Deloitte.

Let’s Play! 2024
The esports market

December 2024

MAKING AN IMPACT THAT MATTERS since 1845

Contents

Preface

Dear Readers,

We welcome you to the eighth edition of 'Let's Play!', Deloitte's esports market report. With this study now closing in on its tenth edition, it reflects the ever-growing relevance of the esports phenomenon.

After reaching near-mainstream levels at times during the COVID-19 pandemic, the buzz around esports has somewhat slowed down in the past two years. Nonetheless, new audiences are steadily coming into contact with the product for the first time, meaning that the term 'esports' and the underlying concept are now firmly established in popular culture. Engaging these new audiences on a long-term and regular basis, however, remains a challenge – as, at present, young men remain the top target group who intensively involve themselves with esports on a regular basis.

To capture a precise picture regarding the state of the esports audience, Deloitte conducted an extensive consumer survey among some 14,000 people age 16 to 65 (henceforth, 'consumers' or 'respondents') from 20 countries globally. The generated data provides valuable insights into the global 'balance of power' and trends on the audience within the esports ecosystem.

We trust you will find reading this report valuable.

Sincerely,

Stefan Ludwig
Partner

Kim Lachmann
Director

Representative survey among **~14,000 participants globally,** including **~8,000 in Europe** (age 16-65)

20 global markets, including 9 in Europe[1]

Focus of this report

Key Takeaways

While esports continue to gain recognition in a wider population, capitalizing fully on these expanded touchpoints remains a challenge for the sector's stakeholders

European context

Esports continue to **gain recognition in a wider population** across European countries**,** resulting in a **'critical mass' now being familiar** with the term and concept

However, **a high proportion** of people who have watched esports content before are currently '**inactive**' within the community, suggesting **many one-off and occasional viewers**

Thus, the sector's challenge remains to **convert** awareness and occasional followership **into regular engagement** and hence **make commercial sustainability** in esports **attainable**

Among those who do watch regularly, high engagement rates are evident. In a European comparison, **regular viewership is highest** in the **UK** (16%) and **Spain** (13%), followed by Italy and Germany

Global context

The esports audience consists of a **disproportionately** high share of **male** and **young** people versus the overall sample. Equally, this holds **compared to video gamers and traditional sports fans**

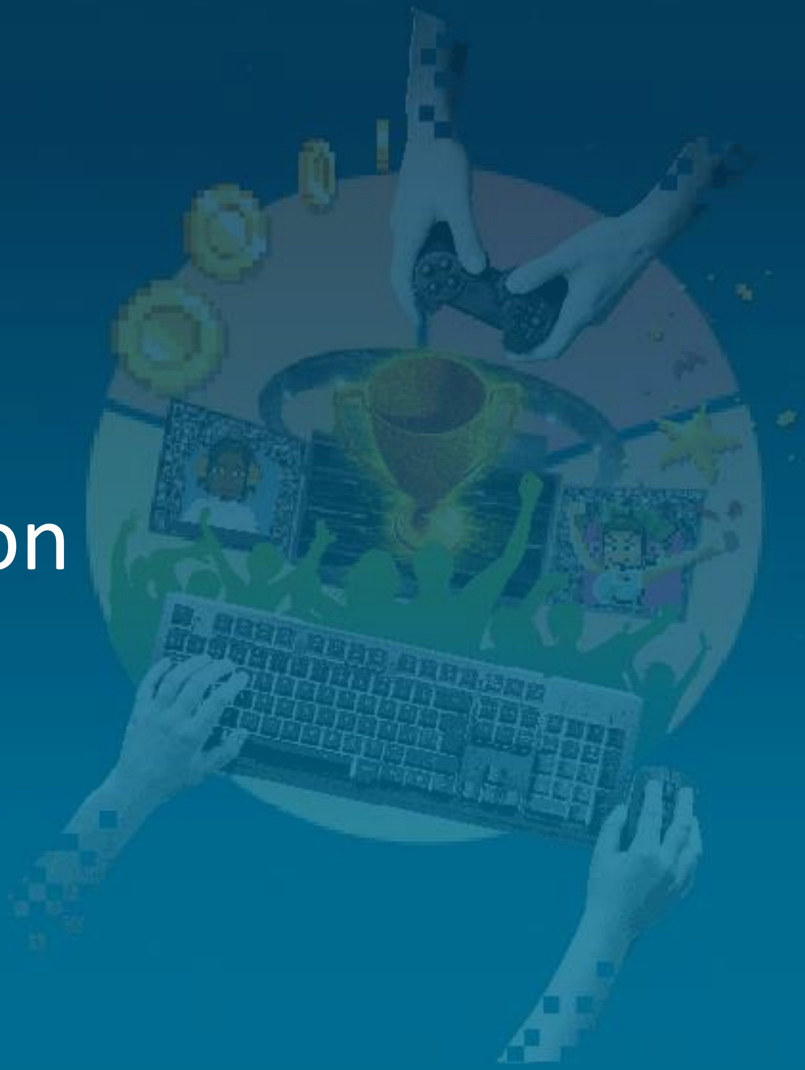
Hence, esports viewers can be considered a **narrow** – and typically highly sought-after – **target group**, indicating **opportunities for activation** by commercial companies

In line with M&A activity across a range of sectors, **transaction frequency in esports normalized in the changed economic environment** since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic

Globally, consumer engagement varies greatly between regional contexts. Across regions, **Southeast Asia** and the **Middle East** show the **highest share of active esports viewers**

01

Esports consumption in Europe

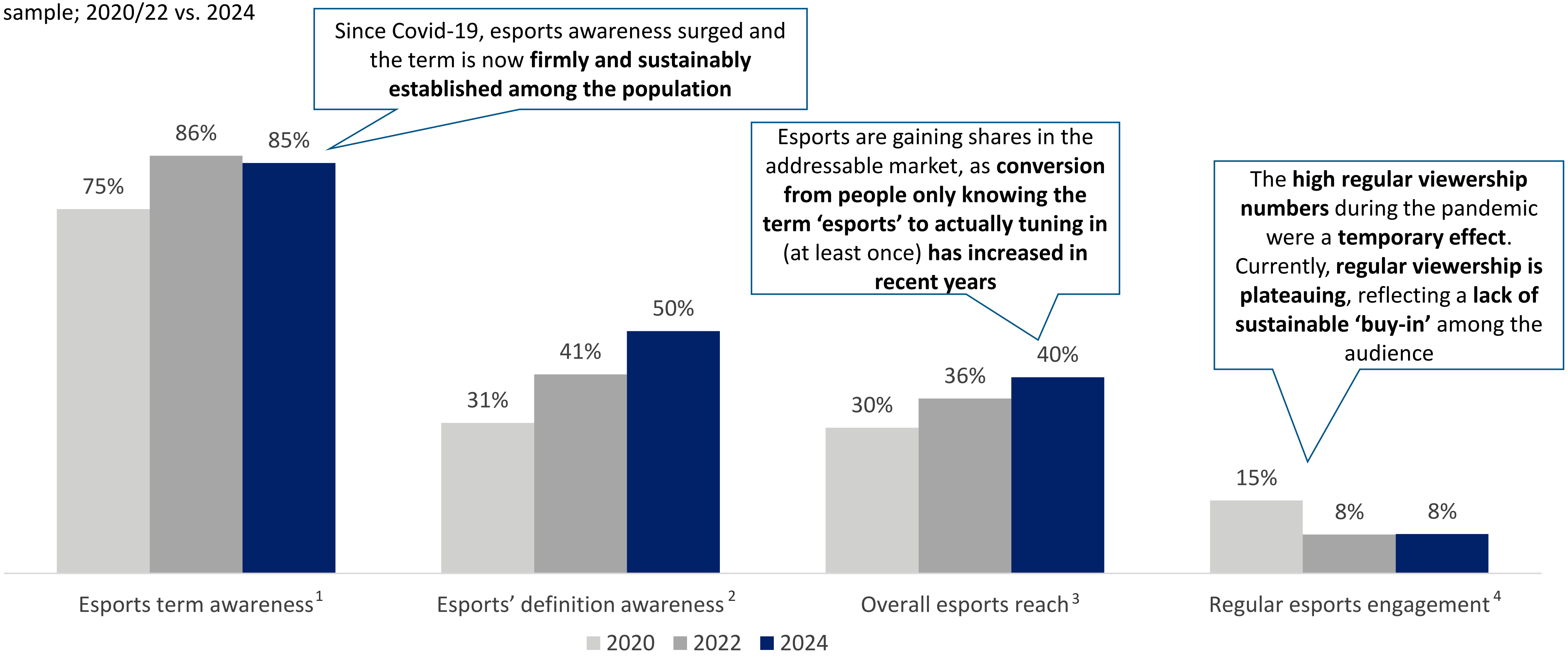


01 | Esports consumption in Europe – Consumer engagement maturity (1/3)

Esports continue to gain recognition in a wider population, resulting in an increasing number of people being 'educated' about the concept. To date, however, esports have not managed to capitalize fully on these expanded touchpoints, as converting new audiences into larger regular viewership remains a challenge

Fig. 1 – Development of esports engagement maturity

Average of overall sample; 2020/22 vs. 2024



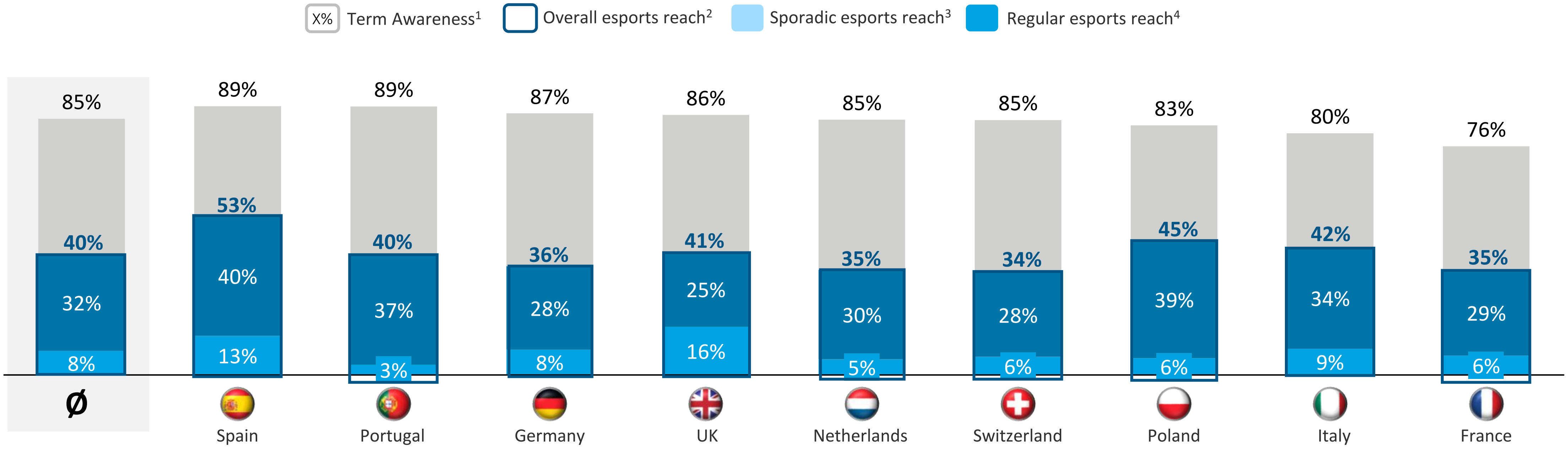
Notes: 1) Share of respondents who know the term 'esports,' independent of the ability to define the term correctly. 2) Share of respondents who know the term 'esports' and can define it correctly. 3) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content at least once in the past. 4) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content at least once per week in the last six months.

Source: Deloitte analysis

01 | Esports consumption in Europe – Consumer engagement maturity (2/3)

In many European countries, a 'critical mass' is now familiar with the term 'esports'. The challenge for the sector's stakeholders remains to convert this into engagement – specifically, regular engagement – in order to more effectively approach commercial aspects. Currently, audiences in Spain and the UK are the most mature in this regard

Fig. 2 – Esports term awareness and audience conversion
by country



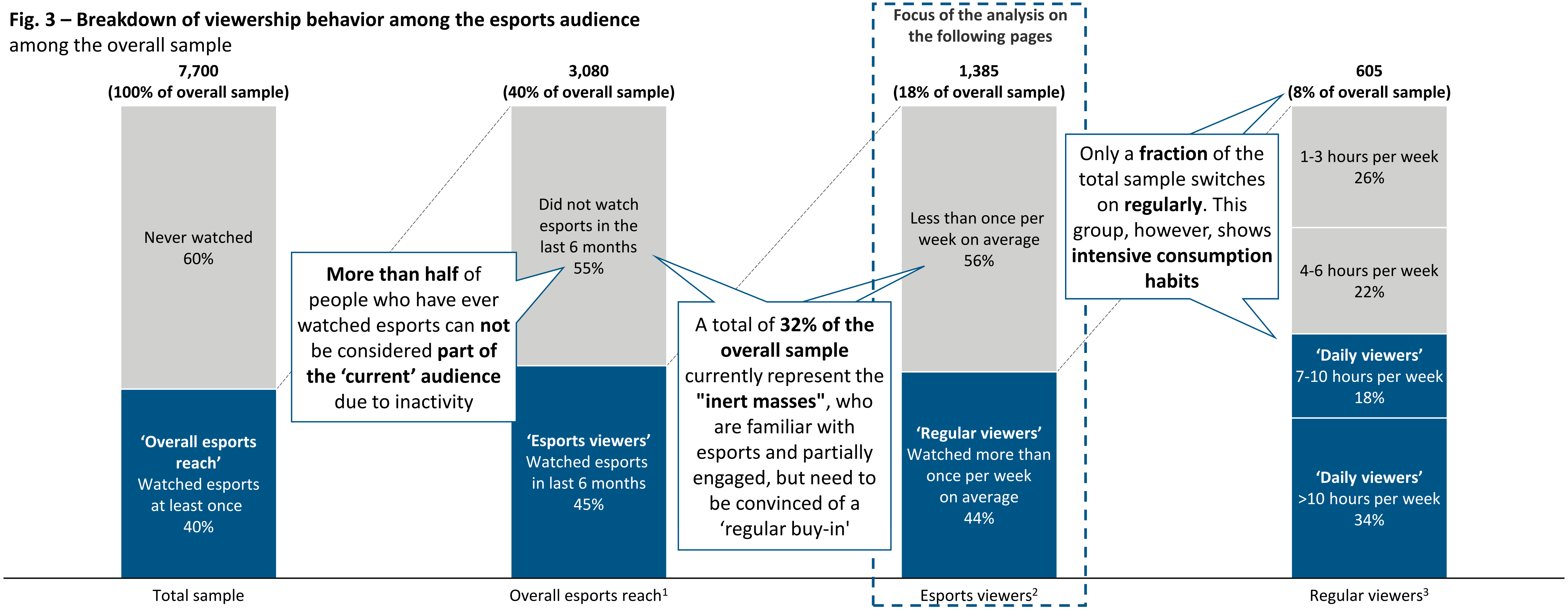
Conversion rate	ø	Spain	Portugal	Germany	UK	Netherlands	Switzerland	Poland	Italy	France
Overall reach as % of aware population	47%	59%	45%	42%	47%	41%	40%	54%	53%	46%
Regular reach as % of overall reach	20%	24%	9%	23%	39%	15%	18%	13%	21%	18%

Notes: 1) Share of respondents who know the term 'esports,' independent of the ability to define the term correctly. 2) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content at least once in the past. 3) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content at least once in the past but are no regular viewers. 4) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content at least once per week in the last six months.
Source: Deloitte analysis

01 | Esports consumption in Europe – Consumer engagement maturity (3/3)

A high proportion of those who have come into contact with esports content are currently ‘inactive’ within the community, suggesting many one-off viewers. Among those who do watch regularly, high engagement rates are evident, with more than half of this group watching an average of at least an hour a day

Fig. 3 – Breakdown of viewership behavior among the esports audience
among the overall sample



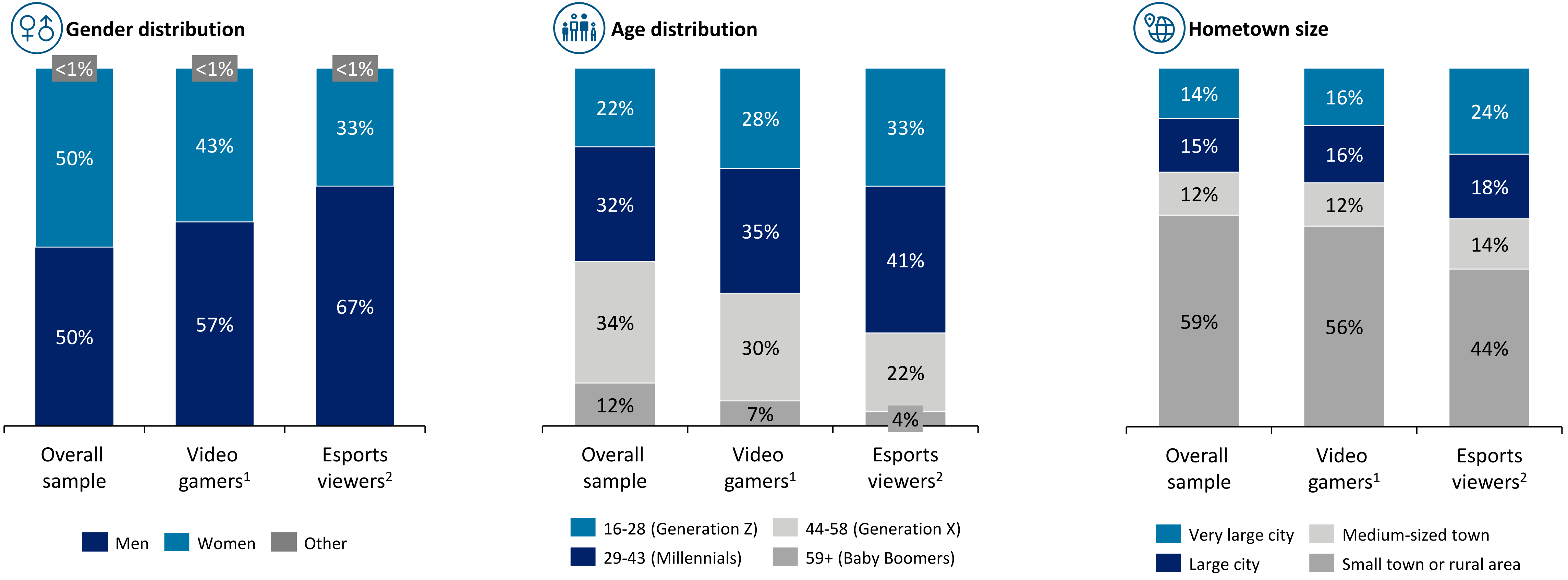
Notes: 1) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content at least once in the past. 2) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content at least once in the last six months. 3) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content at least once per week in the last six months.
Source: Deloitte analysis

01 | Esports consumption in Europe – Audience demographics (1/2)

The most frequent consumers of esports are male and from the Millennial or Generation Z age groups. In addition, esports viewers tend to come from larger cities

While video gamers are roughly comparable to the overall sample regarding their demographics, **esports viewers are a much narrower target group**

Fig. 4 – Demographic breakdown of the esports audience
compared to video gamers and the overall sample

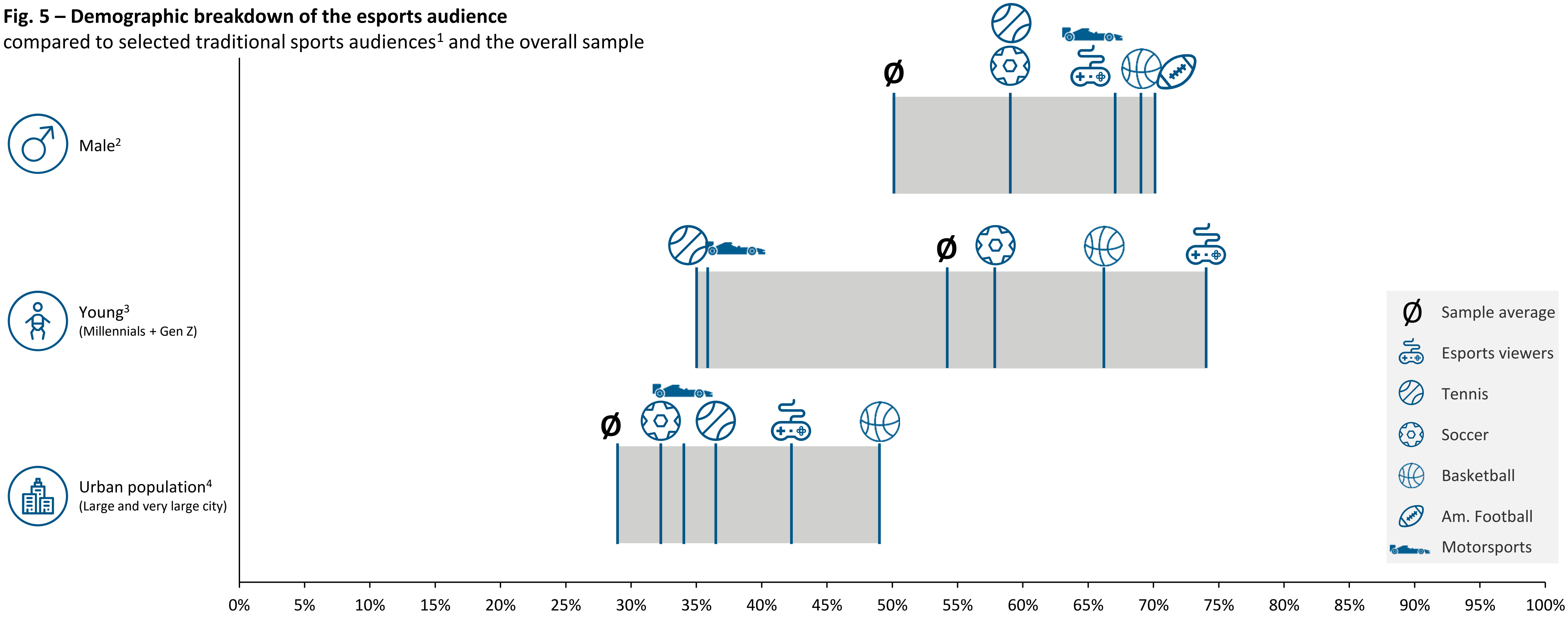


Notes: 1) Refers to respondents who engaged in video gaming in the last 6 months before the survey period. 2) Refers to respondents who have followed esports in the last 6 months before the survey period.
Source: Deloitte analysis

01 | Esports consumption in Europe – Audience demographics (2/2)

In comparison with the fan bases of traditional sports, esports viewers appear to be one of the most attractive target groups. In comparison with other sports, the esports audience consists of a disproportionately high share of male and young people. Therefore, it clearly defines and represents a target group that is typically difficult to reach

Fig. 5 – Demographic breakdown of the esports audience
compared to selected traditional sports audiences[1] and the overall sample



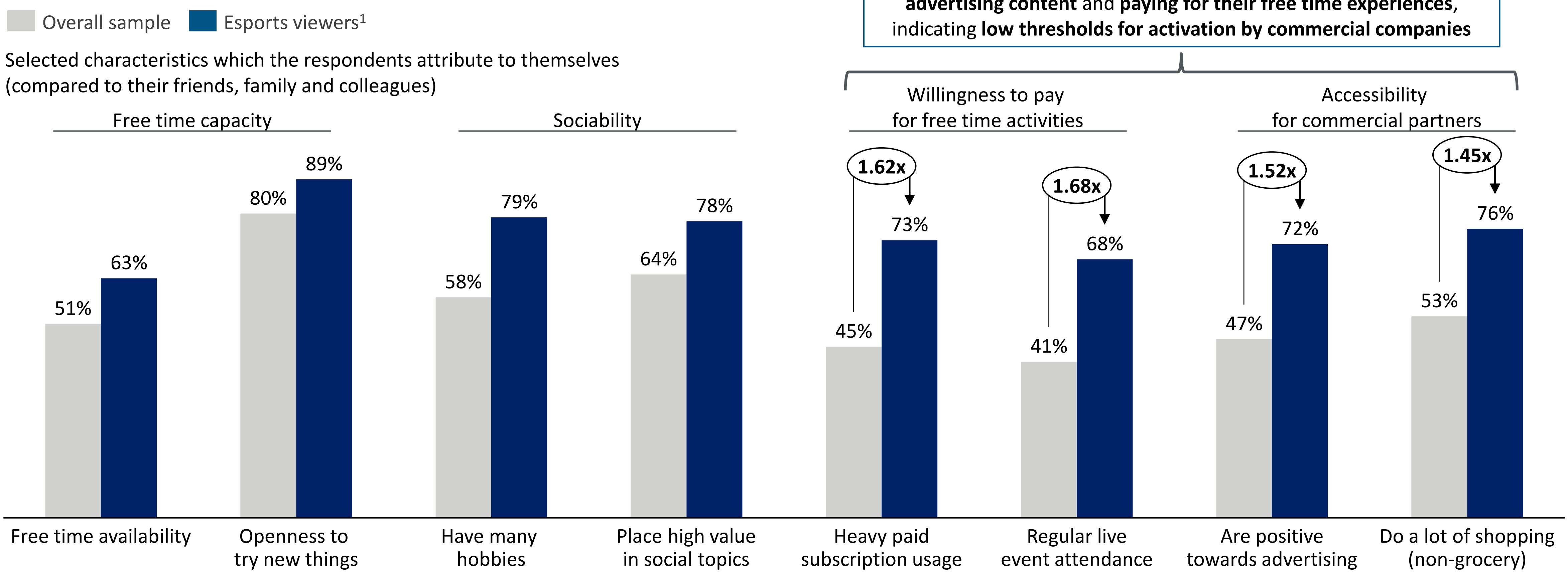
Notes: 1) Refers to respondents who have followed one of 20 selected sports in the last 6 months before the survey period. 2) Share of respective audience group that is male. 3) Share of respective audience group that belongs to Gen Z or the Millennial generation. 4) Share of the respective audience group living in a >100k city.
Source: Deloitte analysis

01 | Esports consumption in Europe – Engagement and interaction (1/3)

The esports audience stands out as an open target group compared to the overall population, demonstrating a disproportionate willingness to pay in relevant commercial contexts. Accordingly, this also points to untapped monetization potential for esports stakeholder from which the sector may benefit in the future

Fig. 6 – Distribution of selected characteristics among esports viewers

Esports viewers show a **disproportionately high inclination towards advertising content** and **paying for their free time experiences**, indicating **low thresholds for activation by commercial companies**



Note: 1) Refers to respondents who have followed esports in the last 6 months before the survey period.
Source: Deloitte analysis

01 | Esports consumption in Europe – Engagement and interaction (2/3)

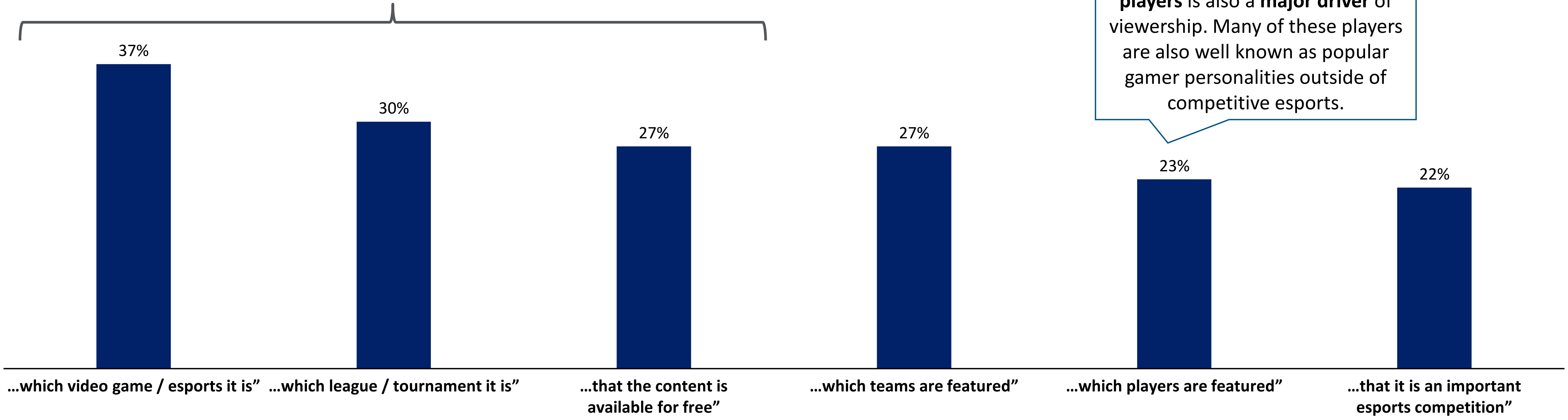
Consumers' criteria for selecting content when consuming esports vary, although the specific game emerges as the main motive, followed by the relevance of the tournament system and affordability

Fig. 7 – Reasons for esports content selection[1]

"What esports content I watch depends primarily on…"

Esports viewers look for the ideal combination between **high-quality** content productions (game/tournament) **and affordability** (free content) which – given the high share of valuable free content that exists in the sector – reinforces the **established no charge-viewership experience**

The **followership of individual players** is also a **major driver** of viewership. Many of these players are also well known as popular gamer personalities outside of competitive esports.



Note: 1) Refers to respondents who have followed esports in the last 6 months before the survey period.

Source: Deloitte analysis

01 | Esports consumption in Europe – Engagement and interaction (3/3)

A large part of esports consumption takes place on Twitch and YouTube Gaming. Therefore, other broadcasting channels have to accept a more niche existence. In terms of social media, usage spreads differently between esports viewers and the overall sample, suggesting the usage of tailor-made social media strategies to reach this specific target group

Fig. 8 – Most important access points for esports consumption
Share of esports viewers using selected platforms/channels for accessing esports content[1]

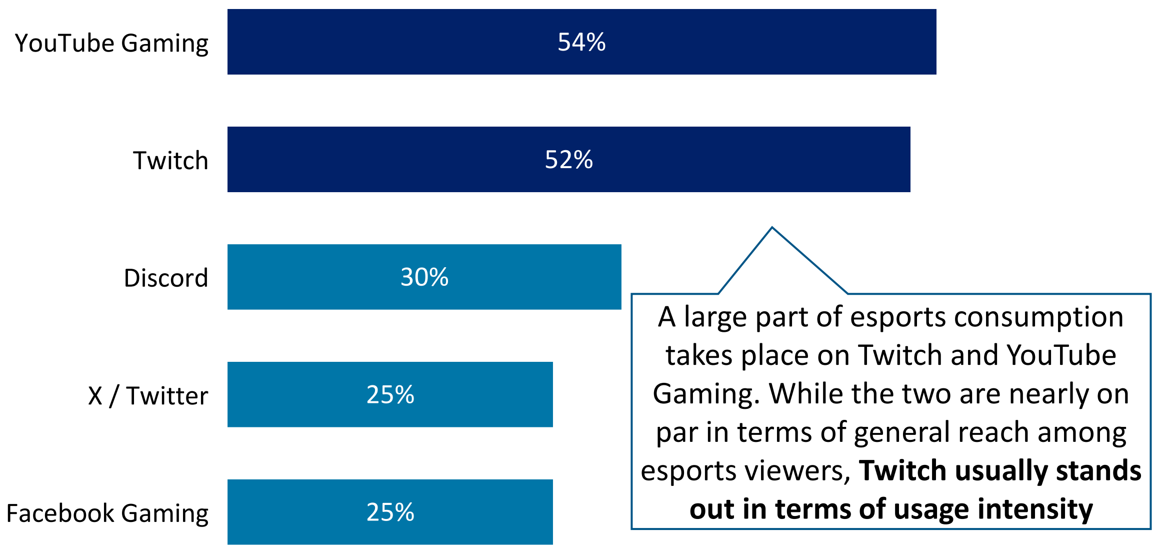
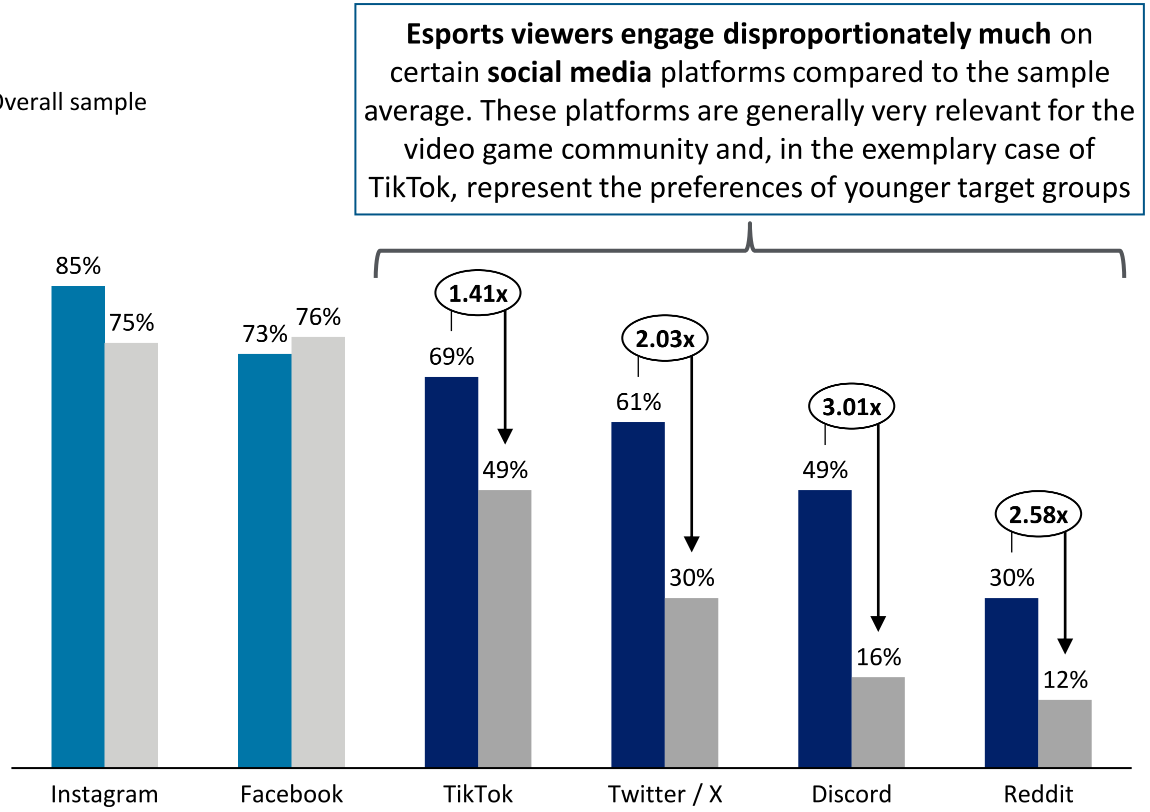


Fig. 9 – Usage of selected social media platforms[2]
Esports viewers[3] vs. overall sample



Notes: 1) Respondents who have watched esports content in the last six months were asked to indicate through which channels/platforms they have accessed content on esports competitions in the last 6 months - participants were asked to select from a list of 13 different options. 2) Respondents were asked to name the social media channels they have used in the last 6 months - participants were asked to select from a list of 7 different options. 3) Refers to respondents who have followed esports in the last 6 months before the survey period.
Source: Deloitte analysis

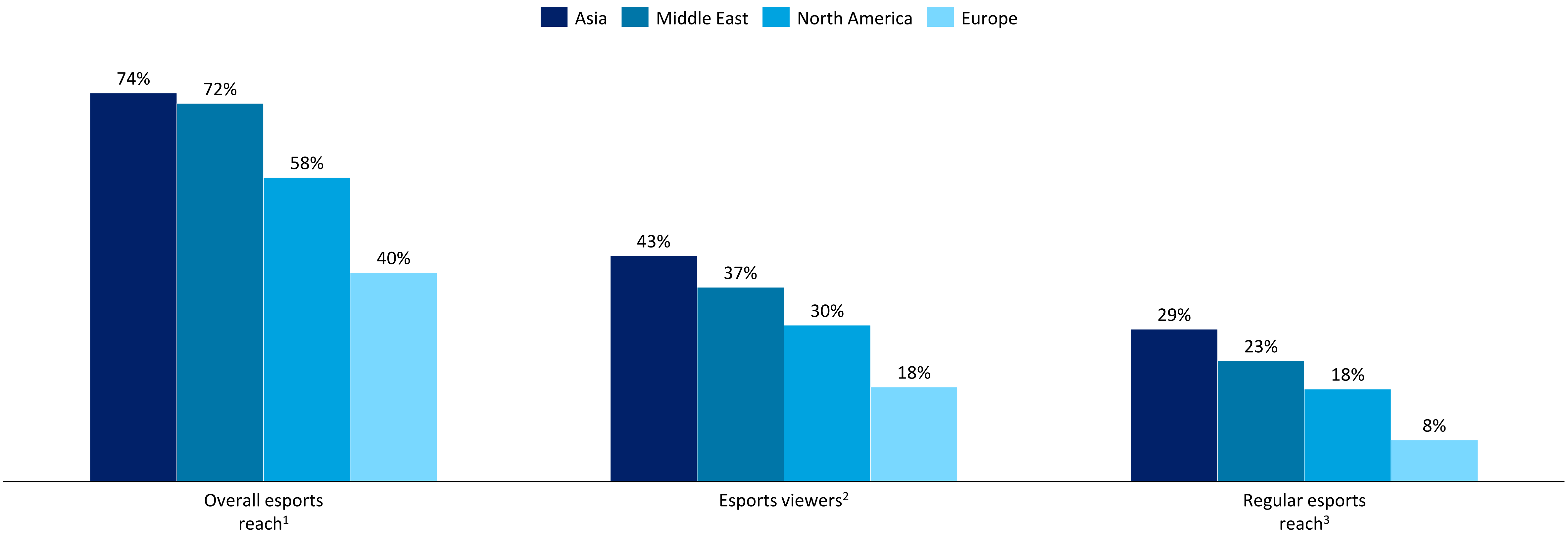
02

Special focus: Global esports snapshots

02 | Special focus: Global esports snapshots – Consumer engagement maturity (1/2)

Esports may be regarded a "borderless" product with strong growth prospects, yet maturity varies greatly between regional markets. While, in line with the comparatively older demographics, esports awareness and initial exposure remain the developmental focus in Europe, a focus can be put on strengthening engagement with audiences in Asia and Middle East

Fig. 10 – Comparison of consumer engagement maturity in selected regions



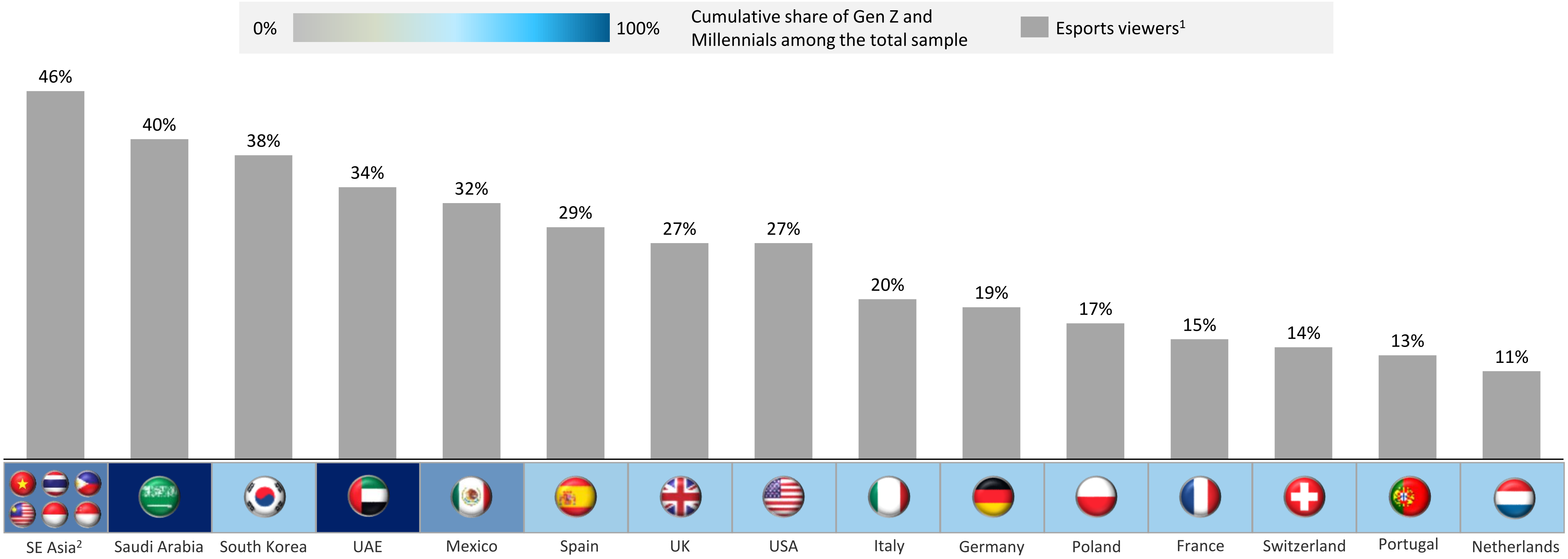
Notes: 1) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content at least once in the past. 2) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content in the last six months. 3) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content at least once per week in the last six months.

Source: Deloitte analysis

02 | Special focus: Global esports snapshots – Consumer engagement maturity (2/2)

Looking at the share of esports viewers per country, regional differences in the developmental speed of the sector become apparent, as engagement maturity increases with decreasing average population age. Accordingly, there is a high proportion of active users in Southeast Asia and the Middle East

Fig. 11 – Esports viewers across countries in 2024



Note: 1) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content in the last six months. 2) Southeast Asia includes: Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore.
Source: Deloitte analysis

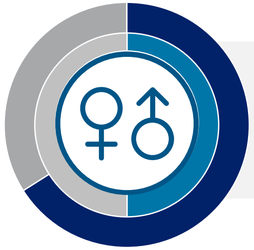
02 | Special focus: Global esports snapshots – Regional profiles (1/3)

North America

USA & Mexico

Demographics

Esports viewers (outer circle) vs. overall sample (inner circle)

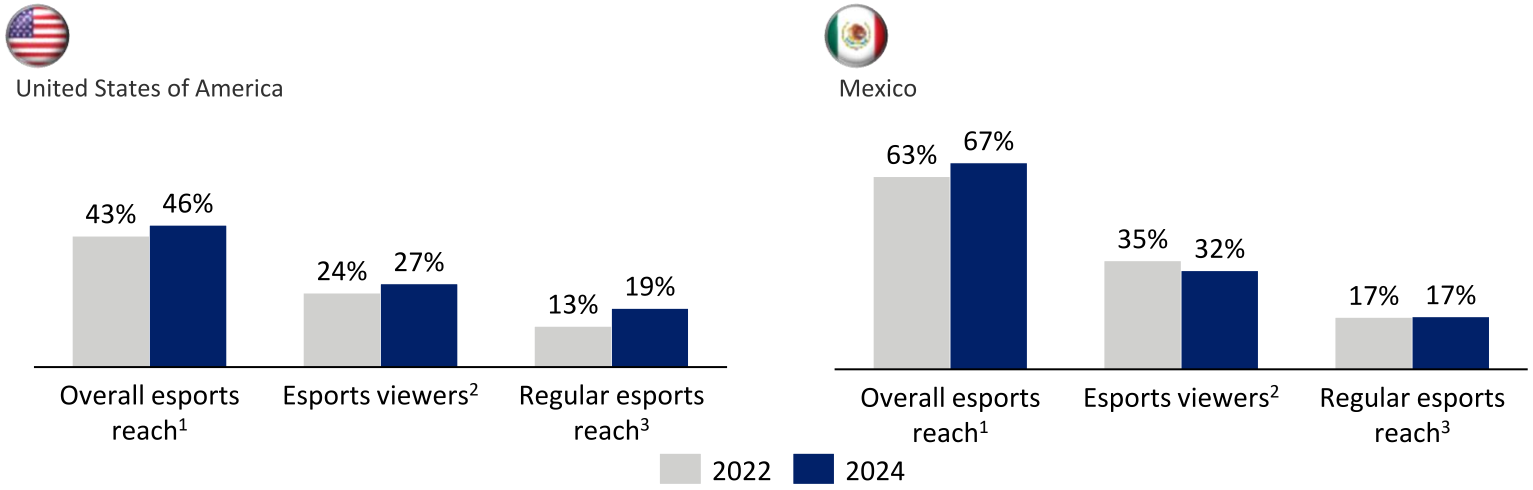


66% of esports viewers are male, compared to 50% in the overall sample

80% of esports viewers count as Generation Z or Millennials, compared to 63% in the overall sample

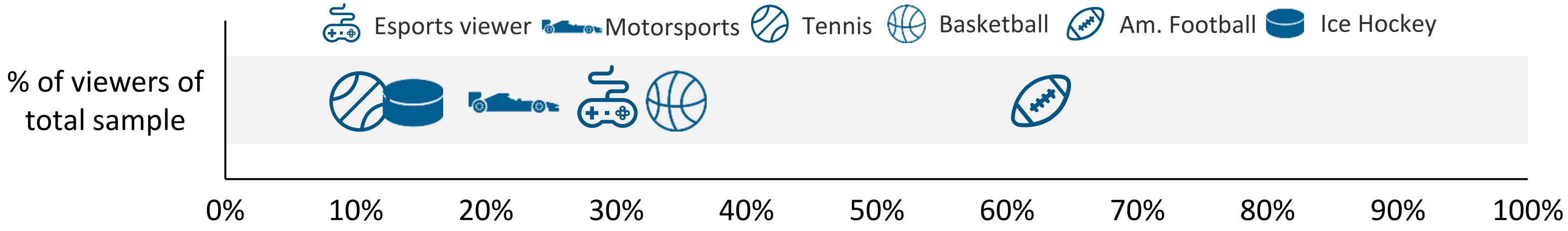
60% of esports viewers are from larger cities (>100k), compared to 45% in the overall sample

Esports engagement over the years



Size of the esports audience within the overall sample

compared to selected traditional sports audiences[4]



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Source: Deloitte analysis

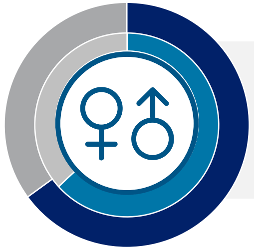
02 | Special focus: Global esports snapshots – Regional profiles (2/3)

Middle East

Saudi Arabia & UAE

Demographics

Esports viewers (outer circle) vs. overall sample (inner circle)



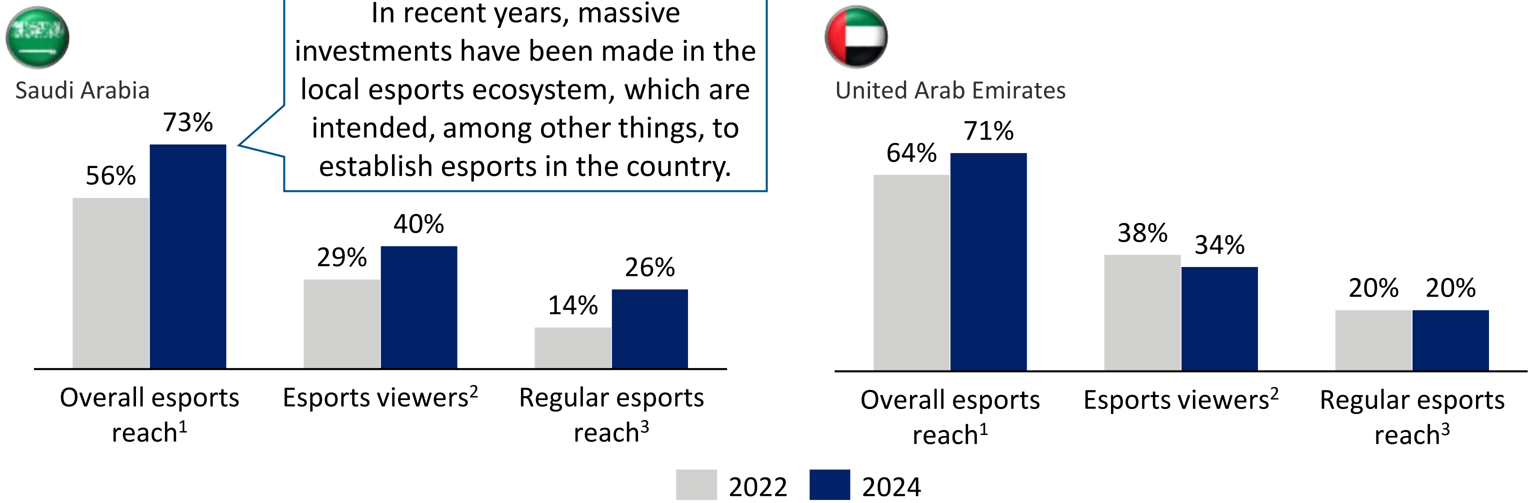
65% of esports viewers are male, compared to 63% in the overall sample

90% of esports viewers count as Generation Z or Millennials, compared to 87% in the overall sample

62% of esports viewers are from larger cities (>100k), compared to 52% in the overall sample

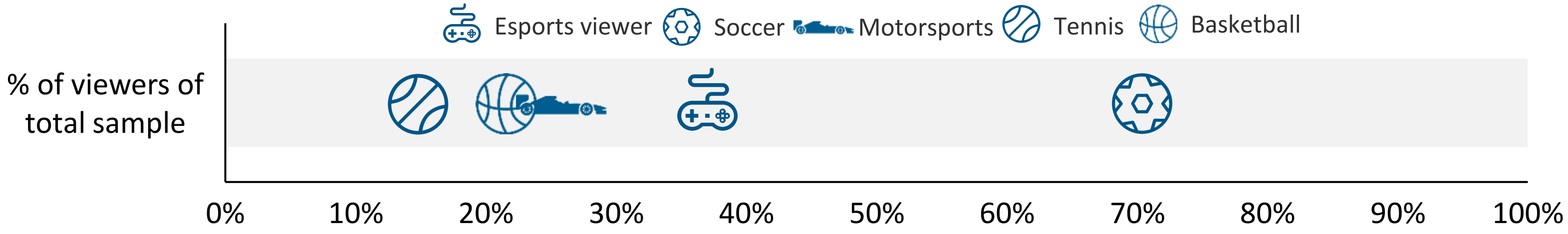
Esports engagement over the years

In recent years, massive investments have been made in the local esports ecosystem, which are intended, among other things, to establish esports in the country.



Size of the esports audience within the overall sample

compared to selected traditional sports audiences[4]



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Source: Deloitte analysis

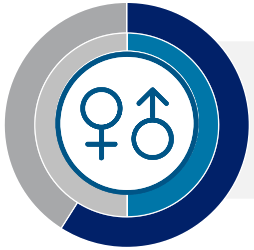
02 | Special focus: Global esports snapshots – Regional profiles (3/3)

Asia

Southeast Asia & Korea

Demographics

Esports viewers (outer circle) vs. overall sample (inner circle)

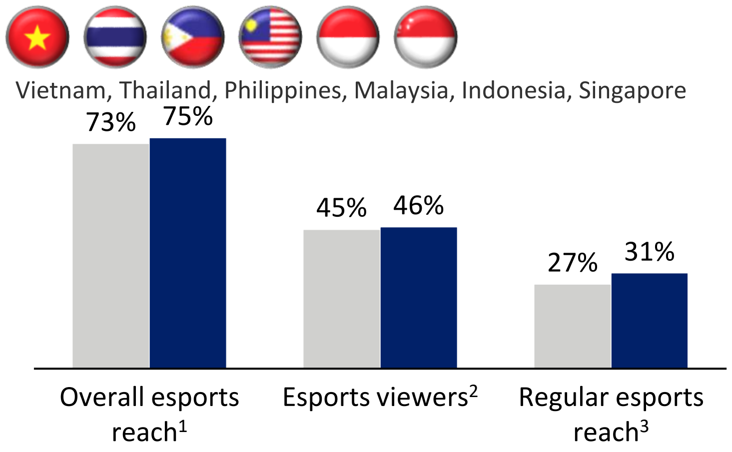


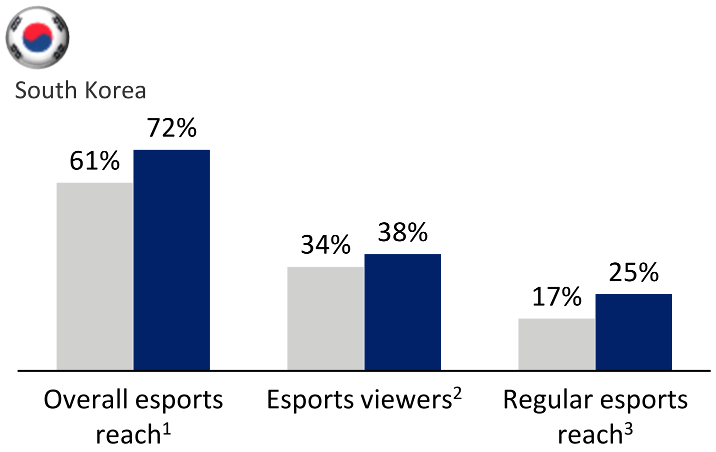
59% of esports viewers are male, compared to 50% in the overall sample

79% of esports viewers count as Generation Z or Millennials, compared to 66% in the overall sample

51% of esports viewers are from larger cities (>100k), compared to 52% in the overall sample

Esports engagement over the years

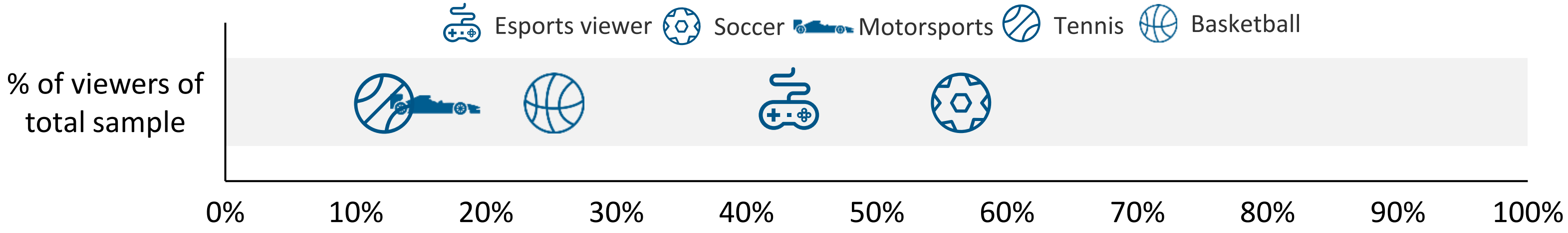




2022[5] 2024

Size of the esports audience within the overall sample

compared to selected traditional sports audiences[4]



Notes: 1) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content at least once in the past. 2) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content in the last six months. 3) Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content at least once per week in the last six months. 4) Refers to respondents who have followed one of 20 selected sports in the last 6 months before the survey period. 5) 2022 sample did not include Vietnam, Thailand and Philippines

Source: Deloitte analysis

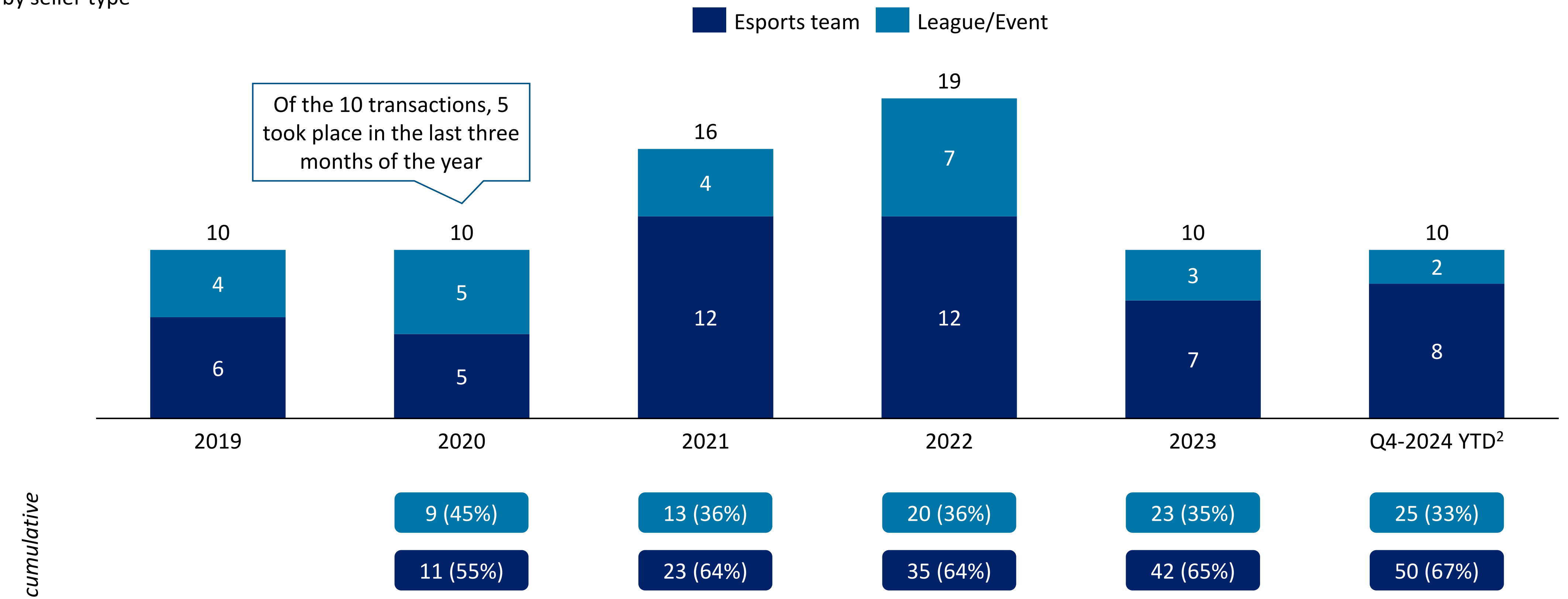
03

Special focus: Esports M&A

03 | Special focus – Esports M&A (1/2)

With esports drawing much attention during COVID-19-related lockdowns, M&A activities in the sector have increased since late Q4-2020. In line with developments in the M&A arena across a range of sectors, overall transaction activity in esports henceforth normalized back to pre-pandemic levels in the changed economic environment of the last two years

Fig. 12 – Number of esports M&A deals[1] 2019 to Q4-2024 YTD[2]
by seller type



Notes: 1) Considered were equity investments globally which were made in companies that operate esports teams or that organise esports leagues, events and tournaments, and in which more than 50% of the target's shares were acquired. 2) Year-to-date.
Sources: Mergermarket, Esports Insider, Deloitte analysis

03 | Special focus – Esports M&A (2/2)

Since 2019, more than one in four transactions (28%) involved a non-endemic investor as the buyer, namely companies from traditional industries – complemented by private individuals such as business people or celebrities. The majority of transactions took place in North America and Europe, where numerous relevant esports organizations are based

Fig. 13 – Breakdown of esports M&A deals[1] 2019 to Q4-2024 YTD[2]
by target geography

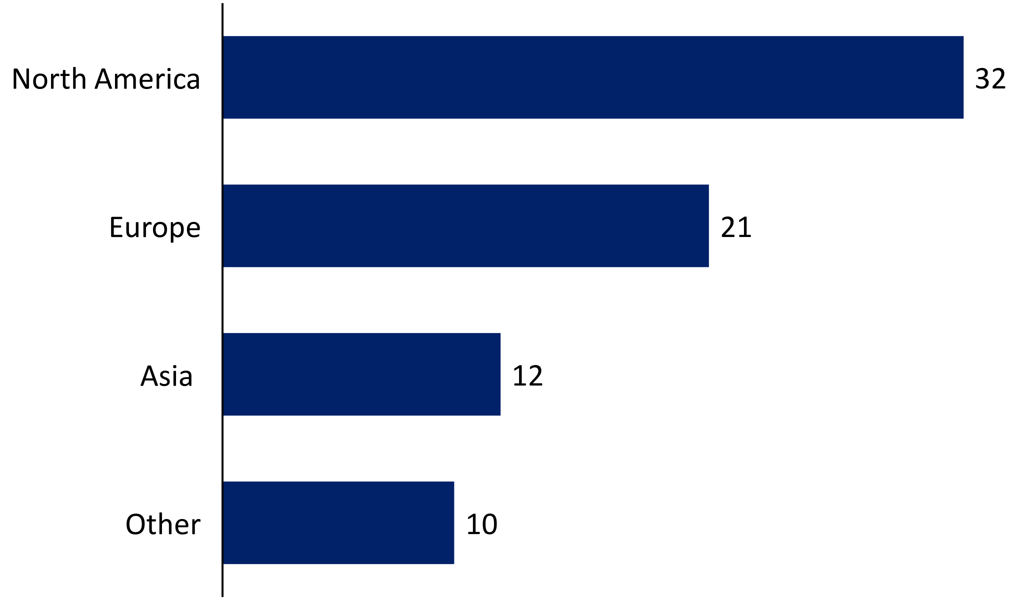
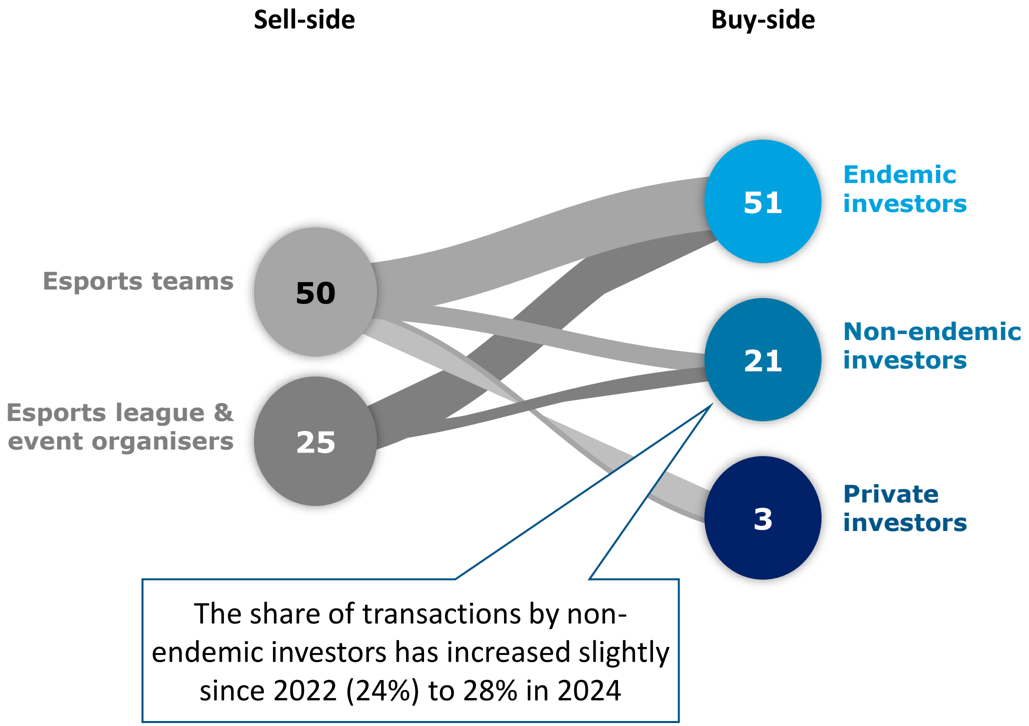


Fig. 14 – Breakdown of esports M&A deals[1] 2019 to Q4-2024 YTD[2]
by investor type / market consolidation



Notes: 1) Considered were equity investments globally which were made in companies that operate esports teams or that organise esports leagues, events and tournaments, and in which more than 50% of the target's shares were acquired. 2) Year-to-date.
Sources: Mergermarket, Esports Insider, Deloitte analysis

04

Appendix

04 | Appendix – Glossary

Baby Boomers
Respondents age 59+

Endemic companies
Companies whose core products and services are related to video gaming and/or esports.

Esports
This study defines esports as playing computer, mobile and console video games on a professional competitive level, with teams or individuals playing each other within leagues or tournaments. Aside from the competitions, esports is primarily a spectator product and is watched by audiences on the internet, on TV and on-site at live events. Esports are a subcategory of the overall video gaming industry, which includes the active and leisure playing of video games.

Esports Ecosystem/Sector (Stakeholders)
The esports ecosystem revolves around key value drivers and orchestrators of esports competitions, products, services, and content. Besides the core value-creating stakeholders (league organizers, event hosts and esports teams, and players), it includes stakeholders from the publisher segment, traditional media and online platforms, and strategic partners. Also, the esports audience is a key stakeholder in the esports ecosystem.

Esports' Definition Awareness
Share of respondents who know the term 'esports' and can define it correctly.

Esports Engagement Maturity
Developmental stage of individual esports markets regarding term and definition awareness, overall reach, meaningful reach, regular reach and commercial conversion.

Esports Term Awareness
Share of respondents who know the term 'esports,' independent of the ability to define the term correctly.

Esports viewers
Respondents who have watched professional esports in the last six months on the internet, on TV or at a live event.

Generation X
Respondents age 44-58

Gen Z
Respondents age 16-28

Overall Esports Reach
Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content at least once in the past.

Medium-sized town
A medium-sized town is defined as having a population between 50,000 and 99,999 inhabitants.

Millennials
Respondents age 29-43

Non-endemic companies
Companies whose core products and services are unrelated to video gaming and/or esports.

Large City
A large city is defined as having a population between 100,000 and 499,999 inhabitants.

Regular Esports Engagement
Share of respondents who have watched professional esports content at least once per week in the last six months.

Small town or rural area
A small town or rural area is defined as having a population of 50,000 or less.

Very Large City
A large city is defined as having a population of 500,000 or more.

04 | Appendix – Methodology

Methodology

Deloitte conducted an extensive survey in summer 2024 to obtain reliable consumer data. The survey involved 14,250 respondents globally, of which 7,700 are located in European countries.

The consumer survey is representative with regards to the online population of individual countries in terms of age (16-65), gender and urbanisation rates. Still, it is not suitable for forming a global or continental average, as the results are not weighted, and some markets were not considered. Accordingly, all total and average reported values are to be understood exclusively as figures for the investigated overall sample but not for the global or continental population.

Please note that figures in this report are typically rounded. Therefore, it may not be possible to recreate sums, shares and growth rates based on other stated figures, as the underlying calculation is based on precise (non-rounded) values.

This publication contains information derived from publicly available or other direct sources. We have not performed any verification work for this report or audited any of this externally sourced information.

This publication is not a substitute for professional advice or services, nor should it be used as a basis for decisions or actions that may affect your finances or business. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your finances or business, you should consult a qualified professional adviser.

04 | Appendix – Country overview

Asia

- Indonesia
- Korea
- Malaysia
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Vietnam

Middle East

- Saudi Arabia
- United Arab Emirates

North America

- Mexico
- USA

Europe

- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Spain
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom

04 | Appendix – Contacts

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04 | Appendix – Sports Business Group

More than twenty years of experience in the sports, fitness and esports industry

Sports Business Group

Our international network offers a wide range of services, including:

- Business and financial advice
- Support with IT/digital transformation processes and business models
- Consulting and implementation of digital marketing and commerce activities
- Support for organisational development and change processes
- Transaction advisory services
- Financial, commercial, vendor and tax due diligence
- Business plan development and review
- Valuation of sports and fitness companies
- Market and location analyses
- Benchmarking analyses
- Provision of comprehensive industry knowledge
- Audit, tax and legal advisory services

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Use our QR code to find out more about Deloitte's Sports Business Group: