

On the Future of the Seals

Hello, Seals.

We come to you today to ask for your help, and to draw attention to a potential issue drawing near in our future.

While we encourage you to read the entire post, here's the bottom line: **If our current trend continues, we won't be able to reliably continue to offer Console services in the future.**

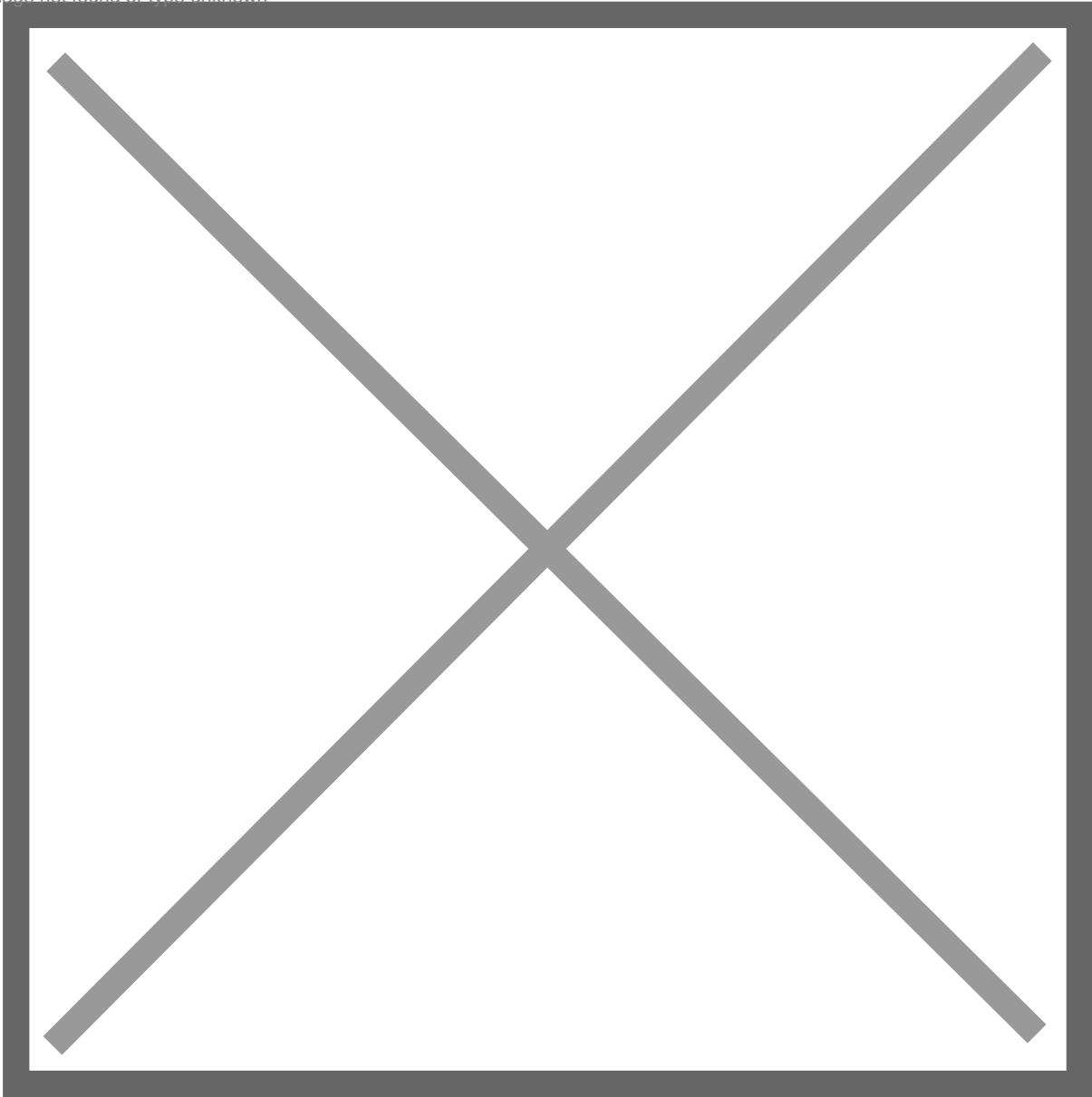
Player Numbers

It's no secret that the largest community for Elite: Dangerous has been on PC. While there are console enclaves, and some console players rival even the most loyal PC players in devotion to the game, Consoles have always been a smaller market for Elite. Unfortunately, exact player numbers are not available for Xbox, PlayStation, or non-steam users. The best source of data we know about is the Steam Chart site, found here:

<https://steamcharts.com/app/359320>

As of time of writing, the last 7 days peak player numbers is 5,393 max concurrent players. That is, over the last 7 days the most number of players online at any given time was just over 5 thousand players. To give some context to that, in the entire history of the Seals (since our founding in 2017), the next lowest 7-day high is 6,001 concurrent players, over the 7 day period starting May 27th, 2019.

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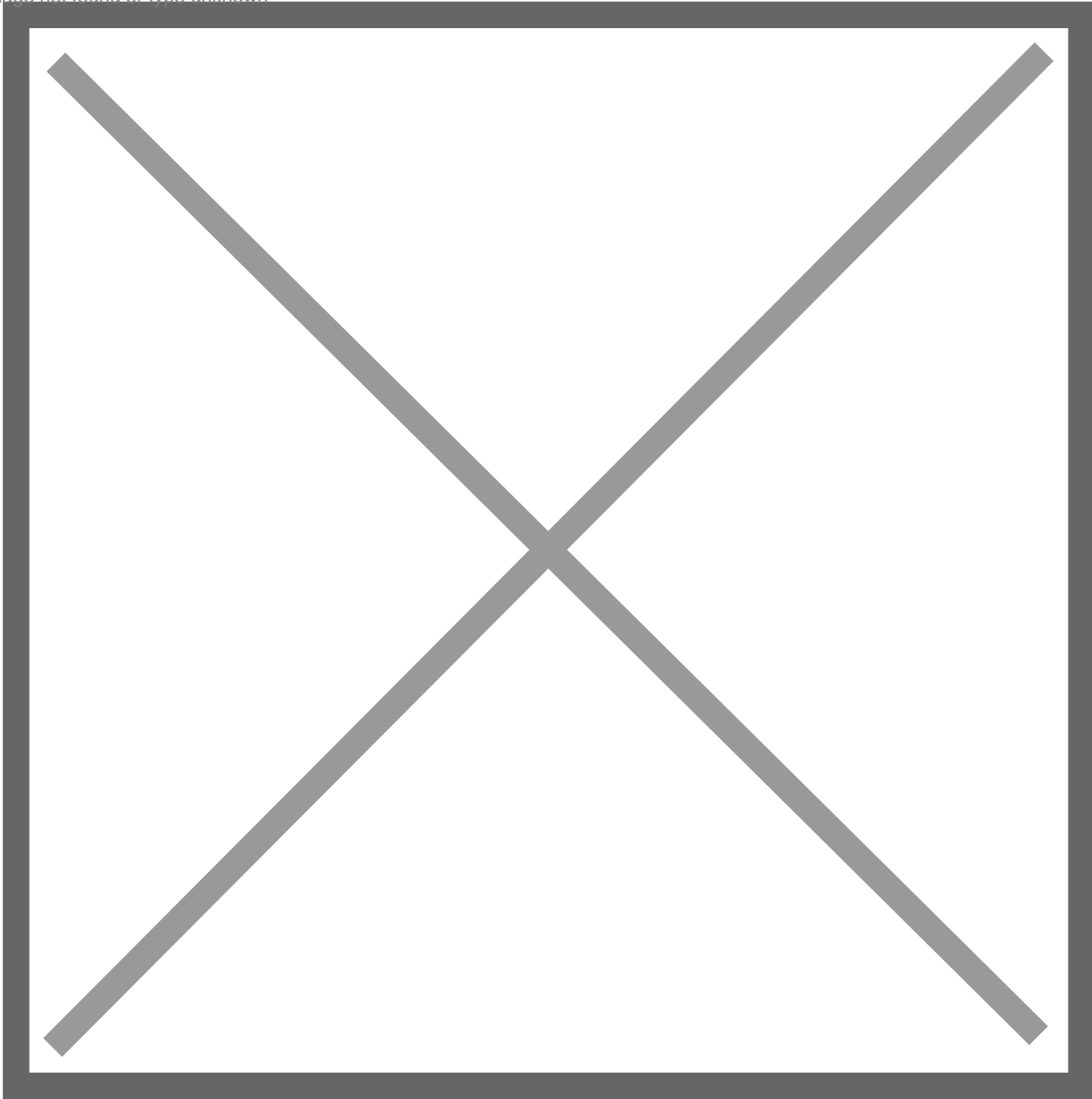
Top: Player Numbers from December 31st, 2018 to July 22nd, 2021. Bottom: All Time Player Numbers (Source: steamcharts.com)

Given the lack of concrete data for non-Steam platforms, we must assume that the player charts look similar (with a notable exception of the Odyssey-driven spike). Even without this new high, the drastic and dramatic decay in player numbers cannot be ignored. Pre-Odyssey Steam player numbers averaged anywhere between 12,000 and 20,000 with a low point in the 6 months preceding Odyssey's release at 10,500 concurrent high. Even without the Odyssey spike, this is a 40% reduction to the game's population.

Case Numbers and Seal Numbers

In an additional attempt to provide context, let's look at our own Seal case numbers. Such stats are readily available at <https://hullseals.space/statistics>.

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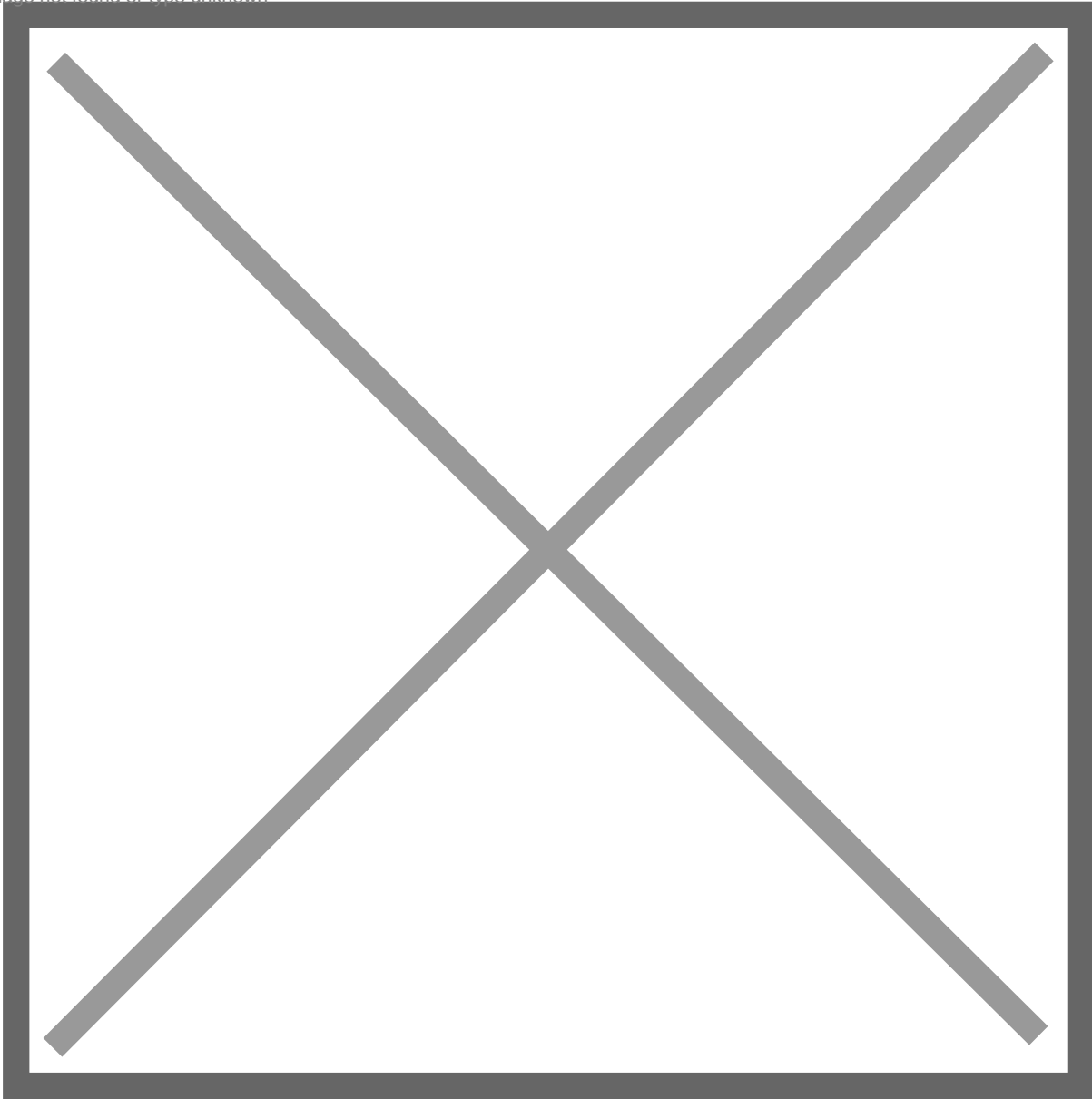


Hull Seal Case Numbers over the period of 7/22/2020 to 7/22/2021. (Source: The Hull Seals)

There are a few things that stand out immediately. Notably, you can tell when we switched over to our IRC solution, which had its go-live day on November 20th, 2020 (which immediately saw a spike in cases and their frequency). While the Seals, expectedly so, do not have the sheer demand as other service organizations such as the Fuel Rats, and certainly not to the extent and concentration we saw during DW2, there is a noticeable decline that started very quickly after Odyssey's release on May 19th, 2021.

Additionally, the vast majority of Seal cases are PC driven. If this means that Console players are safer fliers, the Seals are not as well known by the console community, or there simply aren't enough Console CMDRs to have a large foothold isn't clear from this graph, so we must gather context by looking at publicly available data from other sources, such as our good friends, the Fuel Rats.

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Fuel Rat Case Numbers over the period of 7/22/2020 to 7/22/2021. (Source: The Fuel Rats)

What is immediately clear is that still, PC cases are significantly larger than their console equivalents. Xbox, similarly to Seals cases, lags behind, and PlayStation brings up the rear. A similar situation can be seen in registered Rats and Seals, as self-identification lists significantly more PC players in each organization compared to their Console counterparts. In both organizations, however, there has been a decrease in cases since the immediate Odyssey-driven spike.

In fact, this decrease in players has had a significant impact on the ability for the Seals to respond to requests for assistance - Not only has this reduction in players meant that there are fewer trained seals able to take the cases, spread across both the galaxy and the various time zones in which the Seals operate, there are fewer and fewer new seals being recruited and trained to take up the mantle. On console, this situation has become untenable. More than a dozen times in the last few months, a case has either needed to be turned down or diverted to a nearby carrier instead of dispatching a Seal to the client, because there were no seals in range at the time. This issue plagues all levels to a degree, but is notable with Consoles, particularly PlayStation.

Next Steps

There will of course be some people who blame this unfortunate circumstance on various single entities or actions. As the staff, we do not believe this can be blamed on any one factor - perceived or otherwise. However, passing blame around does not truly solve the issue at hand. What we must consider is where we go from here, and what we can do to try and correct the problems at hand.

Caseload, of course, is out of our control. We can and should advertise our services, both as individuals and as the Seal whole. We should go out in the galaxy and try and find people who need our help and guide them home. We **should** join expeditions, and enjoy the vibrant galaxy so long as we find enjoyment in the game. Other plans, such as the Seal Player Faction, are also on hiatus as Frontier has stopped adding new factions at this time.

The three places we can most focus is on what services we offer, how we offer them, and what we do for recruitment.

First, in the next few weeks we will be rolling out a disclaimer that will present itself to all cases. This disclaimer will, unfortunately, state that it is taking significantly longer than usual to find seals able to go on Console cases, but that we will do our best to find a responder for any CMDR who wishes to ask for our assistance.

This is not something we wanted to do, as it shakes trust in the Seals ability to help those in the galaxy, and may result in an even further reduction in cases. However, it is better for us to be honest with not only ourselves but our clients that we are currently having issues.

Second, starting immediately we are beginning a 3-month observation and review process of our systems, numbers, and activity levels. We need your help to come up with ideas as to how to keep offering the high standard we expect from the Seals, how to engage the Seals, coordinate our efforts, and what we can do to improve ourselves or fix the issues that present themselves.

Third, we must work on recruitment. If we cannot recruit and maintain active levels of seals on any given platform, we must consider terminating our services on that platform. In order to prevent this, we are asking for your help. Beyond not only being Seals, and responding to cases yourselves, please go out and try and recruit new Seals to our family, on all platforms, and spread the word that the Seals are here and able to help. Answer questions others have and do your best to be good ambassadors of the Seals out in the world. Only by working together will we be able to keep the lighthouse bright for those who need us.

As always, we want to hear your feedback and comments. You are the Seals, and without you the Seals cannot exist. Let's work together to make sure that the Seals will still be here for those who need us.

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The Hull Seal Admins

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