



What if video games improved mental and physical health?

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Healthy Play

UNCERTAINTIES

Technology, Values

MEGATREND (Most significant)

Future Humanity

TRENDS

Digital Art & Design
Digital Therapeutics
Gaming & Entertainment
Mental Health
Neuroscience

TECHNOLOGIES

Artificial Intelligence
Data Protection & Privacy
Immersive Technologies & Wearables

SECTORS IMPACTED

Art, Media, Sports & Entertainment
Communication Technologies & Systems
Consumer Goods, Services, & Retail
Data Science, AI & Machine Learning
Digital Goods & Services
Health & Healthcare

KEYWORDS

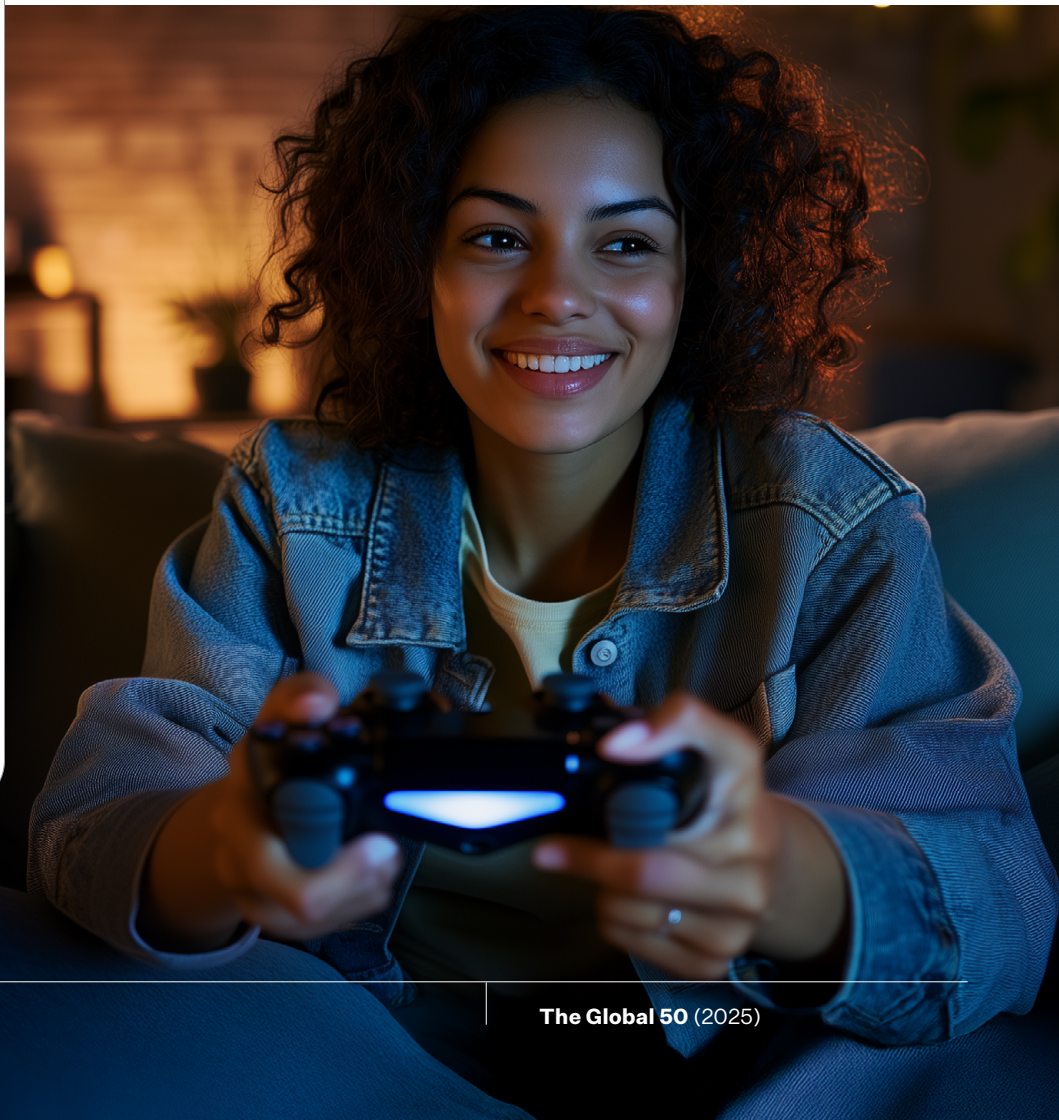
Gaming
Mental Health
Physical Activity
Prescription Games
Wellness Technology

Within Reach

Transitional

Visionary

Physical and mental well-being become the core of the video gaming ecosystem, unlocking gaming's potential to uplift society through research-backed insights that address well-being and support better health.





WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

Mental health issues have reached critical levels globally, with depressive and anxiety disorders affecting more than

**970
million**

individuals worldwide

Video games have become deeply integrated into daily life for millions of people worldwide, with gaming covering all generations and age groups.⁹²⁰ The percentage of children engaging in online gaming grew to 60% in 2023, compared to 57% in 2022.⁹²¹ This trend is particularly noticeable among children aged 3–4 years, whose participation rose from 18% to 23%; children aged 5–7 years, rising from 34% to 41%; and teenagers aged 16–17 years, rising from 72% to 79%.⁹²²

Mental health challenges require innovative solutions amid rising concern. Mental health issues have reached critical levels globally, with depressive and anxiety disorders affecting more than 970 million individuals worldwide.⁹²³ This mental health crisis disproportionately impacts socio-economically disadvantaged populations, while access to traditional mental health services remains limited for many.⁹²⁴ There is a need for innovative approaches to improve the delivery of mental health support.⁹²⁵ A promising option, which is especially valuable given the current worldwide shortage of mental health professionals,⁹²⁶ is game-based interventions, which can be effective in improving individuals' mental health.⁹²⁷ In a study involving almost 13,000 players across 12 countries, players considered that video games relieved stress (71%), helped them face everyday challenges (64%), and helped them combat isolation (55%).⁹²⁸ Among the European countries surveyed, the respective values were 68%, 67% and 53%.⁹²⁹

Physical inactivity is a concern. Regular physical activity reduces rates of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, depression, dementia and certain cancers, potentially preventing up to 5 million deaths annually.⁹³⁰ Yet one in four adults and four in five adolescents are insufficiently active, with women, girls, older adults, and those with disabilities disproportionately affected.⁹³¹ In high-income countries, the inactivity rate can reach 70%.⁹³²



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THE OPPORTUNITY



BENEFITS

New approach to personalised wellness, mental health support, and rehabilitation therapy; improved public health; innovative breakthroughs and growth in gaming.



RISKS

Increased addiction; regulatory and ethical challenges; high development costs; accessibility issues; unintended consequences such as misdiagnosis or reduced human interaction.

Physical and mental well-being become core to the video gaming ecosystem.⁹³³ While collaboration with health experts addresses issues such as gaming addiction and physical strain, new games shift gaming from a passive leisure activity to an active health intervention^{934,935} and a tool for personalised individual well-being.^{936,937} Prescription games are clinically tested and prescribed by healthcare providers targeting specific conditions such as anxiety, depression and cognitive decline.

A comprehensive rating system evaluate video games based on their physical and mental health impacts, with rating boards such as the Entertainment Software Rating Board and other research institutions focused on gaming providing research-backed insights about a game's potential health benefits, such as its cognitive training potential and stress reduction capabilities.⁹³⁸ Game design, through robust community standards, purposefully enhances inclusivity and positive social interactions. Developers integrate features that promote healthy gaming habits, such as playing limits, breaks and age-appropriate content, in parallel with transparent data practices and secure environments that further build trust.



Physical and mental well-being become core to the gaming ecosystem, **from a passive leisure activity to an active health intervention**