

The Demographics of Ingress

This is based on a non-scientific sample of 1,572 players of Ingress, Google's augmented reality game. The survey was posted to Reddit, Google Plus, Twitter, and IRC. From there it passed through informal networks, so hopefully respondents were dispersed enough to make the results meaningful.

The game is dominated by liberal Anglophone men. The average Ingress player is 30.5 years old, male (91%), non-religious (64%), and speaks English as their first language (60%). A majority are in the United States and Canada (44%+7%) but there are also sizable contingents in Germany (6%), the UK (5%), and France (5%).



Politically there was a definite leaning towards the left, although some fringe identities fared well, including libertarian (13%), green (8%), and anarchist (7%). Long live the eco-techno-utopia!

Players break the law, and the rules

Almost one in three players have skirted around the law: 16% said they had “knowingly broken legal or local regulations in order to play Ingress” and a further 15% ominously said “maybe”. Meanwhile 5% of players said they cheated within the game (using GPS spoofing, multiple accounts etc). For those playing the game, that rate of cheating seems very high, but I think it’s more interesting to see that the game rules elicit far more respect than the law.

Ingress is good for you...

As expected, 88% had seen places they otherwise wouldn’t have seen. This is unsurprising because at the core of the game is an attempt to reimagine space and place. More unusual is the level of interaction in the game: 74% of people had met fellow players. The game seems to be highly social, 29% said they had “made new friends.”

The game seems to be good for exercise too, 93% of players have done more walking, 24% have gone cycling, and 10% have gone hillwalking/trekking to play the game.

...but not the environment

A whopping 74% of players have driven in their car to play Ingress. So while one quarter have gone cycling, three quarters have gone driving. Obviously these groups overlap, but the neatness of the number belies the fact that although the game gets everybody out and about, some get more out and some get more about.

I also worry about the 2% of players who have conducted air travel for trips “dedicated to Ingress”!

Ingress is expensive

When asked to estimate the total amount of money spent playing the game, the average came to \$79.84. This is not surprising considering that on top of all the costs of driving and public transport spent on the game, 16% have bought a new device or hardware to play the game, and 8% have upgraded their phone/data subscription.

The breakdown is like that observed on almost any gaming platform. A majority spend nothing or very little on the game, and a core of dedicated players spend exponentially more. In this case, 26.3% have spent \$100 or more, and 3.3% have spent \$1,000 or more.



(Yes this graph should probably be a histogram, or at the very least the x-axis should be notched into percentiles. The amount spent refers to individuals, and is not cumulative.)

Half of players choose a team ideology, half choose with more practical concerns

The two teams are very closely balanced: 786 Enlightened responses, 777 from the Resistance. Half of players chose a team based on the in-game storyline, and the other half deferred to other more practical determining factors. There seems to be a Nash equilibrium of sorts here, which keeps the two teams on an equal footing (in numerical terms anyway). The 23% of people who purposely chose to join the losing team (locally or globally) have a highly balancing effect. The 15% who chose at random would also contribute to equilibrium. Only the 14% who joined the same side as friends have a destabilizing effect.

The two teams are almost indistinguishable

I tried to find characteristic differences between the two teams, I really tried, but there's a pretty stunning parity. Resistor are a notch older than Enlightened (31.1 vs 30.0 years), but just as male, just as North American, just as non-religious, just as likely to drive and walk and buy a new phone and cheat and break the law. Scoundrels.

The only exception is that Resistance does have a more right-of-centre following (ie US Republican) and Enlightenment more left-of-centre (or US Democrat). But both sides are dominated by liberals. If we crudely divided up the political allegiances into left and right, Resistance is 73% left, 27% right.

Enlightenment is 78% left, 22% right.

Ingress (ie Google) has brought users back to Google+

Even if the game died tomorrow in a blaze of network failure or patent litigation, Google would still be happy with the traffic it has driven to its social network. Google+ has always suffered because even users who want to use it to share status updates have too many of their friends on Facebook or Twitter. But when talking about Ingress, a perfect storm of profiling drives people back to Google's social network. Any status update or chit chat is targeted at fellow players, an elite core of early adopting, Android-powered geeks armed with high-end devices and immersed in the Google ecosystem.

Now take these numbers with a grain of salt, because this question more than any other was influenced by where the survey circulated. But according to the responses...91% of Ingress players have talked with other players on Google+, 39% have done so on Reddit, 15% on Facebook, 12% on IRC, and 7% on Twitter.

Finally...

For me the most enjoyable part of reading the results is looking at the self-composed responses at the end of the survey describing people's favourite aspect of the game. Here are some to give a flavour of the responses.

It gets gamers out an moving..... 😊

I now have memorized the locations of every post office, library, fire station and piece of art within a 50 km radius of my house.

Rather than being a weekend warrior, I'm now a daily commute warrior.

The competitive capture-the-flag real world aspect, combined with the digital flavor of Gibson-esque intrigue.

I walk a lot more than previously.

Social-technical system interactions.

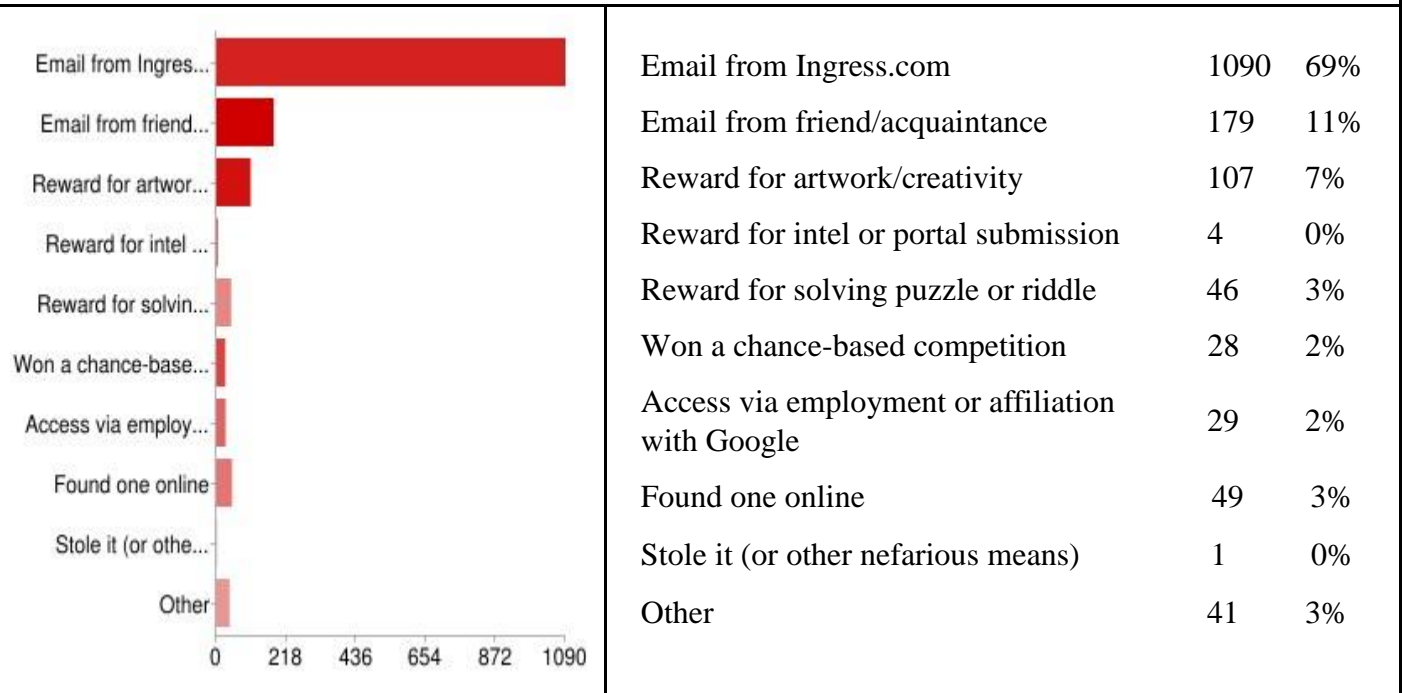
Walking around looking weird with my device, with a cool reason to do so.

The openness. You can't really hide behind an avatar or nickname because you'll eventually meet other players irl.

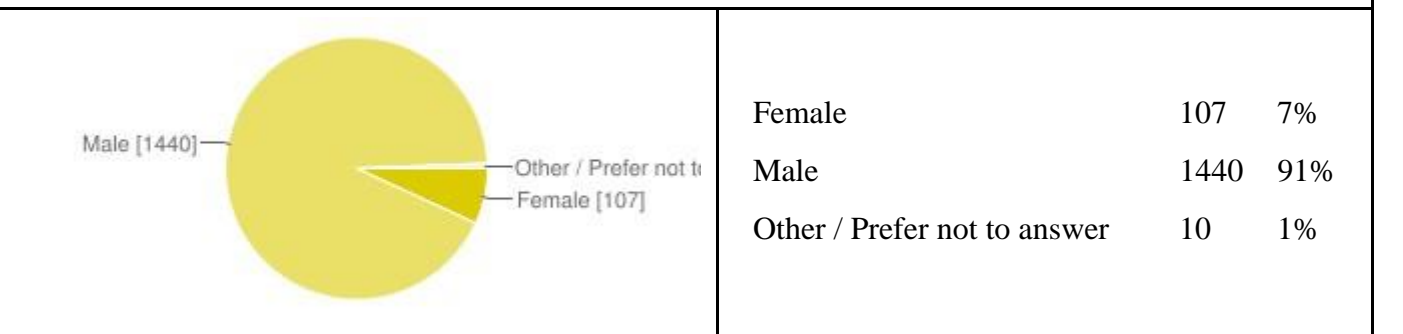
It has a very cyberpunk feel to it. Walking/biking around a large metropolis with a tablet in tote, hacking portals...I'm living my favorite 90's sci-fi books.

I don't like wordles, but that didn't stop me making one out of the full list of favourite aspects of the game...

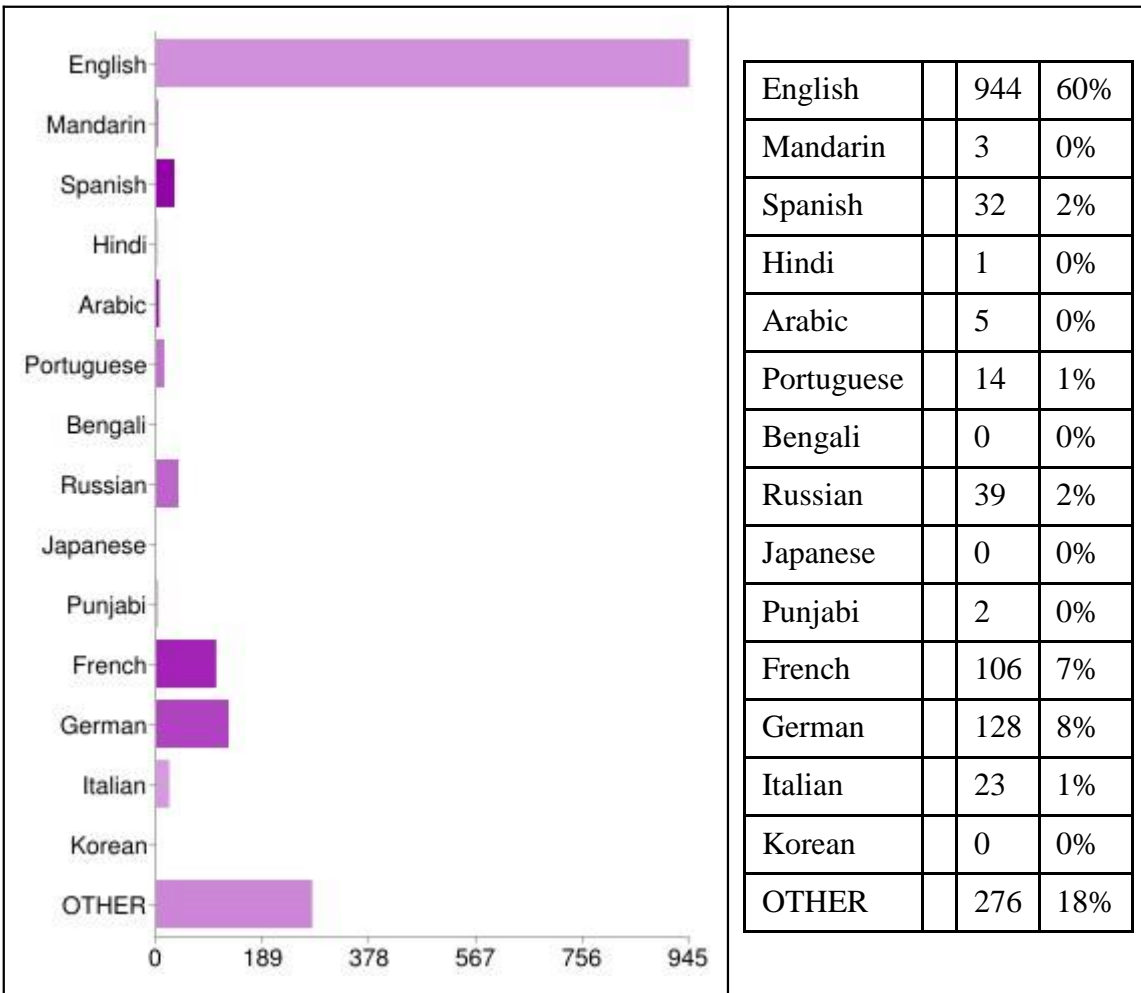
How did you get your activation code?



Gender



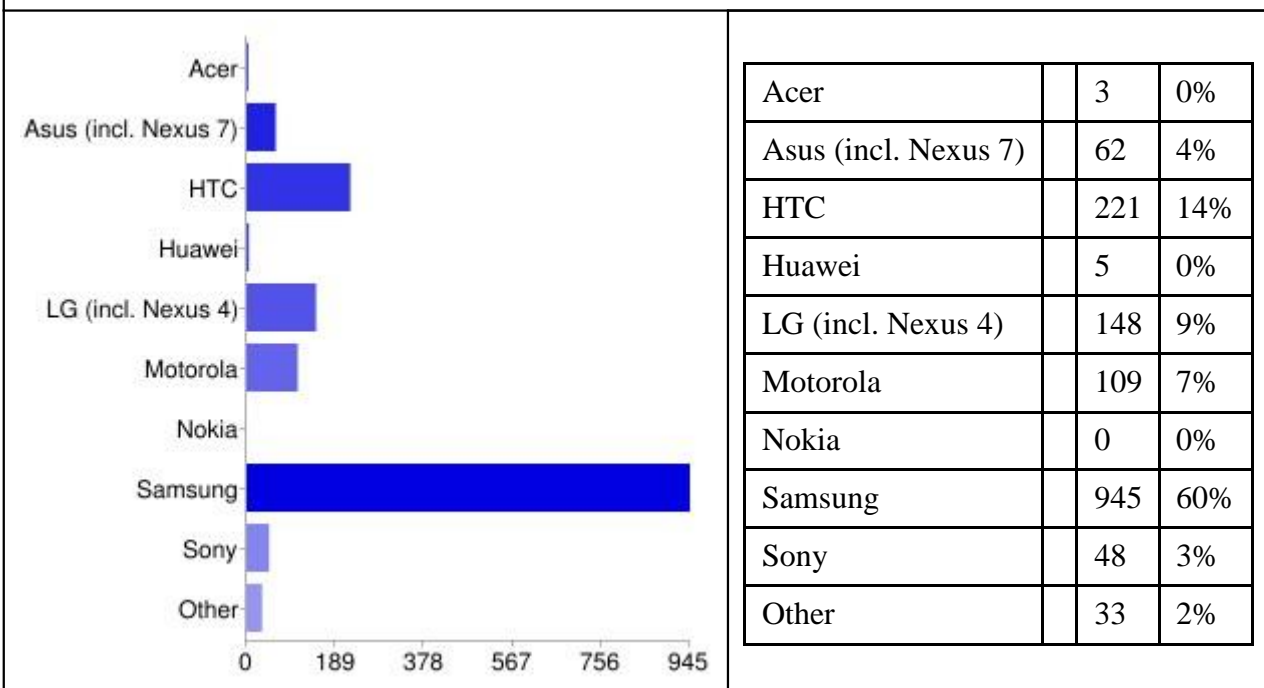
What is your mother tongue?



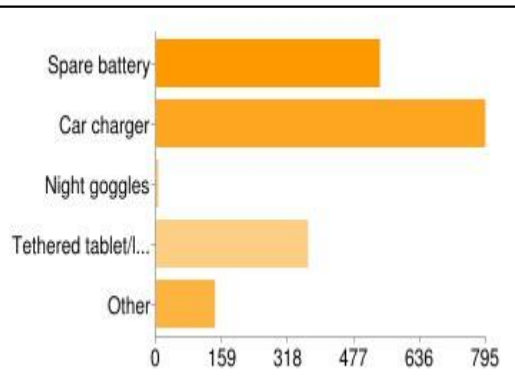
Hardware

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What make is the main mobile device you are using to play?



Have you made use of any peripherals?

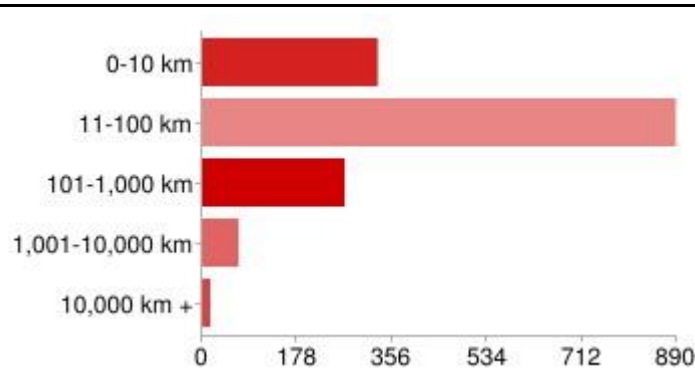


| | | |
|------------------------|-----|-----|
| Spare battery | 539 | 46% |
| Car charger | 793 | 67% |
| Night goggles | 5 | 0% |
| Tethered tablet/laptop | 366 | 31% |
| Other | 142 | 12% |

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

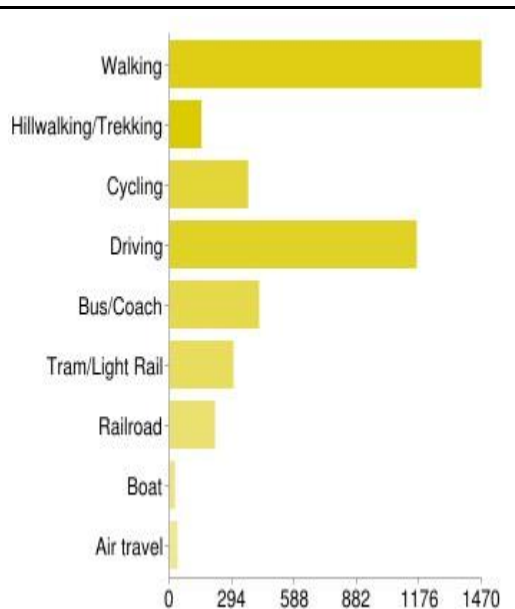
Dedication

Estimate the radius of your Ingress activity.



| | | |
|-----------------|-----|-----|
| 0-10 km | 329 | 21% |
| 11-100 km | 888 | 56% |
| 101-1,000 km | 267 | 17% |
| 1,001-10,000 km | 68 | 4% |
| 10,000 km + | 15 | 1% |

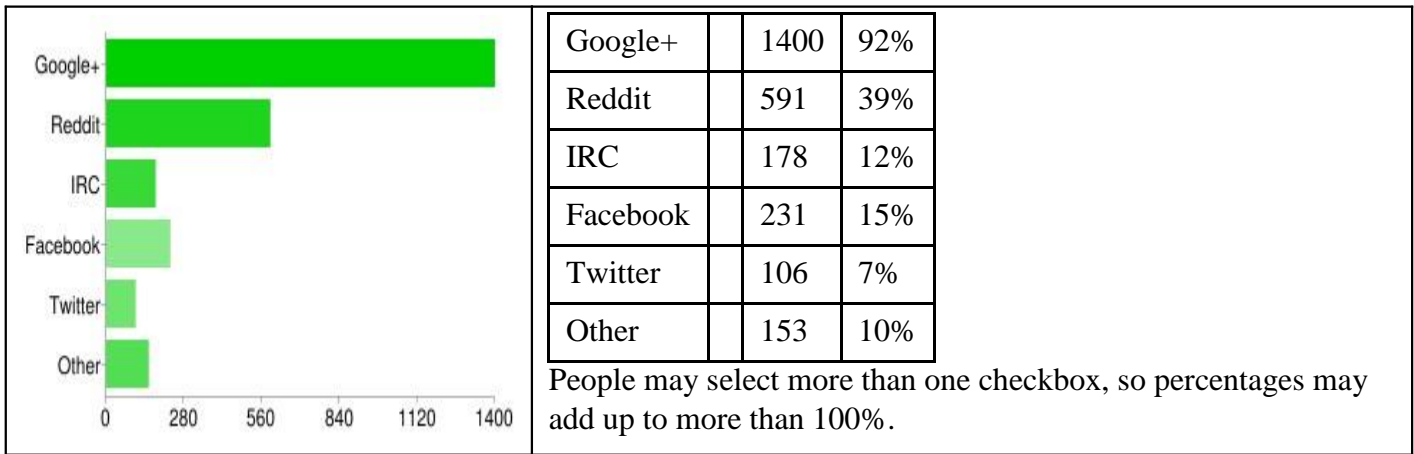
Which modes of transport have you used on trips dedicated to Ingress.



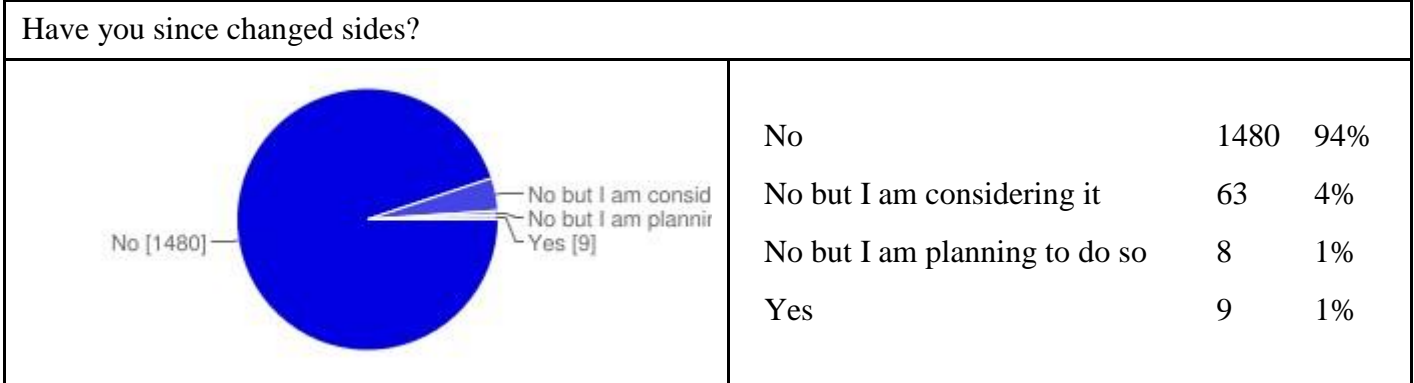
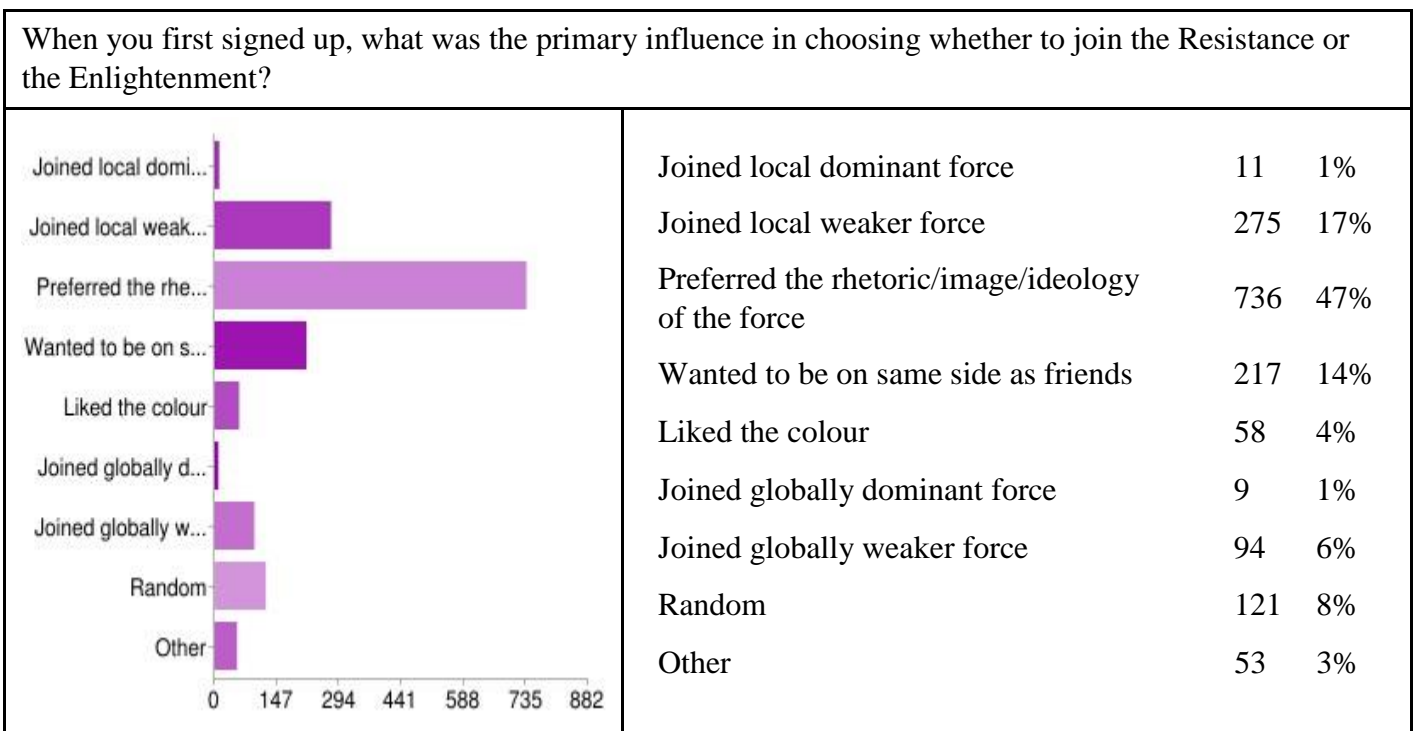
| | | |
|----------------------|------|-----|
| Walking | 1468 | 94% |
| Hillwalking/Trekking | 149 | 9% |
| Cycling | 369 | 24% |
| Driving | 1163 | 74% |
| Bus/Coach | 421 | 27% |
| Tram/Light Rail | 300 | 19% |
| Railroad | 213 | 14% |
| Boat | 25 | 2% |
| Air travel | 37 | 2% |

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

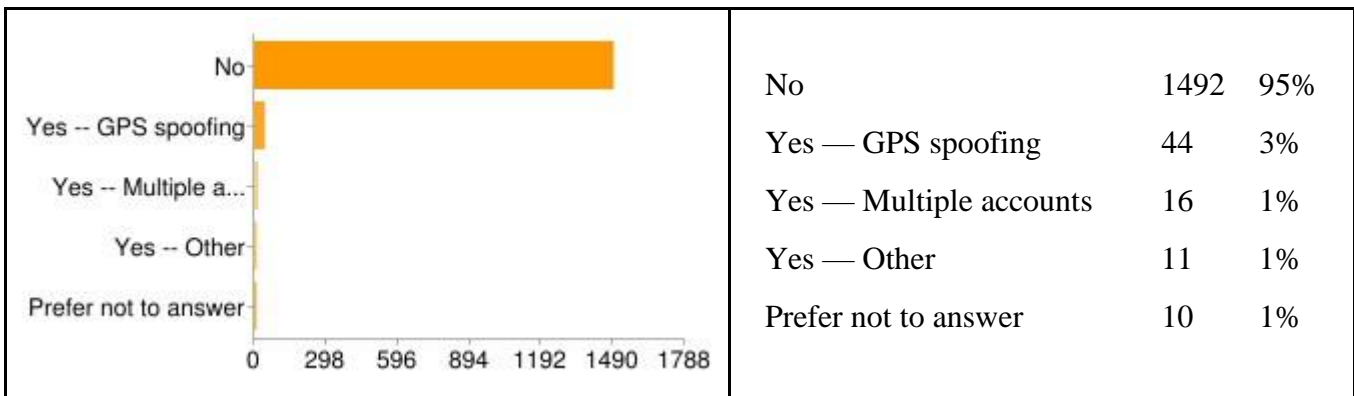
Which platforms have you used to discuss Ingress with other players?



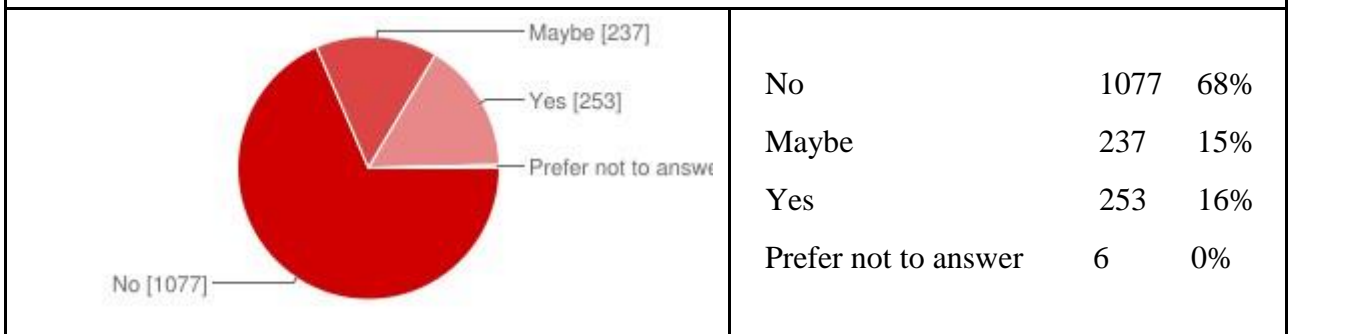
Loyalty & Ethics



Have you cheated?



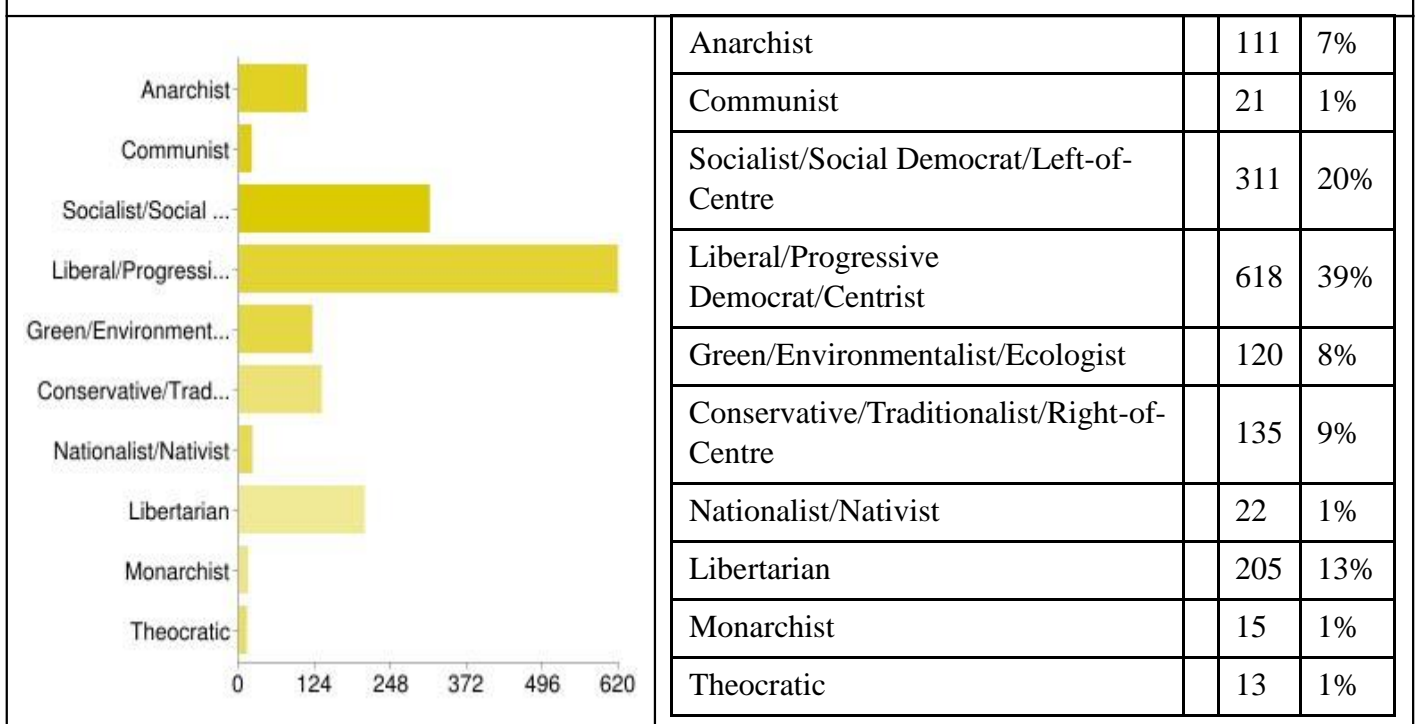
Have you knowingly broken legal or local regulations in order to play Ingress?



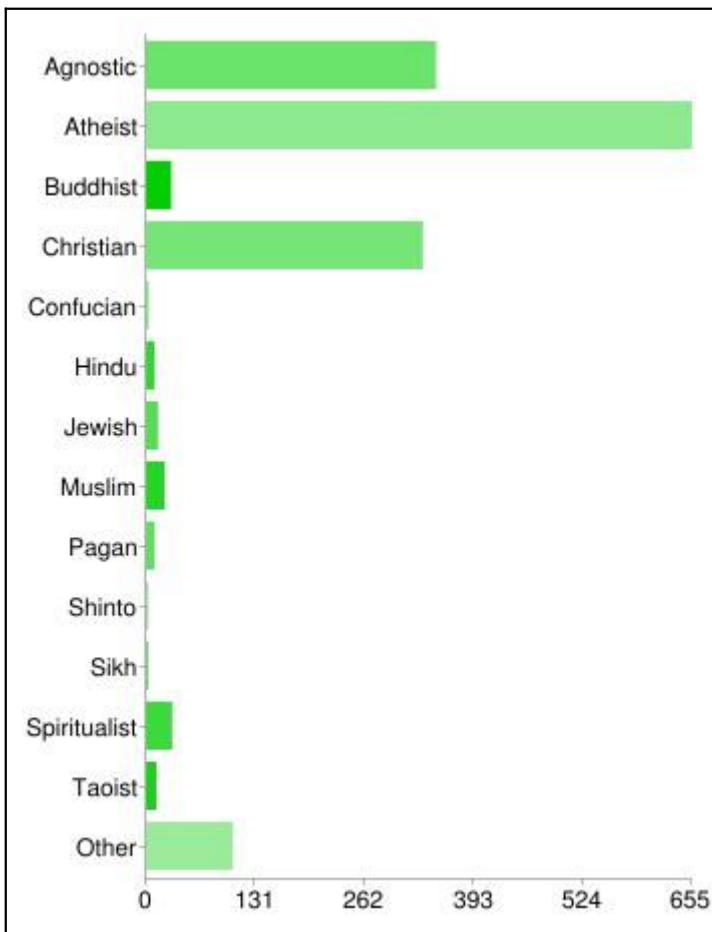
Politics & Religion

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Which of these closest matches your political views?



Which of these most closely describe your religious beliefs?



| | | |
|--------------|-----|-----|
| Agnostic | 348 | 22% |
| Atheist | 655 | 42% |
| Buddhist | 30 | 2% |
| Christian | 332 | 21% |
| Confucian | 3 | 0% |
| Hindu | 10 | 1% |
| Jewish | 14 | 1% |
| Muslim | 22 | 1% |
| Pagan | 10 | 1% |
| Shinto | 1 | 0% |
| Sikh | 2 | 0% |
| Spiritualist | 31 | 2% |
| Taoist | 12 | 1% |
| Other | 104 | 7% |

And finally...

