Paysafe

All the Ways Players Pay – World Cup 2026 Edition:

Betting & transactional trends around the trophy

Contents

1 Executive summary

The 2026 FIFA World Cup will be a key moment for North America. For the first time since 1994, the biggest football tournament on Earth returns to U.S. soil, with Canada and Mexico as co-hosts. However, unlike previous editions, this World Cup takes place in a very different environment: regulated online sports betting is now legal in a majority of U.S. states and Canada's most populated province, Ontario, creating unmatched opportunities for global operators and the entire experience economy.

Against this backdrop, we surveyed 3,850 respondents of legal gambling age who expressed an interest in following the World Cup in some capacity. The research covered key regulated sports-betting markets across North America (the United States – Florida, Kansas, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania – along with Ontario, Canada, and Mexico), Europe (Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the UK), and Latin America (Brazil, Mexico, Peru, and Ecuador). The study explored how fans plan to engage with the tournament, including betting behavior, payment preferences, travel intentions, and digital experiences.

This year's findings reveal a surge in engagement and spending, driven by match-day excitement, first-time bettors, and the unprecedented importance of seamless, secure payments. Here's a snapshot of our findings:

- **Betting boom:** 60% of consumers plan to place bets online or via an app, including 19% who plan to bet for the first time. In the U.S., this rises to 29%, and Mexico follows at 26%.
- **Match-day momentum:** 64% of bettors will place wagers on the day of the game or during the match, and 37% plan to bet more than usual. In the U.S., this figure reaches 51%.
- **Payments are vital:** Quick payouts rank just behind brand trust as the top factor in sportsbook choice. 84% of bettors are more satisfied when payouts are instant, and 44% have abandoned bets due to unavailable payment methods, highlighting the importance of sportsbooks offering a wide variety of payment options.
- **Regional payment differences for betting:** In Latin America, cards take a back seat, as local payment methods like Pix dominate in Brazil at 48%, while digital wallets such as PagoEfectivo lead the way in Peru at 36%.
- **High stakes for retention:** 88% would switch brands after a bad payment experience, rising to 93% in the U.S. and Ecuador. Localized solutions such as Venmo in the U.S., and Interac e-Transfer in Canada are crucial alongside global options like debit and credit cards, digital wallets, and eCash.
- **Travel adds complexity:** 11% of fans plan to attend games in person, increasing in U.S. host states to 32% in New York and 26% in Florida. Credit cards are the main payment method fans use when traveling at 70%, but the demand for digital wallets (31%) and other alternative payment methods (APMs) like eCash (22%) and local payment methods (25%) indicates a need for flexibility.
- **Digital engagement rises:** 58% plan to play soccer-themed video games during the tournament, and 56% expect to spend more on downloadable content, especially in the U.S. and U.K.

As fans get ready for the World Cup, their plans extend far beyond just watching the games. From betting and travel to video gaming and digital spending, the tournament offers a multi-channel engagement opportunity where payments are crucial for driving conversions, building trust, and fostering loyalty.

2. How fans plan to watch and attend the World Cup

2 How fans plan to watch and attend the World Cup

Interest in the 2026 FIFA World Cup has arguably never been higher, with 70% of respondents planning to watch or follow most or all matches live. Among those planning to bet, this increases to 85%, highlighting a strong link between betting plans and overall engagement with the sport.

Viewing habits and engagement levels

Sports preferences show soccer's dominance but also a varied interest in sports. Three-quarters of respondents (76%) follow soccer, with basketball (40%) and tennis (37%) ranking next. Betting habits reflect this trend: 50% bet on soccer, 20% on basketball, and 16% on American football, indicating that the World Cup will attract both core soccer fans and those who usually wager on other sports.

Latin America exhibits the strongest enthusiasm for the event, demonstrating greater interest in watching nearly all the World Cup games. Ecuador leads with 84%, followed by Brazil and Peru (both 76%), then Mexico (73%). In Europe, the enthusiasm of French fans is at 72% and Germans at 66%, while Canada is lower at 59%, despite being a host nation. However, in the United States, another host nation, interest is at 68%, reflecting soccer's increasing popularity among Americans.

For the upcoming 2026 Men's FIFA World Cup, which of the below best describes which matches you'll watch, listen to or follow live?

	Brazil	Bulgaria	Canada	Ecuador	France	Germany	Italy	Mexico	Peru	Spain	UK	US
I'll try and watch, listen to or follow all of them live	45%	34%	26%	51%	45%	32%	34%	40%	45%	37%	33%	39%
I'll try and watch, listen to or follow most of them live	31%	32%	33%	33%	27%	34%	35%	33%	31%	31%	35%	30%
I'll only watch, listen to or follow the most important ones / my team live	14%	24%	26%	8%	18%	28%	26%	18%	15%	24%	26%	19%
I'll watch, listen to or follow a few of them live	8%	10%	13%	7%	7%	5%	4%	9%	9%	8%	5%	11%
I'll not watch, listen to or follow any live – I'll watch on demand / catch up or follow another way	1%	0%	2%	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%

Workplace viewing shows the fans' dedication. Among employed respondents, 62% say they will find a way to watch or follow matches while working. This trend is most common in Latin America, where Ecuador reaches 78%, Mexico 71%, and Peru 68%. In contrast, European markets like Germany and Spain are slightly lower at 55% and 56%, respectively.

Travel plans and payment choices for live games

Travel plans add another layer of interest. While most fans will watch from home, 11% intend to travel to stadiums to see games live.

This percentage increases significantly in one of the host countries, the U.S.: 32% in New York, 26% in Florida, and 23% in New Jersey. Massachusetts and Kansas also show strong interest at 21% and 19%. Appetite for travel is lower in the other hosting nations: 12% in Ontario and 13% in Mexico. These numbers, particularly for the U.S., underscore the World Cup's impact on boosting tourism and live experiences.

Payment preferences for travel show a mix of traditional and alternative methods. Credit cards dominate at 70%, followed by debit cards at 48%. Cash and bank transfers are next at 42% each, while digital wallets account for 31%. Local payment methods are chosen by 25%, and eCash by 22%, signaling growing demand for secure alternatives.

How will you pay for your trip?

*Asked only to those who are traveling to watch World Cup games in person at a stadium

	Global	Brazil	Bulgaria	Canada	Ecuador	France	Germany	Italy	Mexico	Peru	Spain	UK	US
Credit card	70%	74%	0%	73%	100%	65%	55%	67%	76%	73%	40%	62%	80%
Debit card	48%	32%	67%	46%	0%	18%	32%	24%	48%	73%	47%	46%	65%
Cash	42%	39%	0%	32%	67%	35%	58%	14%	52%	55%	40%	25%	52%
Bank transfer	42%	16%	0%	16%	0%	47%	42%	33%	38%	64%	47%	54%	48%
Digital wallet	31%	39%	0%	14%	0%	24%	23%	19%	8%	64%	13%	33%	48%
Local payment method (available only in my country – Venmo, Interac e-Transfer, Pix, etc.)	25%	29%	0%	14%	0%	12%	19%	14%	12%	36%	20%	29%	35%
eCash (such as PaysafeCard, PagoEfectivo, etc.)	22%	16%	33%	8%	0%	29%	23%	5%	20%	36%	13%	20%	29%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%

Regional differences are important: North American travelers rely heavily on cards, while Latin American travelers show stronger adoption of local methods and eCash, emphasizing the need for localized payment strategies.

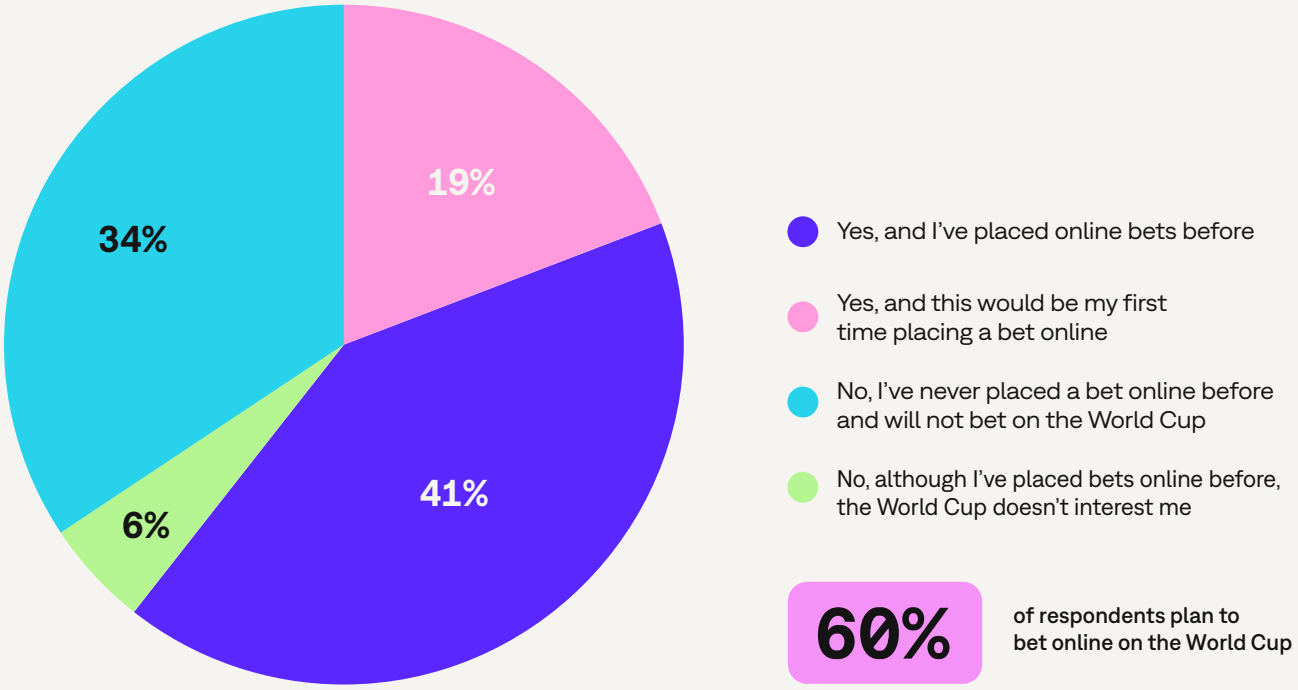
These insights highlight how the World Cup fuels the experience economy. Fans are adjusting work schedules, planning trips, and making payment choices that reflect both convenience and trust. For operators and merchants, this creates opportunities to deliver seamless, secure, and localized experiences that match the excitement of the tournament.

3. Betting intentions: first timers, returning bettors and non-soccer fans will bet

3 Betting intentions: first timers, returning bettors and non-soccer fans will bet

The World Cup is expected to increase betting activity, drawing both seasoned players and newcomers. Overall, 60% of respondents plan to place bets online or via a mobile app during the tournament. This includes a large number of first-time bettors, with 19% saying they intend to make their first-ever online bet on World Cup matches.

Are you planning to bet online or via a mobile app on the games of the World Cup?



60% of respondents plan to bet online on the World Cup

The United States stands out in this regard, with 29% planning to bet for the first time, followed closely by another host country, Mexico, at 26%. This trend suggests a significant opportunity for operators in both host nations.

Returning bettors also form a significant segment, with 41% of past players planning to wager again. The World Cup's appeal goes far beyond soccer fans, as half of respondents who do not regularly follow soccer (49%) say they will still place bets on the tournament, highlighting its ability to turn passive soccer fans into active bettors.

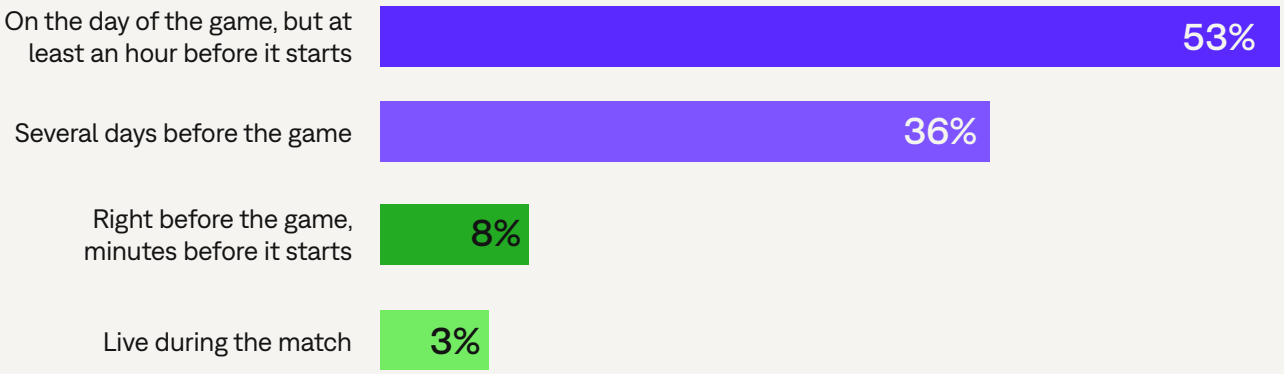
49% of consumers who don't follow soccer plan on betting on the World Cup

Bettors are driven by momentum and community

Timing is another important factor. Betting behavior is mainly driven by match-day excitement, with 64% planning to place bets on the day of the game or during the match itself, while only 36% intend to bet days in advance. This pattern suggests that operators should focus on real-time engagement strategies, such as in-play betting options and quick, seamless payment experiences, to capture last-minute wagers.

When placing bets online or via a mobile app, when do you plan to place your bets?

*Asked only to those planning to place bets on the World Cup online

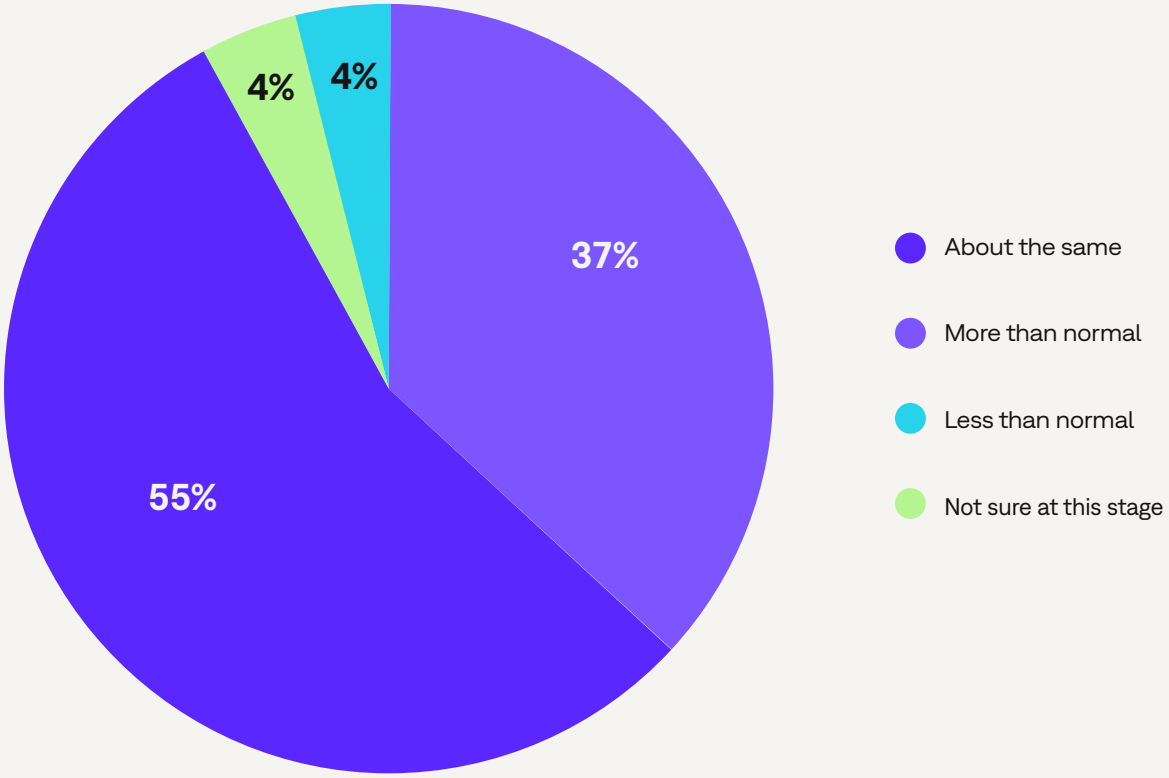


64% plan to place bets on gameday

The frequency of betting is also expected to increase during the tournament. Among those planning to bet, 92% expect to wager either more than usual or about the same as their typical activity. Within this group, 37% plan to bet more than normal, with the United States leading at 51%. These figures reflect the unique excitement of the World Cup and how hosting influences betting activity.

Are you planning to bet more or less than normal during the World Cup?

*Asked only to those planning to place bets on the World Cup online



92% expect to wager more or the same during the World Cup

Social factors also influence participation. 60% of respondents say they would join a group bet if a bet pool or pot was organized by a friend or coworker. Additionally, 54% are more likely to place bets when they have extra money. These insights emphasize the importance of community-based experiences and promotional offers that encourage responsible spending.

Payment preferences make or break the betting experience

Payment preferences for betting reveal clear trends. Debit cards are the go-to method overall at 39%, followed by credit cards at 36%. Bank transfers, including 'pay by bank' open-banking solutions, account for 27%, while digital wallets are preferred by 25%. Local payment methods and eCash also stand out at 19% and 17%, respectively.

How do you plan to pay for your online bets at the World Cup?

*Asked only to those planning to place bets on the World Cup online

	Global	Brazil	Bulgaria	Canada	Ecuador	France	Germany	Italy	Mexico	Peru	Spain	UK	US
Debit card	39%	27%	53%	47%	30%	32%	22%	28%	43%	33%	44%	53%	50%
Credit card	36%	30%	23%	50%	30%	50%	35%	34%	33%	28%	29%	-	54%
Bank transfer	27%	21%	17%	16%	46%	17%	28%	12%	41%	29%	20%	34%	32%
Digital wallet	25%	22%	30%	17%	20%	10%	23%	31%	20%	36%	15%	26%	38%
Local payment method (available only in my country – Venmo, Interac e-Transfer, Pix, etc.)	19%	48%	7%	12%	8%	10%	10%	11%	10%	17%	8%	15%	28%
eCash (such as PaysafeCard, PagoEfectivo, etc.)	17%	13%	23%	6%	27%	13%	19%	12%	21%	29%	18%	11%	21%
Other	1%	0%	0%	4%	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%

Regional differences are notable: in Brazil, local methods like Pix, the Central Bank's instant payment platform, dominate at 48%, whereas in Peru, digital wallets like PagoEfectivo are preferred at 36%, underscoring the critical need for operators to offer localized payment options to attract and retain players across markets.

In the United States, credit cards are the leading choice at 54%, even though some states ban their use (such as Massachusetts) and others impose strict restrictions (like New York's $2,500 yearly limit). This makes it essential for operators in these markets to provide strong alternative payment methods.

The payment experience is vital for player conversion and retention. 84% of bettors say they are more satisfied when payouts are instant, and 44% have abandoned a bet because their preferred payment method was unavailable.

88% of bettors would switch to another sportsbook after a poor payment experience

44% of bettors have abandoned a bet because their preferred payment method was unavailable

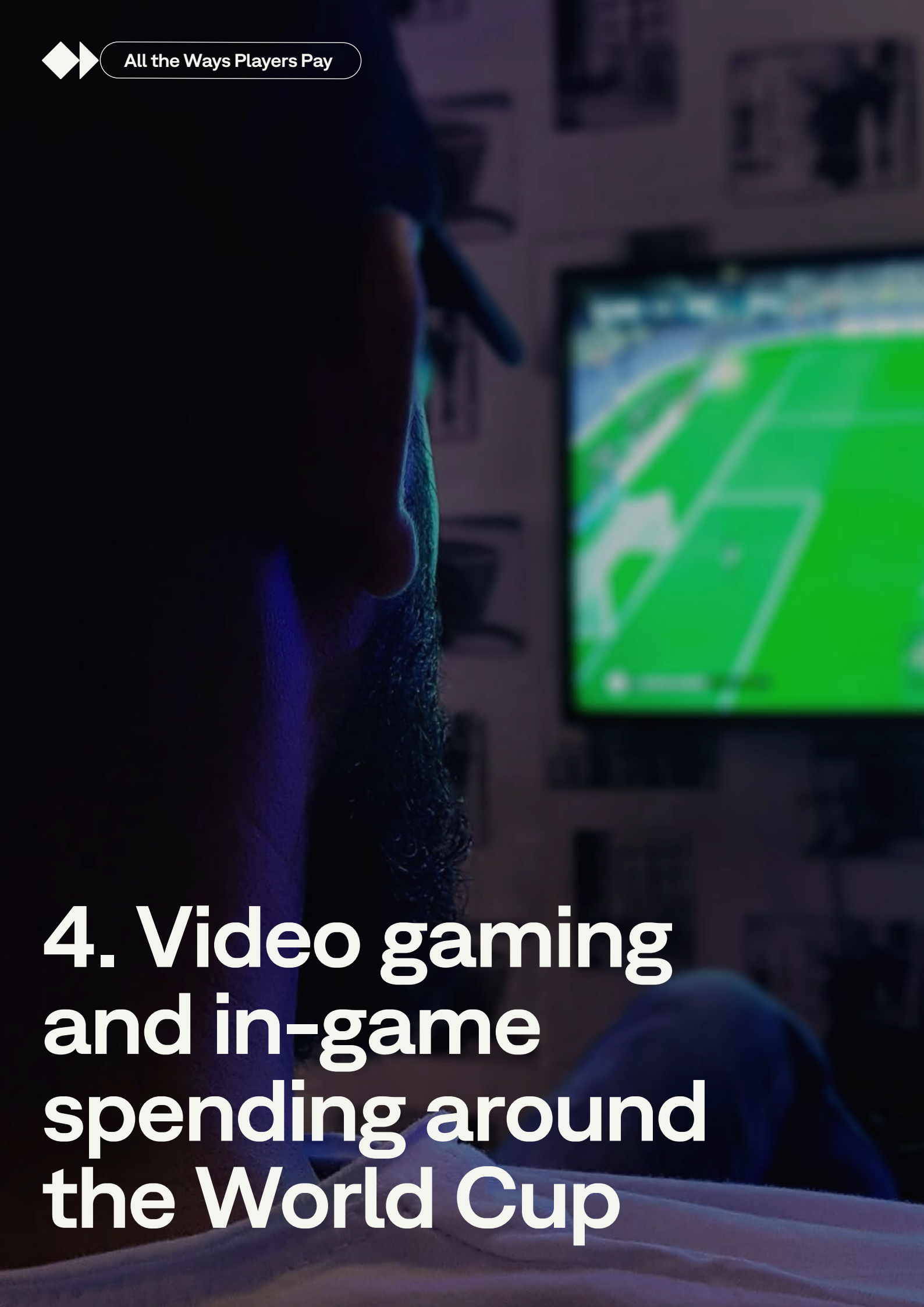
The stakes are high for operators, as 88% of bettors would switch to another sportsbook after a poor payment experience, with this figure rising to 93% for both the United States and Ecuador. These findings emphasize the importance of offering fast, reliable payouts and a comprehensive range of payment options tailored to local preferences.

When it comes to choosing an online sportsbook or betting website or mobile app to bet on the World Cup, which of the following criteria are important?

*Asked only to those planning to place bets on the World Cup online

	Global	Brazil	Bulgaria	Canada	Ecuador	France	Germany	Italy	Mexico	Peru	Spain	UK	US
A brand I trust	38%	42%	37%	50%	40%	22%	36%	33%	37%	34%	28%	44%	40%
Quick and easy payouts	33%	34%	50%	38%	24%	29%	34%	31%	26%	38%	24%	43%	33%
Good odds	28%	28%	13%	38%	19%	27%	36%	15%	21%	25%	21%	36%	32%
Quick and easy deposits	24%	20%	30%	19%	28%	19%	29%	15%	33%	33%	10%	28%	24%
Good promotional offers	23%	22%	17%	32%	27%	19%	16%	21%	23%	30%	22%	23%	24%
Ability to deposit and withdraw with my preferred payment method	22%	22%	30%	15%	22%	17%	18%	26%	26%	27%	22%	24%	20%
A better user experience / easy to use	19%	18%	13%	15%	17%	13%	19%	14%	23%	19%	22%	20%	25%
Ability to bet on multiple sports and events	15%	17%	17%	9%	13%	15%	14%	17%	11%	11%	15%	19%	14%
A brand that sponsors sports teams or has sponsorships in the sports space	13%	15%	3%	12%	18%	8%	10%	11%	15%	13%	18%	11%	14%
It is where my friends bet	11%	11%	10%	12%	11%	15%	7%	18%	11%	13%	17%	5%	12%
Ability to bet with the same online sportsbook or betting company in person	11%	10%	7%	7%	11%	15%	11%	9%	11%	13%	18%	6%	15%
VIP / loyalty rewards	11%	11%	13%	12%	6%	10%	8%	8%	10%	6%	11%	10%	16%
Other	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Don't know	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%

The World Cup is more than just a sporting event; it serves as a driver for betting growth across various markets. For operators, success will rely on meeting the needs of both new and returning players by providing trusted brands, instant payouts, and localized payment options that reduce friction and foster loyalty.



4. Video gaming and in-game spending around the World Cup

4 Video gaming and in-game spending around the World Cup

Of course, when it comes to entertainment, the World Cup is not just a sporting event; it's also a major driver of video game activity. Our research shows that 58% of consumers plan to play at least one soccer-themed video game during the tournament. Popular titles include EA FC at 50%, eFootball at 46%, and Football Manager at 45%. Nearly one in five players (18%) expect to play more than usual during the World Cup, underscoring the tournament's ability to boost engagement with digital entertainment.

58%

plan on playing at least one of the soccer-themed games during the World Cup

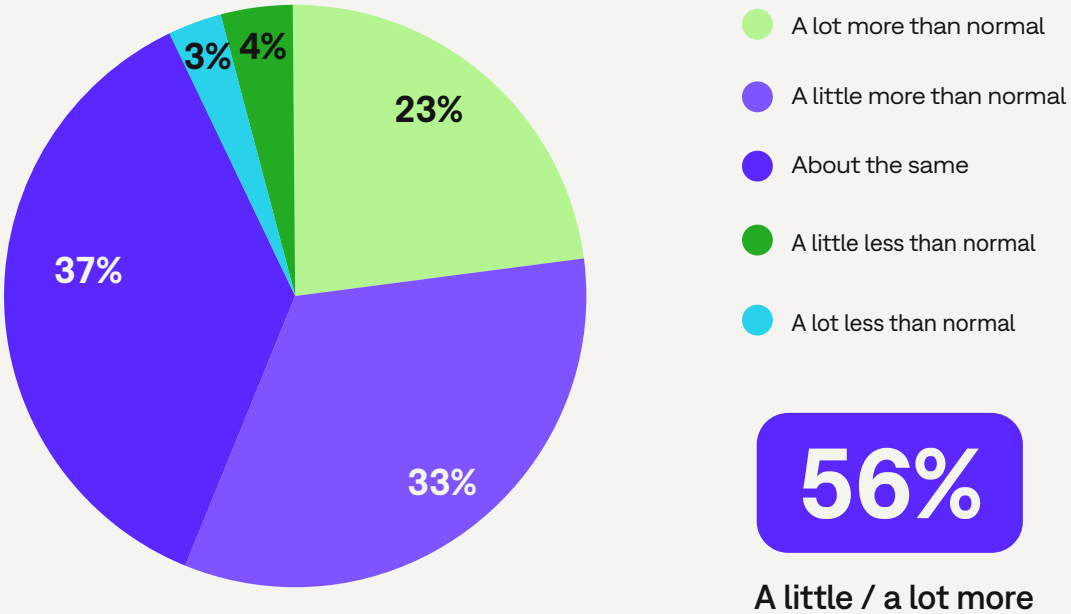
18%

plan on playing at least one game more than normal during the World Cup

Spending patterns support this trend. Over half of consumers (56%) plan to spend more on World Cup-related downloadable content, items, or in-game currency than usual. This rise is especially notable in the United States, where 68% expect to spend more, and in the United Kingdom, at 60%. Within the U.S., spending intentions are highest in New Jersey and New York at 72% (for both), followed by Florida and Kansas at 67% (both), and Massachusetts at 66%. These numbers highlight the strong connection between hosting the tournament and increased digital spending.

How much do you plan to spend on special World Cup downloadable content, items, or in-game currency during the World Cup compared to usual?

*Asked only to those planning on playing soccer-themed video games during the World Cup



56%

A little / a lot more than normal

Age also influences this behavior. Consumers aged 25–34 are the most likely to boost their spending, with 64% planning to spend more on in-game purchases during the World Cup. This group is highly engaged with soccer-themed gaming, making them a key target for operators and merchants aiming to capitalize on cross-sell opportunities.

Regional differences are also evident. While North America leads in spending growth, Latin American markets such as Brazil and Ecuador show strong engagement with soccer-themed games, even if overall spending increases are slightly lower than in the U.S. and U.K. These markets present opportunities for businesses to tailor offers and payment options to local preferences, particularly given the popularity of alternative payment methods in these regions.

Payment flexibility is a game-changer

The payment experience is critical in this context. Gamers expect fast, secure, and convenient transactions when purchasing downloadable content or in-game currency. Digital wallets such as Skrill are increasingly favored for these transactions, given a wallet's privacy safeguards and ease of use. Video game developers that offer a wide range of payment options, including eCash and local payment methods, will be better positioned to meet consumer expectations and reduce checkout friction.

With over half of consumers planning to spend more on in-game content and strong engagement across key demographics and regions, gaming merchants have a unique chance to leverage this trend. Success will depend on delivering secure, flexible payment experiences and creating offers that resonate with fans eager to enhance their World Cup experience through gaming.

5. Key takeaways

5 Key takeaways

The 2026 FIFA World Cup is shaping up to be one of the main experience economy celebrations of the year. It is a catalyst for engagement across viewing, betting, travel, and digital experiences, creating opportunities for operators and merchants to connect with fans in new ways.

This event will drive massive engagement, with 70% planning to watch most matches and 60% betting online, including 19% first-time bettors. Latin America shows the strongest enthusiasm, while travel demand spikes in host nations, making localized payment options essential alongside cards.

Match-day momentum drives betting, so real-time engagement and instant payouts are critical: 84% prefer immediate payouts, and 88% would switch brands after a poor payment experience. Video gaming will also surge, with 58% playing soccer-themed titles and 56% spending more on in-game content, led by younger fans. Across betting, travel, and gaming, success depends on seamless, secure payment methods that build trust and loyalty.

The 2026 World Cup provides operators and merchants a unique chance to connect with fans through trusted brands, quick payouts, and localized payment methods. By focusing on speed, security, and flexibility, businesses can turn the excitement of the tournament into long-lasting customer relationships.

About Paysafe

Paysafe is a leading payments platform with an extensive track record of serving merchants and consumers in the global entertainment sectors. Its core purpose is to enable businesses and consumers to connect and transact seamlessly through industry-leading capabilities in payment processing, digital wallet, and online cash solutions. With 30 years of online payment experience, an annualized transactional volume of $152bn in 2024, and approximately 3,000 employees located in 12+ countries, Paysafe connects businesses and consumers across 260 payment types in 48 currencies around the world. Delivered through an integrated platform, Paysafe solutions are geared towards mobile-initiated transactions, real-time analytics and the convergence between brick-and-mortar and online payments.

Further information is available at https://www.paysafe.com

Methodology

The report was based on a survey conducted on behalf of Paysafe by Sapio Research among 3,850 respondents of legal gambling age with an interest in following the 2026 World Cup (in some capacity) across the UK, US (Florida, Kansas, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania), Canada, Brazil, Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, Germany, Spain, Italy, France, and Bulgaria.

The interviews were conducted online by Sapio Research in November 2025 using an email invitation and an online survey. Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results. In this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 1.6 percentage points from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.