



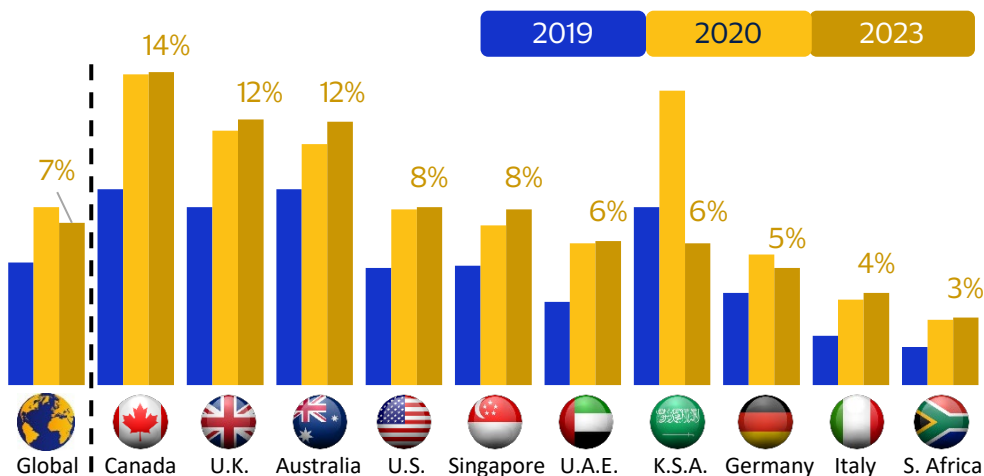
# Global Economic Insight

## From game over to game on: The rise of the video gamer economy

Video gamers are emerging as an attractive, lucrative consumer segment and a force to be reckoned with globally. Analysis of anonymized VisaNet transaction data shows that video gamers\* consistently punch above their weight in terms of overall spending and transaction frequency across all purchasing categories, not just at digital merchants. As the most digitally active cohort, video gamers generally outperform other cardholders in online spending metrics and tend to spend more overall. Visa Business and Economic Insights (VBEI) economists uncovered this trend, along with a set of behaviors common among video gamers, across diverse markets at different stages of digital maturity, highlighting video gamers' growing prominence.

The confluence of major economic, technological and social forces will likely amplify the prominence of video gamers. At the end of 2023, the global games market generated an estimated \$184 billion USD in global revenues, a figure that by 2026 is expected to reach \$205 billion—close to the value of a mid-sized European economy such as Hungary.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the number of video game players is expected to reach 3.8 billion by 2026, accounting for almost half of the world's population.<sup>2</sup> A number of rapidly developing trends will only reinforce the burgeoning video gamer economy, including the rise of the middle class—especially in more populous emerging markets (e.g., India, China, Brazil). The increasing affordability of more leisure time and the seismic rise in the digital economy will also play a role, as will the proliferation of high-speed internet, advancements in mobile technology and the shift towards remote work.<sup>3</sup>

**Fig. 1: Share of video gamers\* rose post-COVID and remains sticky**  
(Percent of cardholders identified as video gamers, annual average)



\*For purposes of this report, we define a video gamer as a cardholder who made at least one online transaction in the "digital goods games" or "video amusement game supply" categories in the preceding three months. Sources: Visa Business and Economic Insights analysis of VisaNet data

April 2024


**Richard Lung**  
Principal Global Economist

**Mohamed Bardastani**  
Senior CEMEA Economist

**Travis Clark**  
U.S. Economist

**Maria Virskaya**  
Data Scientist

### Key Points:

 Economic, social and digital trends are converging to skyrocket the video gamer economy to \$205 billion by 2026

 Video gamers consistently outspend their peers across purchasing categories and markets

 Video gamers around the world have similar spending habits





# Game on, wallet ready!

**Starting with the pandemic lockdowns in 2020, people around the world found themselves with plenty of time to spare for leisure activity. According to a study of workers in 27 countries, working from home saved each worker about two hours of commute time per week in 2021 and 2022.<sup>4</sup>**

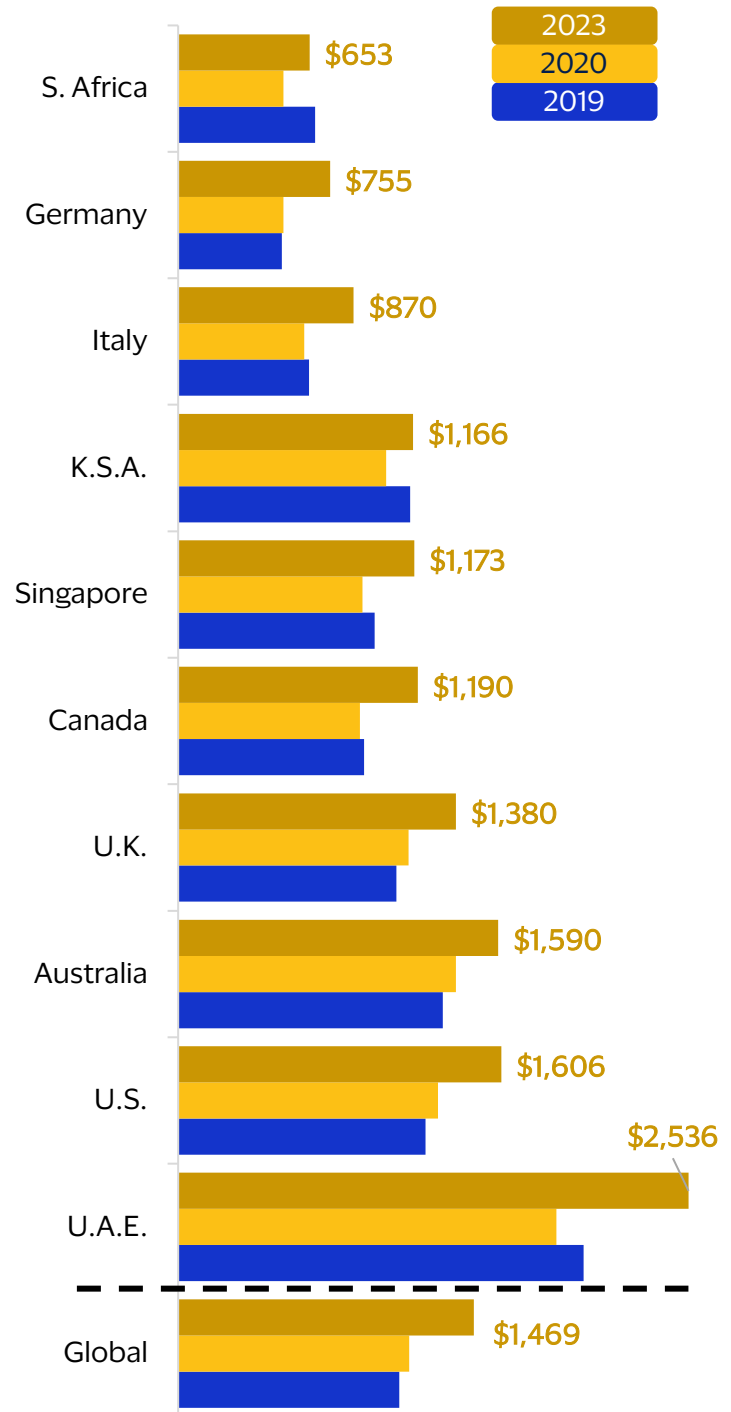
Many people picked up new hobbies, dabbled with DIY (do-it-yourself) projects, or streamed their way through popular social media apps and digital entertainment platforms. The number of video gamers worldwide rose from 5.4 percent in 2019 to nearly 8 percent in 2020 (Figure 1). Three years later, this change in consumer behavior has proven to be sticky rather than temporary, solidifying video gamers as a force to reckon with.

Today’s video games are a vast universe, extending far beyond traditional exclusive gaming consoles and spanning a broader selection of platforms, including PC, mobile, and streaming services. They cover a wide, ever-expanding array of genres from e-sports to horror, fantasy, combat, strategy and beyond. Contrary to some popular stereotypes, the video gamer demographic isn’t limited to younger males. In fact, the global gamer market is fairly evenly mixed between males and females.<sup>5</sup> As for age representation, video gamers run the gamut in the U.S., with 38 percent falling between the ages of 18-34, 26 percent between 35-54, and 21 percent under 18, illustrating the wide appeal of video games.<sup>6</sup>

Since 2019, the number of active video gamers has risen across all key markets examined. For our analysis, we defined video gamers as cardholders who made at least one transaction in the preceding three months on online gaming platforms and merchants. As not all consumers who play video games make regular purchases on video gaming platforms, this methodology most likely underestimates the true number of video gamers. Nonetheless, the steady increase in the share of active cards regularly used on online gaming platforms is telling. Canada’s share was the highest among the key markets at 14 percent in 2023, and South Africa was the lowest at 3 percent (Figure 1). Interestingly, compared to 2019, the share of active video gamers rose in most markets studied, highlighting the stickiness of this change in behavior.

Our analysis also revealed that video gamers’ average total monthly card spending—in all categories, not only gaming—has risen in parallel with the share of cards used on online gaming platforms. Compared to 2019, video gamer cardholders increased their spending by an average of 21 percent across most of the markets examined. For example, in the U.A.E., the average total spending on a card regularly used on online video gaming platforms jumped from an average of \$2,014 USD per month in 2019 to \$2,536 USD in 2023 (Figure 2).

**Fig. 2: Video gamers’ total spending has risen steadily and remains on an upward trajectory** (Average monthly total spending by video gamer cardholders, including gaming and non-gaming purchases)



Sources: Visa Business and Economic Insights analysis of VisaNet data

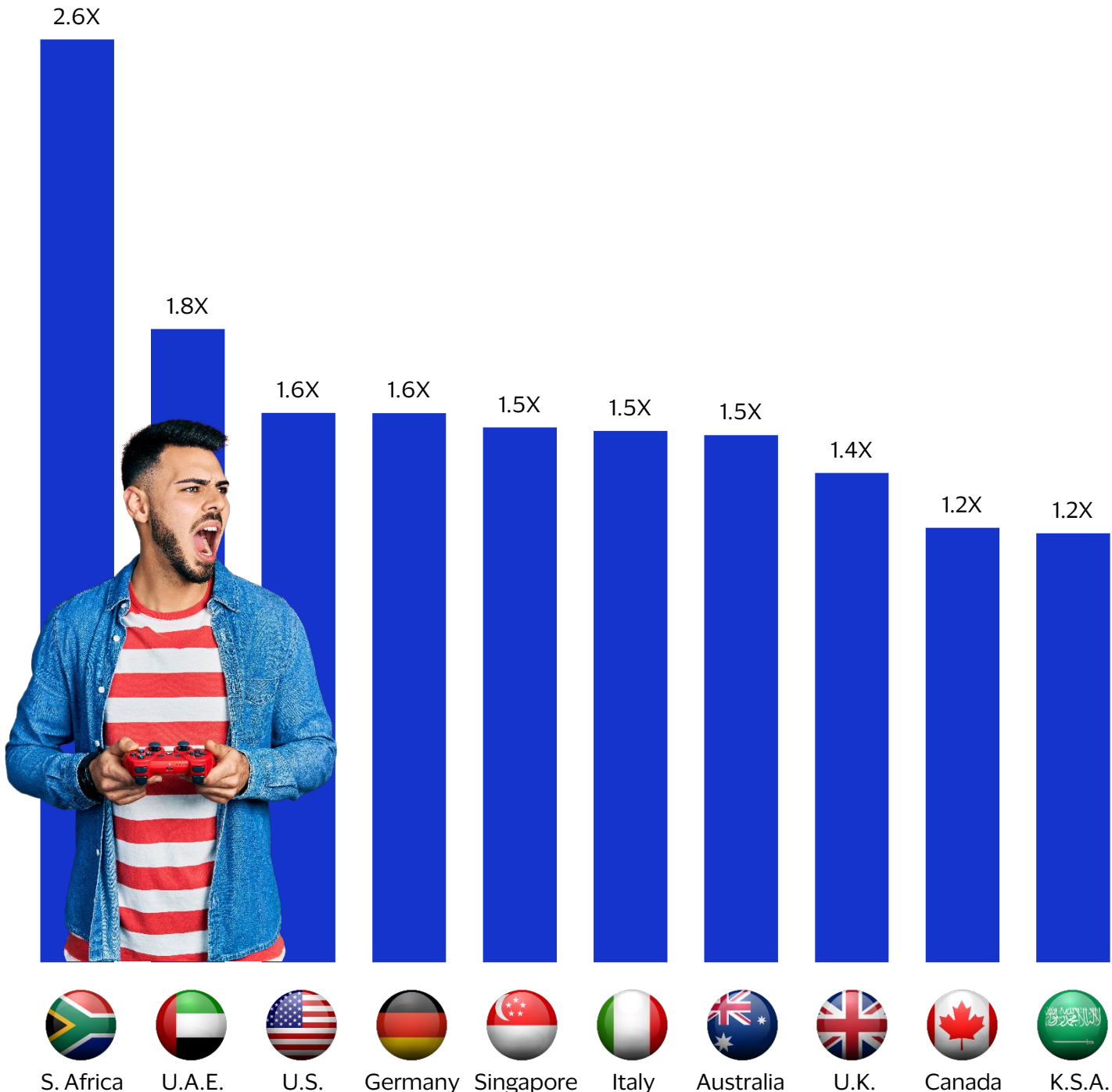


# Game on, wallet ready! (cont.)

This finding is significant given that average monthly spending on video gamer cards is often a multiple of average spending on non-video gamer cards. This was true across all markets examined but particularly prevalent in South Africa, where spending on video gamer cards was 2.6 times higher (Figure 3). In Canada and Saudi Arabia, it was 1.2 times higher, suggesting that the margin for video gamer cards is sizeable in all markets.

**Fig. 3: Video gamers are a lucrative consumer segment**

(Ratio of average total monthly spending on video gamer cards vs. non-video gamer cards in 2023, by country)



Sources: Visa Business and Economic Insights analysis of VisaNet data



# E-commerce and video games: Just click, pay and play

In online shopping and e-commerce, video gamer cards clearly outperform non-video gamer cards. Across all markets, average monthly e-commerce spending on video gamer cards is often a multiple of non-video gamer cards. On average, video gamers in the U.A.E. spend 1.7 times more than regular consumers on online or digital purchases, while the U.K. and Saudi Arabia see just over 1.2 times higher online spending on video gamer cards (Figure 4).

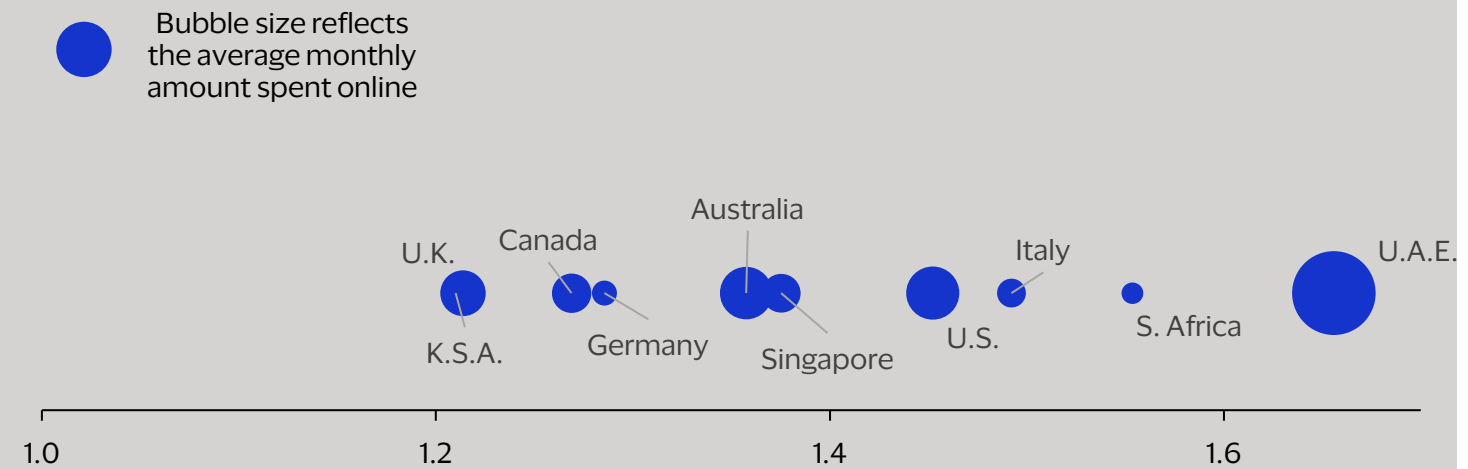
Not only do video gamers tend to spend more online and have higher ticket sizes than other consumers, but they also make more frequent purchases online and on e-commerce platforms.

In all countries examined, video gamer cardholders made roughly twice as many transactions online as other cardholders, with country multiples ranging from 1.85 to 2.25 (Figure 5).

Video gamers' higher online spending and transaction frequency aren't surprising given their tendency to live online. A study by Qustodio found that gamers spent an average of 180 minutes daily on top gaming platforms in 2022, outperforming popular social media and streaming services.<sup>7</sup> Avid gamers also often subscribe to premium content and invest in specific high-tech hardware and accessories; their purchasing behavior and online engagement patterns are characteristic of this immersion in the digital world.

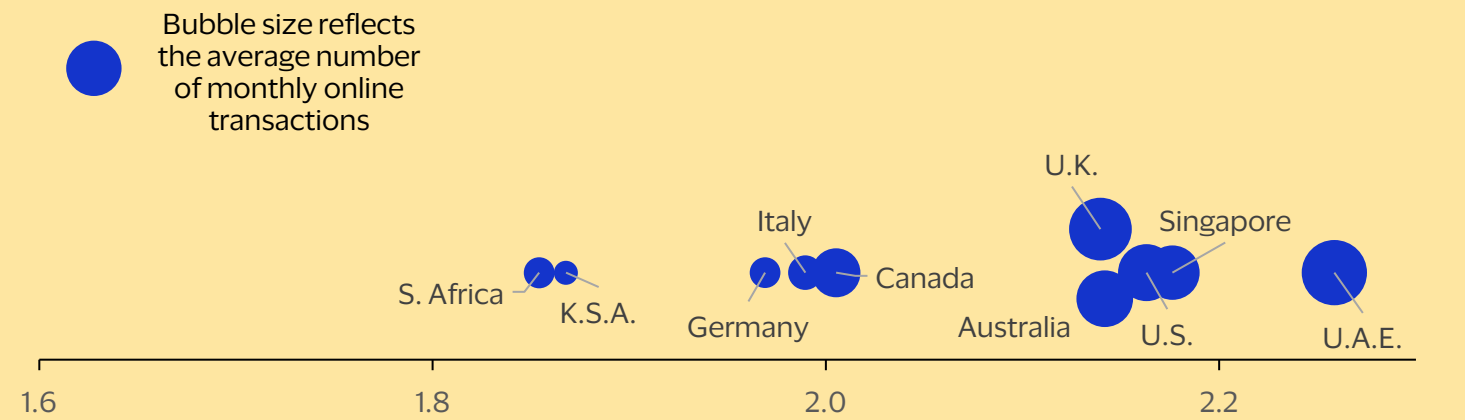
**Fig. 4: Card spending gap widens even further for e-commerce**

(Ratio of total monthly online spending on video gamer cards vs. non-video gamer cards in 2023, by country)



**Fig. 5: Video gamers make more frequent online transactions**

(Ratio of the average number of online transactions on video gamer cards vs. non-video gamer cards in 2023, by country)



Sources: Visa Business and Economic Insights analysis of VisaNet data

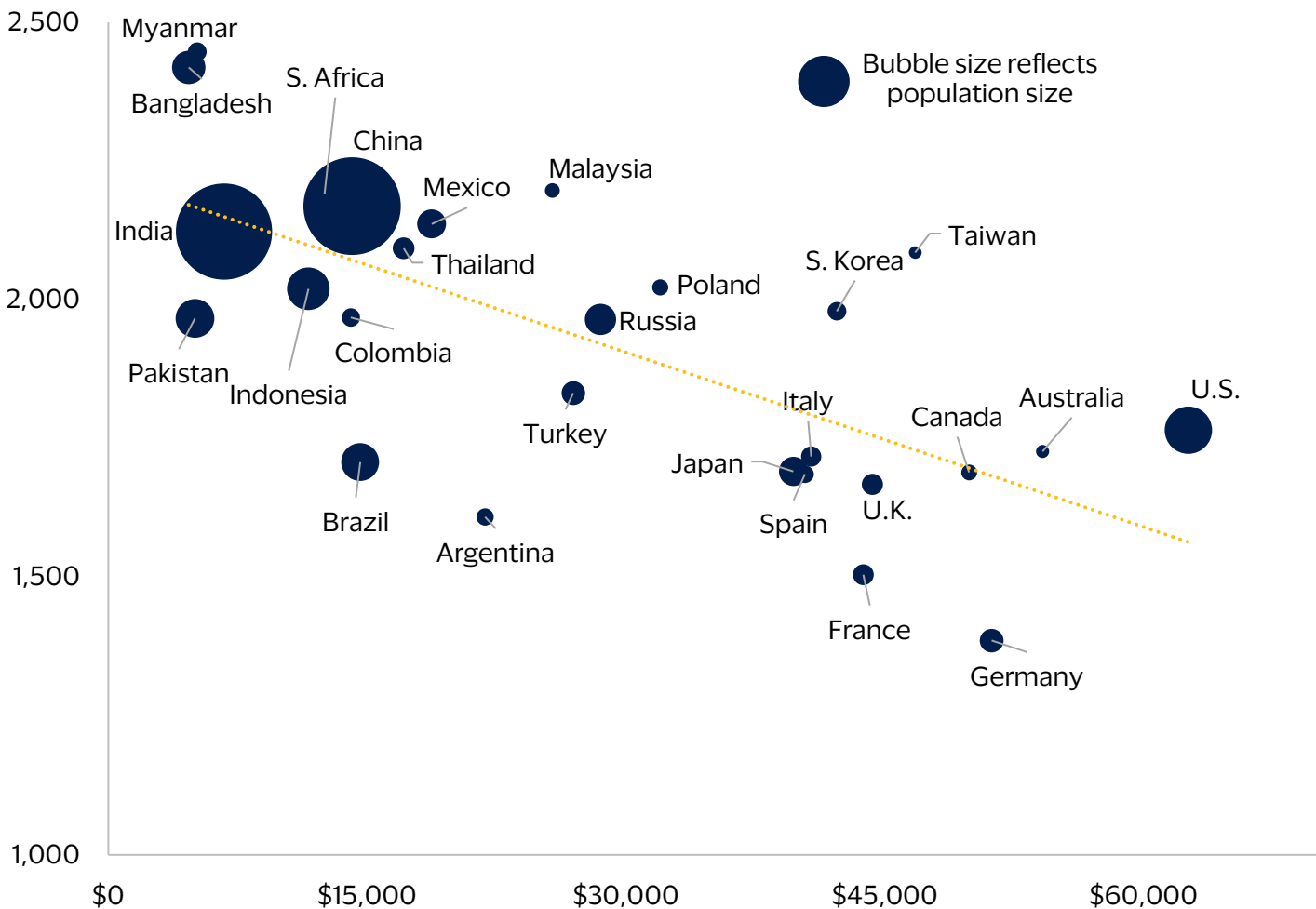
# Economic growth equals more time for video games

One of the driving forces behind the rise of the video gamer economy is the increase in leisure time, an important impact of the economy’s growth over the past 50 years. One of the most common ways to measure the relationship between economic growth and growth in leisure time is to compare the average annual hours worked per person across countries and over time. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the average annual hours worked per person in its member countries declined from 1,855 in 1970 to 1,664 in 2019, a decrease of 10.3 percent.<sup>8</sup> This suggests that, on average, people in these countries have more leisure time than they did five decades ago, gradually gaining leisure time as their economies grew. This relationship is also apparent when looking at countries with different levels of economic development as measured by gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. Generally, average annual hours worked per capita tend to fall as a country’s economy becomes more developed.

We expect that this decade will feature strong economic growth and, as a result, more leisure time. For billions of consumers around the world, this means more time to play video games. The number of video gamers surged from just under 2 billion in 2015 to approximately 3.2 billion in 2022 and is projected to reach 3.8 billion by 2026.<sup>9</sup> As their numbers continue to grow, video gamers will become an increasingly valuable demographic for issuers and merchants. Additionally, the video game industry is likely to continue to expand to meet the demand, providing new opportunities for entertainment, social interaction, and even employment.

Contrary to the common belief that gamers are mostly kids, research shows it is an eclectic and inclusive demographic segment with significant economic and business impact. It’s crucial for both issuers and merchants to recognize and capitalize on this influential consumer segment.

**Fig.6: Economic development and growth in personal income pave the way for more leisure time**  
 (Annual hours worked per capita vs. GDP per capita in USD in 2019)



Sources: Feenstra et al. (2015), Penn World Table (2021), Our World in Data





## Footnotes

1. Newzoo. (2024). Newzoo's year in review: the 2023 global games market in numbers. <https://newzoo.com/resources/blog/video-games-in-2023-the-year-in-numbers>
2. Newzoo. (2024). Newzoo's year in review: the 2023 global games market in numbers. <https://newzoo.com/resources/blog/video-games-in-2023-the-year-in-numbers>
3. Visa Business and Economic Insights. (2023). Weekends are the new weekdays for restaurants, as remote work alters traffic to urban centers. Retrieved from <https://usa.visa.com/partner-with-us/visa-consulting-analytics/economic-insights/remote-work-alters-restaurant-traffic.html>
4. Aksoy, C. G., Barrero, J. M., Bloom, N., Davis, S. J., Dolls, M., & Zarate, P. (2023). Time Savings When Working from Home (No. w30866). National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w30866>
5. Dataprot. (2024). Gamer Demographics: Facts and Stats About the Most Popular Hobby in the World. Retrieved from <https://dataprot.net/statistics/gamer-demographics/>
6. Entertainment Software Association. (2020). Essential Facts About the Video Game Industry. Retrieved from <https://www.theesa.com/resource/2022-essential-facts-about-the-video-game-industry/>
7. Qustodio. (2022). From Alpha to Z: Raising the Digital Generations - Gaming Apps. Retrieved from <https://www.qustodio.com/en/from-alpha-to-z-raising-the-digital-generations/gaming-apps/>
8. OECD. (2024). Average annual hours actually worked per worker. OECD.Stat. <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?DataSetCode=ANHRS>
9. Newzoo. (2024). The Games Market Will Show Strong Resilience in 2022, Growing by 2.1% to Reach \$196.8 Billion. <https://newzoo.com/resources/blog/the-games-market-will-show-strong-resilience-in-2022>





## Forward Looking Statements

This report may contain forward-looking statements within the meaning of the U.S. Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These statements are generally identified by words such as “outlook”, “forecast”, “projected”, “could”, “expects”, “will” and other similar expressions. Examples of such forward-looking statements include, but are not limited to, statements we make about Visa’s business, economic outlooks, population expansion and analyses. All statements other than statements of historical fact could be forward-looking statements, which speak only as of the date they are made, are not guarantees of future performance and are subject to certain risks, uncertainties and other factors, many of which are beyond our control and are difficult to predict. We describe risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from those expressed in, or implied by, any of these forward-looking statements in our filings with the SEC. Except as required by law, we do not intend to update or revise any forward-looking statements as a result of new information, future events or otherwise.

## Disclaimer

The views, opinions, and/or estimates, as the case may be (“views”), expressed herein are those of the Visa Business and Economic Insights team and do not necessarily reflect those of Visa executive management or other Visa employees and affiliates. This presentation and content, including estimated economic forecasts, statistics, and indexes are intended for informational purposes only and should not be relied upon for operational, marketing, legal, technical, tax, financial or other advice and do not in any way reflect actual or forecasted Visa operational or financial performance. Visa neither makes any warranty or representation as to the completeness or accuracy of the views contained herein, nor assumes any liability or responsibility that may result from reliance on such views. These views are often based on current market conditions and are subject to change without notice.

## Visa Business and Economic Insights Staff

<b>Wayne Best, Chief Economist</b>	<a href="mailto:wbest@visa.com">wbest@visa.com</a>
<b>Bruce Cundiff, Vice President, Consumer Insights</b>	<a href="mailto:bcundiff@visa.com">bcundiff@visa.com</a>
<b>Simon Baptist, Principal Asia Pacific Economist</b>	<a href="mailto:sbaptist@visa.com">sbaptist@visa.com</a>
<b>Michael Brown, Principal U.S. Economist</b>	<a href="mailto:michael.brown@visa.com">michael.brown@visa.com</a>
<b>Adolfo Laurenti, Principal European Economist</b>	<a href="mailto:laurenta@visa.com">laurenta@visa.com</a>
<b>Richard Lung, Principal Global Economist</b>	<a href="mailto:rlung@visa.com">rlung@visa.com</a>
<b>Mohamed Bardastani, Senior CEMEA Economist</b>	<a href="mailto:mbardast@visa.com">mbardast@visa.com</a>
<b>Dulguun Batbold, Senior Global Economist</b>	<a href="mailto:dbatbold@visa.com">dbatbold@visa.com</a>
<b>Weiwen Ng, Senior Innovation Economist</b>	<a href="mailto:weiweng@visa.com">weiweng@visa.com</a>
<b>Jennifer Doettling, Director, Content and Editorial</b>	<a href="mailto:jdoettli@visa.com">jdoettli@visa.com</a>
<b>Michael Nevski, Director, Consumer Insights</b>	<a href="mailto:mnevski@visa.com">mnevski@visa.com</a>
<b>Travis Clark, U.S. Economist</b>	<a href="mailto:wiclark@visa.com">wiclark@visa.com</a>
<b>Hannah Heeran, European Economist</b>	<a href="mailto:heeranh@visa.com">heeranh@visa.com</a>
<b>Woon Chian Ng, Asia Pacific Economist</b>	<a href="mailto:woonng@visa.com">woonng@visa.com</a>
<b>Mariamawit Tadesse, Global Economist</b>	<a href="mailto:mtadesse@visa.com">mtadesse@visa.com</a>
<b>Sean Windle, U.S. Economist</b>	<a href="mailto:swindle@visa.com">swindle@visa.com</a>
<b>Jen Petosky, Analyst, Content and Editorial</b>	<a href="mailto:jepetosk@visa.com">jepetosk@visa.com</a>
<b>Michelle Yi, U.S. Economic Analyst</b>	<a href="mailto:michyi@visa.com">michyi@visa.com</a>
<b>Juliana Tang, Project Coordinator</b>	<a href="mailto:jultang@visa.com">jultang@visa.com</a>

For more information, please visit us at [Visa.com/EconomicInsights](https://www.visa.com/EconomicInsights) or [VisaEconomicInsights@visa.com](mailto:VisaEconomicInsights@visa.com).

