

eSports: The Global Scene in Numbers

Hundreds of millions of fans worldwide, million-dollar prize funds at international competitions, professional players becoming celebrities... Year after year, the eSports scene gets stronger and more popular. Let's get a closer look at some of the most important figures.

This March, at the Spodek Arena in Katowice, Poland, the Intel Extreme Masters World Gaming Championship will take place. Gamers from different countries will participate in this event, competing on the virtual battlefields of the few most important eSports games: League of Legends*, StarCraft II* and Counter-Strike: Global Offensive*. How does this scene look in terms of numbers, what is the difference between LoL and CS:GO, and how much money can a professional StarCraft II player earn?

Today, eSports tournaments are becoming increasingly popular. The largest events resemble traditional sports competitions — matches are broadcasted live, you can buy tickets for the tournament venue and participate in match betting, and the players and teams have their devoted fans and attract sponsors from all industries.

League of Legends — The Riot of eSports

- In 2015, the League of Legends video game made a revenue of **\$1.6 billion**.
- In 2013, the revenue was estimated at **\$624 million**.
- Over **67 million gamers** play League of Legends per month, and over **7.5 million** concurrently during peak hours.

\$1.6 billion earned in 2015, 67 million players per month and up to 7.5 million players during peak hours¹ — these impressive figures describe League of Legends, the most popular eSports game² and the most profitable [free-to-play](#)³ game on the global market. A multiplayer online battle arena game, it has to be noted that in 2013 the generated revenue was “only” \$624 million.

League of Legends proves that the world of traditional sports and electronic competitions intermingle with each other. After four years since its release in 2013, League of Legends has been recognized by the U.S. State Department as a fully professional sport. Thanks to this decision, players from outside the United States coming to competitive events can enter the country under visas provided for athletes.

Counter-Strike: Global Offensive - The Golden Star of Valve Corporation

- About **8 million** people per month play Counter-Strike: Global Offensive.
- In 2015, CS:GO has generated **\$221 million** in revenue.

Apart from League of Legends, one of the top computer games in eSports is Counter-Strike: Global Offensive. This popular FPS has been released by American company Valve Corporation*, also known for its digital game distribution platform called Steam*, launched in 2003. The predecessor of CS:GO,

¹ <http://www.riotgames.com/our-games>

² <https://newzoo.com/insights/rankings/top-20-core-pc-games/>

³ <http://venturebeat.com/2014/10/23/the-10-highest-grossing-online-pc-games-in-2014-hearthstone-dota-2-cant-compete-with-league-of-legends/>

Counter-Strike 1.6, was the official game of the Intel Extreme Masters competition and holds the longest-running game in the series. About 8 million people play this popular shooter each month. According to SuperData Research*, CS:GO has generated Valve \$221 million in revenue in 2015, mostly through in-game merchandise. Besides Counter-Strike, Valve Corporation also published Defense of the Arts 2*, a MOBA eSports title that has generated another \$238 million⁴.

StarCraft II — The Space Rivalry

- **1 million copies** of StarCraft II Legacy of the Void has been sold during **first 24 hours** after its official release.
- The highest individual prize won so far at IEM by a professional gamer was **\$100,000**. It was paid to a StarCraft II player, Kim Yoo-jin, aka “sOs.”

StarCraft is a video game series that certainly ranks among industry classics. The game takes place in distant future and its plot focuses on a struggle for dominance in our galaxy between three races. The first game of this franchise was released 18 years ago, immediately attracting players from all over the world. StarCraft II Wings of Liberty*, now an important part of Intel Extreme Masters events, is the second installment of this famous series, available on the market since 2010. Its current chapter in the series, Legacy of the Void, was released in 2015. The popularity of this cult game, developed by Blizzard Entertainment*, has been proven by the fact that 1 million copies of Wings of Liberty have been sold during first 24 hours after its official release.

StarCraft II is recognized as a game dominated by Asian players. In 2014, in Katowice, Poland, the prize of \$100,000 has been claimed by a Korean gamer, Kim Yoo-jin, aka “sOs.” As of today, it is the largest individual prize paid to a single player during IEM tournament series.

The Gaming Market is Thriving

- Globally, there are **160 million people** interested in eSports competitions.
- **40 percent** of them can be classified simply as viewers.
- In 2013, the number of viewers was estimated at **70 million** people. A year later, viewership increased to **134 million**.
- In 2015, the global gaming market has reached **\$91 billion** in revenue, which represents **38 percent growth** compared to 2012.
- The value of the Polish gaming market is estimated at **\$407 million**.

Viewers are the most important part of eSports, and their numbers grow each year. Currently about 160 million people show interest in the electronic competitions, and 40 percent of them cannot be classified as active players. In 2013, the global viewership of eSports events reached 70 million people⁵. In 2014 the numbers increased to over 134 million, doubling year-over-year.

⁴ https://www.superdataresearch.com/blog/us-digital-games-market/?mc_cid=7ebaa0e28f&mc_eid=7c265c760f

⁵ <http://newzoo.com/press-releases/superdata-research-newzoo-reveal-esports-become-booming-sector-gaming/>

The global computer gaming market is constantly growing. According to the Newzoo* research agency, annual revenues have reached \$91 billion in 2015⁶, which represents 38 percent growth compared to 2012. The agency estimates the Polish gaming market at \$407 million.

What Are the Differences in Game Genres?

- **RTS** (real-time strategy) — The participants control virtual kingdoms or races, expand their empires or bases, collect resources required to build their armies and to trigger technology development. The player who can eliminate his/her enemies becomes the winner. Game examples: StarCraft, Warcraft*, Age of Empires*.
- **MOBA** (multiplayer online battle arena) — A subgenre of RTS. Players divided into two contending teams control their characters on an arena. The goal is to destroy the opponent's base. The concept has been coined by Riot Games*, a company that developed League of Legends, the most popular eSports game.
- **FPS** (first-person shooter) — The player uses first-person perspective and controls a character armed with different weapons, mostly guns, trying to eliminate his/her enemies as quickly and efficiently as possible to prevent a terrorist attack or to survive a siege. Game examples: Counter-Strike, Quake*, Call of Duty*, Medal of Honor*, Half-Life*.
- **Fighting games** – Usually played in one-on-one mode, participants fight virtually controlling characters that are able to kick, blow, grab, and use weapons or magic tricks. Game examples: Tekken*, Mortal Kombat*, Street Fighter*.
- **Sports games** – The player impersonates playing football, basketball, hokey or other traditional sports. Sports games tend to be very realistic today, though game durations are much shorter. Game examples: FIFA*, PES*.
- **Collectable Card game (CCG)** – Games in which each player uses a personal pack of cards specifically designed for the game. The game is two or multiplayer. Game examples: Hearthstone*, Magic*.

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⁶ <http://newzoo.com/insights/global-games-market-will-grow-9-4-to-91-5bn-in-2015/>