Supporting creativity through data

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Rise of the Co-op Games

Just hanging out with some friends

Contact: sales@vginsights.com
This report explores the rise of popularity for social games focusing on the small group/team dynamics

Co-op Games Overview

“A cooperative video game, often abbreviated as co-op, is a video game that allows players to work together as teammates, usually against one or more non-player character opponents (PvE)”

Number of Co-op Games Released on Steam by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Games Released</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>799</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 – Wikipedia definition
Co-op games are disproportionately popular on Steam, capturing nearly half of the units sold.

Popularity of Co-op Games on Steam

Only 6% of Steam games released in 2023 were co-op, but they make up 36% of the units sold.
Covid further boosted co-op games through providing a social output during lockdown; post-Covid years saw a normalization, but 2024 bucks the trend

### Popularity of Co-op Games Over Time

#### Co-op Games as a % of All Games Released, by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>2024 YTD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Co-op Games as a % of All Units Sold for New Releases, by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>2024 YTD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 – Looks at new releases each year and what % of units sold went to new Co-Op games VS non Co-Op games
2024 has brought back co-op games in force, with unexpected hits such as Palworld and Helldivers 2 taking the world by storm

Top Co-op Games Released in 2024 on Steam, June 2024

- **Palworld**
  - 19M Games Sold
  - 2.1M Peak Players

- **Helldivers 2**
  - 11M Games Sold
  - 459k Peak Players

- **Content Warning**
  - 2.5M Games Sold
  - 204k Peak Players

- **Gray Zone Warfare**
  - 1.4M Games Sold
  - 73k Peak Players
Top co-op games sell majority of the units - Palworld sold nearly half of the total 40M co-op game units in 2024 so far.

Concentration of Co-op Game Sales

**Breakdown of Co-op Game Units Sold for Games Released in 2024**

- **Palworld**: 19.1M (47%)
- **Helldivers 2**: 11.4M (28%)
- **Gray Zone Warfare**: 2.4M (6%)
- **Content Warning**: 1.4M (3%)
- **Other Co-op Titles**: 6.5M (16%)
However, games with co-op elements tend to out-perform non co-op games by a wide margin across the spectrum, including in the small indie title end.

Outperformance of Co-op Games VS Other Games

**Lifetime Units Sold for Co-op and Non Co-op Games on Steam**

- **Co-op**
- **Non co-op**

**Bottom 25%**
- Co-op: 5k
- Non co-op: 2k
  - +121% increase

**Median**
- Co-op: 38k
- Non co-op: 5k
  - +627% increase

**Top 25%**
- Co-op: 298k
- Non co-op: 21k
  - +1,313% increase

- A typical co-op game sells c. 40k units on Steam VS only 5k for a non co-op game
- Bottom 25% of co-op games still sell twice as well as the bottom 25% of other games
- Top 25% of co-op games sell over 300k units in their lifetime
- 106 co-op games have sold over 5 million units in their lifetime on Steam, making it a surprisingly attractive opportunity for larger publishers
Good co-op games encourage word of mouth and organic awareness spread, delivering a natural hype cycle for a game

Co-op Game Design Benefits

- **Sharable**: Players want their friends to also play, so they sell the game for you
- **Memable**: Memorable stand-out moments will spread on social media
- **Streamable**: The game is both player and watcher friendly, making for good content
- **Infinitely replayable**: The gameplay loop(s) are designed to be fun for a long time

Note that these are not co-op exclusive features, but are often easier to achieve with co-op games
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Competitive Intelligence
Player Insights
Appendix
## Definitions and methodology

### Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA/AAA games</td>
<td>Large budget games developed by massive teams and companies. AAA game budgets are typically over $100M to develop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAGR</td>
<td>Compound annual growth rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCU</td>
<td>Concurrent users – active players in-game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2P</td>
<td>Free to play games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Game Revenue</td>
<td>Revenue from the direct sale of a game, excluding any DLC and MTX revenues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAP</td>
<td>In-app purchases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indie games</td>
<td>Games developed by independent studios. This covers a large range of studios from 1 person hobby projects to larger studios of a few hundred employees, but budgets still fall far short of the AAA game levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTX</td>
<td>Microtransactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit Sales Estimate</td>
<td>Using different estimation methods, including an algorithm based on our internal database of actual sales as well as a large sample size of user profiles. Detailed overview of the method is highlighted in the section below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue Estimate</td>
<td>Estimated units sold multiplied by the price at the time. This is gross revenue, including the Steam cut, but adjusted for local currencies, returned products and discounts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More information:
Definitions: [https://vginsights.com/about](https://vginsights.com/about)
Email: Support@vginsights.com
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