

Women in Gaming

NuGamers Fact Sheet



Part II: Focus Groups

The identified main obstacles,
reasons and motivators

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We explore the main motivators, obstacles and reasons for women to study and work in the game industry and other STEM fields.

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Gender equality in game industry and education

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The identified main obstacles, reasons and motivators

Part III: Conclusions

Possible solutions for overcoming obstacles and the included risks

How to use this fact sheet?

The contents are divided into three parts as shown on the left. Each of these parts can be explored as a standalone, but to reach the best understanding of the topics, it is recommended to be explored in this order.

However, some of the introduced topics revolve around similar themes, which means that even a superficial read-through should give you a good overview of the contents.

What motivates women to study and work in game industry?



As previously established:

- Half of gamers are women
- Only around 24% of the industry workforce are women
- Even less hold a managing position
- As a result, the industry is missing the skills, viewpoints, ideas and innovation from women
- This leads to the products (= games) not being the best they could be

Why women want to make games for living?

- The reasons can be exactly the same as the reasons for men
- We know why more women should work in the industry
- There are multiple disciplines within the industry – it's a hybrid of technology and creative industries

Source:

Gender diversity in the gaming industry, Women in Tech, <https://www.womenintech.co.uk/gender-diversity-in-the-gaming-industry/>

Why more women should be working in gaming, SheCanCode, <https://shecancode.io/blog/game-changers-at-rare-why-more-women-should-be-working-in-gaming/>

What obstacles women face in the gaming sector?



- Negative portrayal of women in video games
- Harassment, sexism and cyber-bullying while playing video games
- Presentational aspects of games can be identified as strongly gender-linked

“ Games include twice as much male dialogue as female dialogue on average. 94% of games studied had more male dialogue than female dialogue, including games with multiple female protagonists.

- Misogynistic attitudes & workplace harassment
- Unequal pay for men and women
- Lack of visible role models
- Gender bias and stereotypes in STEM education field and in applying to education – “Maths is only for boys.”



What is Gamergate?

The number of female players has increased, which has also increased the number of female developers who have developed the industry forward.

However, this does not please everyone, which, for example, gave rise to the phenomenon "Gamergate".

It's about **harassment of game developers and players**, cyberbullying and misogyny in the game industry.

Abuse of female gamers in the UK by male counterparts is driving gamers offline

 **35%**
of UK women game on PC

 **23%**
game on console

 **33%**
of female gamers say
they've been the victim of
abuse or discrimination
from male gamers

Where abused: **online**
 **63%**

Type of abuse:

- 51%** Verbal
- 40%** Sending inappropriate content/messages
- 32%** Sexual harassment
- 10%** Threats of rape

Impact

33%
Don't reveal that they are
female when playing
online multiplayer games

11%
Won't play online as
they are worried that
they will be abused by
men

'Bryter' 'research-I', and 'ResearchBods' carried out a survey of 1,151 UK women aged 16+ that play console or PC video games at least once a month in Feb-Mar 2018.

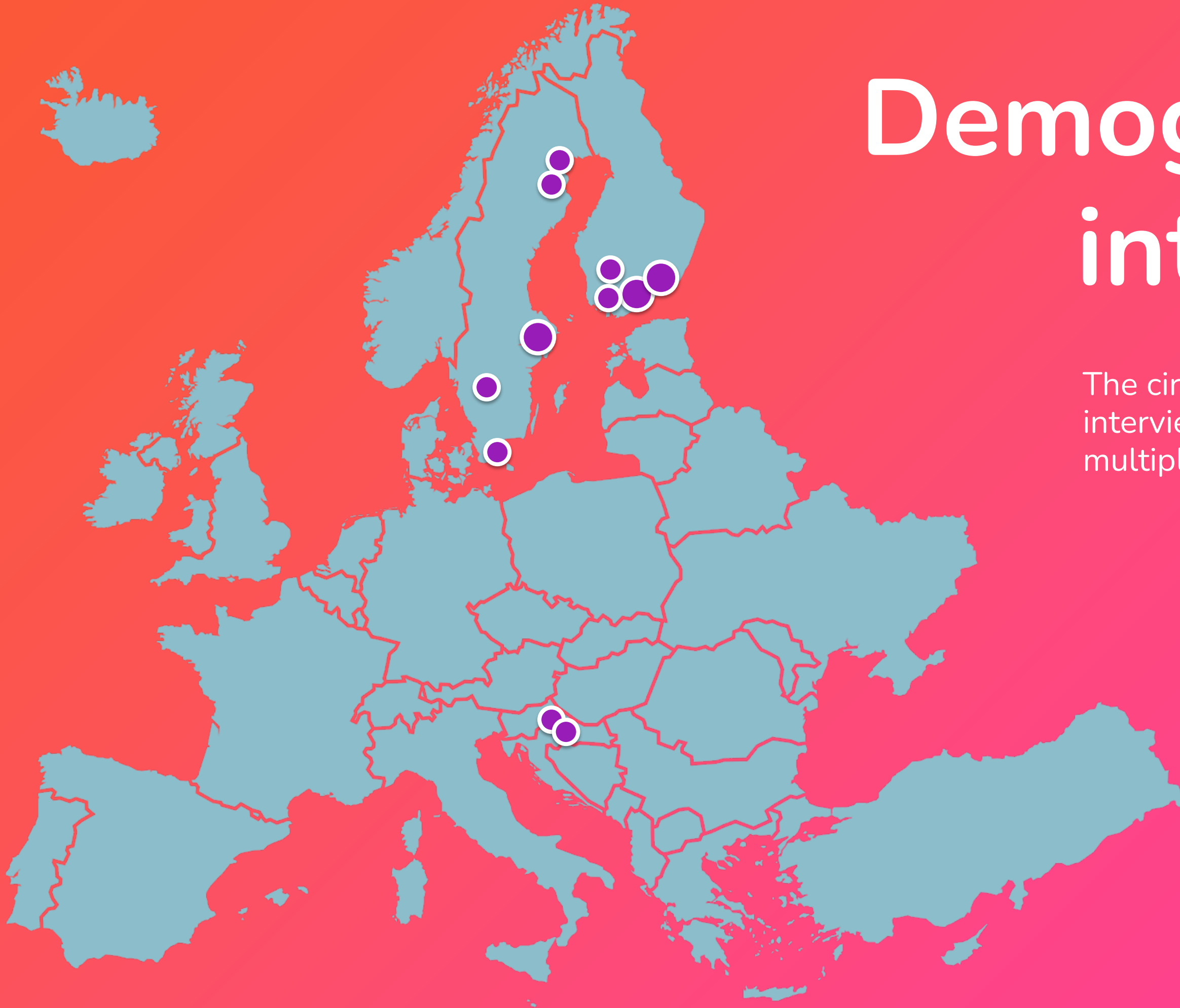
Source: One-third of UK women gamers report abuse or discrimination from male gamers, Games Industry.biz,
<https://www.gamesindustry.biz/one-third-of-uk-female-gamers-report-abuse-or-discrimination-from-male-gamers>

Focus groups

- **Our goal was to find:**
 - Vocational school and university students in game and STEM-related fields
 - Their teachers
 - Industry professionals
- And ask their thoughts and opinions.
- **What we were looking for:**
 1. Motivators for studying/working in game industry
 2. Main obstacles and reasons for studying/working in game industry
 3. Possible solutions for overcoming these obstacles
 4. Possible risks in overcoming these obstacles

Demographics of interviewees

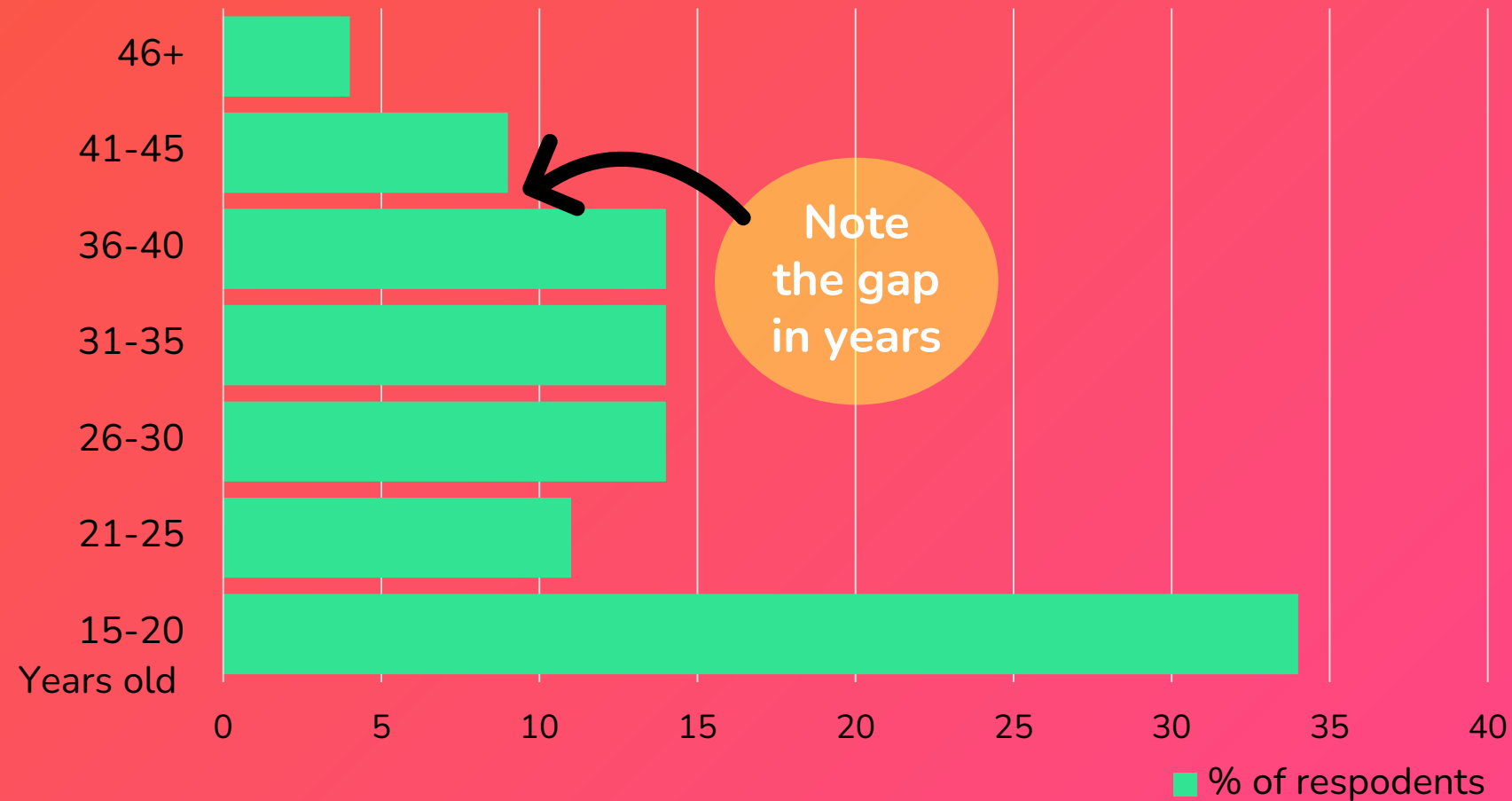
The circles present the locations of the interviewed individuals. A larger circle means multiple interviewees were from the same area.



Demographics of interviewees

n = 34

Age distribution



3 higher education teachers



9

higher education students



6 industry professionals

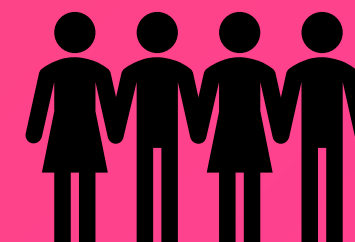
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11 vocational education students or younger

5 vocational education teachers

5



70% Female
6% Non-binary
24% Male



What we learned

The following information is summarized from our focus group participants, and it conveys only the thoughts and experiences of the focus group.

The following part is divided into:

1. Hobbies & interests
2. Motivators
3. Challenges

Hobbies & interests 1/2

To better understand the group of interviewees, let's first take a look at their hobbies and interests. Different life stages, professional roles and personal responsibilities shape people's hobbies and freetime activities.



Community-driven hobbies for younger respondents:

Younger participants are more engaged in hobbies that involve significant social interactions, enjoying spending time with people who share similar interests. These community-driven activities allow them to connect and build relationships through shared hobbies.



Family and home-oriented hobbies for older respondents:

Older respondents, especially those with families, place more importance on family-oriented activities. Their hobbies tend to revolve around home life, balancing responsibilities with leisure. However, family responsibilities can also limit how they spend their free time.



Work-life balance for teachers:

Teachers emphasize maintaining a healthy work-life balance. They seek hobbies that provide a complete break from their job, focusing on activities that help them recover mentally and physically, such as exercising to stay fit.

Hobbies & interests 2/2

Types of hobbies mentioned:

- **Games (non-online):** Many respondents enjoy fantasy games, horror games, and watching related movies or TV shows. Also roleplaying games (e.g. Dungeons and Dragons) are popular.
- **Solo activities:** Some prefer solitary hobbies like gardening, canoeing, nature walks and miniature painting.
- **Online games:** Others engage in online games and games with compelling storylines, either solo or with friends and family.
- **Creative interests:** Hobbies such as storytelling, cosplay, reading comics and books, and analysing video games are popular. Some even integrate their hobbies into their professional life, like drawing which evolved into professional work.
- **Outdoor and family-focused hobbies:** Some individuals spend more time outdoors, engaging in activities like gardening, spending time with their family, cooking, and exploring music.

Physical and mental wellness:

Activities like going to the gym, walking the dog, and focusing on creative outlets like writing or storytelling are common. Cleaning, cooking, and going to the gym are also cited as regular, everyday activities.



Shifts in priorities:

Some respondents mention spending less time on gaming due to other commitments, prioritizing responsibilities like family or work over leisure. However, when they do play, they mix between group gaming sessions with friends and individual gaming based on their mood and social company.

Motivators 1/4

The summary outlines the key themes of **creativity, passion, community engagement, personal success**, and the factors driving **career decisions**, while also reflecting on **teaching, societal impact**, and the **workplace environment**.

Creativity and passion in work:

- Respondents highly value creativity and freedom in their roles, where they can **express their unique ideas and approach problems in innovative ways**.
- Many are passionate about their jobs, particularly **enjoying the process of creating engaging content** and programming games that captivate audiences.
- **The desire to combine personal passions**, such as drawing, storytelling, and gaming impact their career choice. These roles allow them to **stay true to who they are rather** than forcing themselves to fit into traditional career molds.
- For some, working in the **creative field felt like a natural extension of their lifelong interests**, like playing and designing games, and the opportunity to design interactive experiences was a **perfect fit for their skills and interests**.

Community engagement:

- Respondents are actively involved in game-related communities such as Discord groups, Facebook groups, and professional associations, where they **engage with like-minded individuals**.
- Many participate in board game design, role-playing games (such as Dungeons & Dragons), **and enjoy sharing their knowledge** with others by teaching or guiding peers through game development projects.
- They find **value in these communities**, as they provide both a **sense of belonging and a platform for exchanging creative ideas and collaborating** with others in the gaming world.





Motivators 2/4

Personal growth and recognition:

- Respondents are motivated by a **desire for personal growth**, finding areas they excel in and continuously seeking opportunities to learn and improve.
- **Receiving acknowledgment for their skills**, such as through competitions, awards, or prizes, helps them stay motivated and confident in their abilities.

Hobbies and personal interests:

- Outside of work, respondents **engage in hobbies closely related to their professional interests**, such as playing and creating video games, board games, and tabletop games.
- Additionally, they enjoy other **hobbies that allow for relaxation and creativity**, like music, cooking, spending time outdoors walking their dogs, and socializing with friends.

Motivation for teaching:

- Some respondents have taken their passion for games and creativity into higher education, where they are **committed to teaching and mentoring students** in fields like game development and programming.
- They find working with students **incredibly fulfilling**, particularly being **inspired by the students' creativity** and **witnessing their personal growth**. For them, helping students create amazing projects and reach their potential is one of the most rewarding aspects of their career.
- They also highlight the **importance of extracurricular activities and internships**, noting that companies are often very satisfied with the students they host, further enhancing their academic and professional experience.



Motivators 3/4

Creative industry motivation:

- A **creative career** allows individuals to combine personal passions with work. For many respondents, this includes a **deep love for games and art** that began in childhood.
- Working in a creative industry, especially game design, feels like a **natural fit**, providing opportunities to **channel their imagination into tangible products** that entertain and engage others.
- Game research and education attracts passionate professionals, as it **combines academic rigor with their love for interactive entertainment**.
- Creative jobs were appealing because they **offered an alternative to trying to "fit" into a conventional career**, allowing them to stay authentic to **their introverted, creative personalities**.

Motivators behind career choices:

- **Family influence:** Family members working in the industry are cited as a significant factor in shaping career decisions. This provided a positive role model and fostered early interest in the field.
- **Interest in technology and gaming:** Many respondents were drawn to technology and gaming from a young age, and these early interests developed into career aspirations.
- **Creative skills recognition:** Positive feedback and recognition of their creative skills in hobby activities encouraged some to pursue the field professionally.
- **Game industry as a natural fit:** For those passionate about games, the game industry was considered one of the most viable and exciting career paths.
- **Practical considerations:** Good wages, the content of the degree program, and guidance counselor advice influenced career decisions. For some, the choice was obvious from a young age, while others discovered the field later, sometimes through unrelated jobs that spurred a career change.
- **Gender representation:** Some respondents chose to enter male-dominated fields because of the positive image of the industry, and a desire to challenge traditional gender stereotypes.

Gender dynamics in the workplace:

- While gender plays a background role, respondents believe that **different perspectives from all genders are important** in the workplace.
- **Good team dynamics** are essential for success, and they feel that **gender should not matter** in achieving positive outcomes and collaboration in the workplace.

Good workplace environment:

- **The nature of the field**, including its collaborative and creative environment, is a significant source of motivation.
- **Positive feedback** from colleagues and peers is seen as essential for maintaining high morale and job satisfaction. Good teamwork and supportive environments help foster creativity and professional success.

Societal impact and values:

- Respondents are motivated by the **desire to make a positive impact on society**, whether by creating work that makes people's lives better or by challenging societal norms.
- Some respondents are driven by a **desire to improve gender representation in traditionally male-dominated industries**, helping to combat stereotypes and create a more inclusive environment for future generations.
- They also appreciate the opportunity to use their creativity and imagination at work, believing that **creative industries provide unique opportunities to influence culture and bring about social change**.



Motivators 4/4



Challenges 1/4



The summary introduces the various challenges faced by different groups – **gamers, students, industry professionals, and teachers** – highlighting issues of **gender disparity, mental health, and professional uncertainty**.

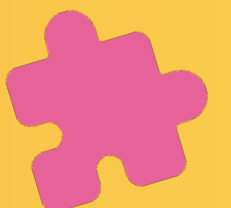
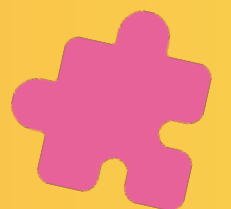
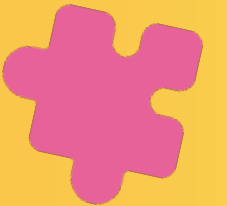
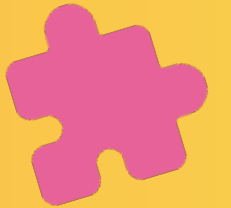
Challenges in gaming as a hobby:

- **Time constraints:** Many respondents struggle to find time for gaming due to **demanding personal and professional responsibilities**. Maintaining a good work-life balance makes it difficult to engage in gaming regularly, which often leads to a **decline in skills** over time. This is particularly frustrating for those who aspire to reach or maintain a higher skill level in competitive games.
- **Finding communities:** Some gamers have a **hard time finding like-minded individuals** who share their interests, especially for more niche genres or games. For women, this issue is compounded by their **insecurity in joining predominantly male communities**, where they may feel unwelcome or judged.
- **Insecurity in communities:** Female gamers often feel insecure in online gaming communities due to **gender-related criticism**. Many respondents shared experiences of feeling **excluded or criticized** simply because they are women. They are often **questioned about their gaming skills** or seen as lesser players compared to their male counterparts.
- **Social perceptions:** Gaming is still seen as an **unconventional or unproductive hobby**, especially for women. Respondents expressed frustration over how they are viewed by others when they spend time gaming. Some also feel **pressured to make their hobbies “productive”**, creating internal conflict about whether gaming can be just for fun.
- **Harassment and exclusion:** Female gamers experience **gender-related harassment**, such as **unwanted romantic advances, gender-based jokes, trolling, and griefing** (deliberately sabotaging a game because of the presence of women). This often leads women to **avoid voice chat** in multiplayer games to conceal their gender, which in turn creates communication challenges in team-based games where verbal collaboration is essential.
- **Skill maintenance and gender bias:** Limited gaming time not only leads to a **decline in skills**, but women also face additional scrutiny and are often **pressured to perform better than their male counterparts** to be taken seriously. Despite their passion, they may struggle to meet the demands of competitive gaming, further intensifying their frustrations.

Challenges 2/4

Faced by students

- **Educational barriers:** Many students expressed disappointment with traditional education systems, feeling that academic programs **do not provide sufficient institutional support or adequately prepare them** for the real-world challenges of the game industry. Self-directed learning and skill development outside formal education were necessary for many to succeed.
- **Gender disparities in class:** Female students often **feel isolated or overshadowed in male-dominated classes**, particularly in technical fields. Respondents noted that **boys are typically more vocal** in class discussions, and female students' **opinions are often overlooked**. This creates an environment where women are hesitant to share their ideas or take on leadership roles in projects.
- **Class culture:** In classes with a higher proportion of female students, the culture is seen as more inclusive, with more collaboration and mutual support. In contrast, classes with predominantly male students tend to have a more **competitive and exclusive atmosphere**, making it harder for women to feel confident in sharing their perspectives.
- **Lack of role models:** One of the major challenges for female students is the **lack of female role models in both education and the game industry**. Teachers often **struggle to find women professionals to invite as guest speakers or mentors**, as many women in the industry prioritize personal responsibilities or have fewer opportunities to engage in such activities.
- **Mental health and imposter syndrome:** Many female students deal with **imposter syndrome, self-doubt, and fear of not being taken seriously** in a male-dominated field. This often hampers their ability to fully engage in their studies and pursue leadership roles.
- **Job market challenges:** After graduation, students face a **fiercely competitive job market**, with **long periods of unemployment** being common. Even highly qualified students may struggle to land interviews.



Challenges 3/4

Faced by industry professionals

- **Industry competitiveness:** The gaming industry is **highly specialized**, and professionals face **intense competition for jobs**. Many companies are **reluctant to hire junior employees**, making it difficult for newcomers to break into the field. Those already in the industry experience **constant pressure** to stay relevant and innovate.
- **Financial and resource constraints:** Many professionals struggle with **funding and resource limitations**, both in their personal projects and within their companies. This is especially true for smaller studios or independent developers, where securing financial stability can be a significant challenge.
- **Balancing personal and professional commitments:** Professionals often face **difficulty balancing their personal creative projects with the demands of their professional careers**. The pressure to meet **deadlines** and the industry's **fast-paced environment** can leave little time for hobbies or personal development outside of work.
- **Gender disparities in the workplace:** Female professionals face distinct challenges in achieving recognition and career advancement. The presence of a **“bro culture”** in a workplace creates an atmosphere where **women feel excluded or uncomfortable**. Women often need to **speak louder or repeat ideas to be heard**, and they struggle to be taken as seriously as their male counterparts.
 - The “bro culture” often includes informal behavior and unprofessional conversations, making it **difficult for women to fully integrate into office dynamics**.
 - Women in graphics or art roles may **feel limited in their career prospects**, particularly if they lack technical skills like programming, which are often seen as essential for starting a game studio.
- **Job mobility and instability:** The gaming industry is known for **high job mobility**, with professionals frequently moving between studios or cities. While this offers diverse experiences, it creates **instability for those seeking long-term roles**. Some respondents reported living in multiple cities within a short period, which can be stressful and disruptive to personal life.
- **Diversity in hiring:** Despite efforts to promote diversity, **tech-related roles in gaming still receive overwhelmingly male applications**. Hiring managers often face difficult decisions when trying to prioritize diversity, as the pool of candidates is predominantly male.
- **Mental health and imposter syndrome:** Industry professionals, especially women, often **struggle with imposter syndrome and self-doubt**. The pressure to continuously innovate, stay competitive, and perform at a high level can take a toll on mental health, leading to **burnout**.
- **Global crises and economic uncertainty:** The gaming industry has also been affected by global crises such as **COVID-19 and political instability**, which have **reduced job opportunities** and created **further uncertainty** for professionals trying to secure stable employment.
- **Family and personal commitments:** For women, **balancing family responsibilities with the demands of a career** poses additional challenges. The game industry's requirement for long hours, travel, or relocating can **conflict with family duties**, especially for those with children.

Challenges 4/4

Faced by teachers

- **Rewarding yet demanding work:** While many teachers find their work deeply rewarding, particularly the opportunity to help students grow and achieve their dreams, they also face significant challenges. One common issue is **maintaining a work-life balance**, as teaching can be **time-consuming and emotionally draining**.
- **Gender dynamics in the classroom:** Teachers in male-dominated fields struggle **to create an inclusive environment**. Female students often feel outnumbered and less heard in such classes, leading teachers to address issues of gender disparities in participation and classroom culture.
- **Limited female role models:** Teachers face challenges in **finding female role models to invite as guest speakers or mentors**, which limits opportunities for female students to see successful women in the industry.
- **Institutional barriers:** Many teachers encounter **institutional challenges**, such as **limited resources or lack of support** from academic institutions in promoting diversity and innovation in the curriculum.

