

# How Much Money Can I Make As A Professional Gamer?

 Last Updated On May 26, 2024 [Bryan](#) in [Careers](#)



No matter how much you love playing video games and want to make it a profession at the end of the day you have to be able to support yourself financially. There are a lot of ways for professional esports athletes to make a living.

How much money can a professional gamer make? **A player can earn anywhere from \$25,000 to \$1 million a year. It depends on their skill level, the game played, and whether streaming is used.**

I was pretty stunned when I learned that a majority of esports athletes earn **\$60,000 a year**. I didn't realize there was so much earning potential. These numbers may look enticing, but don't get too excited yet. It can be very challenging to create a professional gaming career that can earn this amount of money.

## The Numbers



Unfortunately, there's a lack of transparency within the esports industry regarding income. **Many esports teams and players keep this information very guarded and don't make it public.**

For people wanting to break into the field, this makes it very difficult to know if it's even something they should pursue.

When it comes to money, and financial security people want to know there's potential before undertaking a new career.

As esports becomes more popular hopefully more information will be released regarding financial situations.

Personally, I would want this information if my children decided to pursue a career in esports. I would want to know how much they could potentially earn before really investing in this career path.

Some of the following stats and figures can be misleading to future gamers.

It's going to look very enticing, but please know these are averages and to achieve this level of income is incredibly tricky.

As we said before, esports is a worldwide phenomenon meaning you have to compete globally in order to turn this into a viable profession.

The very best pro gamers in the world average around **\$1.1 million a year** per year!

A majority of that money can be broken up into individual categories such as streaming, sponsorships, prize winnings, and salary.

Again this number represents the best of the best, and it's not a number that you are guaranteed to make as a professional gamer.

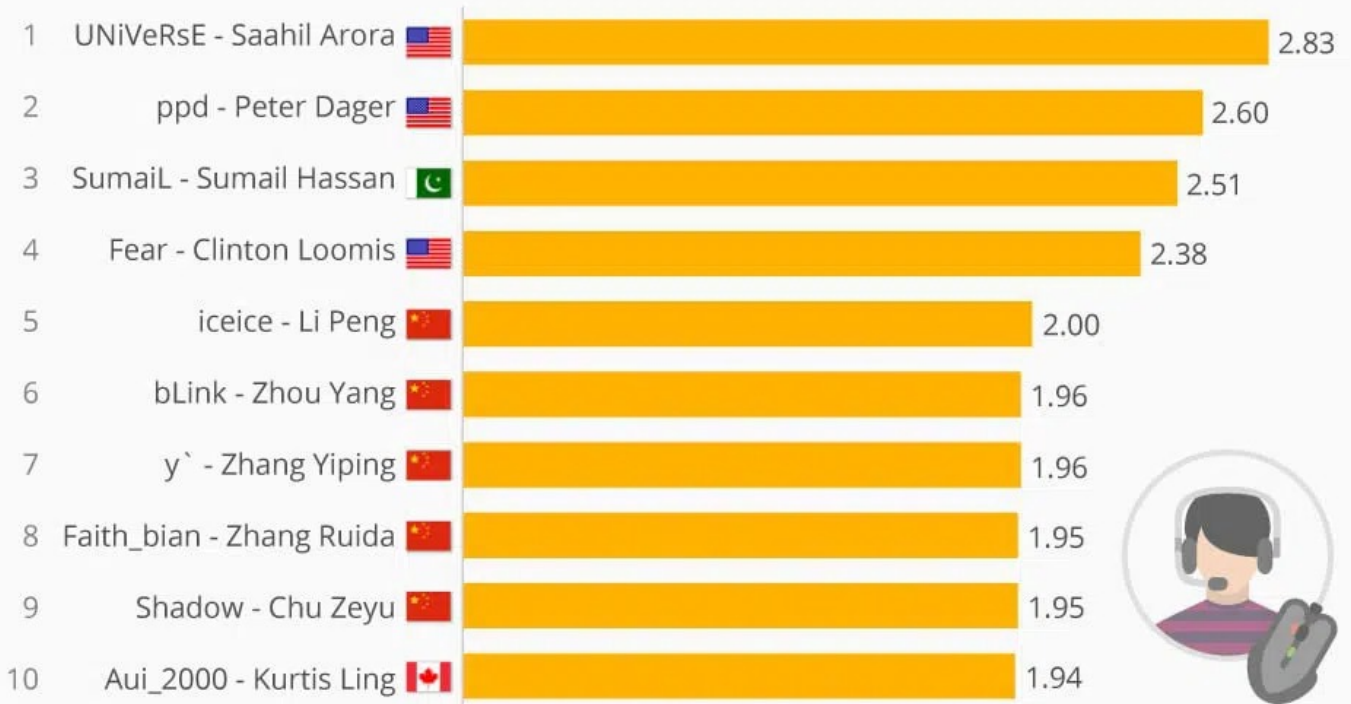
**Only around 2,000 pro-gamers are able to make a living in esports.** That's two thousand people in the entire world!

This figure really stuck with me as I research this topic. With so many people wanting to be in the industry and its continual growth this seemed like a low number to me.

But the numbers speak for themselves and reflect how hard it is to play professionally.

# The Highest Earning Gamers in the World

Career winnings of the best-earning eSport players (in million USD)\*



\* As of August 8, 2017

@StatistaCharts

Source: [esportsearnings.com](http://esportsearnings.com)



statista

Courtesy of [Statista](#)

Of course, different people have different standards in regards to what is considered a healthy financial living.

## Financial Breakdown

I honestly thought most professional gamers earned a majority of their income through prize winnings. But after studying the numbers you'll notice prize winnings are a small percentage of their income.

The following percentages are a guesstimate, but hopefully, they will give you an idea of **what a professional gamer can expect from different avenues.**

- 55% streaming ad revenue
- 13% sponsorships
- 13% twitch subscriptions
- 11% prize money

- 8% salary

## Streaming



Professional gamers are required to practice...a lot! So why not use all that practice time and earn additional income.

Growing up the 90s I never thought it would be popular for people to sit down and watch other people play video games let alone pay to watch other people.

I was always the one grabbing the controller to play, which regularly caused arguments between my brother and myself.

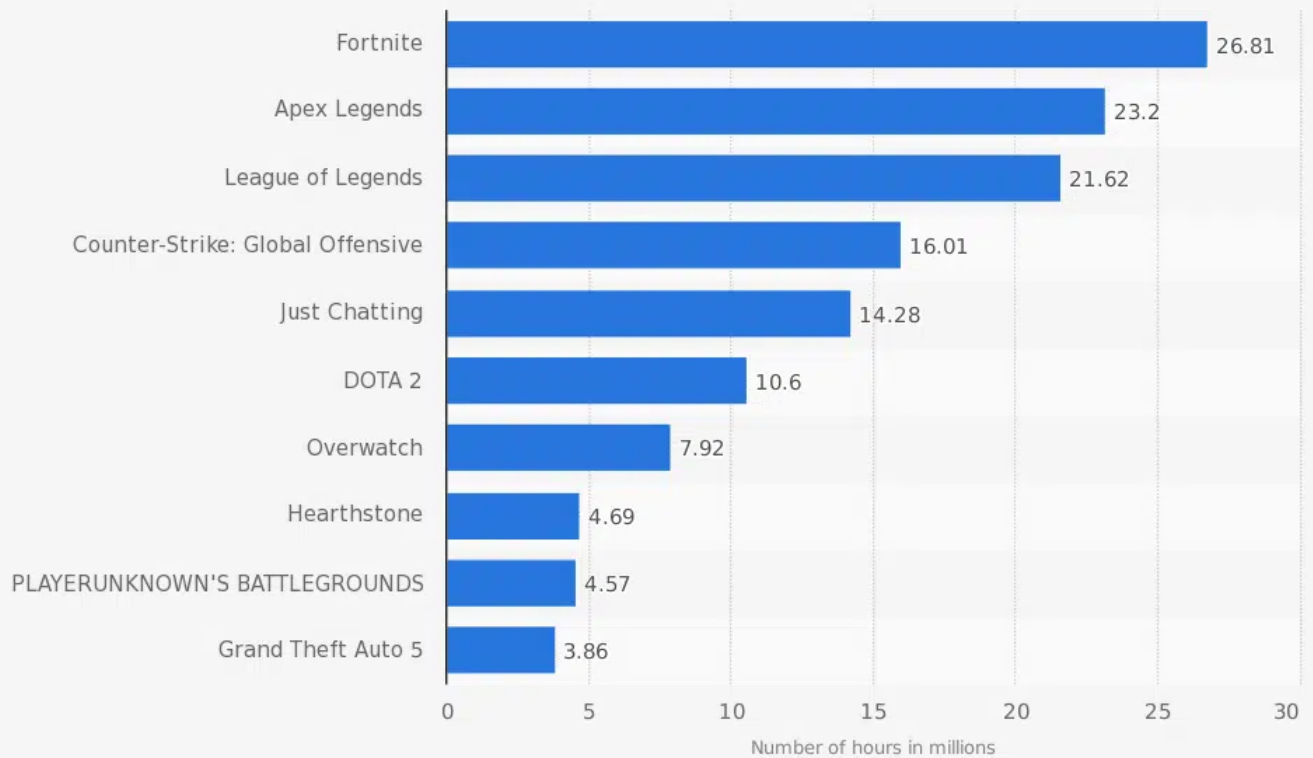
For fans of gaming today it's become commonplace for them to use YouTube Gaming or Twitch to follow their favorite esports athletes as they practice and play.

Gamers are streaming themselves as they play against other gamers. Some streamers even offer their audience tips and tricks.

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### Leading gaming content on Twitch worldwide from February 25 to March 3, 2019, by number of hours viewed (in millions)



Source  
Gamoloco  
© Statista 2019

Additional Information:  
Worldwide; Gamoloco; February 25 to March 3, 2019

Courtesy of [Statista](#)

It'll be interesting to see how these numbers continue to develop and change as esports becomes more common and grows in popularity.

## YouTube Gaming

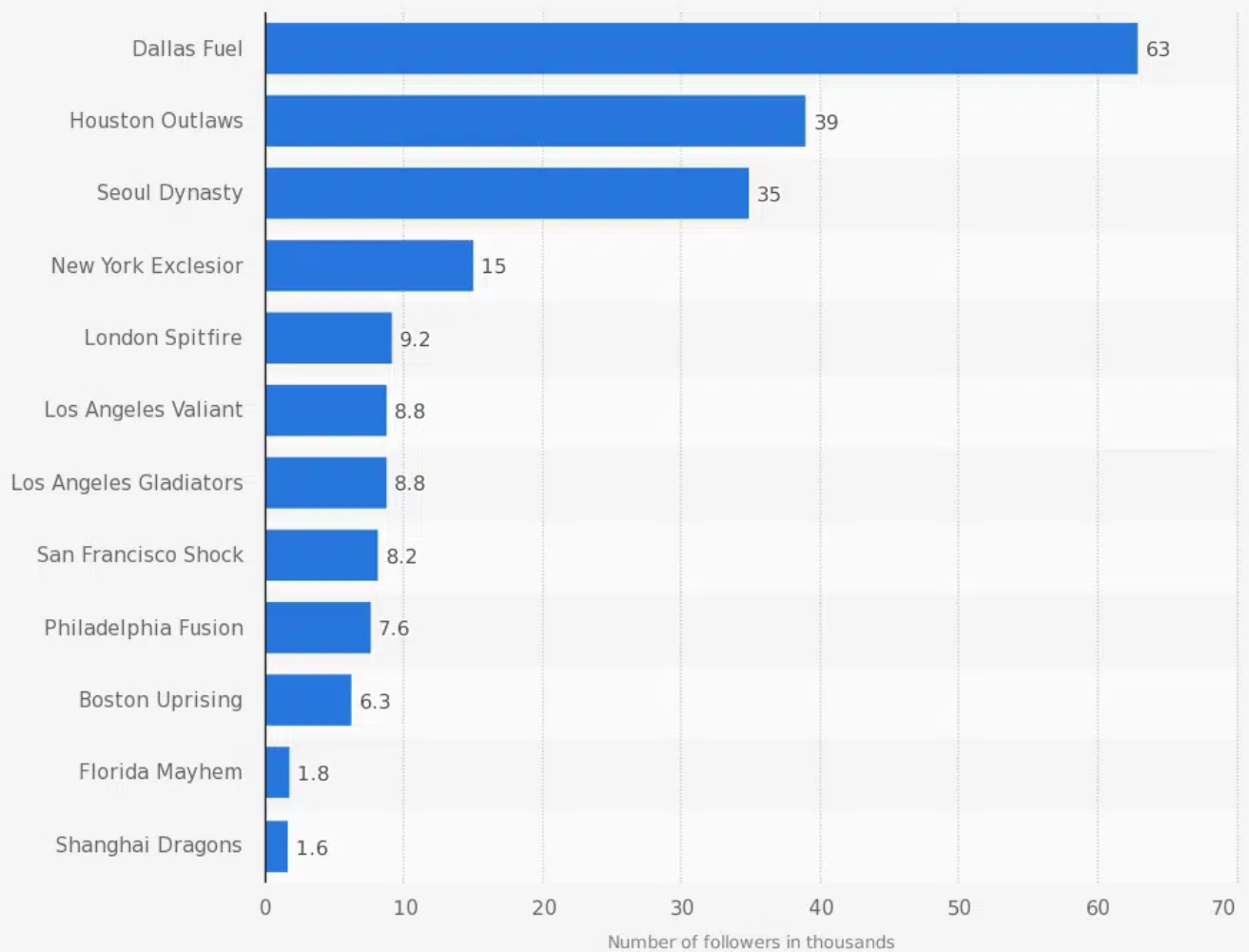
A lot of gamers will start with a YouTube channel to grow their audience.

**YouTube Gaming has a reputation of being more accessible for new gamers.**

With YouTube Gaming, the primary way to earn money as a streamer is through ads. You get paid from the number of people watching your videos and clicking on the ads.

Esports leagues are even taking advantage of YouTube Gaming. They are using it to reach fans around the globe.

### Leading Overwatch League teams on YouTube worldwide as of February 2018, by number of followers (in 1,000s)



Source  
eSports Marketing Blog  
© Statista 2018

Additional Information:  
Worldwide; February 13, 2018

Courtesy of [Statista](#)

Once you've reached a substantial following on your YouTube channel (typically around 10,000 subscribers) it's probably best to take your content to Twitch.

## Twitch

Twitch operates on a completely different payment model you'll need to understand when creating your channel.

It costs the general consumer \$4.99 a month to subscribe to a specific Twitch Channel. The streamer will then collect \$3 of that fee monthly.

So easy math says if an esports athlete has **1,000 subscribers they will earn \$3,000 per month from Twitch.**

While that might not sound like enough to break the bank, the top streamers in the world have made a lot of money using this system.

**League of Legends streamer 'Imaqtpie' has been known to make \$9,000 a month from streaming alone.**

Not only are gamers making money from Twitch but they are also collecting income from their sponsors.

Sponsors want their brands represented and worn while gamers are streaming their content. You'll regularly see streamers give specific shout outs, take commercial breaks to show love to their sponsor, or hold special giveaways highlighting one of their sponsors.

## **Personalities**

Most of the very best streamers have dynamic or engaging personalities.

**Their audience continues to return to their channel because they enjoy both their skills and who they are as a person.**

Being a top streamer really is about developing your brand and your image.

You want to come across as likable and relatable to your audience so they return again and again. It's also beneficial to be consistent with your content and how often you play.

You want your audience to know how often you'll be online and when to expect new content.

I understand that streaming might be incredibly awkward at first, but if you can get over the nerves, there's a great opportunity there.



## Sponsorships



This is actually one of my favorite parts about becoming an esports athlete.

It sounds really neat to be sponsored by a company! You'd get paid to wear their brand and use their products. So if you're reading this Under Armour just let me know when you're ready to sign me to a sponsor contract.

If you look at the top athletes in the world not necessarily within esports, you'll notice they all have sponsorship deals. Most of the time the sponsors are so connected to the athlete's brand that you can't differentiate between the two.

### ***DID YOU KNOW?***

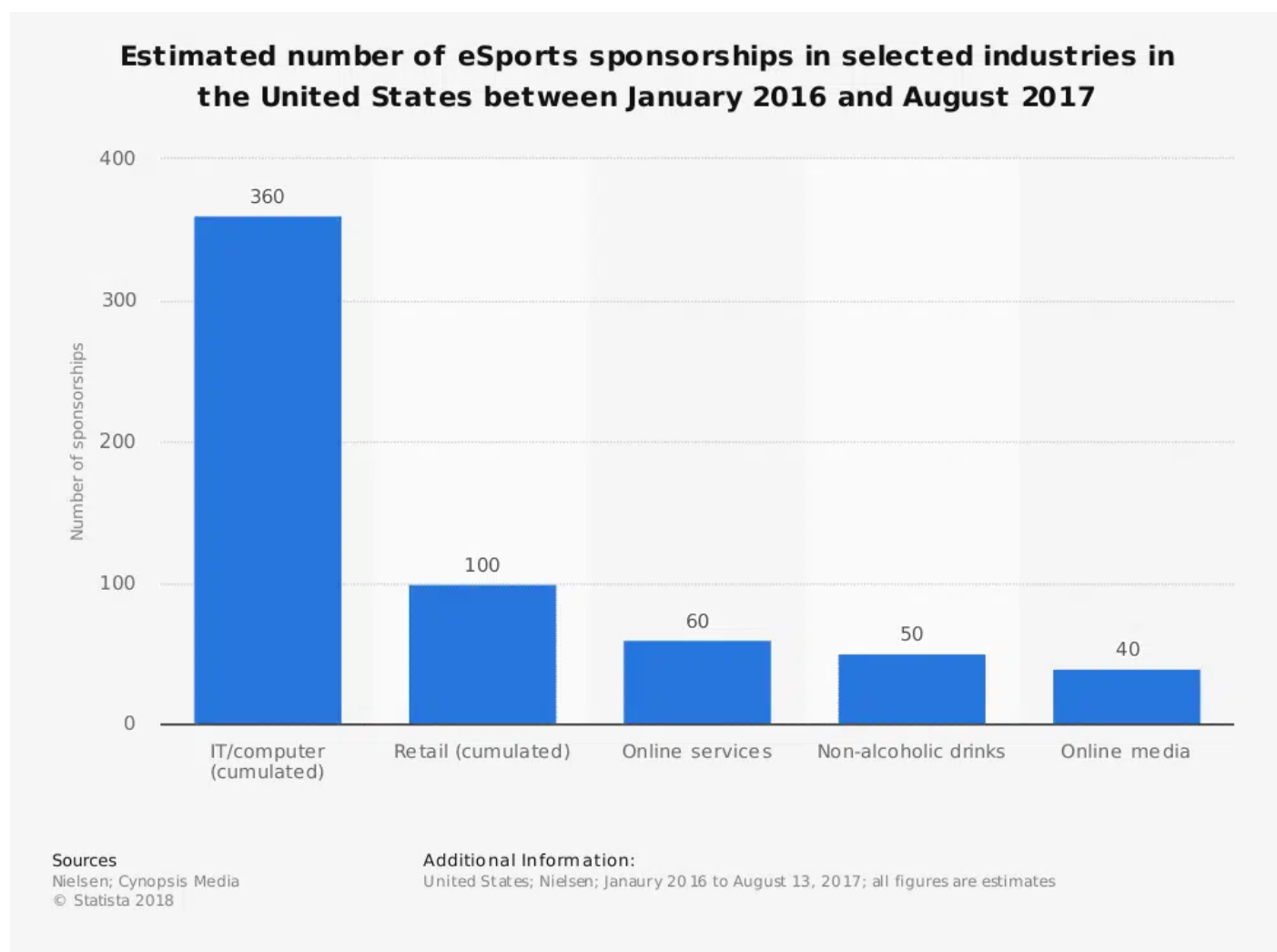
*Meg Whitman, former CEO of eBay and Hewlett Packard invested in Immortals LLC, taking a seat on the board of the organisation at the same time.*

*– Adam Fitch, Esports Insider*

For instance, I've always associated Puma with Usain Bolt and Under Armour with Steph Curry.

Getting a corporate sponsorship in esports is really the golden ticket to financial success.

This is where a majority of athletes make their income and support themselves.



Courtesy of [Statista](#)

## Individual Sponsorships

Sponsorship deals for esports can be configured in a couple of different ways. First, you have companies sponsoring individual athletes.

These individual athletes typically play single player games like [Super Smash Brothers](#) and are popular streamers.

**Companies will approach athletes and pay them to wear the company logo or brand on their clothing** as they compete or stream.

If you look at the significant esports teams, you'll notice their athletes' shirts are decorated with a variety of logos from companies. It's very similar to NASCAR where you'll see logos on cars.

Teams typically have both major and minor sponsors all wanting their logo seen on athlete's jerseys.

There's a variety of different companies getting involved in sponsorship. With many of them not having a product necessarily related to gaming in general.

Companies like Coca-Cola, Mountain Dew, and Airbus are just a few of the companies that have thrown a lot of money at esports and their athletes.

The owners of these teams love having corporate sponsors to help offset the costs of maintaining the group. Some of those costs include paying for tournament fees, travel, or general day-to-day operations.

## **Technology Sponsorships**

Companies like Razer, Alienware, and Intel that have a direct link to video games will spend a lot of money on sponsorships.

Their sponsorship will typically be configured a little different. These companies know the athletes need their products so they'll either give away items for free or at a significant discount.

**Gaming companies want the general audience to see top athletes using their products** so they'll be inspired to go out and buy their own.

Travis Hezel is the global director of sponsorships for the company [SteelSeries](#). They design and manufacture video game items like headphones and mice.

Travis had a great quote describing the partnership between companies and esports teams.

*“Depending on the account, it can result in varying items. Ultimately, we take the stance that the players need to be taken care of financially, but that also comes from make sure they’re happy utilizing our equipment when competing. Their interests always come first when we’re working with management on negotiating an agreement. A great case would be the guys from Evil Geniuses-the management approaches us based on feedback from their Dota 2 Team already using our peripherals.”*

– [AList, Playing The Game: How Much ESports Players Really Make](#)

You can clearly see from this quote that Travis and his company take great pride in their product and their sponsorship deals. They understand how important it is for top gamers to use their products while also raving about their functionality.

## **Social Media**

Sponsorship deals also include social media requirements from their athletes. It's mostly having them take pictures or giving a specific shout out about a product.

Some esports teams will even film commercials using a sponsor's products.

### ***DID YOU KNOW?***

*Esports star Tyler ‘Ninja’ Blevins has over 150 million social media followers.*

Companies love utilizing these athletes followers to push their products. They know the fans trust these influencers and want them taking as many social media pictures as possible.

It's tough to know exactly how much money can be made from these kinds of deals. Typically, the financial details are not made public.

If you're reading this...Under Armour...feel free to call me!

## Prize Money



There are so many different games played within esports, and every one of them has their own individual tournaments.

Even though there are amateur tournaments everywhere throughout the year, there's only a select few that offer truly life-changing prize money.

### ***DID YOU KNOW?***

*There are only 26 tournaments each year with prize money that's \$1 million or more. There are 500*



*tournaments with prize money exceeding \$80,000.*

– *MoneyNation*

The game you have chosen to play professionally may not have enough prestige to offer this much prize money. Plus most of the tournaments that are awarding this much money are team-based and not individual.

### **You can learn a lot from the top 500 gamers around the world and their prize money earned in 2018.**

These figures include total prize money earned for the year.

- The top 500 Gamers made \$20,000
- The top 100 made \$125,000
- The top 20 made \$400,000

To be included on this list of top gamers will take a lot of skill and dedication.

Most headlines about esports will discuss the enormous prize money players can win at tournaments.

When young gamers see these large numbers they decide to pursue a career in esports.

Prize money is also the most deceiving number. They can set the wrong expectations and can be a source of great frustration for gamers.

### **The amount of prize money offered at the top tournaments is typically determined by the popularity of a video game.**

You can automatically assume tournaments based around League of Legends or Dota 2 will have huge prize winnings for the top teams.

**The highest paid esports athletes (based on prize winnings alone) is actually Dota 2 players.** Meaning their tournaments have the biggest prize money payout.

At the 2017 Dota 2 International Championship Team Liquid was crowned champions. **Their total prize money for first place was \$10,862,683!**

This is simply astonishing!

## Split

What potential esports athletes don't realize is that \$10 million dollars get divided up. Not all of it goes to the players.

**Most esports teams have 5 to 6 players, a coach, a manager, and the owner.** All of these individuals will be getting a cut of the total prize money.

Obviously, if you're playing a single player game like Super Smash Brothers or Call of Duty, there are not as many people to split the money with. But neither is the total prize money anywhere near as high with these types of games.

I get it...even if you split \$10 million dollars, that's a lot of money! The problem comes from a lack of knowledge knowing that it's being split at all.

There is obviously potential to support yourself with prize-money alone, but it can be challenging with the amount of competition and the infrequency of tournaments.

If you were relying on prize money alone, you really can't afford to lose any tournaments. This creates unnecessary pressure on young gamers and can really take the joy out of competing.

This is why you have to be smart and develop your brand YOU with social media, streaming, and sponsorships, so there are other opportunities to

make money.

## Salaries



Courtesy of [GotCredit](#)

It can be challenging to get an exact figure of what to expect regarding salary as a professional gamer. Again the players with high wages are the ones playing the most popular games.

The very best **League of Legends** players typically earns **\$5,000 to \$10,000 a month**. While **CS:GO** players can make **\$8,000 to \$15,000**.

The problem is the minimal available roster spots on the top esports teams. Most esports teams only employ around 5 League of Legends players at a time. So, you can imagine it's challenging to get one of the coveted spots.

There's very little transparency between esports teams and the general public regarding salaries.

Bryce Blum, an attorney with [Electronic Sports and Gaming Law](#), had this to

say about salaries and the esports industry.

*“While there are certainly exceptions, the overwhelming majority of team owners want to compensate their players fairly. But how do we determine what is ‘fair’? In most industries, that can be easily dictated by the market. But the market can be misleading when it is in a state of flux, and nowhere is that more true than for eSports heading into 2016.”*

I know that quote was from 2016. However, Bryce’s point is still accurate today. Esports is still not that old of an industry and is changing every day.

**As esports gets bigger, there will need to be more regulations in place to keep salaries fair for everyone.**

## League of Legends

To get a general idea of salaries for a professional gamer, we’ll look at how League of Legends is setup.

At the beginning of every season Riot (the creator of League of Legends) gives its esports teams a set amount of money to cover all salaries and help with operating expenses.

**Riot has made it clear that every athlete that is part of their championship series must be paid a minimum of \$12,500 annually.** This figure doesn’t include any streaming money, sponsorship, or prize winnings.

A typical League of Legends championship series season lasts 28 matches which break down to about \$450 per event.

Even though this is the standard amount, many esports team will pay their athletes much more.

With League of Legends being as popular and competitive as it is, esports teams have to find ways to lure the top players to sign-on. This typically

means promising a higher salary for a contracted player.

## Honest Finances

**Favorite League of Legends team Ember actually released their player's salaries.** This was the first time any esports team has been this transparent with what they are paying their athletes.

In total, Ember has 5 players playing for their League of Legends team. The athlete's salaries are determined based on their reputation, skill, and social following.

It's like any other career. The more successful you are the more you should get paid.

Two of Embers athletes earn \$65,000 a year with the potential to receive an additional \$27,000 depending on their performance. Their other three athletes earn \$70,000 annually.

This all sounds like a pretty sweet setup to me! Especially since Ember gives their athletes health insurance.

You'll sometimes see salaries a little lower for professional gamers because so much of their daily expenses (housing, food, travel) are being met by their team owners.

It's fascinating to me to see the growth of esports and how the athletes are being compensated.

I appreciate how many esports teams and organizations are making sure their athletes are probably taken care of.

There's obviously potential to earn a good deal of money within esports, but it will take a lot of work, creativity, and patience as you work your way to the top.



## Related Questions

**How do I get an esports sponsor to notice me?** To receive sponsorships you must win tournaments, have a following on social media, and stream to a decent size audience.

*Featured image courtesy of [artubr](#)*

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