Game Market Copilot

STEAM 2025 / RELEASE TIMING

How should you pick a Steam release date?

We examined the release dates and review counts of all 20,908 games released on Steam in 2025. From the "aim for an empty day" adage through weekday and month concentration, the days around Next Fest and the seasonal sales, primary-tag seasonality, and the days around major launches, this is a reference for deciding your release date.



Release timing report | 2025 releases | Full census | 25 official events

Game Market Copilot
Data as of 2026-08-24

Background art: R.E.P.O. / Clair Obscur: Expedition 33 / Hades II / ARC Raiders (Steam store)

Foreword



Shuntaro Nakajima
Founder
Game Market Copilot

The common advice for Steam release dates is "find an empty day." Analyzing the release dates and reception of all 20,908 games released in 2025 shows which parts of that adage hold up, and which do not.

The 2025 release cycle shows the same pattern as releases through August 2026, so it should serve future release planning too. New releases cluster on Thursdays and Fridays and in October-November, rising and falling in a regular cycle. Analyzing review counts against release timing, we observed lower review traction only under one specific condition: releasing right after a major title whose top tags are close to yours. So treat the "empty periods are better" adage as a light guide at most; this report lays out, step by step, how to actually decide a release date.

Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: 20,908 Steam releases of 2025 / Data as of 2026-08-24 (reviews observed 61-600 days after release) / Metrics: release dates, Steam-purchase review counts

Contents

04 The 2025 picture and the key findings
06 Chapter 1: The 365-day release-count calendar (daily, weekday, month)
10 Chapter 2: Around the official events (Next Fest, seasonal sales)
14 Chapter 3: Tag seasonality and review counts
20 Chapter 4: Releasing near major titles, and how to pick a date (this chapter only: 2023-2025, 51,531 titles)
26 Closing: the 2026 follow-up (Jan-Aug), definitions, scope



R.E.P.O. (released Feb 26)


Clair Obscur: Expedition 33 (released Apr 24)



Hades II (released Sep 25)


ARC Raiders (released Oct 30)

Screenshots from the Steam store pages of each quarter's most-reviewed release, one per quarter, to show how launches spread across the year.

Key findings first

What the census shows

01 **Releases concentrate on Thu-Fri and in Oct-Nov** Ch. 1

02 **No day qualified as "unusually crowded"** Ch. 1

03 **Releases during the big sales drop to 0.69x the surrounding weeks** Ch. 2

04 **Releases jump in the 7 days after Next Fest, all three times** Ch. 2

05 **Only Horror and Comedy show confirmed release-month skew** Ch. 3

06 **No confirmed review gap between busy and quiet release days** Ch. 3

07 **No drop in release counts observed near major launches** Ch. 4

> This report examines the distribution of release counts. It does not measure how launch-date choice affects sales.

Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: 20,908 Steam releases of 2025, 25 official Valve events, 370 primary tags (finding 07 only: 51,531 releases of 2023-2025, 45 majors) / Data as of 2026-08-24

The procedure first

Five steps to narrow down a release date

A decision guide built from the analysis of every 2025 title and the official Steamworks rules. Each step's evidence lives in the chapters, with the details on pages 24-25.

1 **Eliminate the days the official rules make impossible**
Work backward from the Coming Soon period, review times, the date lock, and the discount cooldown, and strike the dates you cannot pick. (page 25)

2 **Check your direct competitors' release dates**
Rather than market-wide release counts, check whether a sizable game competing for your primary tag and price band lands near your date (ch. 3-4).

3 **Settle your Next Fest plan first**
Next Fest is widely treated as an event with little downside to joining. Participation is once per title, pre-release only, held three times a year (February, June, October), so pick your fest and the demo-validation period before placing the date (ch. 2).

4 **Decide how to treat "empty days"**
Weekend release dates are generally discouraged. Emptiness by itself is no basis in our observations (ch. 1). Ease of pickup on social media and in gaming press may still be worth considering (future research).

5 **Cross-check the remaining candidates against the calendar**
Only when equivalent candidates remain, use the daily chart, distance to official events, and your own tag's seasonality as tiebreakers (ch. 1-3).

> The 2025 data turned up no particular "good day." Know which days you cannot pick and which periods run crowded, then decide from similar titles' release plans and your own constraints: that is the strategy this report supports.

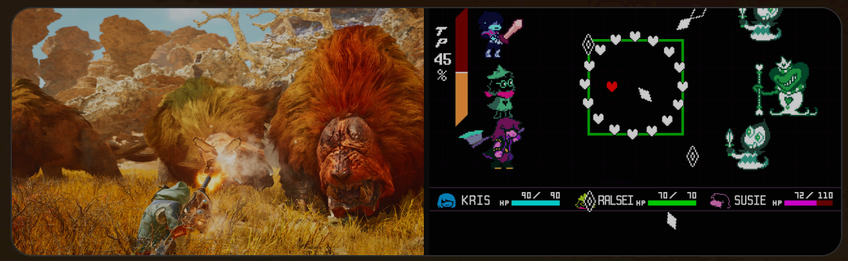
Source: Game Market Copilot / The procedure is a decision framework built on the 2025 census and official Steamworks rules; it does not guarantee the outcome of any date / Data as of 2026-08-24

01

SECTION 01

The 365-day release-count calendar

Using the daily release counts, we look at the year-long release cycle and the weekly rhythm.

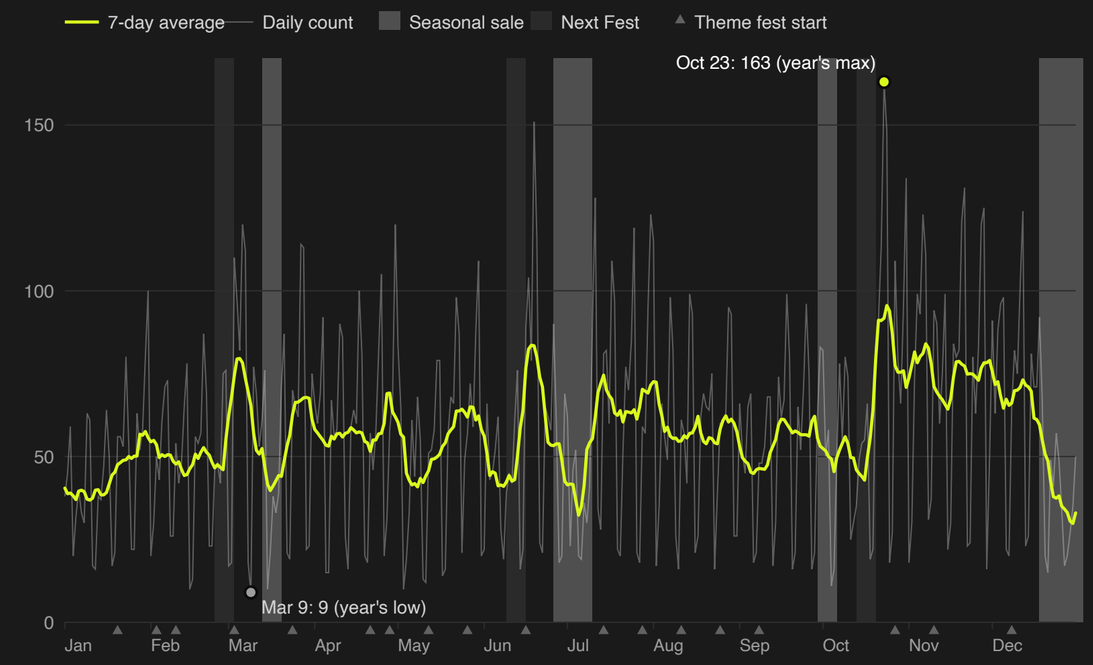


Art: Monster Hunter Wilds (released Feb 27) / DELTARUNE (released Jun 4). Major launches spread across the year too (Steam store).

Full census: daily releases, 365 days

Daily release counts through the year

The daily release counts of 2025, in sequence. The weekly rhythm of many weekday releases and few weekend ones runs through the whole year. Releases dip during the seasonal sales (light grey bands) and Next Fest (dark grey bands), and rise after each of the three Next Fests.

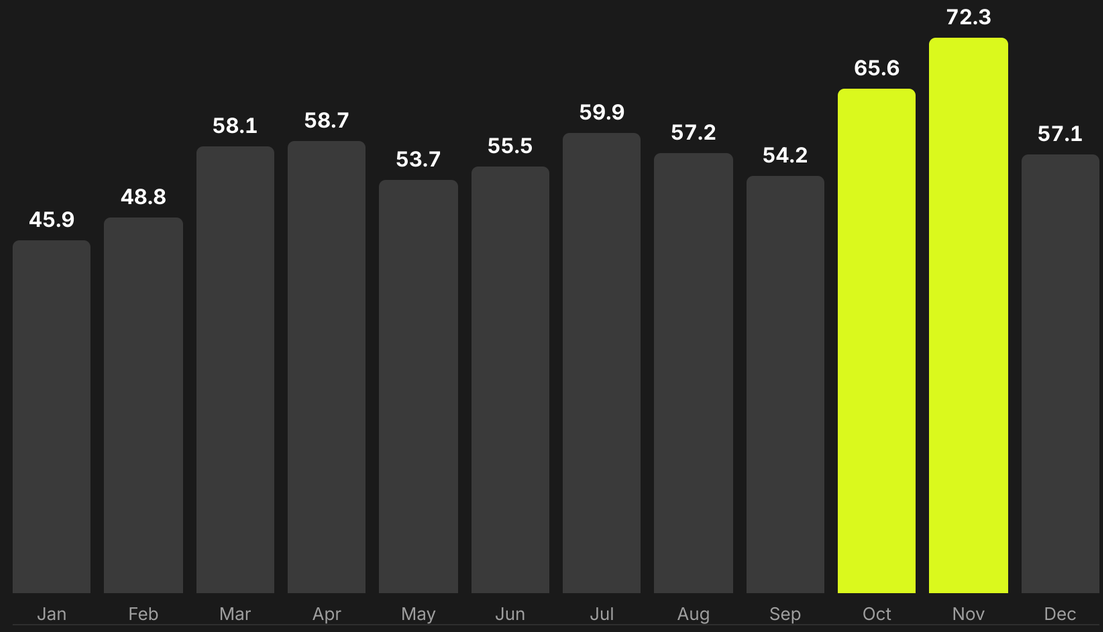


Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: 20,908 Steam releases of 2025, 365 days / Data as of 2026-08-24 / Event bands follow Valve's official dates (start inclusive, end exclusive)

Average releases per day, by month

Average releases per day, month by month

Months differ in length, so we compare average releases per day. November is the busiest at 72.3 per day and January the quietest at 45.9, with supply building from the start of the year toward autumn. February has the smallest total (1,366 games), but with only 28 days, January ends up lowest per day.



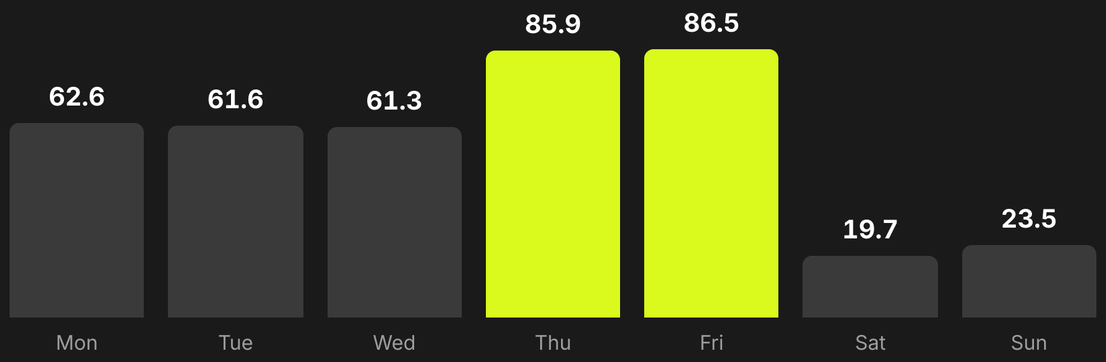
Monthly counts show how crowded each month was, not how games released then performed. The Oct-Nov peak includes the post-Next-Fest surge covered in chapter 2 and Horror's October concentration covered in chapter 3.

Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: 20,908 Steam releases of 2025 / Data as of 2026-08-24 / Values are average releases per calendar day per month (monthly totals range from 1,424 in January to 2,168 in November)

The weekly cycle: average per weekday

Average releases per weekday

The 20,908 releases of 2025, as average releases per weekday occurrence. The year averaged 57.3 releases a day, but split by weekday, 42.9% of them (8,961 games) shipped on a Thursday or Friday.



20,908 games
released on Steam in 2025

57.3/day
average releases per day across 365 days

42.9%
share released on Thursday or Friday (8,961 games)

> The weekday cycle is real, but testing all 365 days together, zero days could be confirmed as individual anomalies.

Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: 20,908 Steam releases of 2025, 365 days / Data as of 2026-08-24 / Values are averages per weekday occurrence (Wednesday occurs 53 times, other weekdays 52). Anomaly verdicts apply a weekday- and season-adjusted model with an all-365-day multiple-comparison correction

Chapter 1 summary

What months, weekdays and weekends tell you

Months	Releases start the year lowest and build toward autumn. November peaked at 72.3 per day, January bottomed at 45.9.
Weekdays	42.9% (8,961 games) concentrated on Thursday-Friday; Monday through Wednesday ran roughly flat.
Weekends	Saturday-Sunday releases stay at 10.7% (2,243 games). Current Steamworks guidance generally discourages weekend release dates.
Anomalies	Zero days could be confirmed as individually "unusually crowded."

> What makes days crowded is the weekly and seasonal cycle, not particular dates. "Aim for an empty day" has no basis in the 2025 observations; narrow your date by execution constraints and direct competitors instead (pages 24-25).

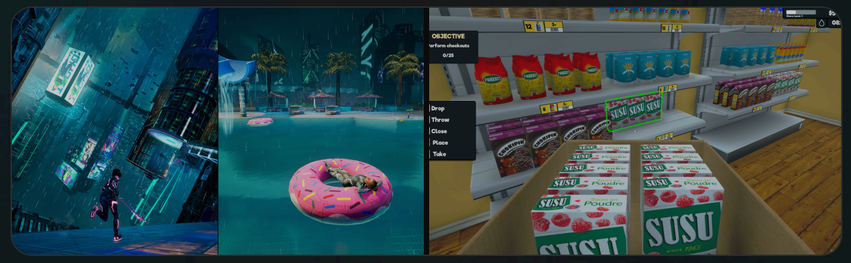
Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: 20,908 Steam releases of 2025, 365 days / Data as of 2026-08-24 / Weekend guidance per current Steamworks documentation (as of 2026-09-03) / Anomaly verdicts apply a weekday- and season-adjusted model with an all-365-day multiple-comparison correction

02

SECTION 02

Around the official events

How release counts move after Next Fest and during the seasonal sales, and whether the 18 theme fests show any difference, each checked against the same weekdays in the surrounding weeks. The chapter also lists the dates of all 25 official events of 2025.

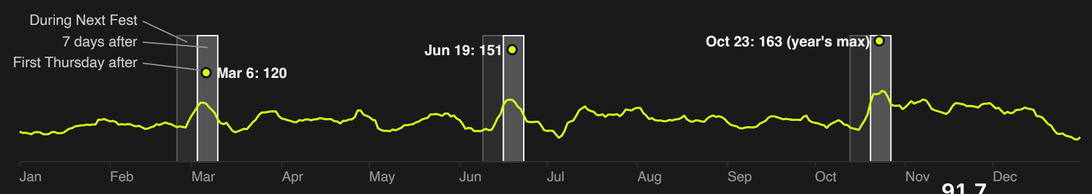


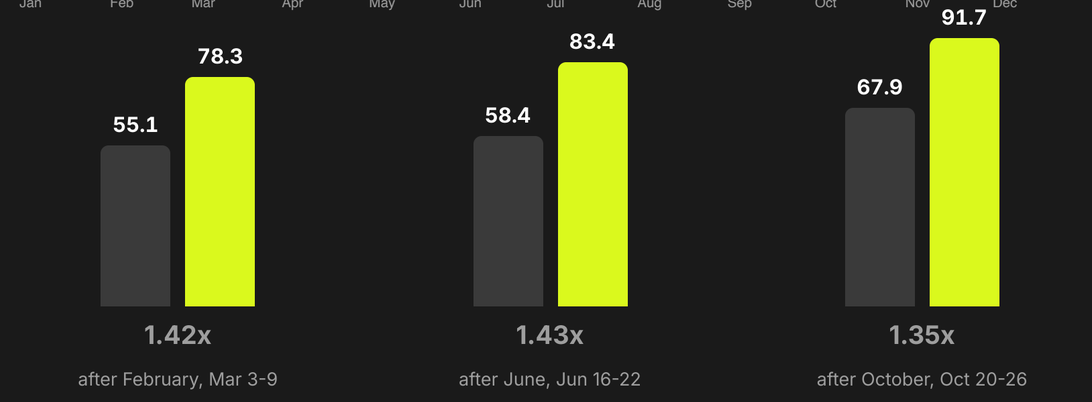
Art: Split Fiction (released Mar 6) / Supermarket Simulator (released Jun 19). The most-reviewed releases of each first post-Next-Fest Thursday (Steam store).

7 days after Next Fest: busier all three times (post-hoc)

Average daily releases in the week after Next Fest

The 7 days after each of the year's three Next Fests (February, June, October) are compared with the same weekdays in the surrounding 4 weeks (the control). All three post-fest weeks were busier than their controls; pooled, 1.40x. The first Thursday after each fest ranked among the busiest release days of the year.





daily average on matched control days daily average in the post-fest week

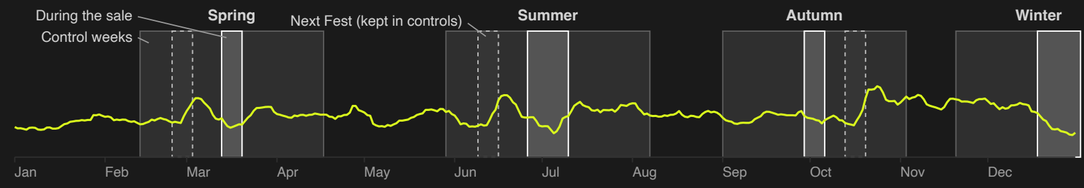
Releases in the 7 days after each fest exceeded the controls all three times, and the first Thursday after each fest was among the year's busiest days. This is not a recommendation to release right after a fest, or to avoid it.

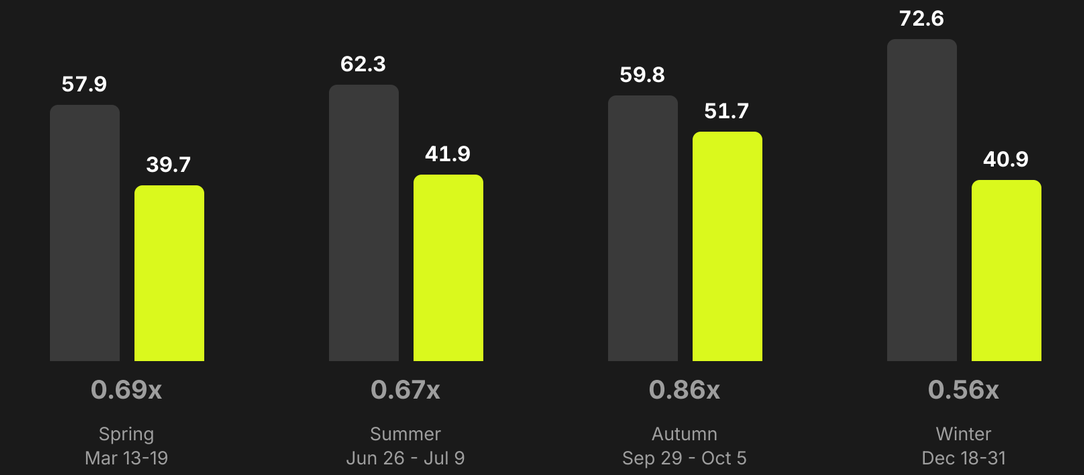
Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: the 7 days after each of the 3 Next Fests of 2025 (21 days) vs same-weekday control days within ±28 days, other official event days excluded / Data as of 2026-08-24 / Only 3 event units; the post-fest window was chosen after seeing the data

During the seasonal sales: fewer releases, all four times

Average daily releases during the seasonal sales

Each of the four seasonal sales' daily release average is compared with the surrounding 4 weeks before and after. All four sales saw fewer releases than their surroundings; pooled, 0.69x (plausible range 0.58-0.82x).





daily average of the surrounding weeks daily average during the sale

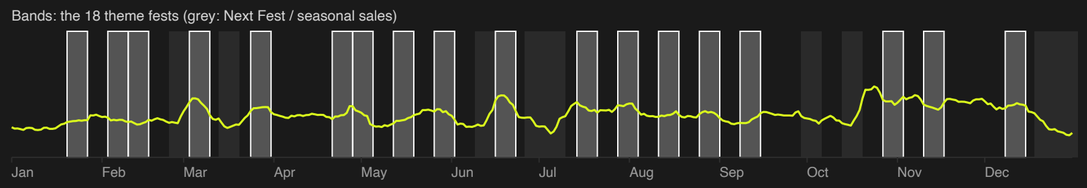
Because discounts cannot change for 30 days after launch, games aiming to join a sale need to release at least 30 days before it starts. The dip during sales is consistent with that rule.

Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: the 4 seasonal sales of 2025, 42 running days inside 2025, vs the 4 whole weeks before and after each (196 days total, no exclusions; Winter counted for its 14 days inside 2025 with pre-sale weeks only) / Data as of 2026-08-24 / Ranges are resampling estimates (only Autumn, at 0.86x, crosses 1x) / Sensitivity: excluding Next Fest weeks reads 0.67x (0.56-0.79), same direction / Only 4 event units; this describes calendar overlap

The 18 theme fests: no confirmed change

Average daily releases during theme fests

Pooling the year's 18 theme fests (Idler Fest, Racing Fest and so on; list on the right page) under the same method, fest days average 1.07 times the controls, with a plausible range (0.999-1.148x) that crosses 1x. The dip seen during the seasonal sales is not observed in theme-fest weeks.





1.07x (plausible range 0.999-1.148)

18 theme fests pooled
126 running days

daily average during fests daily average on matched control days

> No basis for "avoid fest weeks" is observed for theme fests. This pools 18 fests as a calendar description; it is not an effect of any single fest or of participating.

Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: the 18 theme fests of 2025, 126 running days, vs same-weekday control days within ±28 days (other official event days excluded) / Data as of 2026-08-24 / A pooled comparison across 18 fests, not per-fest testing

The 25 official Valve events of 2025

Official event calendar

1/20-1/26	Theme fest	Real-Time Strategy Fest
2/3-2/9	Theme fest	Idler Fest
2/10-2/16	Theme fest	Couch Co-Op Fest
2/24-3/2	Next Fest	Steam Next Fest: February 2025
3/3-3/9	Theme fest	Visual Novel Fest
3/13-3/19	Seasonal sale	Steam Spring Sale 2025
3/24-3/30	Theme fest	City Builder & Colony Sim Fest
4/21-4/27	Theme fest	Sokoban Fest
4/28-5/4	Theme fest	Wargames Fest
5/12-5/18	Theme fest	Creature Collector Fest
5/26-6/1	Theme fest	Zombies vs. Vampires Fest
6/9-6/15	Next Fest	Steam Next Fest: June 2025
6/16-6/22	Theme fest	Fishing Fest
6/26-7/9	Seasonal sale	Steam Summer Sale 2025
7/14-7/20	Theme fest	Automation Fest
7/28-8/3	Theme fest	Racing Fest
8/11-8/17	Theme fest	4X Fest
8/25-8/31	Theme fest	Third Person Shooter Fest
9/8-9/14	Theme fest	Political Sim Fest
9/29-10/5	Seasonal sale	Steam Autumn Sale 2025
10/13-10/19	Next Fest	Steam Next Fest: October 2025
10/27-11/2	Theme fest	Steam Scream 4
11/10-11/16	Theme fest	Animal Fest
12/8-12/14	Theme fest	Sports Fest
12/18-1/4	Seasonal sale	Steam Winter Sale 2025

Source: official Valve announcements (Steamworks event pages, Steam news) / Periods run first day through last day (ending at the next day's rollover) / Theme-fest comparison scope (left page): 20,908 Steam releases of 2025, data as of 2026-08-24

03

SECTION 03

Tag seasonality and review counts

Do any of the 370 primary tags (each game's top-ranked Steam tag) skew toward particular release months, and does same-day crowding relate to review counts? We check both against the full 2025 census.

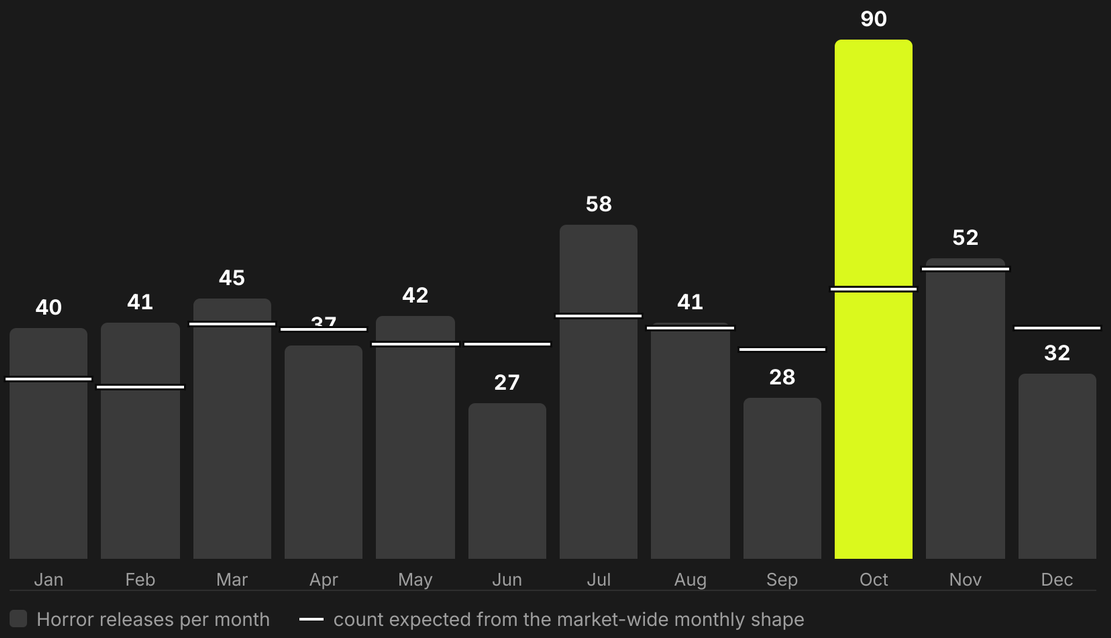


Art: Escape the Backrooms / Dark Hours. Both are primary-tag Horror releases of October 23 (Steam store).

Confirmed skew no. 1: Horror (533 games)

Horror releases by month

Of the 533 primary-tag Horror games released in 2025, 90 (16.9%) shipped in October. Halloween falls on October 31, and Steam runs its Halloween theme fest, Steam Scream 4, from October 27 (page 13). It is a guess, but the likely reading is that more Horror games set their launch dates to land in this window.

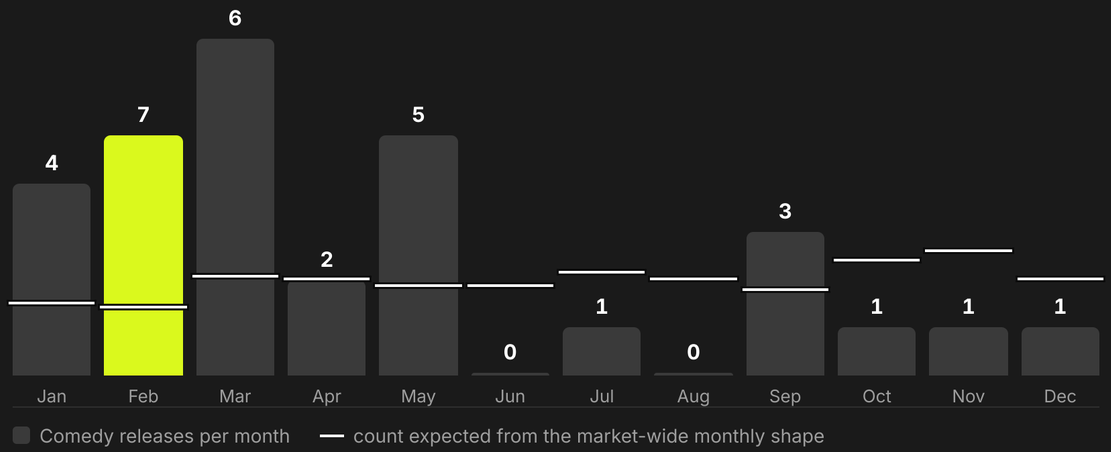


Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: the 533 primary-tag Horror releases of 2025 (20,891 tagged releases, all 370 tags scanned) / Data as of 2026-08-24 / Plausible range for the October share: 13.9-20.3%. Primary tags are current tags at the 2026 extraction

Confirmed skew no. 2: Comedy (31 games, small sample)

Comedy releases by month

Besides Horror, primary-tag Comedy also showed a concentration: 7 of its 31 releases (22.6%) landed in February. With only 31 games, though, and no seasonal event in sight unlike Horror, coincidence is a real possibility.



For the other 368 primary tags, no monthly skew could be confirmed

> "This genre ships in this month" or "this is the season to release" is not something the 2025 release record shows.

Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: the 31 primary-tag Comedy releases of 2025; of the 370 primary tags, the 93 with 30+ releases were tested (the 277 below 30 remain descriptive) / Data as of 2026-08-24 / The confirmed finding covers the full 12-month shape; the peak month is a descriptive note. Plausible range for Comedy's February share: 11.4-39.8%

All 533 Horror releases of 2025: most reviewed, 1-5

How many October launches make Horror's top ranks?

The 533 primary-tag Horror releases of 2025, ranked by Steam-purchase reviews (October launches carry black dates). Whether an October launch helps is checked with the reach rates below.

1		**R.E.P.O.** released Feb 26	**336,511** reviews
2		**Escape the Backrooms** **released Oct 23**	**134,187** reviews
3		**No, I'm not a Human** released Sep 15	**26,789** reviews
4		**Ghost Watchers** released Jul 24	**12,700** reviews
5		**Five Nights at Freddy's: Secret of the Mimic** released Jun 13	**10,752** reviews

Review reach rates: October vs other months

Share reaching 100 reviews

October	**15.6% (14/90)**
Other months	**15.1% (67/443)**

Share reaching 1,000 reviews

October	**2.2% (2/90)**
Other months	**4.1% (18/443)**

Reaching 100 reviews corresponds to the top 81 of the 533; reaching 1,000 to the top 20.

Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: the 10 most-reviewed of the 533 primary-tag Horror releases of 2025 (ranks 1-5) / Data as of 2026-08-24 (reviews are cumulative; later release months have fewer observation days) / Images from each game's Steam store page

Most reviewed, 6-10: does October help or hurt?

Review counts are cumulative, and games that went through Early Access include pre-1.0 reviews. The October-vs-other reach comparison sits at the bottom of the left page.

6		**Dark Hours** **released Oct 23**	**3,419** reviews
7		**Emissary Zero** released Mar 28	**2,648** reviews
8		**The Complex: Expedition** released Jul 18	**2,589** reviews
9		**Kiosk** released Jan 29	**2,514** reviews
10		**Last Report** released Jul 11	**2,338** reviews

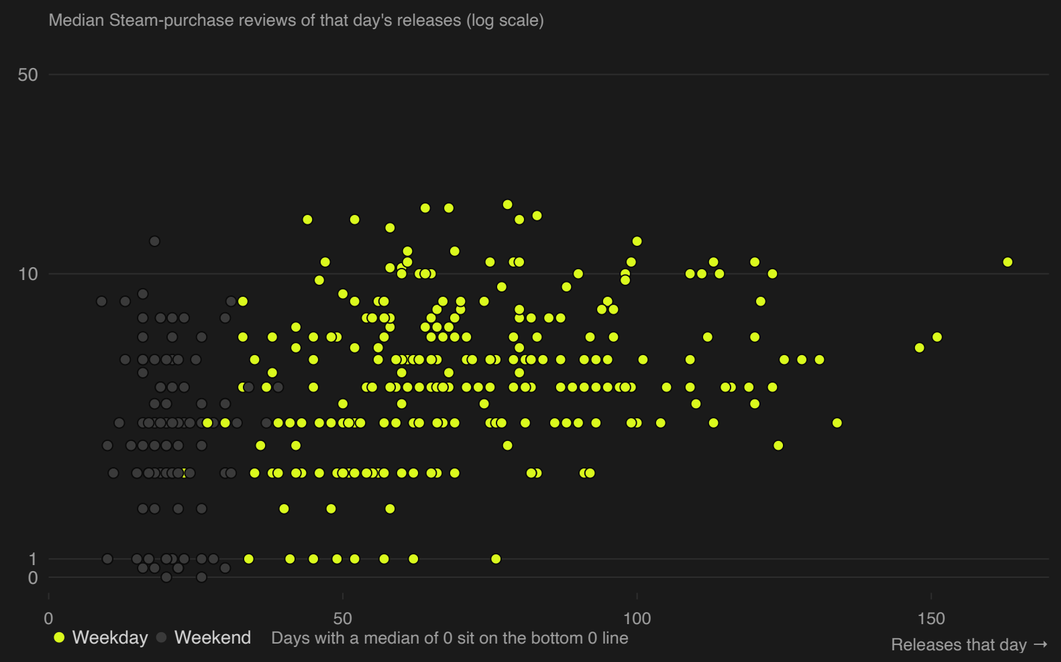
> Even in October, Horror's busiest month, the share reaching 100 reviews matches the other months. The share reaching 1,000 reads lower, so October could conceivably hurt, with games buried in the crowd. But the counts behind that reading are small, and no significant gap could be confirmed.

Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: the 533 primary-tag Horror releases of 2025 (90 in October, 443 in other months) / Data as of 2026-08-24 / Images from each game's Steam store page

365-day scatter: crowding vs review counts

Same-day release counts and each day's median reviews

Each dot is one day: further right, more games shared that release day; higher, a higher median review count for that day's releases. If crowded days buried games, the dots would slope down to the right; no such shape appears. Most of the grey dots sinking to the lower left are weekends, which is what "empty days" actually are.



Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: 365 days of 2025, 20,908 releases / Data as of 2026-08-24 (cumulative reviews observed 61-600 days after release) / Metrics: releases per day, per-day median Steam-purchase reviews

Testing the adage: "aim for an empty day"

"Launch on an empty day and stand out": not confirmed

We tested the "pick a quiet day and avoid getting buried" adage against the full 2025 census. **Comparing busy and quiet days within the same week, no review-count gap could be confirmed.** A naive year-wide comparison makes busy days look better, but that is because releases pile into high-attention weeks; it cannot be called an effect of picking the day.

Say you compare a quiet day (30 same-day releases) with a busy one (90)

Naive year-wide comparison
games from high-attention weeks stay mixed in

Quiet day	**100 (baseline)**
Busy day	**113 = looks 13% higher**

Within the same week
busy vs quiet days of the same week, directly

Quiet day	**100 (baseline)**
Busy day	**98 = no confirmed gap**

The index sets the quiet day to 100 (regression coefficients of +2.05% / −0.29% per 10 extra same-day releases, converted to a 60-release gap). The within-week comparison's plausible range, −12% to +10%, crosses "no gap." Both comparisons hold weekday, season, primary tag and price equal.

> Neither "an empty day gives you an edge" nor "ride a crowded day" is supported by the 2025 census. Narrow your date by execution constraints and direct competitors, not total crowding (pages 24-25).

Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: 20,907 Steam releases of 2025 (1 title without a review-observation date excluded from the comparison only) / Data as of 2026-08-24 / Values are the change in review count (geometric mean of 1+reviews) per 10 extra same-day releases / Sensitivity: continuously adjusting for the week's total releases reads −0.44%, likewise crossing 0% / An observed association, not a causal effect

04

SECTION 04

Releasing near major titles, and how to pick a date

Widening the scope to 2023-2025 (51,531 releases), we check what release counts and the share of games reaching 100 reviews look like in the ±7 days around each year's 45 major launches, then lay out the procedure for narrowing down a release date.



Art: Hollow Knight: Silksong (2025) / Black Myth: Wukong (2024). Examples of the majors covered in this chapter (Steam store).

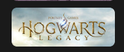
Chapter 4 scope: the 45 majors

The 45 major titles this chapter covers

Here "majors" are the 45 games in each year's paid top 15 by Steam-purchase reviews (free games excluded). Majors released within two weeks of each other merge into one cluster, turning the 45 titles into 28 clusters.

2023 (top 15 by reviews)


Pizza Tower
1/26


Hogwarts Legacy
2/10


Resident Evil 4
3/23


The Last of Us™ Part I
3/28


STAR WARS Jedi: Survivor™
4/27


鬼谷八荒 Tale of Immortal
5/26

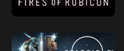

BattleBit Remastered
6/15


Brotato
6/23


DAVE THE DIVER
6/28


Baldur's Gate 3
8/3


ARMORED CORE™ VI FIRES OF RUBICON™
8/24

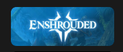

Starfield
9/5

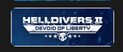

Lethal Company
10/23

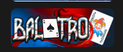

ARK: Survival Ascended
10/25

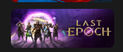

Ready or Not
12/13

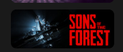
2024 (top 15 by reviews)


Enshrouded
1/24

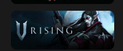

HELLDIVERS™ 2
2/8


Balatro
2/20


Last Epoch
2/21

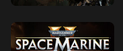

Sons Of The Forest
2/22


Buckshot Roulette
4/4


V Rising
5/8


7 Days to Die
7/25

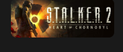

Black Myth: Wukong
8/19

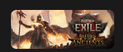

Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine 2
9/9


Satisfactory
9/10


EA SPORTS FC™ 25
9/26


S.T.A.L.K.E.R. 2: Heart of Chornobyl
11/20


Path of Exile 2
12/6


MiSide
12/10

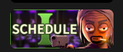
2025 (top 15 by reviews)


Kingdom Come: Deliverance II
2/4


R.E.P.O.
2/26


Monster Hunter Wilds
2/27


Grand Theft Auto V Enhanced
3/4


Schedule I
3/24


Clair Obscur: Expedition 33
4/24


ELDEN RING NIGHTREIGN
5/29


DELTARUNE
6/4


PEAK
6/16


Hollow Knight: Silksong
9/4

Hades II
9/25

Battlefield™ 6
10/10

Dispatch
10/22

Escape the Backrooms
10/23

ARC Raiders
10/30

Source: Game Market Copilot / Majors = each year's top 15 paid games by Steam-purchase reviews (reviews read as of 2026-08-24) / Capsule art from each game's Steam store page

Chapter 4: near major launches: release counts

Release counts around majors, and the spread

Daily release counts before, on and after the 45 majors' launches (left page) are compared with same-year, same-weekday control days. **Across 13 ways of running the aggregation, not one could be called "fewer releases,"** so "the days around a major sit empty" does not show up in the full counts. Clusters do range widely, 0.75x-1.79x: Silksong's week (0.75x on launch day) really was quiet. And since "majors" is an after-the-fact definition, about a fifth are surprise hits like R.E.P.O. that drew little pre-launch attention.

Top: bands are plausible ranges. Bottom: bars are per-cluster launch-day ratios (above the line = more than control).

> Around clearly pre-anticipated majors like Silksong, some avoidance may occur; overall, no drop in releases around majors is observed.

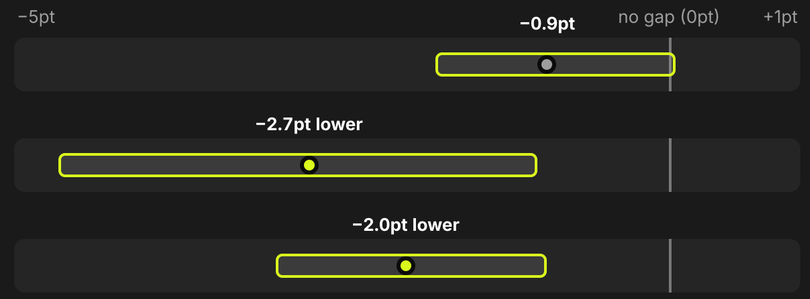
Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: 51,531 releases of 2023-2025, 45 majors in 28 clusters / Controls: same year and weekday, ±7-28 days, official events excluded / Data: catalogue 2026-09-03, majors by reviews 2026-08-24 / Sensitivity: foreseeable-only and top-30 variants also show no confirmed decrease (some designs allow up to ~10%)

Does releasing near a major hurt? An exploratory observation

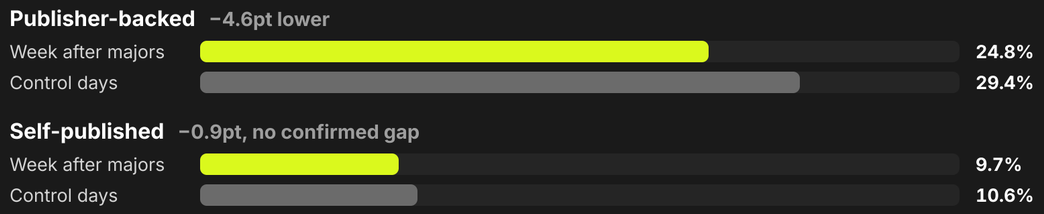
On and right after major launch days, the 100-review reach rate runs a little lower

We compared the share reaching 100 Steam-purchase reviews between games released before, on and right after major launches (±7 days, majors themselves excluded) and games released on control days. Before launch, no gap is confirmed. On launch days and in the week after, the share leans 1-3 points lower, though not strongly enough to call confirmed: of 12 ways of running the aggregation, 8 settle on the low side and 4 include no gap. Switching the threshold to 1,000 reviews shows the same shape.

How many points the 100-review reach rate differs for games released near majors, vs control days



The same week-after gap in the 100-review reach rate, split by publishing setup



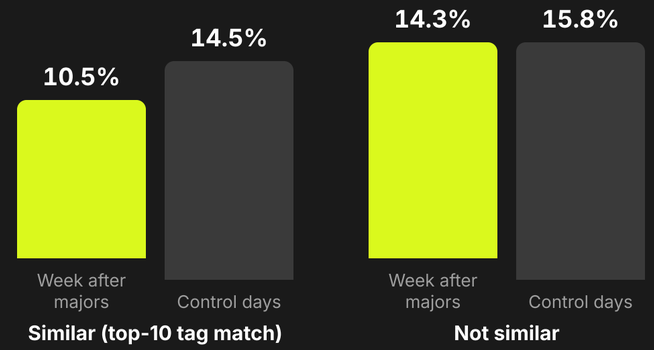
Publishing setup is taken from whether the Steam developer and publisher match. As a hypothesis: publisher-backed games overlap more with the exposure channels a major takes over, such as press coverage and streamer slots, so the heavily overlapping segment may be the one getting squeezed.

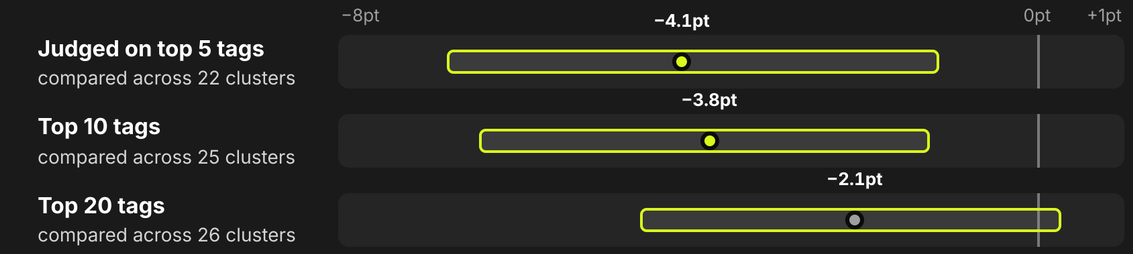
Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: 51,531 releases of 2023-2025; non-majors within ±7 days of majors (counted once) / Data: reviews 2026-08-24, catalogue 2026-09-03 / Sensitivity: the 1,000-review rate reads the same way (−1.4pt on launch days, −0.7pt after, no gap before) / Publishing setup is a current-catalogue value; between-group difference untested / Exploratory

Games with similar tags: a clue to direct competition

The week-after 100-review reach rate of games whose tags sit close to a major's

Splitting the games released near major launches into "similar" (primary tag matches one of the major's top tags) and "not similar," the 100-review reach rate came out lower for the similar group. **Matches on the top 5-10 tags show the largest gaps**, so keeping an eye on the release timing of competitors sharing your top subgenre tags looks worthwhile.





> In the observations, gaps show up most when a major sharing your top 5-10 tags sits right next to your date, which makes it material for your release decision.

Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: tagged non-majors in the week after majors (similar 1,463 vs 3,254; not similar 6,813 vs 16,093; counted once) / Within-cluster paired gaps, valid for 22-26 clusters / Data: reviews 2026-08-24, catalogue 2026-09-03 / Tag matching is mechanical, not measured competition; the paired gap leans on a thin publisher-backed slice / Exploratory

A decision procedure built on this report's observations

Five steps to narrow down a release date

1. **Eliminate the days the official rules make impossible**
   Work backward from the Coming Soon period, review times, the date lock, the discount cooldown, and launch-day support coverage, and strike the dates you cannot actually pick (right page).

2. **Check your direct competitors' release dates**
   Look at overlap with the games competing for the same primary tag, price band, and streamers, not at market-wide release counts. No link between same-day release counts and review counts could be confirmed (pages 18-19). Proximity to a major title also only becomes material when its top tags overlap yours (pages 22-23).

3. **Settle your Next Fest plan first**
   Participation is once per title, before release only. Decide which fest you join and when the demo gets validated, then place the release date. In 2025 the 7 days after each Next Fest were crowded, all three times (page 10).

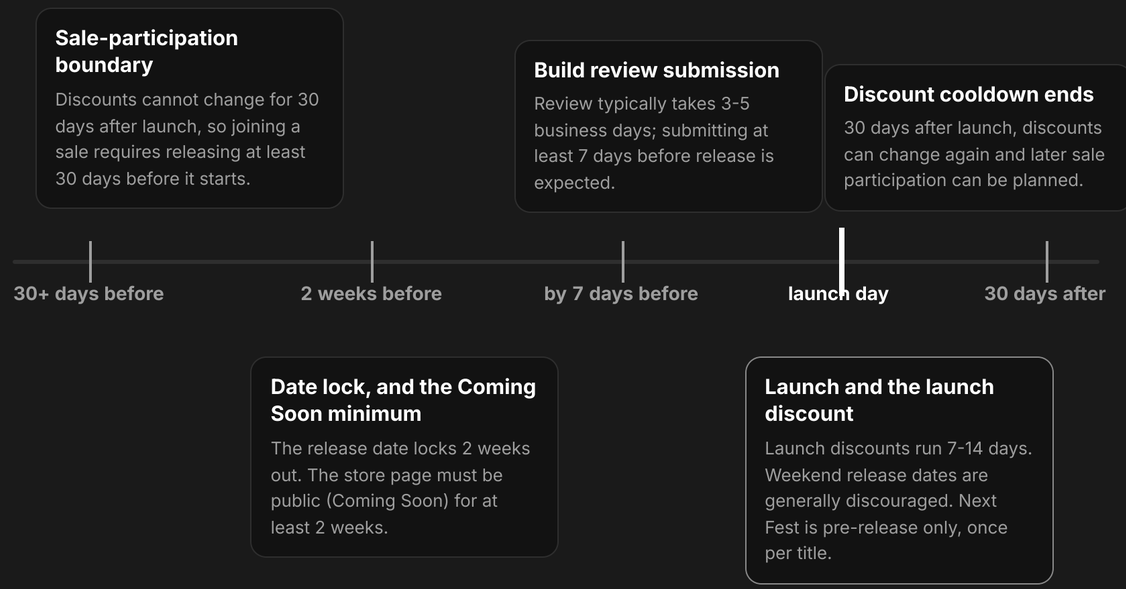
4. **Decide how to treat "empty days"**
   Weekend release dates are generally discouraged in Steam's operating guidance. The days with few releases turn out to be weekends, sale periods, and the year's end, and emptiness by itself is no basis in our observations.

5. **Cross-check the remaining candidates against the calendar**
   Only when several equivalent candidates remain, use the daily chart (page 6), distance to official events (page 13), and your own primary tag's seasonality (pages 14-15) as tiebreakers.

Source: Game Market Copilot / The procedure is a decision framework built on this report's 2025 census observations and official Steamworks rules. It does not guarantee the outcome of any particular date

Official Steamworks rules around the release date

The official-rule timeline, launch day = day 0



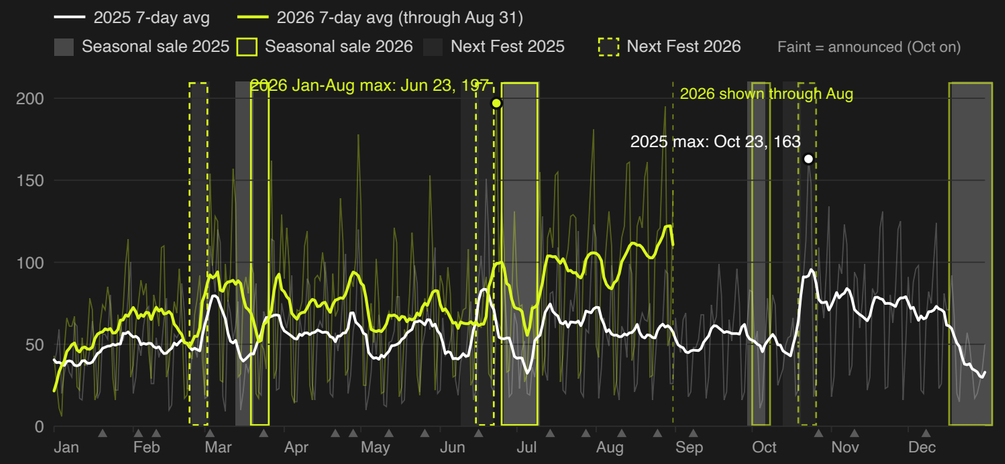
This timeline decides your candidate dates before any weekday or month "winning pattern" does. The 2025 observations show the valleys and peaks of supply lining up with these rules and the event calendar.

Source: official Steamworks documentation (Release Dates / Discounting / Next Fest; current as of 2026-09-03) / We have not verified that the wording was identical throughout 2025

Follow-up: January-August 2026 actuals

2026 releases follow the same pattern, at a higher level

The date-narrowing procedure (pages 24-25) holds in this follow-up too. White is 2025, lime is 2026 (through August 31), daily release counts. The Thursday-Friday peaks and the event valleys stay intact while January-August 2026 averaged 76.1 releases a day, 1.33 times the 2025 full-year level.



76.1/day
average daily releases, Jan-Aug 2026 (2025 full year: 57.3/day)

42.5%
share released on Thursday or Friday (2025: 42.9%)

10.9%
weekend release share (2025: 10.7%)

NEXT REPORT

How much of this is AI-assisted games?

How much of the 2026 release growth, especially from July on, involves AI use? That and more, coming as a report.

Source: Game Market Copilot / 2025: 20,908 releases (data as of 2026-08-24); 2026: 18,483 releases January 1 - August 31 (extracted 2026-09-19) / Event dates per official Valve announcements / 2026 values are mid-year and can still grow slightly

Scope and measurement

What this report analyzed

Games analyzed

The 20,908 Steam games released January 1 to December 31, 2025. Release dates, primary tags, and publishing setup are catalogue values extracted September 3, 2026, including ports, re-releases, and Early Access graduations. Games delisted after release are not restored, and games whose release date was later rewritten are counted at their extraction-time date.

Steam-purchase reviews

Cumulative counts of reviews posted by users who bought the game on Steam, read as of August 24, 2026. Observation falls 61-600 days after release, and reviews are not sales or player counts. Games that went through Early Access include pre-1.0 reviews.

Event comparisons

For the 25 official Valve events, running days (start inclusive, end exclusive) are compared with the same weekdays within 4 weeks either side, other official events excluded. These describe calendar overlap, not effects of participating.

Primary tags and seasonality

A game's top-ranked Steam tag is its primary tag (370 kinds). Seasonality testing covers the 93 tags with 30+ releases, corrected across the whole 370-tag scan. Tags are current values, not launch-time tags.

The major-adjacency comparison (chapter 4 only)

That chapter alone widens the scope to the 51,531 releases of 2023-2025 and defines "majors" as each year's top 15 paid games by Steam-purchase reviews, 45 titles (an outcome-side definition, not company size). Majors with overlapping ±7-day windows merge into 28 clusters, compared against same-weekday control days of the same year (±7-28 days, official event days excluded). With only 25-26 cluster units, the milestone and tag-overlap findings are exploratory. Reviews in that chapter are observed 236-1,331 days after release, unlike the 61-600 days of the main chapters.

Game Market Copilot continuously collects and aggregates Steam catalogue data and Steam-purchase review data to support game developers' and publishers' decisions with numbers and AI tools. Feel free to cite the numbers in this report with "Game Market Copilot" as the source. Charts made by GMC may be reproduced as they are (game screenshots and capsule art remain the property of their owners).

gamemarketcopilot.com

Source: Game Market Copilot / Scope: 20,908 Steam releases of 2025 / Data as of 2026-08-24 / Metrics: release dates, Steam-purchase review counts