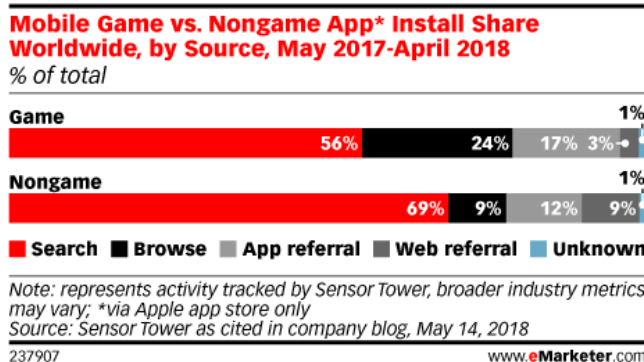# How Did You Find that App?
Search vs. browse

Ezra Palmer

Search is the most common way for app downloaders to find an app, but not all app categories are found quite the same way.

New data from Sensor Tower indicates that the path to a game download is different from the path to a nongame download.

Sensor reported that 65% of overall Apple App Store downloads between May 2017 and April 2018 came from search. But for game downloads, only 56% were search-sourced. Browsing led to 24% of game installs, the study found.

For nongame apps, browsing led to just 9% of all downloads.

Mobile Game vs. Nongame App* Install Share Worldwide, by Source, May 2017-April 2018
% of total

Game				1%
56%	24%	17%	3%	
Nongame				1%
69%	9%	12%	9%	

■ Search ■ Browse ■ App referral ■ Web referral ■ Unknown

Note: represents activity tracked by Sensor Tower, broader industry metrics may vary; *via Apple app store only
Source: Sensor Tower as cited in company blog, May 14, 2018

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The data suggests that, not surprisingly, users looking for a game to play are in discovery mode, and are more likely to stumble across

something that catches their fancy. Nongame apps appear to be the result of a direct, specific desire for a certain app, or at least a certain type of app.

According to eMarketer's latest estimates, there will be 221.7 million smartphone app users in the US. The vast majority (97.4%) have downloaded free apps. Only about one-third will buy an app this year, eMarketer projects.

Subscribers to eMarketer PRO: Look for a new report, "Mobile App Installs: What You Need to Know About User Acquisition," coming later this month. [UPDATE: The report has been published. Subscribers can access it below.]