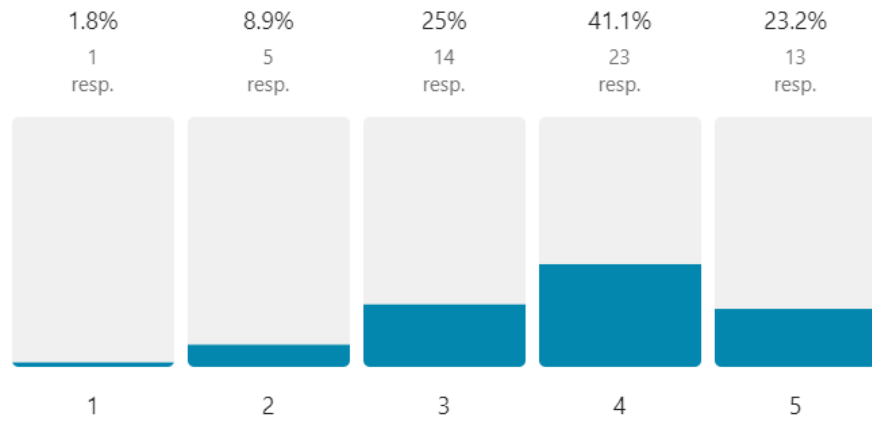| 1.8% | 8.9% | 25% | 41.1% | 23.2% |
| 1 | 5 | 14 | 23 | 13 |
| resp. | resp. | resp. | resp. | resp. |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Fig. 5



Should eSports be included in the Olympics?

- Yes, ESports should be enter Olympic as soon as possible.
- No, ESports should be developed independently
- Not yet, ESports is not allowed to enter the Olympic Games, and a credible regulatory agency is needed
- No, ESports is not a "sport"
- Not known/Neutrality

10,40%
29%
26,70%
28%
5,90%
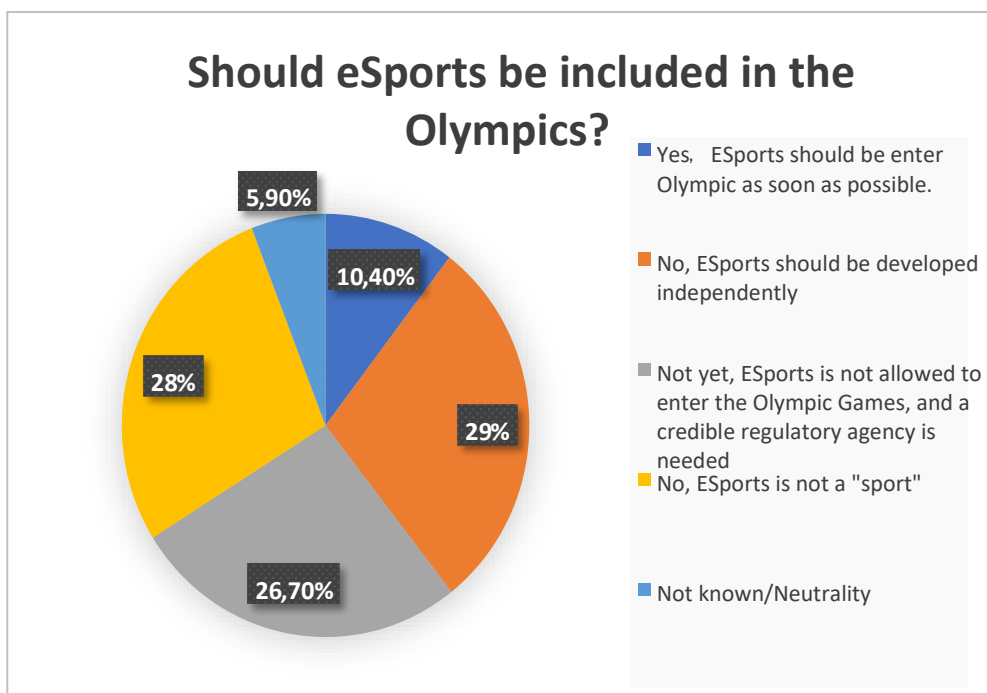
Fig. 6

**15** Do you think that eSports should become part of the Olympics?

56 out of 56 people answered this question

Yes                                                           38 resp.  67.9%
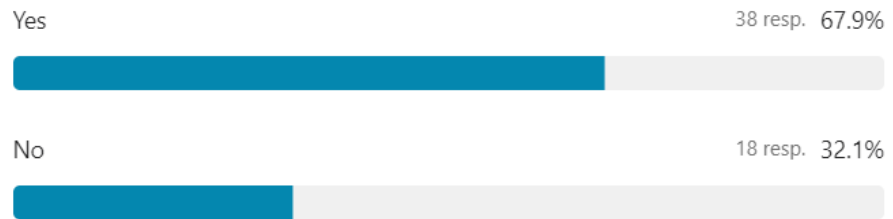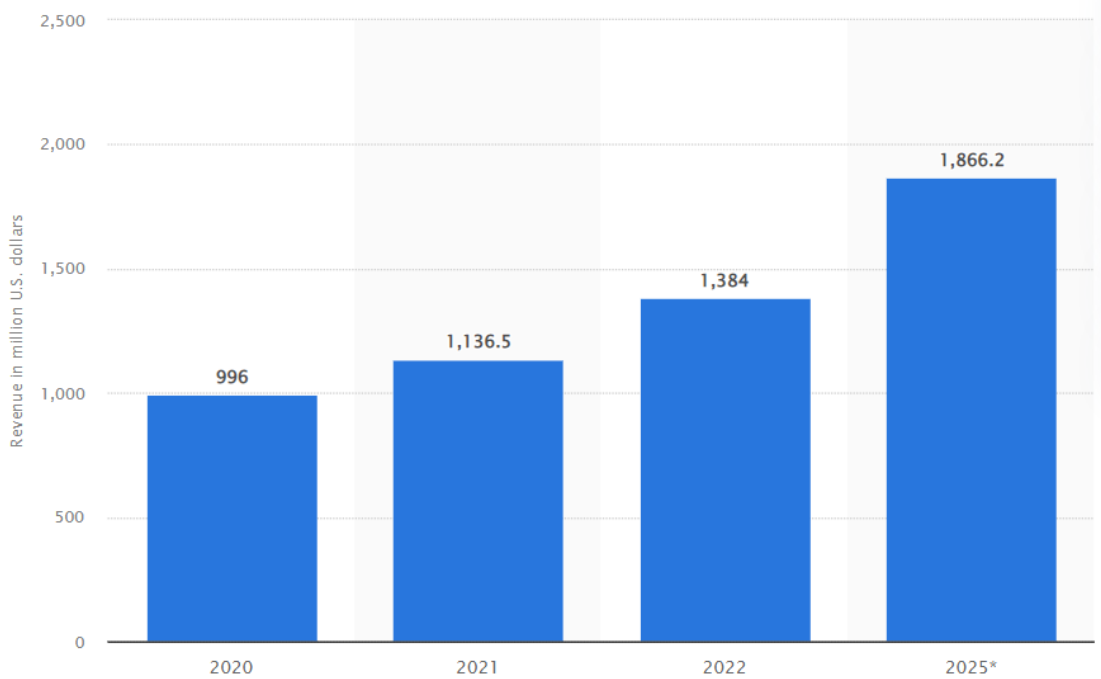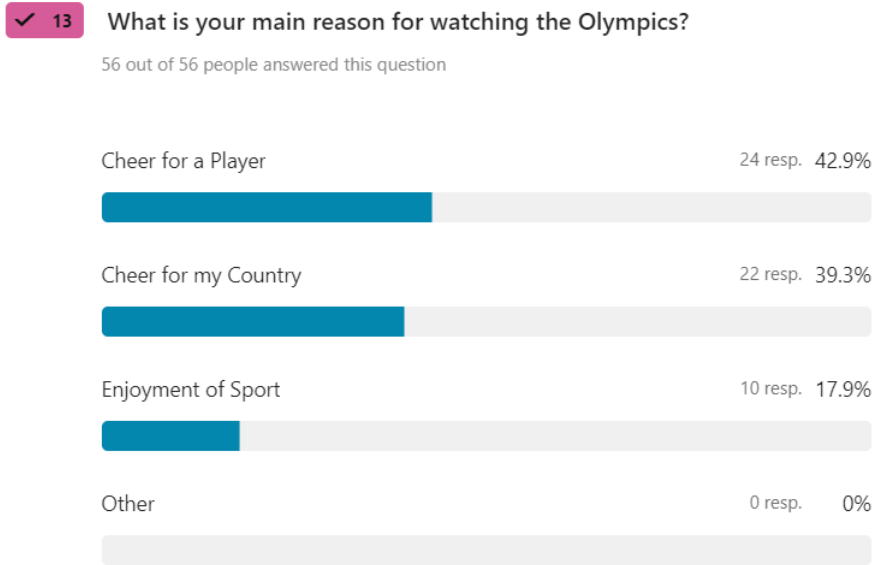
No                                                            18 resp.  32.1%

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

✓ 13 **What is your main reason for watching the Olympics?**

56 out of 56 people answered this question

Cheer for a Player                                    24 resp.   42.9%

Cheer for my Country                                  22 resp.   39.3%

Enjoyment of Sport                                    10 resp.   17.9%

Other                                                  0 resp.    0%

Fig. 9



Fig. 10

| Sport | Avg. age in 2000 | Avg. age in 2006 | Avg. age in 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|
| PGA Tour | N/A | 59 | 64 |
| LPGA | N/A | 59 | 63 |
| Horse racing | 51 | 56 | 63 |
| ATP tennis | 51 | 56 | 61 |
| NASCAR | N/A | 49 | 58 |
| MLB | 52 | 52 | 57 |
| WNBA | 42 | 49 | 55 |
| WTA Tennis | 58 | 63 | 55 |
| Olympics | 45 | 50 | 53 |
| College football | 47 | 48 | 52 |
| College basketball | 44 | 48 | 52 |
| NFL | 44 | 46 | 50 |
| Boxing | 45 | 47 | 49 |
| NHL | 33 | 42 | 49 |
| NBA | 40 | 40 | 42 |
| MLS | N/A | 39 | 40 |
| Source: Sports Business Journal | | | |

Fig. 11

Appendix B. Survey Questionnaire

1 → What's your date of birth?*

Description (optional)

Month     Day     Year

MM / DD / YYYY

OK ✓     press Enter ↵

2 → Do you play a game with an eSport*

the survey will continue based on whether the game is an eSport or not

Y Yes

N No

3 → How much do you enjoy your game of choice*

1: I don't enjoy my game at all
5: I enjoy my game very much

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

4 → Do you respect players who achieved higher ranks*

Description (optional)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

5 → Do you respect other players of your own skill level?

Description (optional)

Y Yes

N No

6→ Have you made friends through playing the game*

1: I have not
2: I have but we're not close
3: I have made one good friend
4: I have a close group of friends
5: I made many friends

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

7→ How much do you think your contribution effects the game you play?*

Description (optional)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

8→ Do you watch eSports?*

Description (optional)

Y Yes

N No

9➜ Do you know any eSports players? (Local or international)*

*Description (optional)*

Y Yes

N No

10➜ Among the players you've watched or know, is there someone that stands out? *

*Description (optional)*

Y Yes

N No

11➜ Are there any eSports athletes that remind you of Sports athletes of high standings?*

*Description (optional)*

Y Yes

N No

12 ➔ Do you watch the Olympics?*

*Description (optional)*

Y Yes

N No

13 ➔ What is your main reason for watching the Olympics?*

*Description (optional)*

A Cheer for my Country

B Cheer for a Player

C Enjoyment of Sport

D Other

Add choice

14 ➔ Would you watch eSports in the Olympics for similar reasons?*

*Description (optional)*

Y Yes

N No

15→ Do you think that eSports should become part of the Olympics?*

*Description (optional)*

> Y Yes

> N No

16→ Questions earlier asked about friendships, the importance of skill, and respect. These are all Olympic Values, does knowing this change your opinion?*
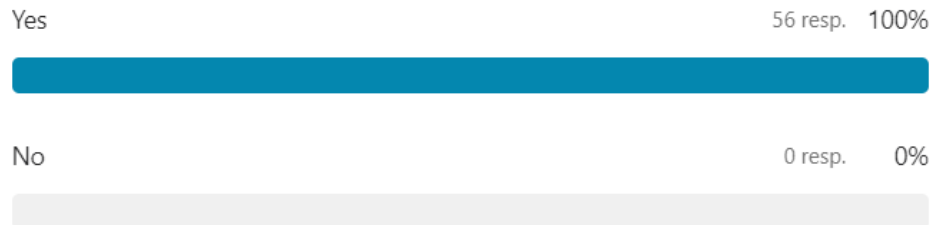
*Description (optional)*

> Y Yes

> N No

17→ Why do you think eSports should or should not be a part of the Olympics?
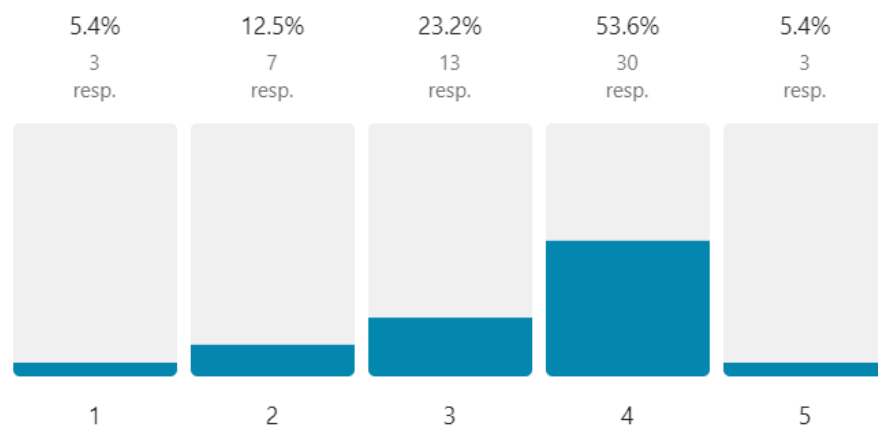
*Description (optional)*

Type your answer here...

Appendix C. Survey Summary

**2** **Do you play a game with an eSport**

56 out of 56 people answered this question

Yes — 56 resp. 100%

No — 0 resp. 0%

**3** **How much do you enjoy your game of choice** — Avg. 3.4

56 out of 56 people answered this question

| 5.4% | 12.5% | 23.2% | 53.6% | 5.4% |
|------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 3 resp. | 7 resp. | 13 resp. | 30 resp. | 3 resp. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

📊 **4** **Do you respect players who achieved higher ranks** Avg. 3.4

56 out of 56 people answered this question

| 3.6% | 21.4% | 26.8% | 30.4% | 17.9% |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 2 resp. | 12 resp. | 15 resp. | 17 resp. | 10 resp. |



| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
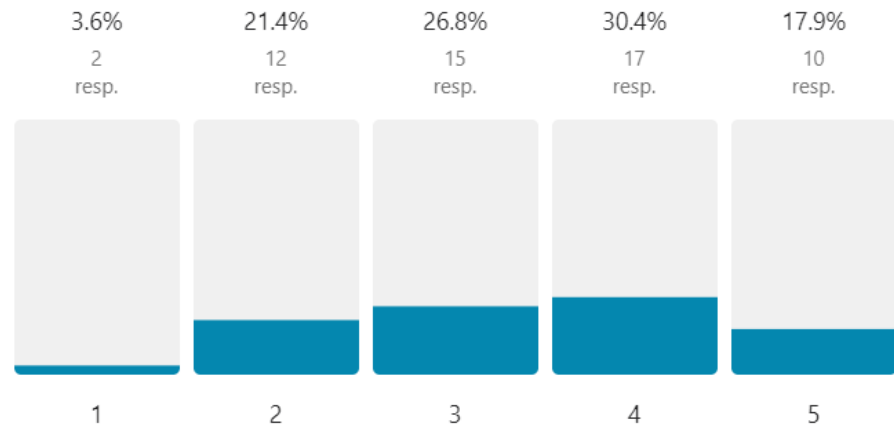
◐ **5** **Do you respect other players of your own skill level?**

56 out of 56 people answered this question
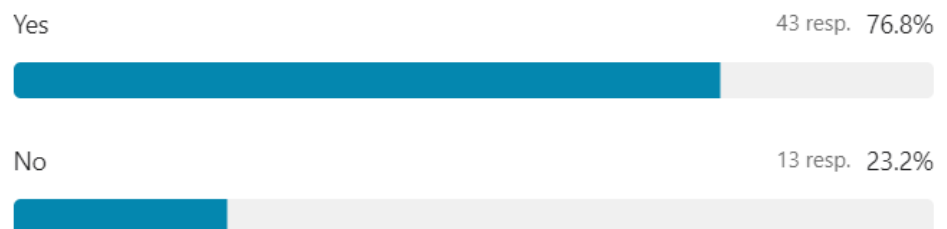
Yes                                                           43 resp. 76.8%
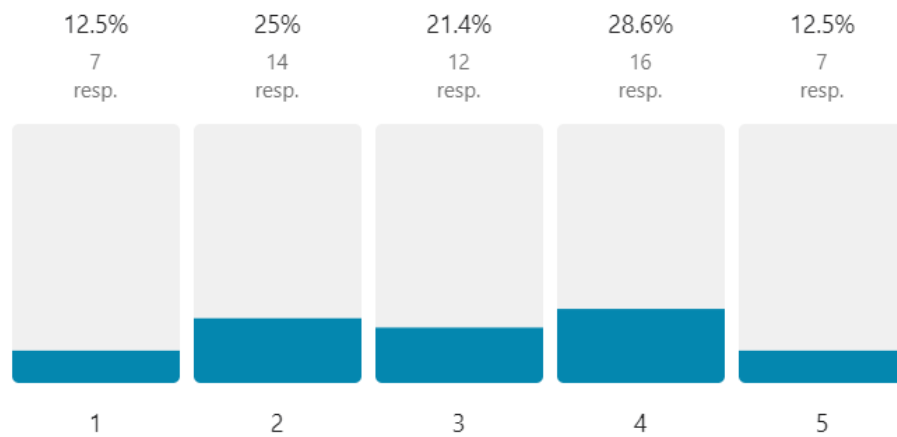
No                                                            13 resp. 23.2%

**6** Have you made friends through playing the game          Avg. 3.8

56 out of 56 people answered this question

| 1.8% | 8.9% | 25% | 41.1% | 23.2% |
|------|------|-----|-------|-------|
| 1 | 5 | 14 | 23 | 13 |
| resp. | resp. | resp. | resp. | resp. |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
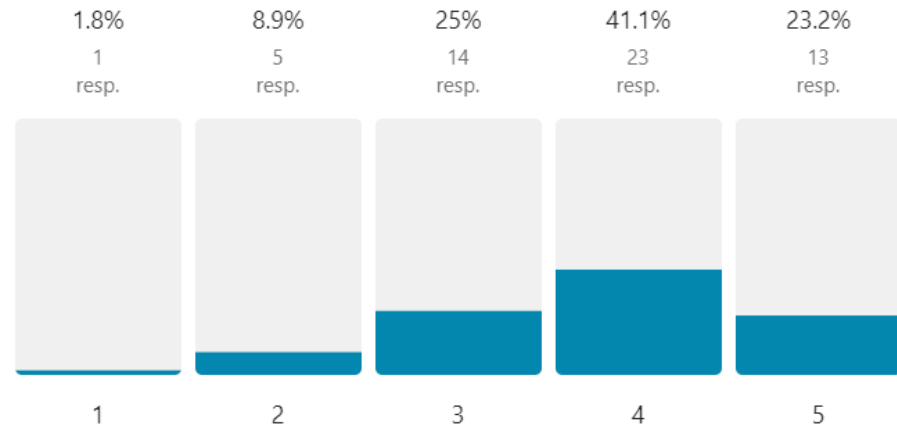
**7** How much do you think your contribution effects the game you play?          Avg. 3

56 out of 56 people answered this question

| 12.5% | 25% | 21.4% | 28.6% | 12.5% |
|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| 7 | 14 | 12 | 16 | 7 |
| resp. | resp. | resp. | resp. | resp. |

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

⬑ 8 **Do you watch eSports?**

56 out of 56 people answered this question

Yes                                                    50 resp.  89.3%

No                                                      6 resp.  10.7%

⬑ 9 **Do you know any eSports players? (Local or international)**

56 out of 56 people answered this question

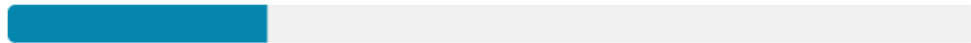Yes                                                    41 resp.  73.2%

No                                                      15 resp.  26.8%

**10** Among the players you've watched or know, is there someone that stands out?

56 out of 56 people answered this question

Yes — 34 resp. 60.7%
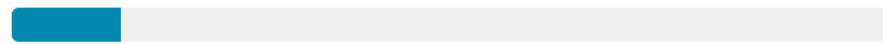
No — 22 resp. 39.3%

**11** Are there any eSports athletes that remind you of Sports athletes of high standings?

56 out of 56 people answered this question
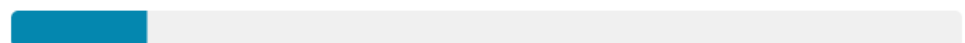
Yes — 49 resp. 87.5%

No — 7 resp. 12.5%

**12** Do you watch the Olympics?

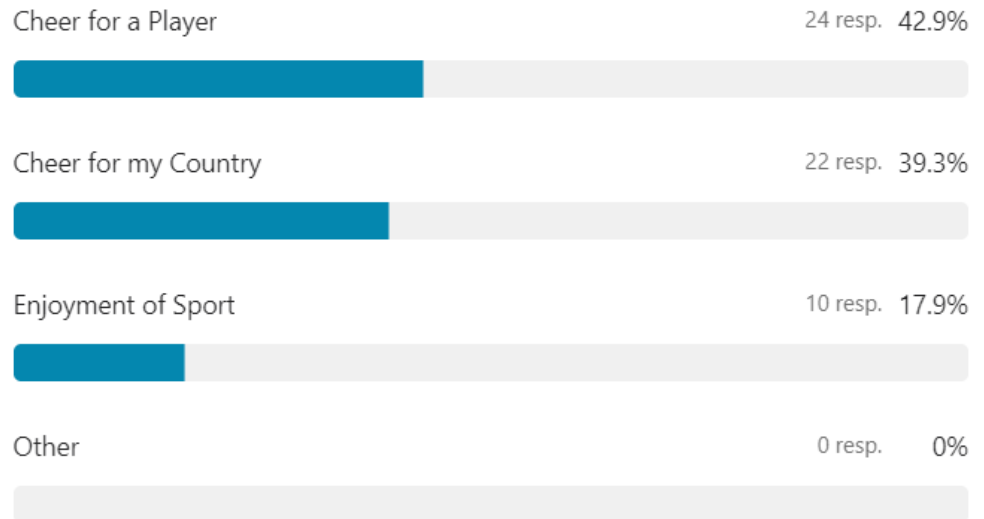56 out of 56 people answered this question

Yes — 48 resp. 85.7%

No — 8 resp. 14.3%

✓ 13 **What is your main reason for watching the Olympics?**

56 out of 56 people answered this question

Cheer for a Player                                                24 resp.  42.9%

Cheer for my Country                                          22 resp.  39.3%

Enjoyment of Sport                                            10 resp.  17.9%

Other                                                                  0 resp.    0%

**◑ 14**   **Would you watch eSports in the Olympics for similar reasons?**

56 out of 56 people answered this question

Yes                                                             52 resp.  92.9%

No                                                               4 resp.   7.1%

**◑ 15**   **Do you think that eSports should become part of the Olympics?**

56 out of 56 people answered this question

Yes                                                             38 resp.  67.9%

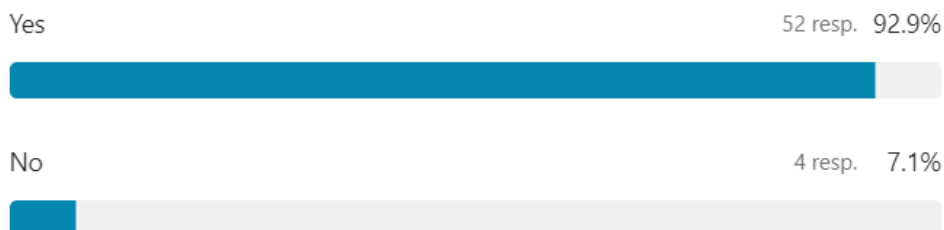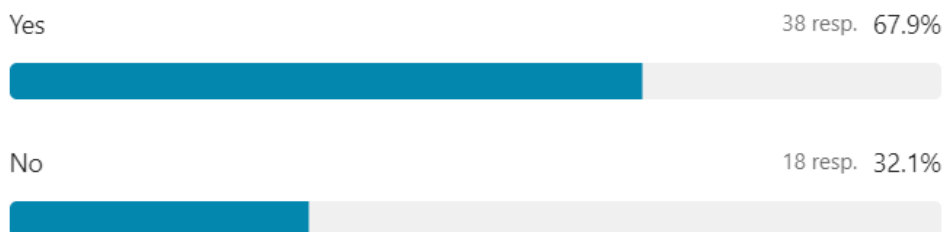No                                                              18 resp.  32.1%

**◑ 16**   **Questions earlier asked about friendships, the importance of skill, and respect. These are all Olympic Values, does knowing this change your opinion?**

56 out of 56 people answered this question

Yes                                                             5 resp.   8.9%

No                                                             51 resp.  91.1%

**17**  **Why do you think eSports should or should not be a part of the Olympics?**

10 out of 56 people answered this question

I want to cheer for the Philippines in esport

2 hours ago

It is not sport

2 hours ago