

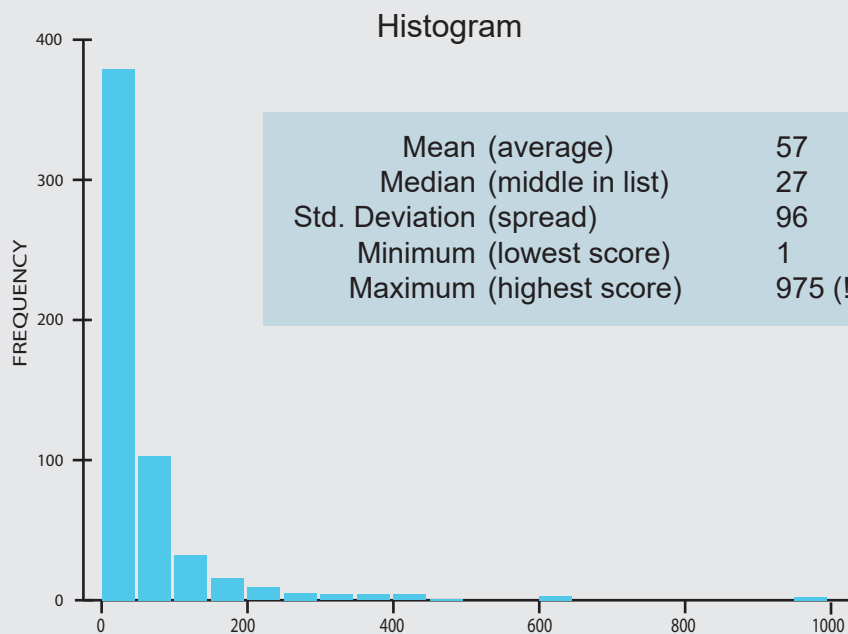
# 2018 ESCAPE ROOM ENTHUSIAST SURVEY

VERSION 1.1, SEPTEMBER 2018

A survey targeting escape room enthusiasts was open for completion from July to August, 2018. This is a summary of selected results.

PAGE 1

## HOW MANY INDIVIDUAL ESCAPE ROOMS HAVE YOU DONE?



## 562 People Completed the Survey

We conducted an online survey in July-August 2018. The survey was advertised online on

- Facebook ER enthusiast group
- RoomEscapeArtist.com (American)
- EscapeTalk.nl (Dutch)
- Escape Room SubReddit (Hivemind)

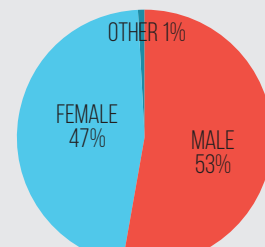
562 participants came from 32 different countries, more than half from the United States (53%), with large numbers

of participants from the Netherlands (17%), UK (9%) and Canada (8%).

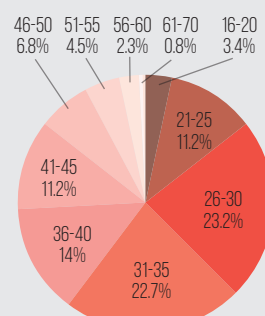
Enthusiasts ranged from 16 to 70 years in age, with 60% aged less than 40 years. 53% were male, 46% female, and 1% identified as other. They were relatively well educated with 73% having a bachelor's degree or higher.

Enthusiasts reported having played between 1 and 975 rooms. Half of participants had done fewer than 30 rooms, however because of a small number of enthusiasts who had done a large number of rooms, the average room experience was 57.

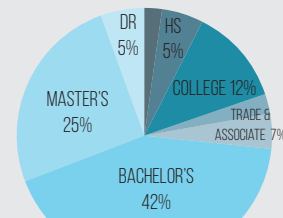
## QUICK LOOK



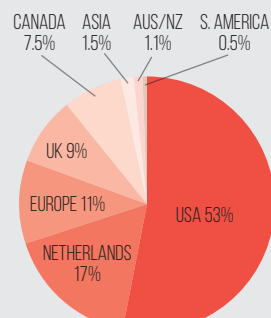
### GENDER



### AGE



### EDUCATION



### COUNTRY

## COMMENTARY

Participants in this survey are not representative of escape room players. The sample is biased towards people who identify as enthusiasts, have played more rooms, and spend time on English language online enthusiast groups.

# 2018 ESCAPE ROOM ENTHUSIAST SURVEY

## MORE ABOUT ESCAPE ROOM ENTHUSIASTS

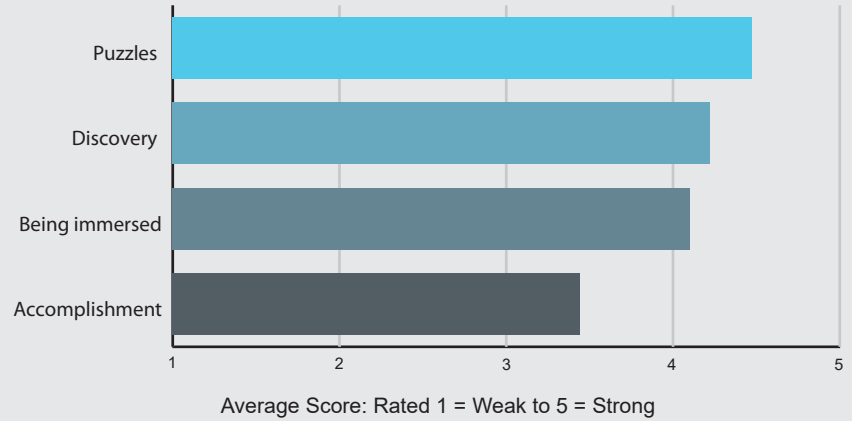
**Tracking rooms:** 80% of enthusiasts kept track of the number of rooms they had played (nerds!) and 50% kept track of their wins

**Teammates:** 70% normally played with friends (same or different groups), 16% played with just their partner, 7% played with family and 6% played with colleagues, only 1% normally played with randoms.

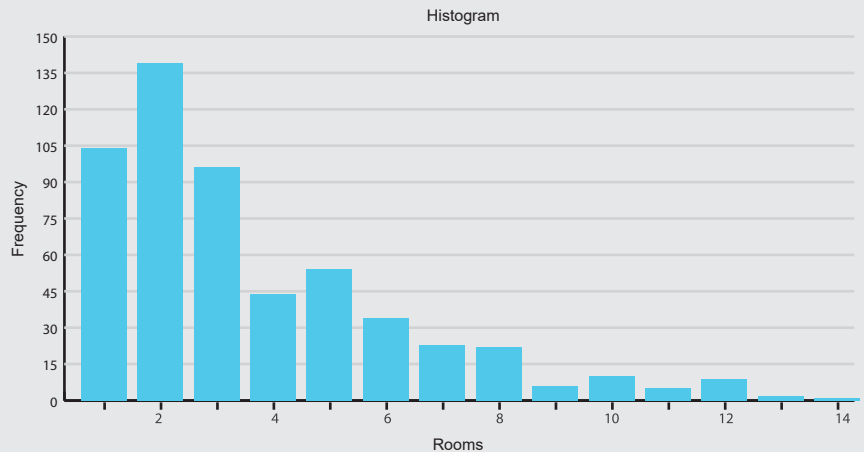
**Traveling:** Enthusiasts said that there were between 1 and 600 rooms 'local' to them, with an average of 22 local rooms. 72% said that compared to a year ago there are more rooms in their local area, 20% said there were the same number of rooms, 6% were unsure, and only 2% said that there were fewer rooms.

Enthusiasts reported travelling between 1 and 100,000 miles for the primary purpose of playing escape rooms, with an average of 500 miles. Enthusiasts had played a maximum of between 1 and 14 rooms in 24 hours, with an average of 3.7 rooms.

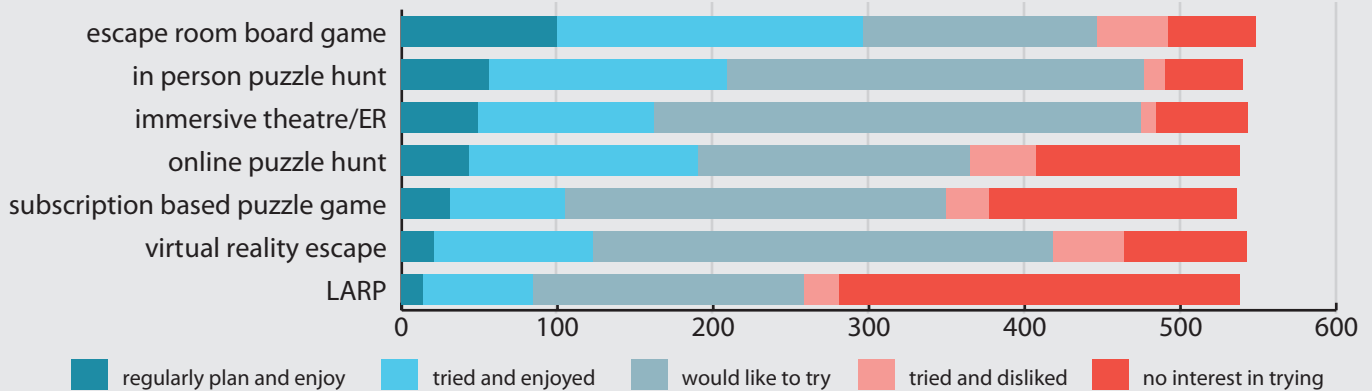
### WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO PLAY?



### MOST ROOMS PLAYED IN A 24 HOUR PERIOD (>30 MINUTES)



### WHICH OF THESE ESCAPE ROOM RELATED ACTIVITIES HAVE YOU PLAYED?



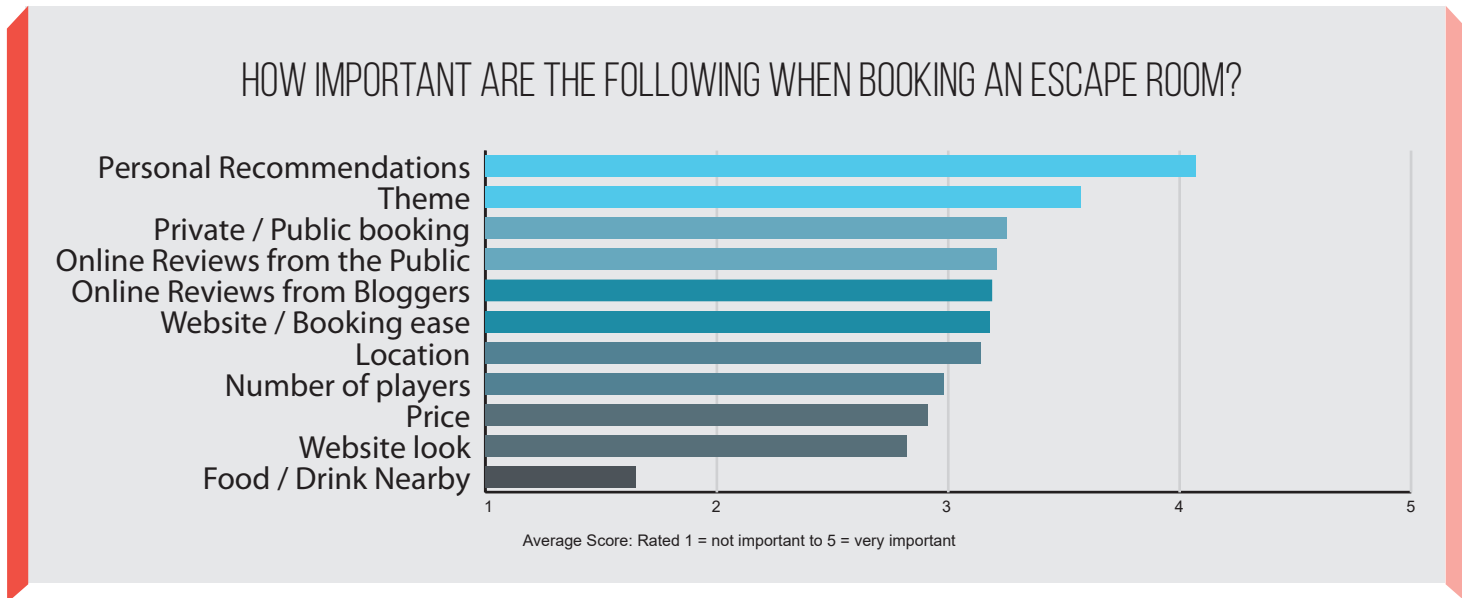
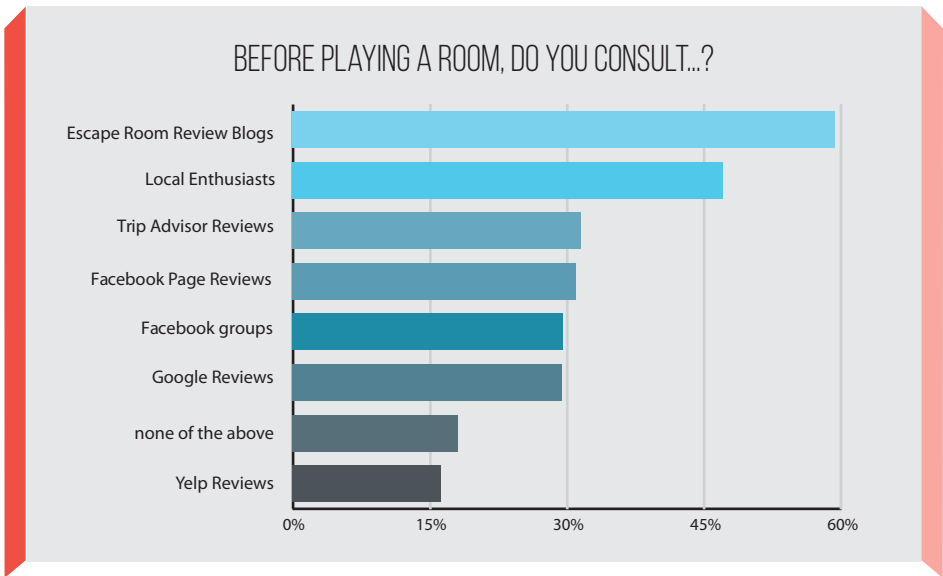
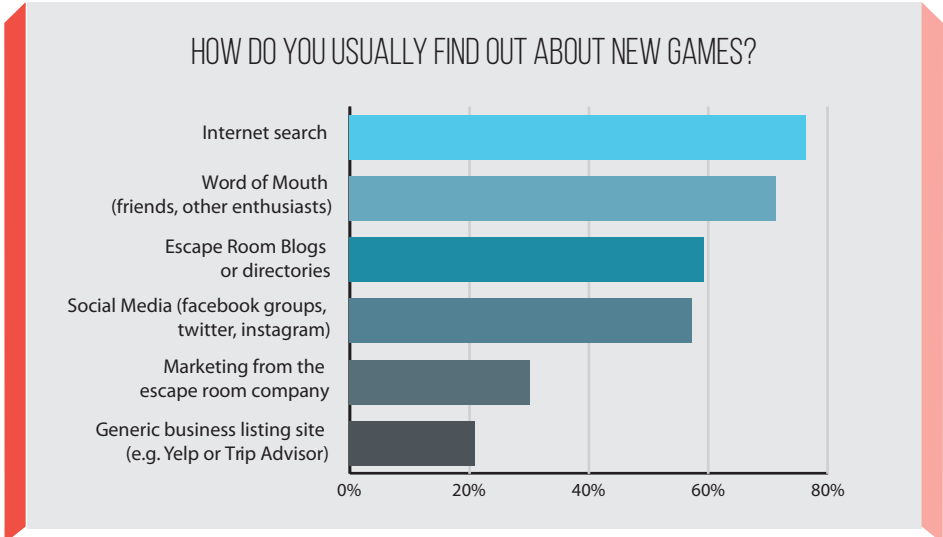
## ESCAPE ROOM PREFERENCES - BEFORE THE ROOM

**Price and Length:** 75% of enthusiasts were prepared to pay at least twice the price of a movie ticket for a good 60 minute escape room. 98% preferred rooms of 60 minutes or longer.

**On Winning:** Enthusiasts generally expected to win rooms - 87% of enthusiasts said that going into a room they had  $\geq 70\%$  expectation of winning and, 9% said that they had 100% expectation of winning.

**Ticketing:** Enthusiasts had a strong preference for private ticketing, with private ticketing of small rooms (2-6 players) which was liked or loved by 75% of enthusiasts, compared with public ticketing of large rooms (7-12 players) which was liked or loved by only 16% of enthusiasts.

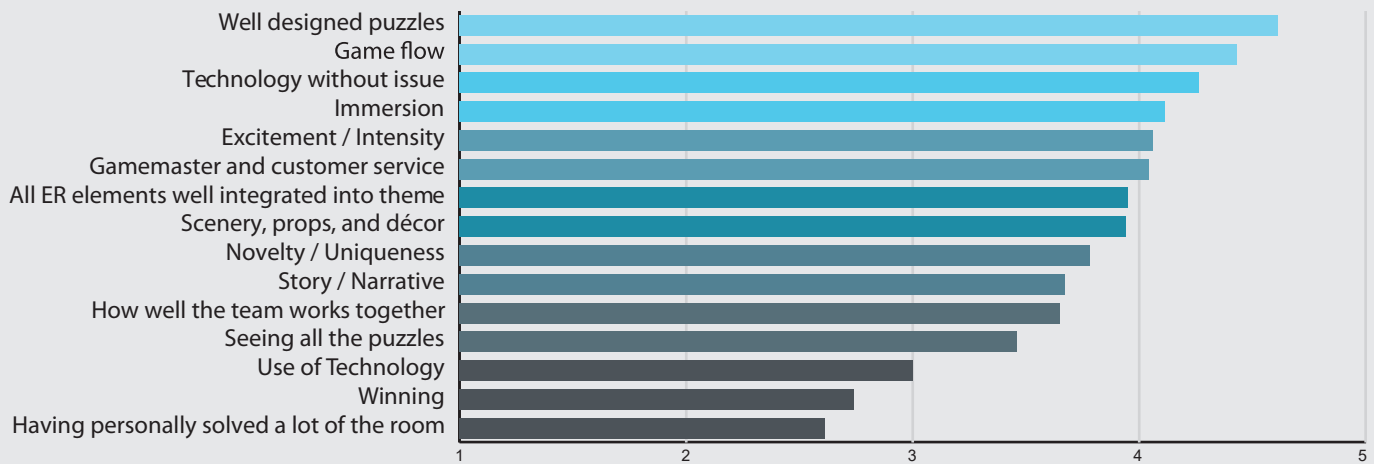
However, there were differences between the North American market and the European market, since the latter does not have public ticketing of large rooms. Please refer to the *Regional Differences* section of this document for more information.



# 2018 ESCAPE ROOM ENTHUSIAST SURVEY

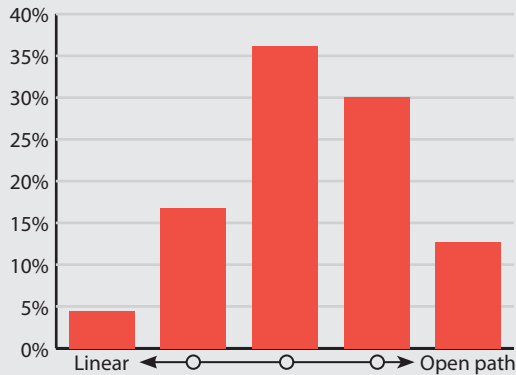
## ESCAPE ROOM PREFERENCES - ROOM DESIGN

FOR YOUR IDEAL GAME, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING?

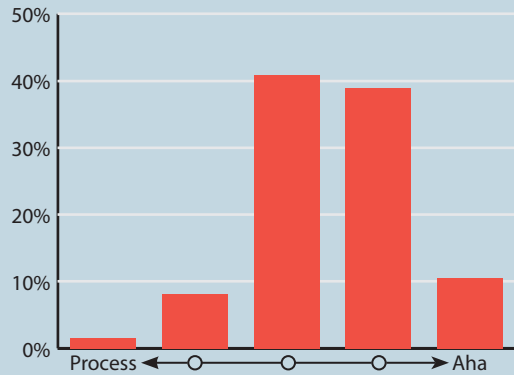


Average Score: Rated 1 = not important to 5 = very important

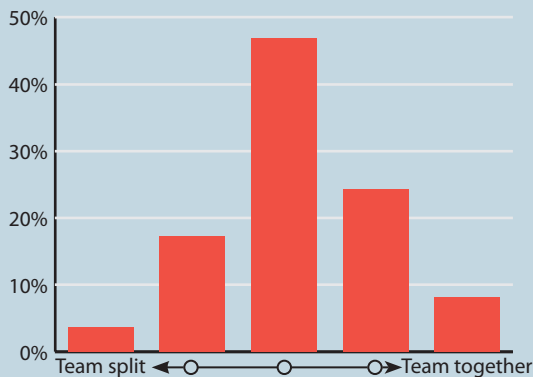
### GAME FLOW PREFERENCE



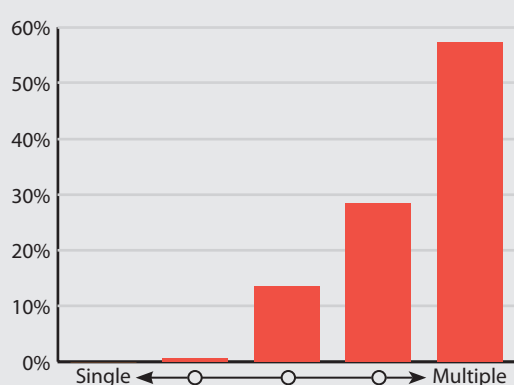
### PUZZLE ASPECT PREFERENCE



### SPLIT TEAM PREFERENCE

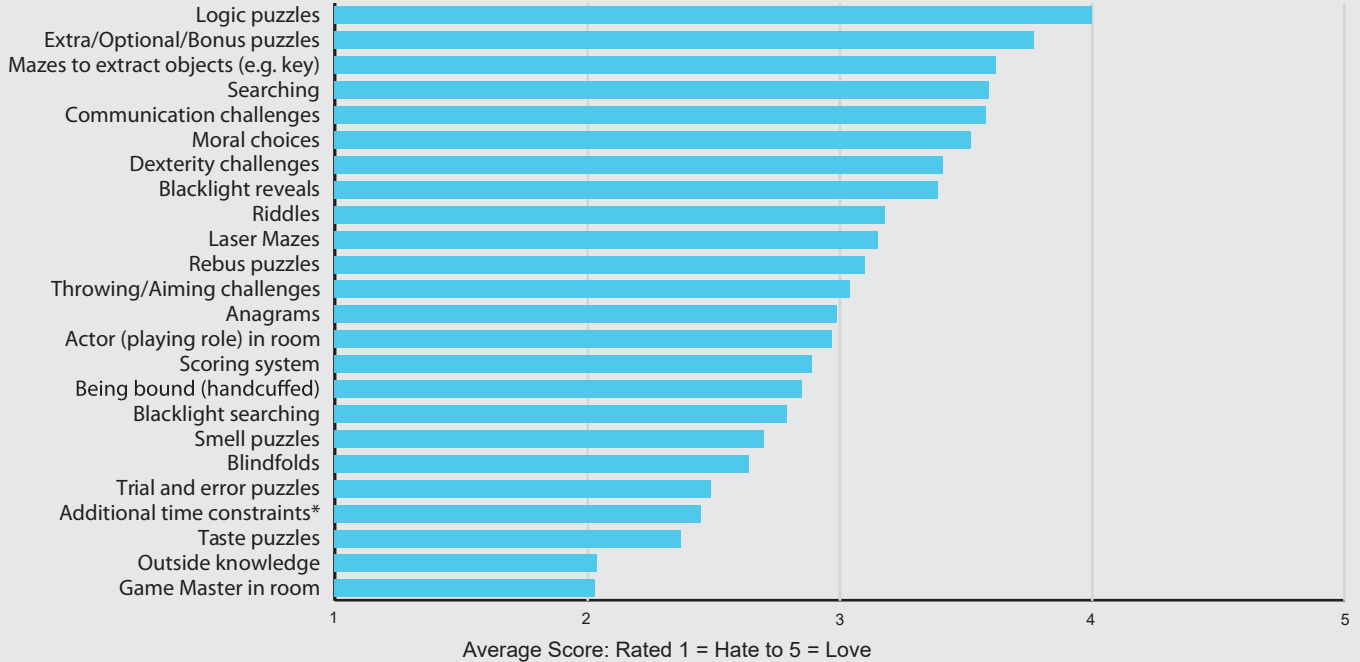


### SINGLE VS MULTIPLE ROOMS



# 2018 ESCAPE ROOM ENTHUSIAST SURVEY

## FOR YOUR IDEAL GAME, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING?



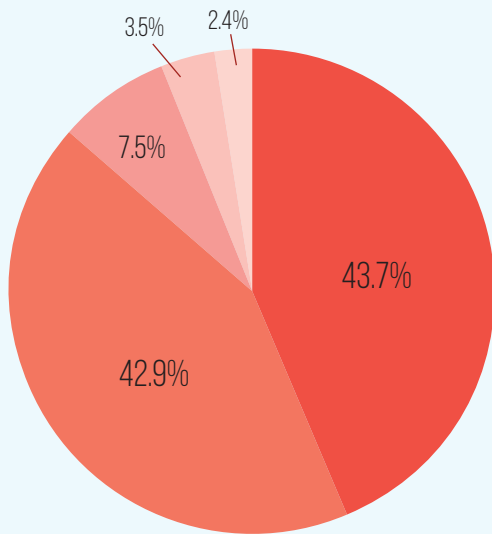
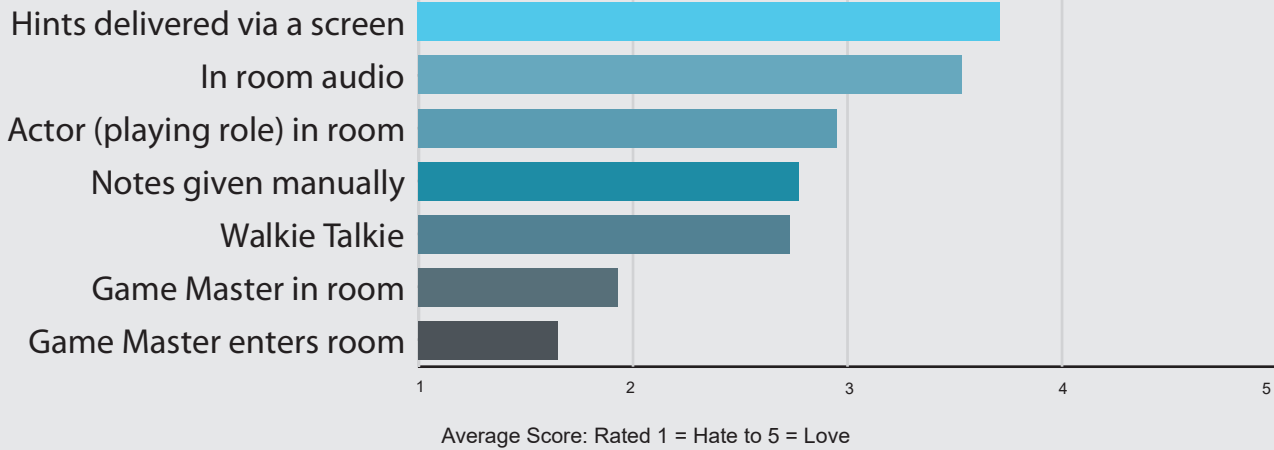
\*Example of additional time constraints: 5 minutes for a particular puzzle

## HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THESE DIFFERENT THEMES?



## ESCAPE ROOM PREFERENCES - HINTS

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE FOLLOWING HINT SYSTEMS?

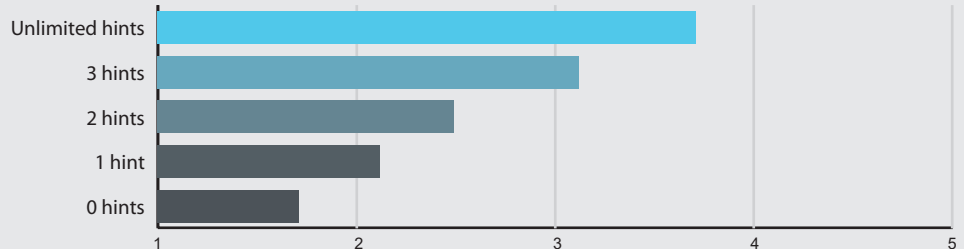


WOULD YOU PREFER ASKING FOR A HINT, OR A GM GIVING HINTS TO HELP YOUR PROGRESS?

- Ask if we want a hint
- I don't care
- Give me unsolicited hints based on our timed progress through the room
- I will ask for my hints, thank you very much
- Give me unsolicited hints taking into account time remaining, how close I am to solving the puzzle, and our morale

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE FOLLOWING HINT SYSTEMS?

Average Score:  
Rated 1 = Hate to 5 = Love



# 2018 ESCAPE ROOM ENTHUSIAST SURVEY

## WHAT MAKES A GREAT ESCAPE ROOM EXPERIENCE FOR YOU?

We asked the open question: What makes a great escape room experience for you? 497 enthusiasts responded. The following is a chart of common elements mentioned.

Element Mentioned	% Mentioned
Puzzles – logical, fair, with ah-ha moments, creativity and diversity valued	43%
Immersion	30%
Customer service /GM – friendly, personal and enthusiastic	16%
Set/production	15%
Game flow	14%
Narrative	14%
Theme – of personal interest, unique, or well executed	13%
Surprise or novelty	11%
Integration – of theme and puzzles, as well as narrative, hint system and pre-room experience	11%
Fun	11%
Team experience/teamwork – communication puzzles, team working together, everyone having enough to do and moment to shine	10%
Technology	5%
Wow moments/finale – an exciting, memorable reveal or conclusion	4%

# 2018 ESCAPE ROOM ENTHUSIAST SURVEY

## REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

We compared the preferences of enthusiasts from the two regions with the most survey participants North America (340 participants) and the UK and Europe (201 participants). Compared to the UK and Europe, North American enthusiasts reported significantly fewer companies were local to them (34 vs 17 on average) and that they had travelled further to play rooms (593 vs 331 miles on average).

This probably is because there is greater population density in Europe compared to North America, so there are more games in a smaller area.

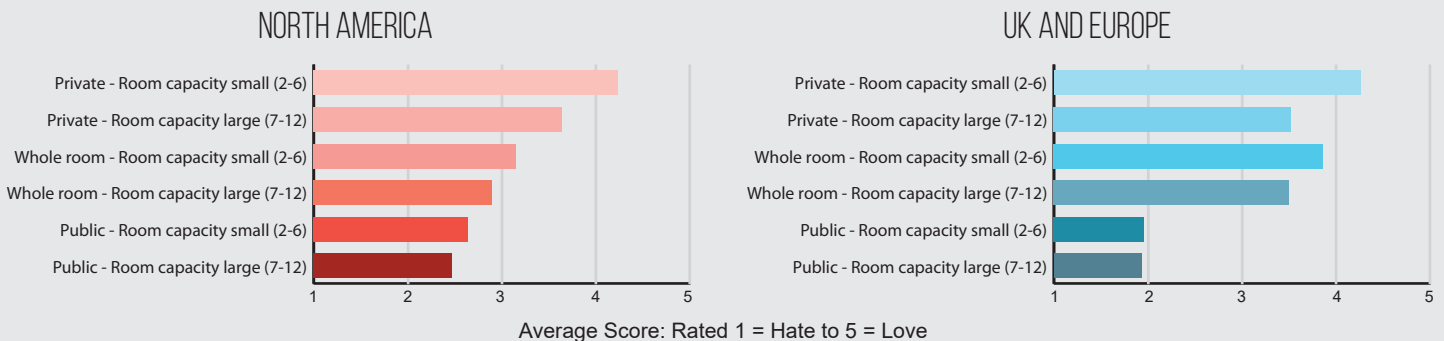
Compared to the UK and Europe, North American enthusiasts were more likely to have played or wanted to play



online puzzle hunts and immersive theatre. North American enthusiasts also expected to pay more relative to the price of a movie ticket than those in UK and Europe. North American enthusiasts were more indifferent towards public ticketing (small or large room capacity) than UK and European enthusiasts who disliked these models. North American enthusiasts were significantly more likely to consult Yelp, Google, locals and FB groups whereas UK and European enthusiasts were more likely to consult blogs or none of the listed sources. These may reflect regional differences in escape room practices that enthusiasts have become accustomed to, as well as regional differences in popularity of various social media platforms.

There were no significant differences between regions in ideal team size (4 people) or motivation for playing escape rooms.

## TICKET BOOKING PREFERENCES



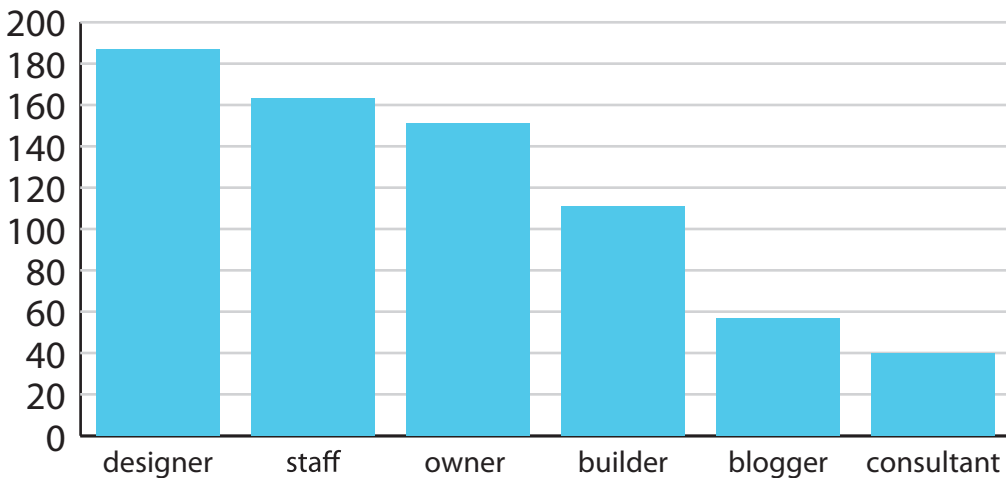
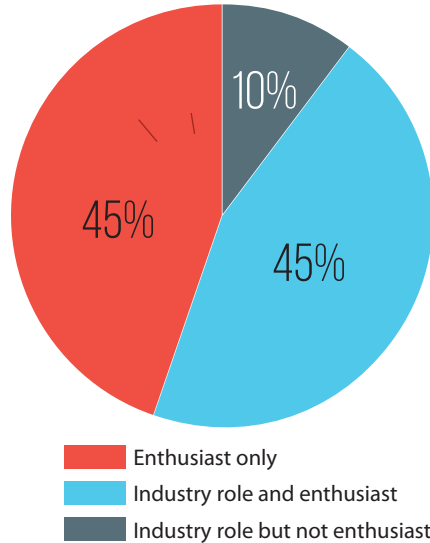


# 2018 ESCAPE ROOM ENTHUSIAST SURVEY

## IMPACT OF WORKING IN THE ESCAPE ROOM INDUSTRY

45% of participants reported being enthusiasts only, 45% said they were enthusiasts with a role in the ER industry, and 10% reported having a role in the ER industry but did not identify as an enthusiast.

There were no significant differences between number of rooms played on average between enthusiasts only and those with industry roles. Compared to enthusiasts only, participants with industry roles reported having fewer local escape rooms (19 vs 27), and had less strong liking of multiple rooms. Those with industry roles also expected to pay more relative to a movie ticket than enthusiasts only. Before playing a room, those with industry roles were more likely to consult tripadvisor, google, locals, FB groups and less likely to consult blogs or none of the listed sources.



NB: multiple answers allowed, so raw numbers presented

There were no significant differences between enthusiasts and those with industry roles on how much they liked different escape room tropes. Compared to enthusiasts only, participants with industry roles had stronger preferences for detective/police/crime, heist/thieves, military, science, sherlock, spy, tomb/ancient civilisation themes. They also had a stronger liking for hints delivered via a screen.

These differences reflect the more commercial and market knowledge focused views of those with ER industry roles.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**LEE-FAY LOW** is an Associate Professor at the University of Sydney and an avid enthusiast of escape rooms. She compiled all the results and provided commentaries and insights written here.



**ERROL ELUMIR** is obsessed with escape room puzzle design and has designed large scale escape events and puzzle hunts. He is part of a podcast about escape rooms called Room Escape Divas.

More information about this survey, as well as raw data, can be found on the website <http://thecodex.ca>. A huge thanks to all who participated in this survey!

There were a number of people who helped out with editing and previewing this survey. Our thanks go out to Ben Rosner, David Spira, Lisa Spira, Gilles Duchesne, Joanna Cheng, Ken Ferguson, and Pim Arts.

# 2018 ESCAPE ROOM ENTHUSIAST SURVEY

PAGE 10

## BONUS CONTENT - COMMENTS AND ANECDOTES FROM YOU!

Below are a few comments we've selected to include in this survey. If you are interested, all comments are available in the raw data. Errol's comments are in blue.

"I recently did an immersive theatre escape room and found an unused Maxi Pad in the space, and I thought it was part of the game. So I carried it around for a long time until I realized it definitely wasn't part of the game."

"This one time a dragon sang Tom Jones to us. Which was obviously amazing."

Yes. Yes it is.

"Once, in a cockroach filled room, we got a clue to go out the emergency door. The emergency door that led to the outside, because the room used to be a store room at a thrift shop. We called on the walkie and asked, is this right, they said we could go outside. We did. My friends found nothing, but some sewer and power line markings on the ground behind the shopping plaza, and decided that must be the clue. They took off for about 15 minutes while the rest of us 'solved' most of the rest of the room (in reality it was just a bunch of broken locks that needed opened by mostly force -- which is what they told us to do) The clue to go outside had us literally break the door to the outside to get a key... Our friends come back with a keycard they had found at the end of the sewage and power markings, all the way at the other end of the shopping plaza, they said it was tucked behind and air conditioner. I looked at them and said, guys, there is no tech in this room. They had found somebody's key they left for their mistress! We still have the key."

Those guys are searching heroes!

"We looked out the window and thought the room across the street was blinking a code to us. LOL"

"Why is it I always forget to open the drawers that aren't locked?"

You and me both, fellow enthusiast!

"Once the room was so hot I took off my shirt, only to learn later the host had put a clue on my back."

Nobody lets me take off MY shirt. :(

"Once had lightning strike the building during one of the games we played and it helped open a lock that had an electrical element to it."

"I'm an owner and females constantly flash the camera (not complaining, just saying)."

"I once fell asleep for a minute or two during a particularly lengthy and boring deciphering puzzle."

Were you doing the puzzle? This sounds like me.

"We had a escape room which ended by crossing a small hall with smoke effect. But, when they ended the game of the group before us, they forget to turn off the smoke machine. After +/- 50 minutes, we entered the hall to finish the game. It was full of smoke and we almost suffocated before getting to the end of the hall. Terrible and scary experience. We couldn't turn back because the door to the other room closed automatically. :("

"Did a room where you had to identify the name of the serial killer. One of the players said out loud 'Okay, I am looking for a 4-letter word that begins with F!' which led to us laughing."

"I LOVE EGGS!"

I honestly can't remember if this comment was written by me or not. In case of the latter, you and I can be friends!

"Cheese is delicious."

"A cat fell from the ceiling tiles."

This sounds like me.

"Lisa, I'm not drinking any Chilean wine while doing this survey."

This doesn't sound like Manpans.

"Player accidentally wore one wrist cuff home and had to come in the next day to get it unlocked."

"There is no number on Richard the 3rd!"

"An escape room is not a good place for a second date."

"I hope you have a nice day."

Thank you! I hope you have a nice day, too!