

# App Downloads Remain Dominated by Games

But the most popular individual apps are for messaging

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Demand for mobile apps is showing steady growth, according to recent research.

New figures from [Sensor Tower](#) show that worldwide mobile app downloads from Google Play and Apple's App Store combined totaled 23.4 billion in Q3, up 13.6% from last year's figure.

Year-over-year gains in downloads were stronger on Google Play (15.0%) than on the App Store (10.6%), likely a reflection of how dominant Google's Android mobile operating system remains on a global level.

([International Data Corporation \[IDC\]](#) estimates that 85.2% of smartphones shipped worldwide this year will run Android, compared with just 14.6% for iOS.)

Games still account for the overwhelming majority of downloaded apps on either OS, according to Sensor Tower. The company reported that users worldwide downloaded 6.90 billion games in Q3 from Google Play, well above the second-place category of tools, which saw 1.19 billion downloads.

**Top 5 Android vs. iOS Mobile App Categories Worldwide, Ranked by App Store Downloads, Q3 2016 & Q3 2017**

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Android			iOS		
	Q3 2016	Q3 2017		Q3 2016	Q3 2017
1. Game	6.06	6.90	1. Games	2.03	2.23
2. Tools	1.21	1.19	2. Entertainment	0.52	0.54
3. Entertainment	0.68	0.98	3. Photo & video	0.50	0.53
4. Photography	0.79	0.86	4. Social networking	0.39	0.46
5. Communication	0.83	0.83	5. Utilities	0.43	0.45

Source: Sensor Tower, "Store Intelligence: Q3 2017 Data Digest," Nov 21, 2017

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Meanwhile, iOS users downloaded games 2.23 billion times in the third quarter, compared with about 540 million downloads for entertainment apps, the No. 2 finisher.

But when it comes to the popularity of individual apps, messaging and social media services rule. By Sensor Tower's measure, the top five apps ranked by combined downloads on Google Play and the App Store were, in order: WhatsApp, Facebook, Messenger, Instagram and Snapchat.

The mobile game with the highest number of downloads was Subway Surfers, which ranked eighth overall on Sensor Tower's list. That's an indication that—while games remain popular as a category—they are still outpaced by messaging and social media apps on an individual basis.

eMarketer estimates that smartphone gamers in the US will number 121.4 million this year, with their ranks growing to 138.4 million by 2021.