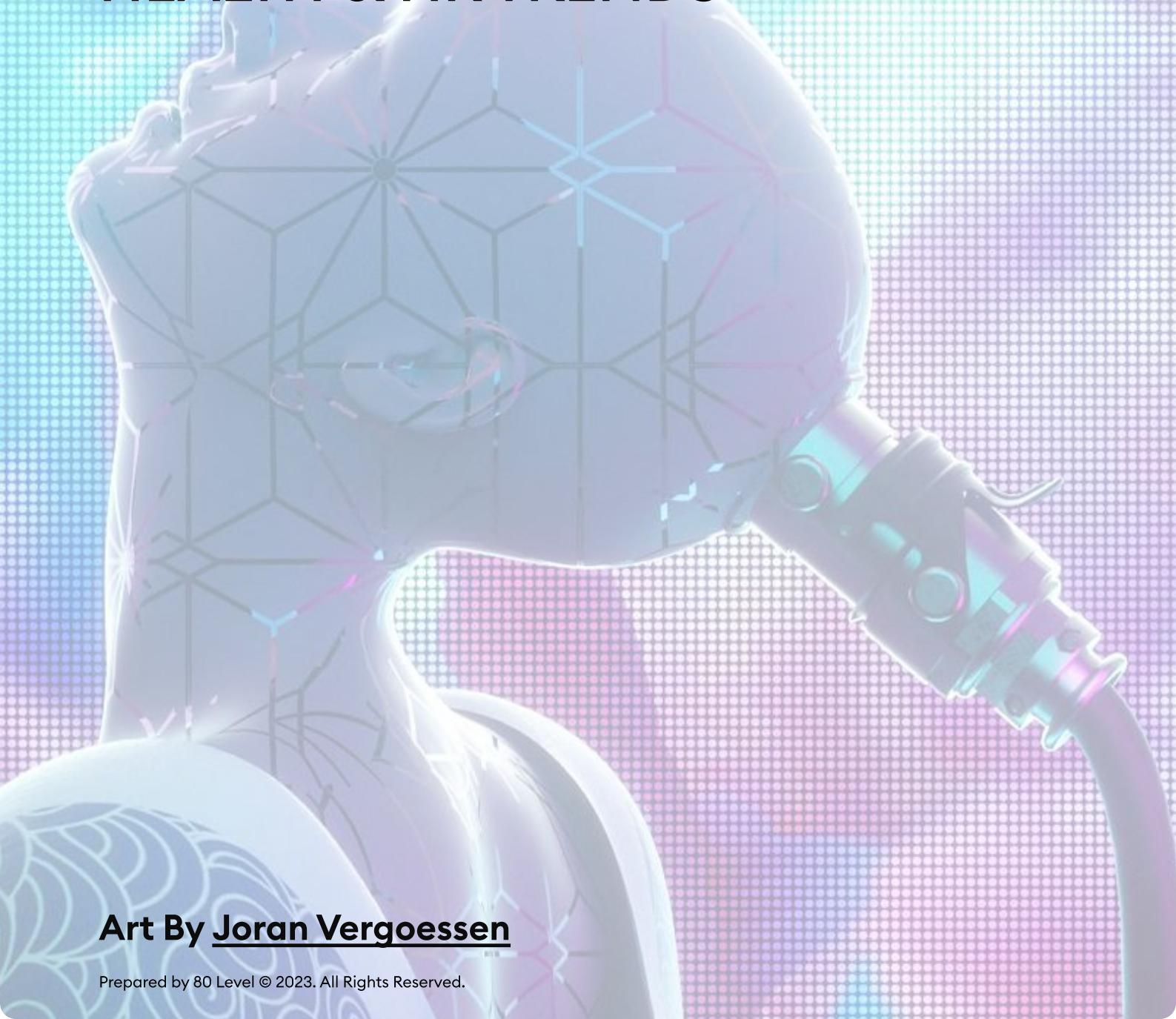


STATE OF THE GAME DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY 2023

WORKPLACE CULTURE, MENTAL HEALTH & HR TRENDS



Art By Joran Vergoessen

STATE OF THE GAME DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY 2023: WORKPLACE CULTURE, MENTAL HEALTH & HR TRENDS

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80 Level Research does quantitative and qualitative research by conducting interviews and surveys with gamers, game developers, digital artists, and other industry experts. We are your go-to source of information and insiders' perspectives on all-things video games.

Explore our new Mental Health State of the Industry report with:

- An extensive examination of workplace culture, mental health, and HR trends;
- The latest data from 56 countries sourced through surveys and interviews;
- Insights from 500+ professionals, including students, freelancers, employees, and CEOs.

This report will provide you with fresh industry findings directly from people who work there to answer many acute questions:

- What truly influences employees' loyalty? Our factor analysis unveils the key drivers.
- How do you combat burnout? Practical advice from industry peers.
- Is AI genuinely replacing human jobs? Separating fact from fiction.
- Is unpaid overwork a hallmark of modern gamedev? Learn what our respondents think.
- Delve into the industry's layoffs landscape in 2023, with firsthand accounts.
- Discover why companies' efforts to support mental health often fall short.

Where the industry stands and where it's headed will be revealed in this comprehensive report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the ever-changing world of game development, 2023 brought significant challenges. Layoffs loomed large in major gaming companies, driven by economic strains, cost-cutting measures, and shifts in the industry. These changes, influenced by shifting post-pandemic consumer behaviors, left many in the industry feeling confused and overwhelmed. Our research aims to provide clarity and support.



Only a quarter of respondents (26%) expressed contentment with the current working environment at their companies and demonstrated a positive perception of the existing workplace culture.



Professionals definitely believe that the industry needs improvement. A negative eNPS score (-19%) demonstrates a poor level of industry professionals' emotional loyalty to their studios. Currently, most respondents are not willing to recommend working at their companies to other job seekers.



Managerial mindfulness, company support of employees' well-being, remote work policies, and individual expertise are the significant factors in determining the eNPS.



Investing effort and resources in manager training programs, which only 13% of companies are doing now, could have a significant impact on eNPS. Creating a positive and inclusive work environment, supporting professional development and growth, and leading by example better companies' can dramatically increase eNPS scores.



The culture and workplace environment at a company is one of the most important factors for 40% of respondents when it comes to looking for a new job. However, 19% of surveyed professionals stated that their companies don't take any measures to support employees' mental health, and 52% don't take any actions to support diversity, equity, and inclusion among workers.



Over the past year, 28% of respondents experienced layoffs in their organizations.



Despite the talks about the imminent replacement of people by AI, only 3% of respondents mentioned that layoffs were driven by the automation of certain job roles.



Overwork is a hallmark of the modern game industry. 37% of respondents took on more responsibilities without an increase in salary in 2023. Additionally, the same percentage didn't receive any payment for the overtime work hours.



After the pandemic, around half of the respondents continue to work fully remotely (47%). Also, 33% of specialists use a hybrid work format, and only 15% work fully in a physical office.

In a time of change, our research aims to instill hope and a sense of shared experience, reassuring employees and employers alike that they are not alone in navigating these industry challenges. Together, we can chart a path towards a healthier, more inclusive, and fulfilling future for game development.

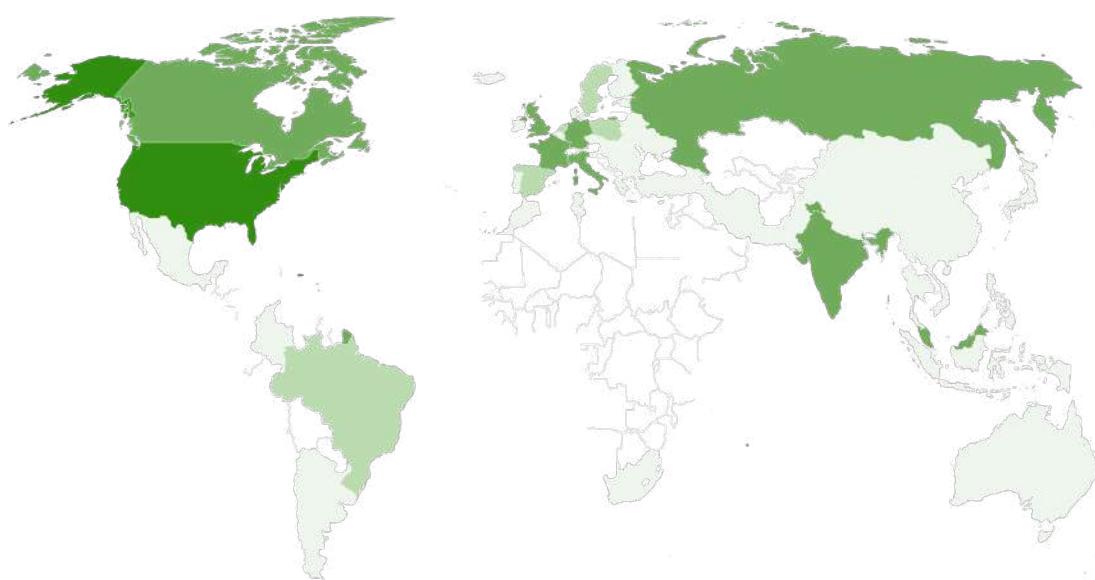
TABLE OF CONTENTS

A SURVEY SNAPSHOT	5
BEYOND EXHAUSTION: MENTAL HEALTH AND BURNOUT IN THE WORKPLACE	9
REMOTE WORK IS HERE TO STAY	13
DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION	14
ADOPTING A MINDFUL LEADER MINDSET	15
UNSUSTAINABLE WORK PRACTICES: LAYOFFS, OVERTIME AND BEYOND	16
FOUR ULTIMATE COMPONENTS OF EMPLOYEES' LOYALTY	22
HOW TO MAKE EMPLOYEES HAPPY AND INCREASE ENPS? PRACTICAL TIPS	26
DECODING THE JOB SEARCH	28
SOLVING CHALLENGES OF HIRING	33
CONCLUSION	35

A SURVEY SNAPSHOT

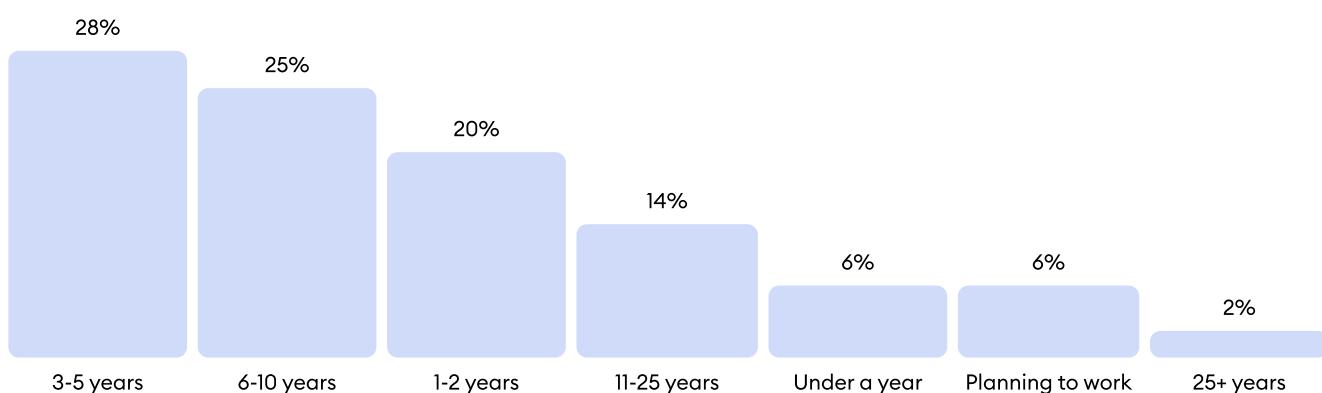
The 80 Level Research team conducted a global survey among 503 gaming industry professionals to receive valuable insights about workplace culture and different methods of supporting employees' mental health in gaming companies. Industry professionals from 56 countries share their experience on topics such as emotional well-being at work, burnout prevention, leadership, hiring process, and layoffs.

RESPONDENTS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

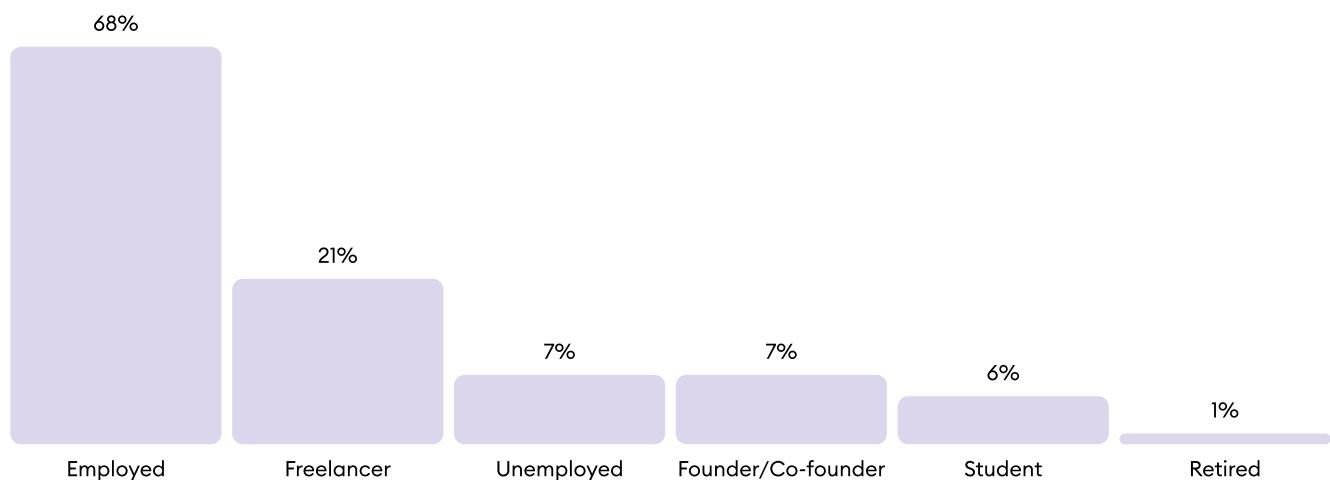


The gender distribution among respondents is as follows: male (76%), female (17%), and non-binary (2%). The median age of respondents is 30. Most of the respondents have been working in the industry for 3-5 years (27%), with almost the same number working for 6-10 years. 19% are at the start of their career (1-2 years). Only 2% have been in the industry for more than 25 years.

YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY

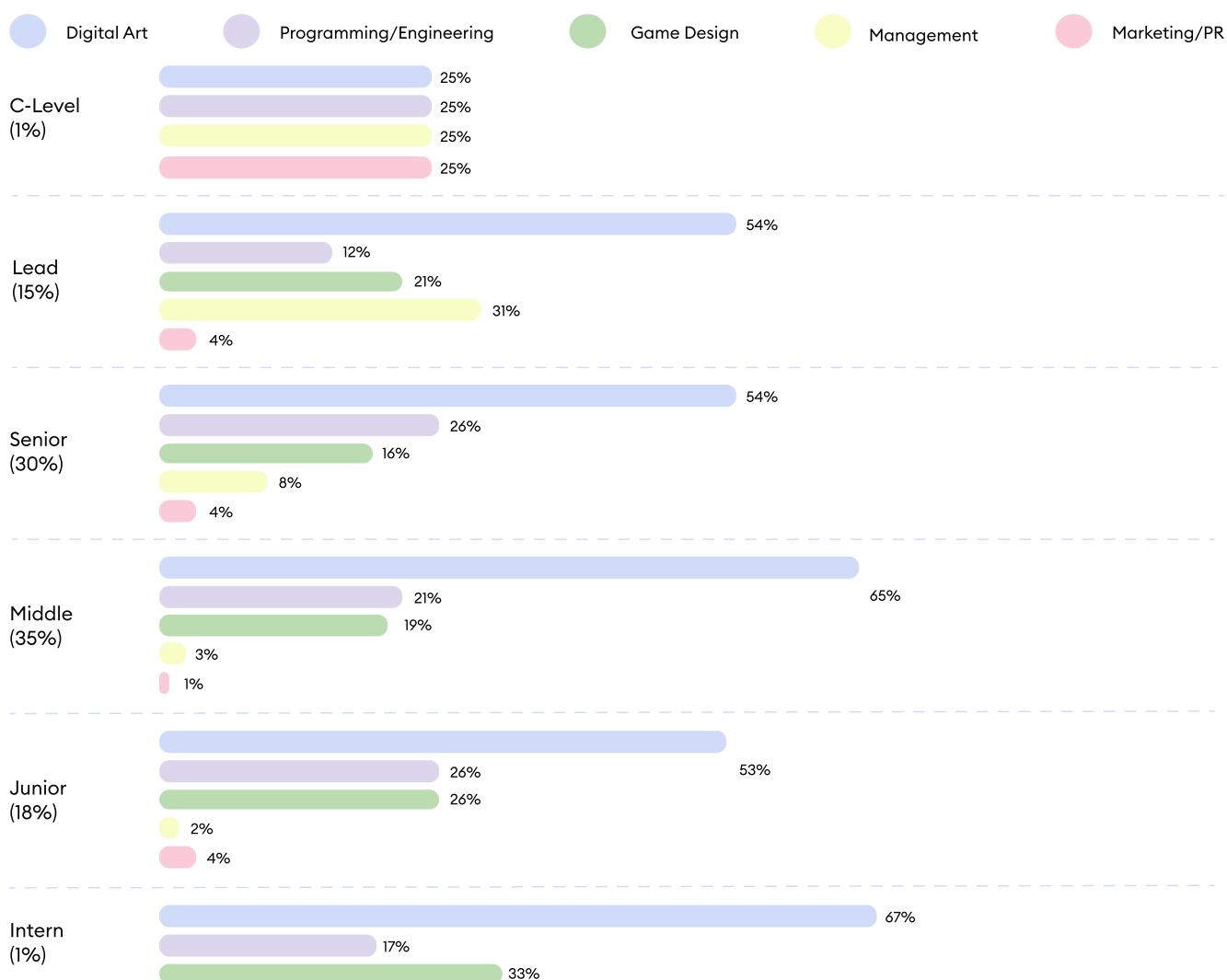


CURRENT STATUS



More than 2/3 of the people surveyed are currently employed at a company. Freelance is another popular occupation type among respondents: 21% are self-employed.

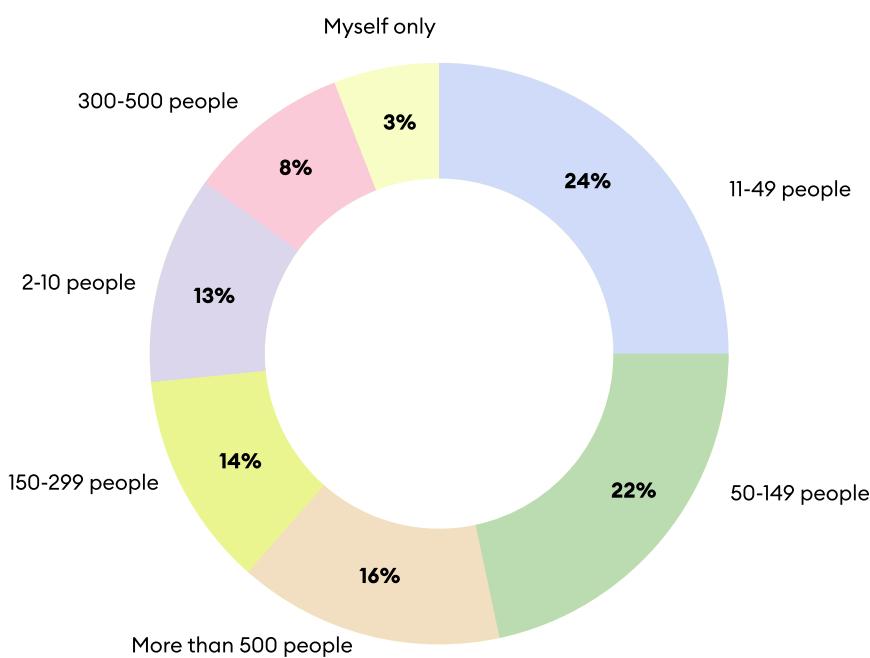
MAIN AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITIES



Among the 500 respondents, we had the following distribution of their work areas and expertise levels: Among C-Level respondents, there was an equal distribution of those who represented digital art, programming, game design, management, and marketing (this group being the smallest one). The biggest group of respondents from each level of expertise was represented by digital art. Game designers are represented from 19% to 33% in each expertise category. Programming professionals accounted for 12% to 26% of different expertise.

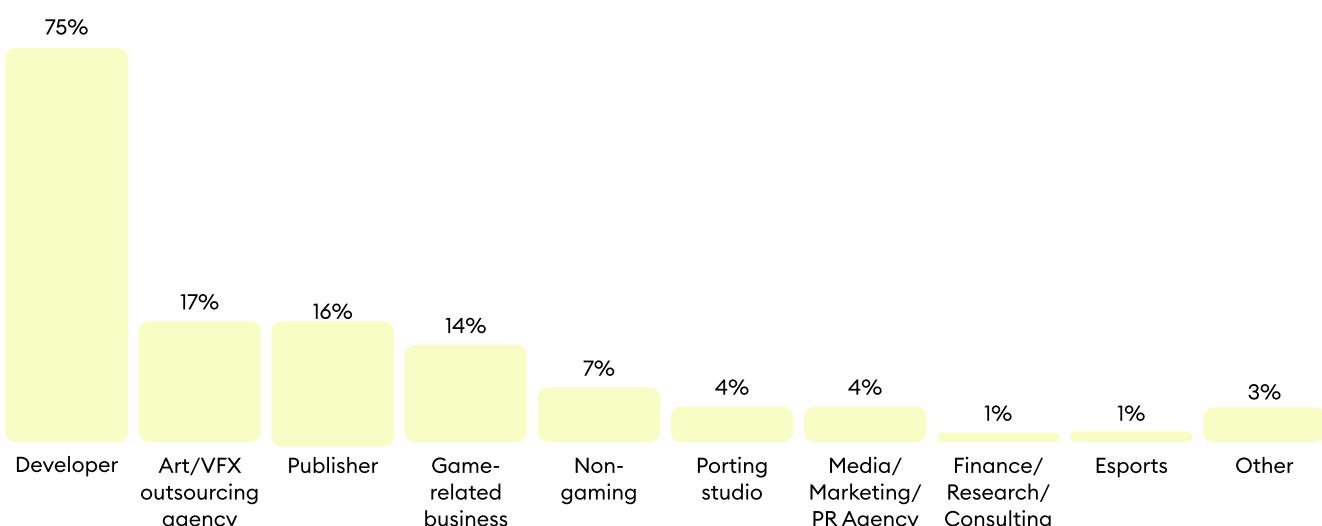
40% of respondents work for indie companies (1–49 people), 36% are employees in mid-sized studios (50–299 people), and 24% work at enterprises (300+ people).

SIZE OF THE COMPANIES



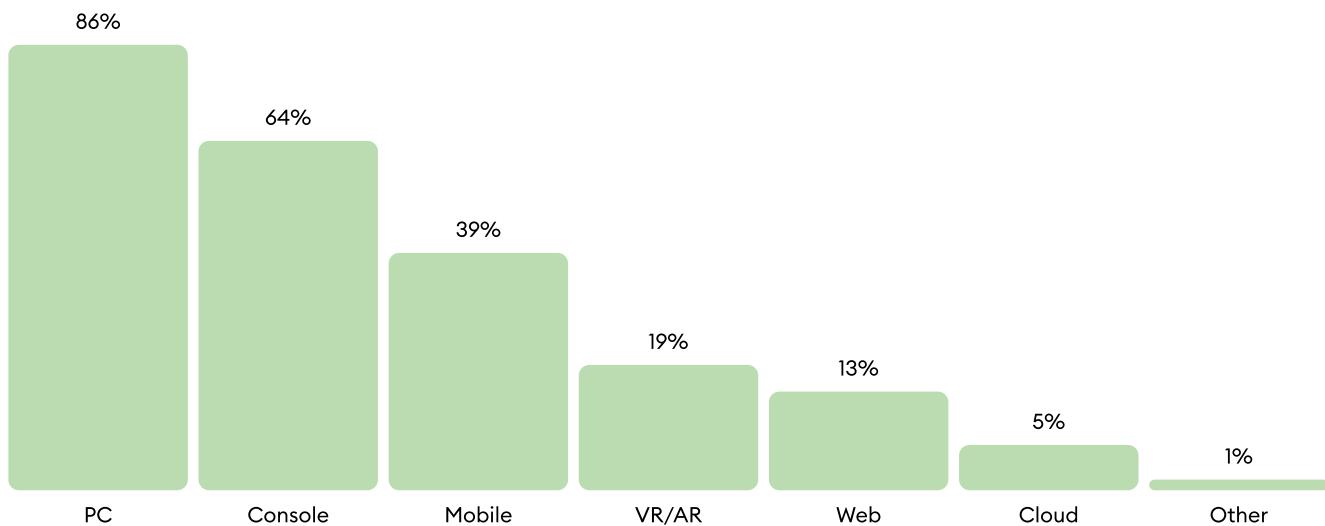
Development studios (75%) are the most popular workplaces among surveyed specialists. Art/VFX outsourcing agencies (17%) and publishing companies (16%) take second and third place, respectively.

MAIN SPECIALISATIONS OF RESPONDENTS' COMPANIES



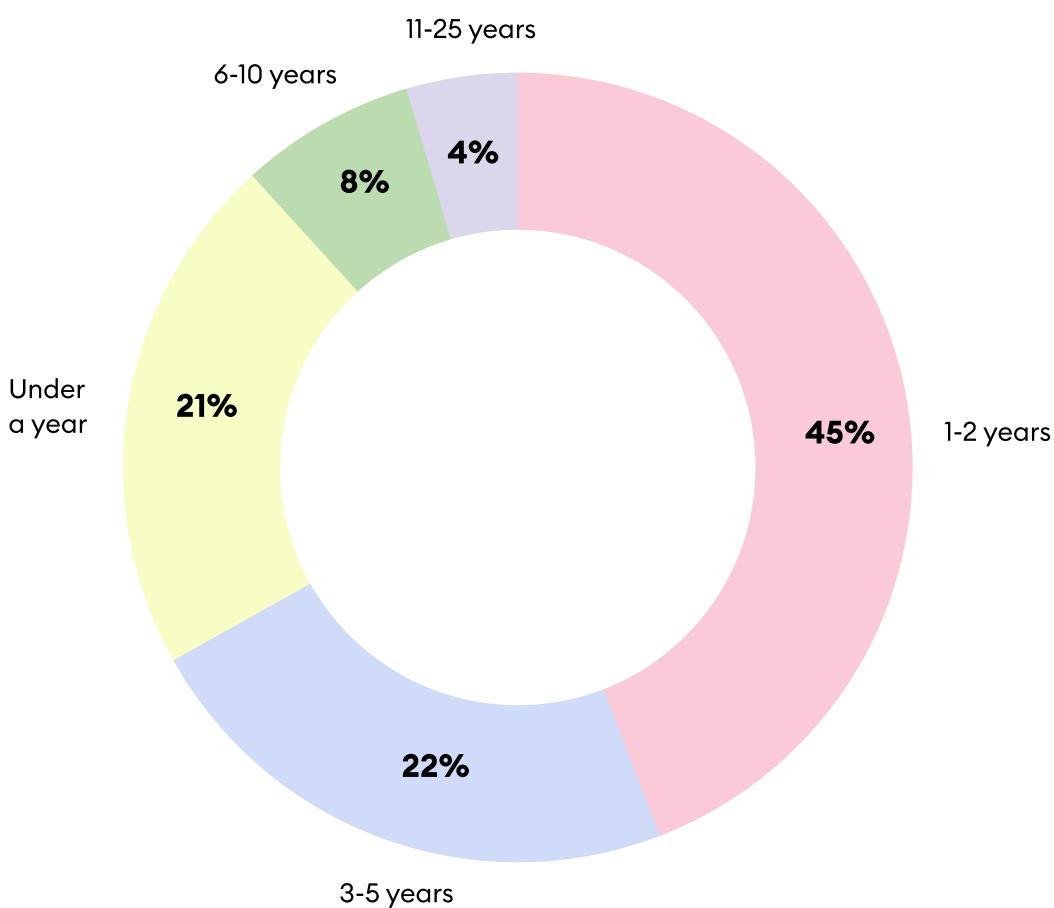
The companies respondents work for are mostly oriented towards PC (86%), console (64%), and mobile (39%).

MAIN GAME PLATFORMS



Half of the respondents (45%) have been working at their current company for 1-2 years, while 22% have 3-5 years of experience.

YEARS IN THE CURRENT COMPANIES



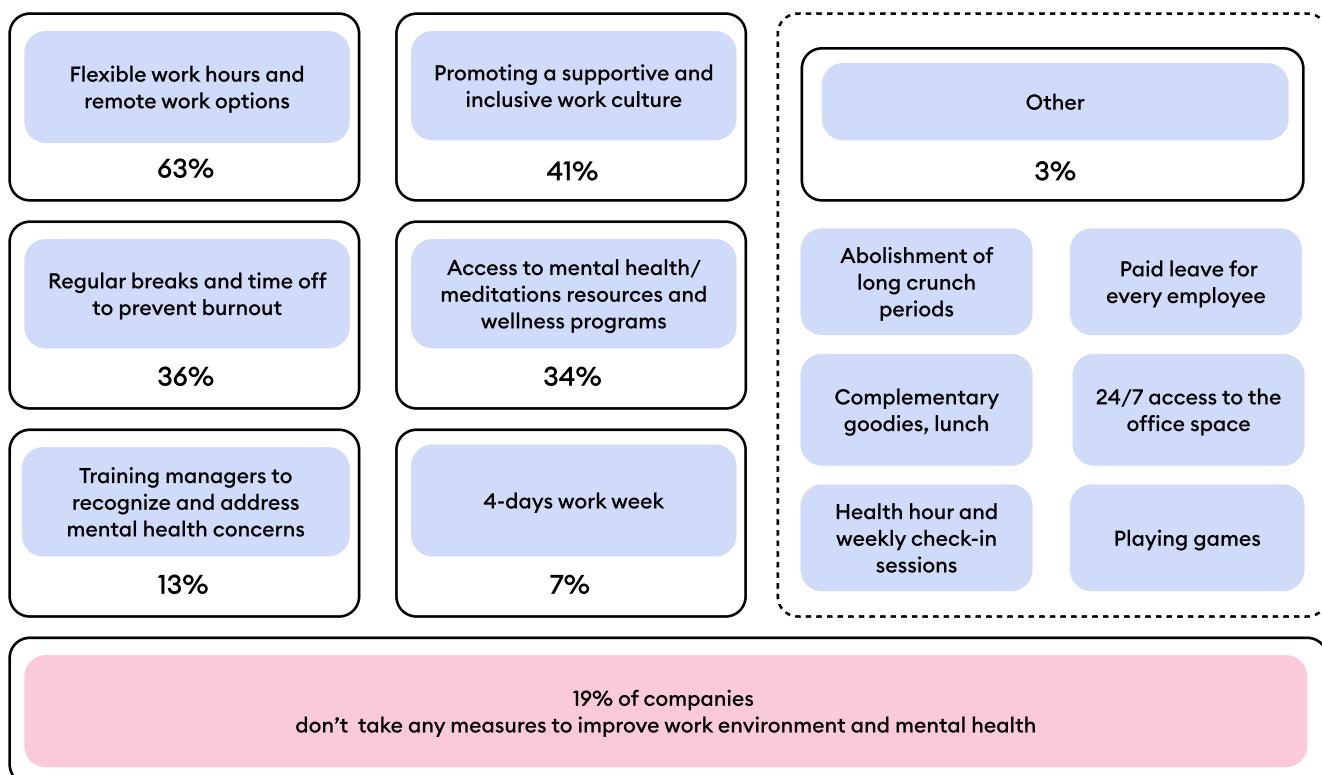
BEYOND EXHAUSTION: MENTAL HEALTH AND BURNOUT IN THE WORKPLACE

In the game development industry where people work for really long hours, where harm, as well as a lack of managerial skill and the toxic idea that our passion is what keeps us employed, all make it harder to maintain ones' well-being.

From the podcast with Eve Crevoshay, Executive Director at Take This

In order to maintain employees' mental health, the majority of companies offer flexible schedules and remote work options (63%) and strive to create an inclusive work culture (41%). However, not a lot of studios provide a 4-day work week (7%) or train their managers to support employees' mental health (13%). Surprisingly, 19% of respondents said that their companies don't take any measures to improve work environment and mental health.

MEASURES COMPANIES TAKE TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEES' MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

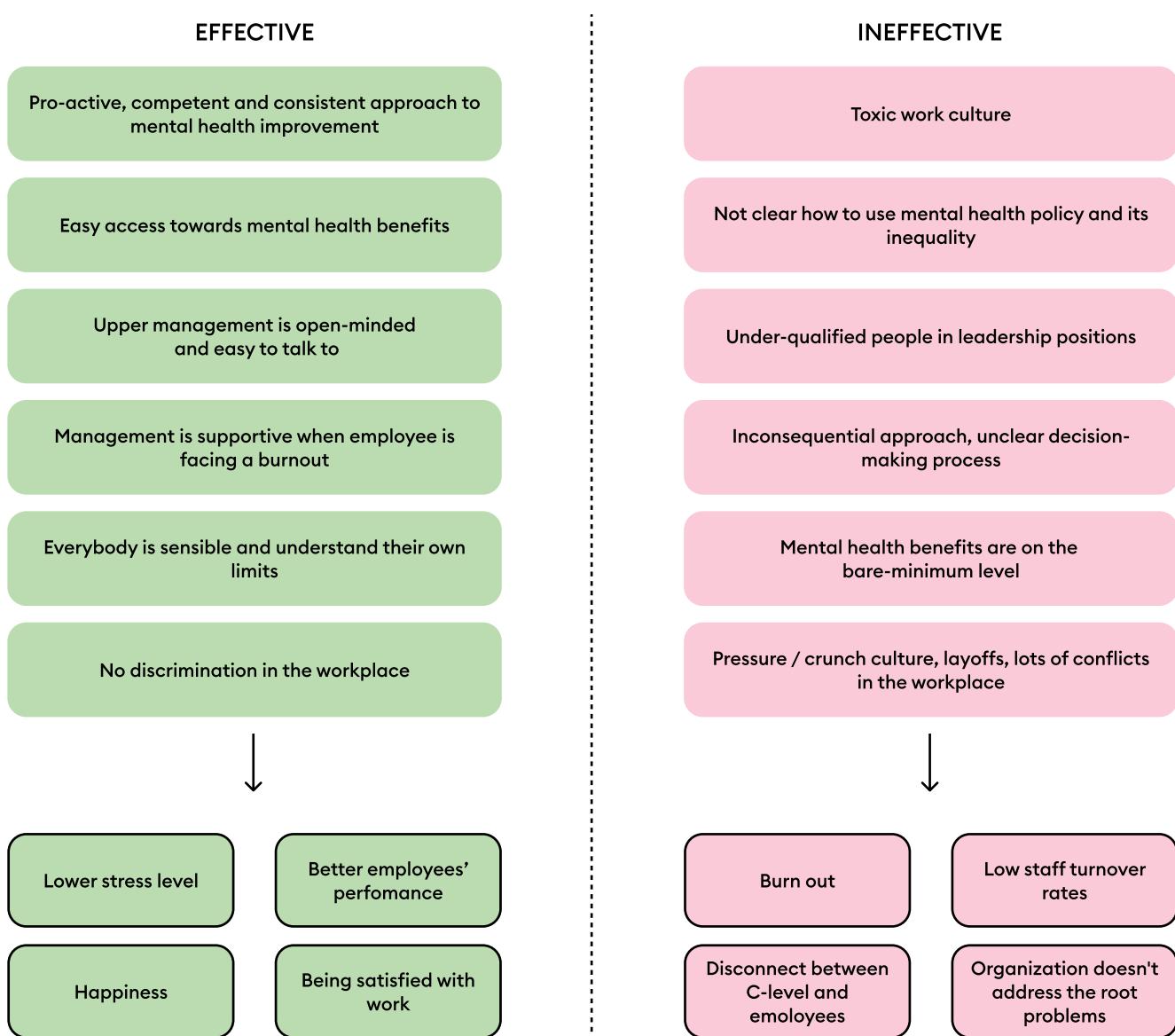


On average, the level of satisfaction with existing methods of maintaining employees' mental health is 3 out of 5. There are several factors influencing the effectiveness/ineffectiveness of companies' mental health policies:



According to respondents' opinions, work culture, managers' professionalism, and the ability to plan play a big role in employees' mental health. Even the most well-drafted programs and good working conditions may not bring success without a proper managerial approach.

WHAT MAKES EMPLOYEES CONSIDER A COMPANY'S EFFORTS TO ENHANCE MENTAL HEALTH (IN)EFFECTIVE?



"Without the responsibility of top-managers about project decisions, clear planning, and the ability to spread the workload efficiently, no health hours or massage sessions could compensate for stress."

Anonymous from 80 Level Survey

“I have witnessed firsthand the negative effects of not respecting personal time. I believe it is a selfish approach because if my staff members are working, I should also be working... Just as I respect their time, I expect the same in return. They should have time for themselves, whether it's spending time with friends, family, reading a book, or playing games. It is important to show that we value their time, and in return, they will value what we are building together.

From the interview with Shahrizar Roslan, CEO at Kaigan Games

Many companies just create the appearance of caring about employees' mental health. One of the respondents called it: **“band-aids for unaddressed crunch culture.”** In addition, taking into account the specifics of the gaming industry, employees are forced to overwork in order to meet deadlines:

“The reality of the workload that needs to be completed fast and cheap at a AAA level makes it really hard to get away from the maelstrom of stress. In other words, it's more a problem that arises from business practices in today's society than a problem solely with this studio.

Anonymous from 80 Level Survey

Consequently, it's important to provide employees basic mental health support, like psychological assistance or establishing a schedule that's convenient for them, and also promote employee growth and development:

“Encouraging growth and understanding that even mistakes at work have a solution is fundamental. Working in fear of making mistakes and being reprimanded is detrimental and devastating.

Anonymous from 80 Level Survey

“A trust relationship thrives on reciprocal communication. It hinges on respecting and actively supporting individuals in their career journeys. Cultivating such respect fosters an environment where candid and meaningful conversations can flourish.

From the interview with Joshua Axner, CEO at Gimbal Zen

Besides that, another approach can be individual to meet the needs of all employees.

“We hired a dedicated HR assistant to improve communication and provide multiple avenues for employees to express themselves comfortably. By having a separate person, it creates a system where employees can easily share their concerns and desires. This approach helps in avoiding communication bottlenecks and ensures that employees have various channels to communicate their needs.

From the interview with Shahrizar Roslan, CEO at Kaigan Games

On average, the burnout rate of the surveyed gaming industry employees for the past year is **3 out of 5**. The following 14 tips helped our respondents to minimize or even prevent burnouts in the past.

TIPS FROM RESPONDENTS

1. Strive to do what you like;
2. Try to maintain work-life balance and do not work overtime;
3. Take regular breaks with hobbies outside of work;
4. Try to reduce work stress and not get into conflicts, if possible;
5. Break up big tasks into smaller pieces;
6. Do more physical activities, meditation, and walks;
7. Save money to create a financial cushion;
8. Strive to have trusting relationship with your boss, highlight the problems you're facing early on;
9. Share your feelings with other coworkers and the manager;
10. Improve your time management skills;
11. Always use paid time off and sick-leave time if it's given;
12. Set boundaries and enforce them as much as you can;
13. Work with your colleagues as a team to set realistic and achievable KPIs and milestones, and set realistic deadlines, taking into account work-life balance;
14. Pace yourself.

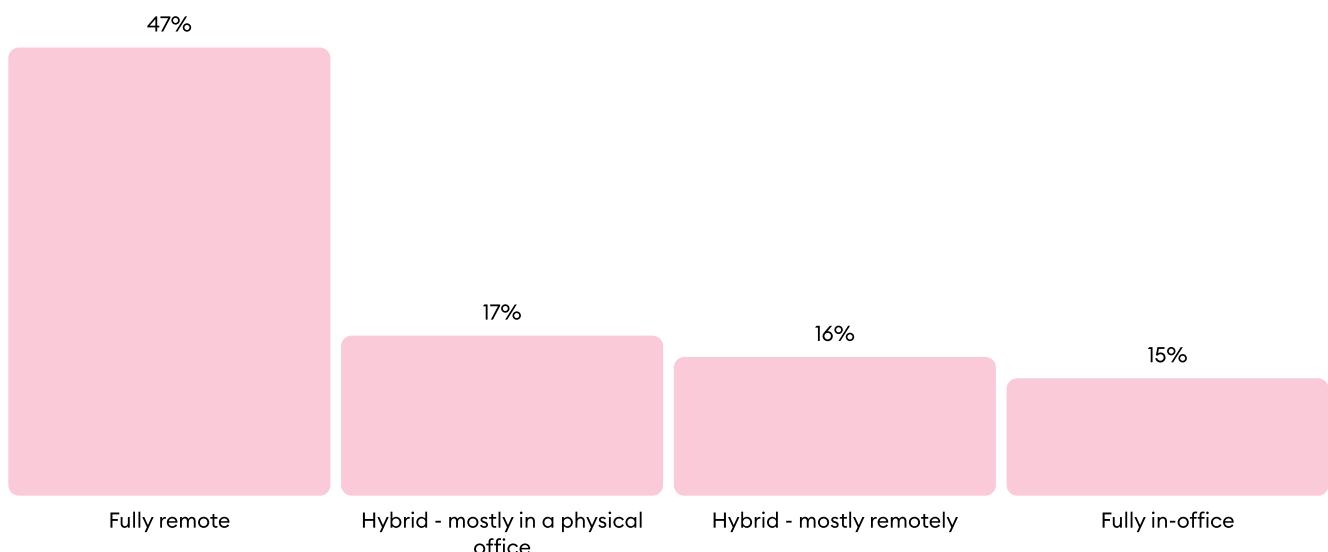
It is crucial to be cautious when identifying signs of distress among employees. Creating an open and supportive workplace culture can help in this regard. As an organization, it is our responsibility to provide tools and resources to support these individuals, such as benefits, paid time off, mental health days, and sabbatical leaves.

From the interview with Mufizal Mokhtar, General Manager at Virtuos Kuala Lumpur

REMOTE WORK IS HERE TO STAY

After the pandemic, about half of respondents continue to work fully remote (47%). 33% of specialists use a hybrid work format, and only 15% of respondents work fully in a physical office. In general, **employees are satisfied with the remote work policy in their companies: the average rate is 4 out of 5.**

RESPONDENTS' PLACE OF WORK AFTER THE PANDEMIC



We have implemented flexible working arrangements, allowing employees to work in the office or remotely. This has greatly impacted our ability to attract talented individuals, especially when setting up studios in locations like Singapore or Indonesia, where finding experienced professionals can be challenging. The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the trend of remote work in the industry, and we have focused on building a strong sense of community. We organize virtual team lunches, coffee chats over video calls, and engage in virtual events and multiplayer games to foster bonding and connection.

From the interview with Matthew Quek, Co-Founder & CEO at The Iterative Collective

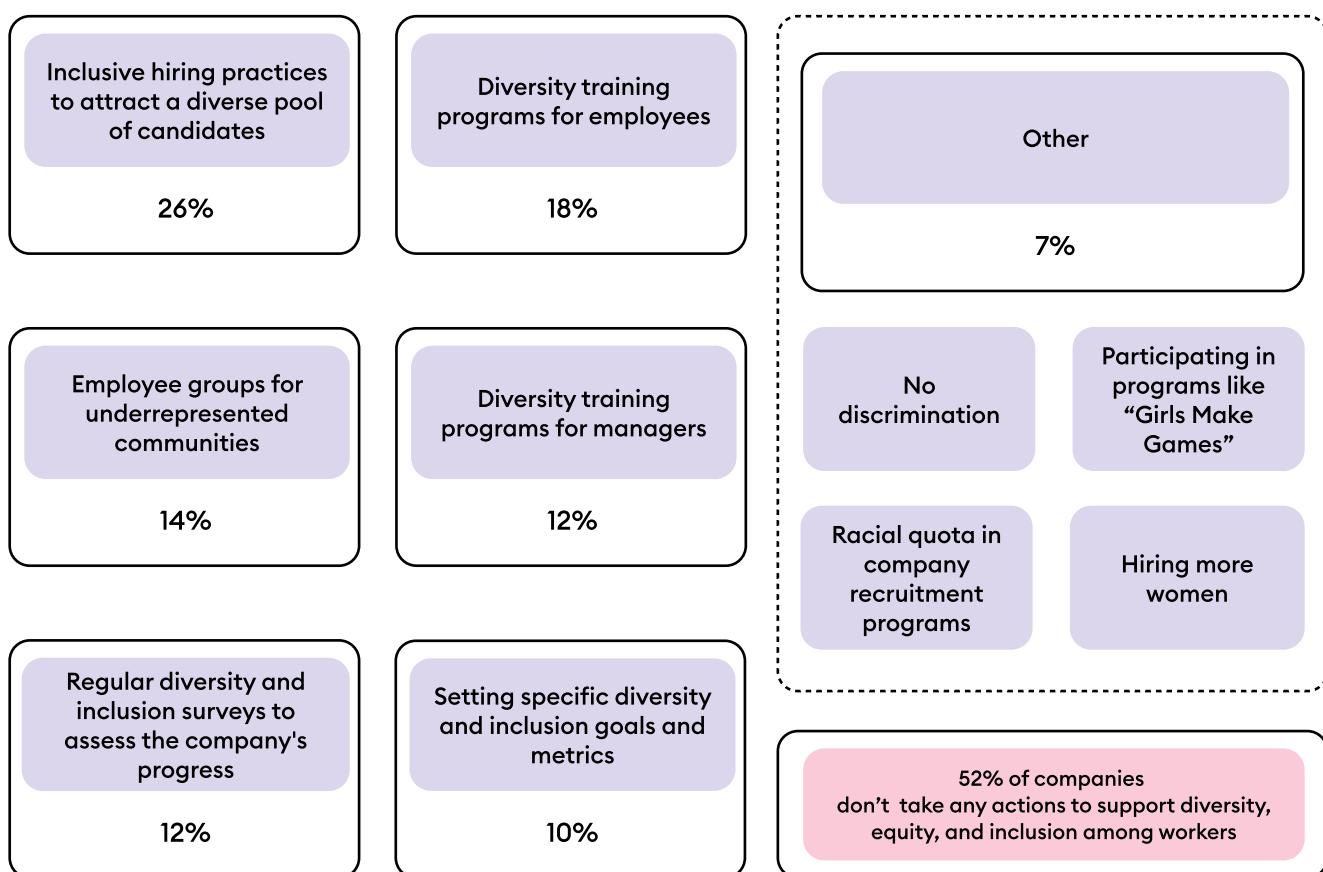
The majority of respondents would prefer working from home in order to take care of family and be able to save money on childcare and commuting. This applies especially to new employees who started their careers after the pandemic. Some professionals feel a sense of unfairness when those who worked for the company before the pandemic can remain remote, while they can't. However, some respondents expressed a preference to work offline because it's easier to collaborate with people this way.

For companies with hybrid work place policies it's important to communicate clearly and maintain corporate culture online to make sure that remote employees aren't isolated from the office. So, if a company gives employees an opportunity to work remotely, team retreats to get to know colleagues in-person should be arranged. Companies can also provide laptops and additional benefits (e.g pay Internet bills and purchase software) in order to improve the working conditions of remote workers.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

One of the other efforts that is valued by employees is a company's attention to diversity and inclusion. It's worth noting that more than 50% of companies don't take any actions to support diversity, equity, and inclusion among workers (52%). As for other studios, a quarter of them often use inclusive hiring practices (26%), and 18% implement training courses for employees. Besides that, not many industry players set up diversity and inclusion goals or conduct surveys among employees to monitor and assess the environment in the company.

COMPANIES' INITIATIVES TO INCREASE STAFF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION



However, it's important to note is that not everyone "is on board" with companies supporting diversity. Certain groups of people feel like their rights are violated if hiring quotas are going to be implemented (according to an open question of this survey). The main reason behind it that people named was connected to the potential unfairness of hiring decisions, which may not be made based on qualifications and experience.

We need to remember that quotas should serve as a direction for the company on where to look for candidates, but not as the only criteria of why someone should be hired. It may also be useful to ask representatives from different social demographic groups within the company before making final decisions on hiring quotas.

Satisfaction rate of diversity, equity and inclusion maintenance is on the average point - **3 out of 5.**

“It's important to bring successful practices from different sectors into a community with diverse demographics and aspirations. This requires active listening and going into the field to understand the unique dynamics and needs. The foundation of these efforts lies in effective communication and respect, fostering an environment of continuous change and adaptation.

From the interview with Dr. Tan Chin Ike, Head of School & Associate Professor at Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation (APU / APIIT)

ADOPTING A MINDFUL LEADER MINDSET

As managers' culture and attitude towards workers are very significant aspects of mental health, survey specialists assessed their managers' activities in this area. The estimated score is good, in terms of creating an inclusive work environment, acting ethically, and recognizing employees' contributions: all of these characteristics have an average rating of **4 out of 5.** Although, managers' ability to support professional growth and show emotional intelligence was rated as 3 out of 5 by respondents.

RESPONDENTS' ASSESSMENT OF THEIR MANAGERS

SHOW EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND EMPATHY FOR THE TEAM



CREATE A POSITIVE AND INCLUSIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT



SUPPORT YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH



ACT ETHICALLY AND LEAD BY EXAMPLE



RECOGNIZE AND PRAISE YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS



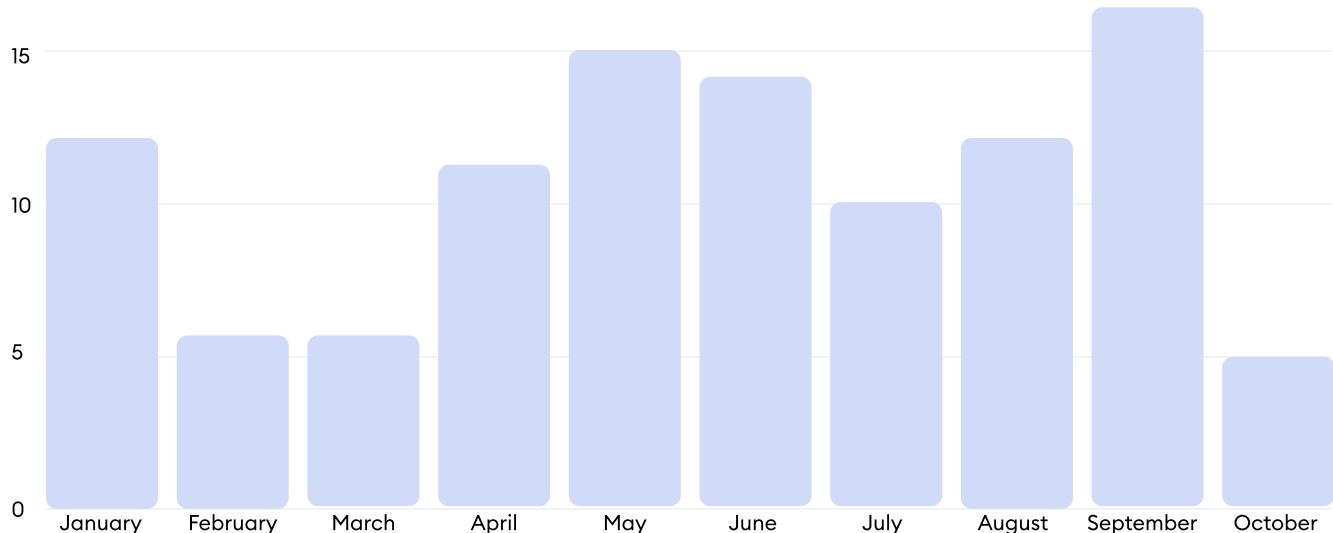
Creating a safe and supportive environment encourages open communication. It is important for leaders to have an open-door policy and actively listen to their team members' challenges and concerns. By providing a safe space for expression, employees feel appreciated and valued. This applies to all levels of the organization, including managers and artists. It is crucial to foster a culture where it is acceptable to discuss both achievements and mistakes, and to find solutions together.

From the interview with Elvis Chew, Head of Production at Anima

UNSUSTAINABLE WORK PRACTICES: LAYOFFS, OVERTIME AND BEYOND

Layoffs in the gaming industry have become a prominent topic of discussion lately, and it's essential to understand the extent of this issue and the impact it has on individuals within the industry. According to [Videogamelayoffs.com](https://videogamelayoffs.com), 6,261 people were affected by layoffs in 2023.

NUMBER OF MONTHLY LAYOFF ROUNDS WITHIN THE INDUSTRY 2023

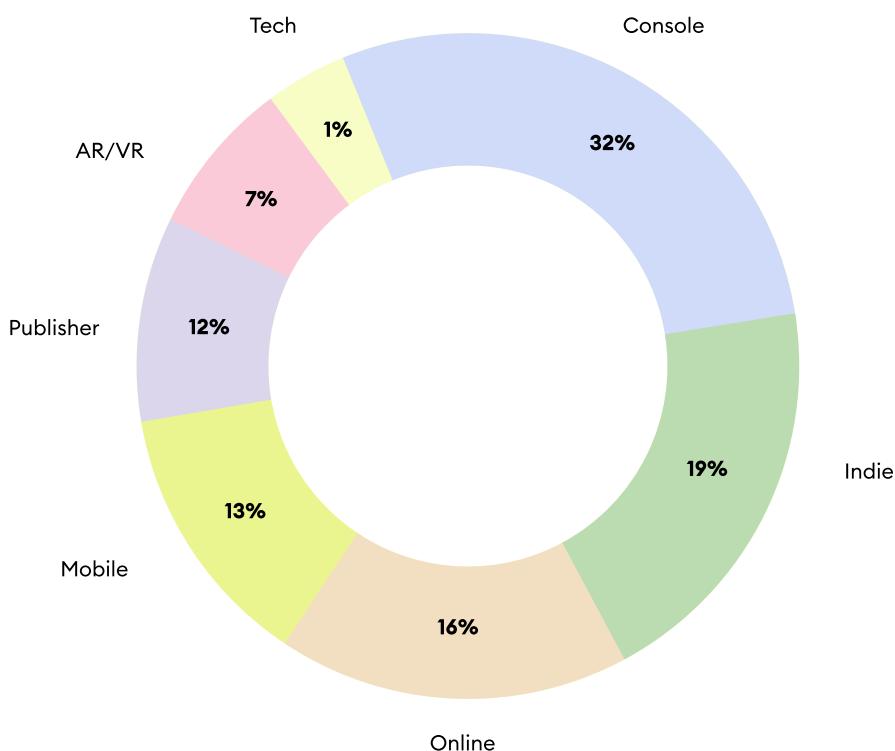


*source: videogamelayoffs.com [data updated at October 13th, 2023]

According to GamesIndustry.biz, 2023 has seen a series of layoffs in major gaming companies, including Ascendant Studios, Beamdog, Crystal Dynamics, Roblox, Blizzard, Epic Games, Team17, Naughty Dog, Twitch, and Keywords, affecting a wide range of employees.

The layoffs have been attributed to various reasons, including economic challenges, cost-cutting measures, and the end of contracts with service firms. Key industry figures have expressed their opinions on this issue, with Kantan Games CEO Serkan Toto highlighting the urgency for gaming companies to cut costs by reducing staff. Hiro Capital partner Spike Laurie attributes this trend to a recalibration in response to economic changes, specifically referencing Elon Musk's layoffs at X, formerly known as Twitter.

GAME INDUSTRY LAYOFFS DISTRIBUTION BY STUDIO TYPE 2023



*source: videogamelayoffs.com [data updated at October 13th, 2023]

Additionally, IDG Consulting's Emilie Avera points out the disparity in compensation between executives and non-executive employees as a significant concern. The external sources also mention how the gaming industry's rapid growth during the pandemic has necessitated a post-COVID realignment due to evolving consumer spending habits and the demand for longer playtimes in single-player titles.

While companies may make these choices with the aim of improving future financial gains, it's concerning to note that in 40% of cases, former employees are not offered fair parting conditions. This raises important questions about the treatment of individuals during these challenging times and the need for greater consideration towards employee well-being.

Regarding various challenges faced by employees in the industry during the year, industry professionals gave the following answers:

- 37% experienced "quiet hiring." This refers to being assigned additional responsibilities without a corresponding salary increase or promotion. It suggests that many employees had to take on extra work without any additional compensation.
- Another 37% of respondents reported working unpaid overtime hours.
- 28% experienced layoffs in their organizations during the past year.

DID YOU FACE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING THIS YEAR?

Quiet hiring (additional responsibilities with no raise) 37%



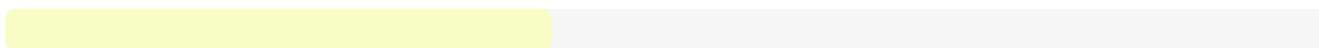
Unpaid overtime work 37%



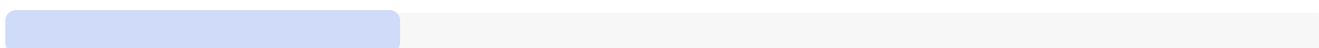
Layoffs 28%



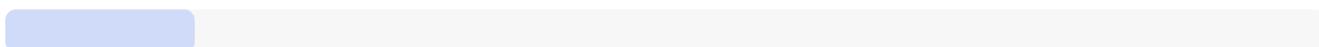
Bonuses reduction/cancellation (monetary) 22%



Reduction of benefits for the employees (non-monetary) 18%



Salary cuts 11%



None of the above 30%



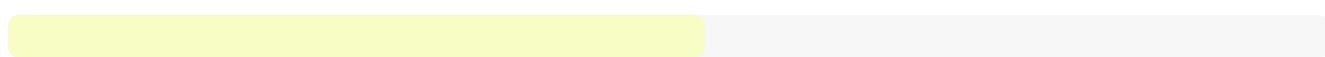
By understanding the primary causes of layoffs, , you can devise a strategy to mitigate them, provide support to affected employees, and foster a more stable and resilient work environment. 34% of survey respondents indicated that layoffs occurred as a result of cost-cutting measures driven by financial constraints. 23% stated that it was primarily caused by company restructuring or reorganization, and pretty much the same amount of people attributed layoffs to an economic downturn or recession that impacted the overall business performance of game development companies. Only 3% of respondents mentioned that layoffs were driven by automation or technology replacing certain job roles.

REASONS FOR THE LAYOFFS

Cost-cutting measures due to financial constraints 34%



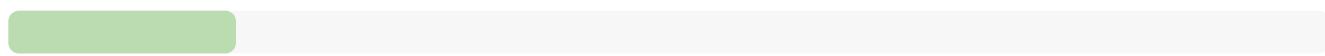
Company restructuring or reorganization 23%



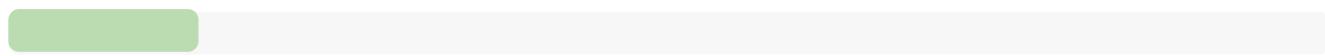
Economic downturn or recession affecting business performance 21%



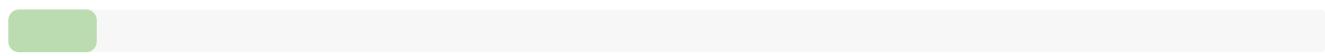
Company mergers or acquisitions leading to workforce adjustment 8%



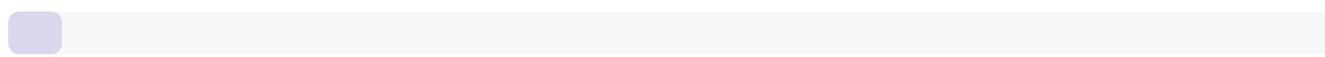
Outsourcing/offshoring of jobs 7%



Automation or technology replacing certain job roles 4%

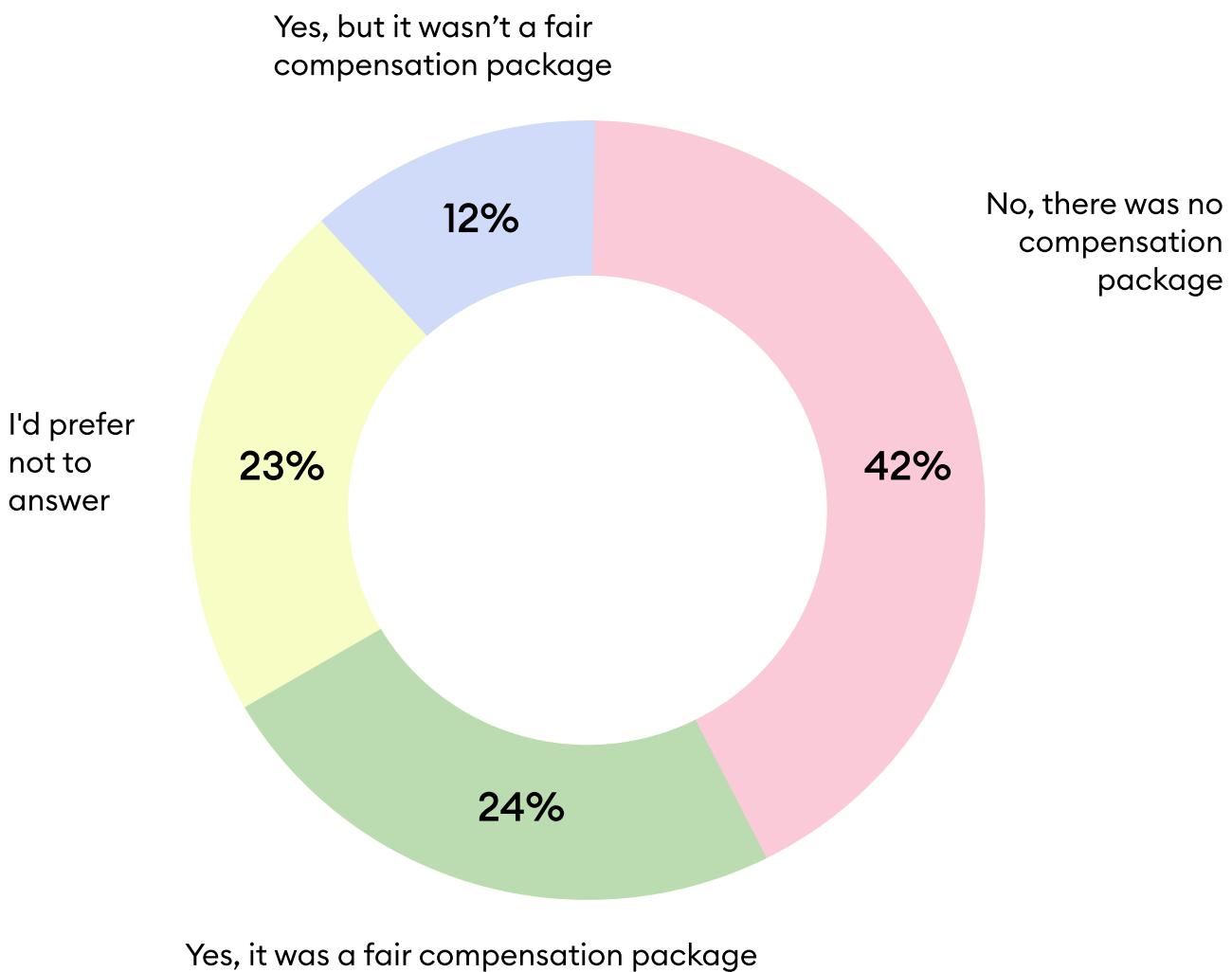


Other 3%



The data on severance packages shows that almost half of the respondents (42%) did not receive any severance package after being laid off. 12% of respondents received a severance package, but felt that it was not fair or sufficient. However, a quarter of the respondents (24%) received a fair severance package upon being laid off.

SEVERANCE PACKAGES DUE TO THE LAYOFFS



Overall, surveyed professionals see the problems in the gamedev industry on 3 main levels: personal, company, and market level. Personal issues are related to specialists' backgrounds, skills, and knowledge in the gaming field.

The company level includes the majority of problems faced by respondents. These problems are connected to business management, hiring approaches, work culture, employees education, and product/project attractiveness. By improving these aspects, companies can create a more favorable working environment for gamedev specialists.

Market challenges are less susceptible to influence from employees and companies. They are determined by economic, political, and social factors.

THE MAIN PROBLEMS THAT SURVEY RESPONDENTS FACE

PERSONAL PROBLEMS

Not enough skills or portfolio needed to gain the job

Not enough experience

COMPANY PROBLEMS

ORGANIZATIONAL

Seeking social recognition at the expense of product quality

Managerial issues and lack of clear communication

Lack of development professionals among management

Lack of organization in business processes

Budget is unclear

Low salary and underpayments

Crunches and mass layoffs

Location restrictions and lack of remote/hybrid options

Non-permanent contracts

Expectation that employees are generalists despite their roles

HR

Lack of standardisation in job titles

Valid candidates are often overlooked

No feedbacks from HR are given whenever rejected

Recruiters are pretty clueless about more niche job roles

Unrealistic requirements

Hiring people due to nepotism and connections

Not many opportunities for entry level

Incompetent HRs

CULTURAL

No respect to the personal boundaries

Lack of compassion from managers

Hard skills are preferred over the soft skills

Culture of overwork

Inequality

TRAINING

Reluctance to let people expand their knowledge

Lack of resources to train juniors

Companies don't want to spend budget on buying education courses

PROJECTS

Lack of passion projects

The majority of projects are similar

Lack of motivated people

MARKET PROBLEMS

Stagnation in mechanics development in the AAA segment

Impossible to make portfolio public due to confidentiality

AA/AAA games are too bloated and expensive to make

Reduced hardware/software access in some countries

No game developers' union

Challenging to land a job for remote workers

Lack of networking chances

Economy shrinks - so did the industry

Outsourcing has taken over a big slice of the pie

Lack of a centralised job board

Limited travel opportunities due to politics

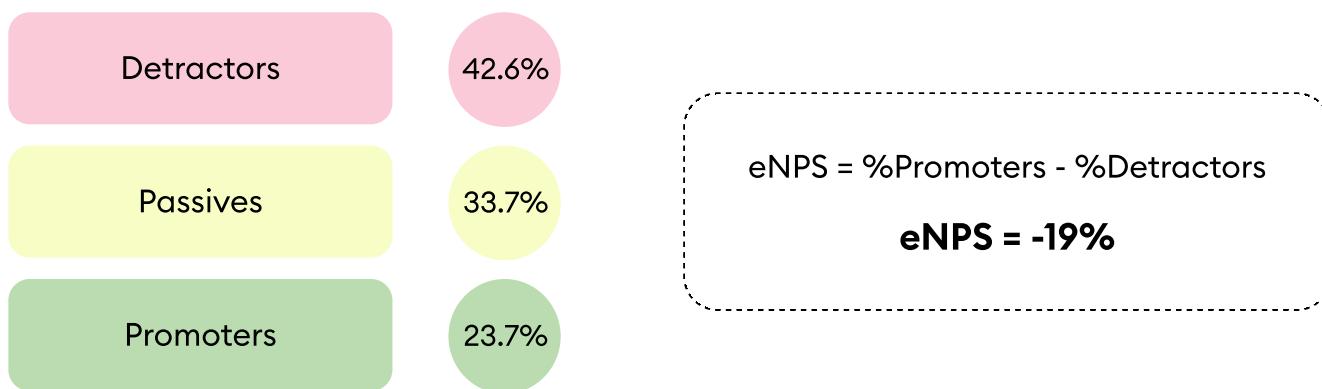
FOUR ULTIMATE COMPONENTS OF EMPLOYEES' LOYALTY

FINDINGS FROM FACTOR AND REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) is considered to be an important metric for measuring employees' loyalty to the company. The concept is widely popular and adopted in several established and emerging industries. 80 Level has executed factor and regression analysis aimed to spot the factors influencing the eNPS of a company and the score rating from individuals.

Our survey revealed a negative eNPS score (-19%) that demonstrates a certain level of disloyalty among most professionals from an emotional point of view. Respondents aren't willing to recommend their companies to job seekers.

ENPS SCORE



Factor analysis is a statistical technique in which a multitude of variables is reduced to a smaller number of factors. In this market research, it was used to collectively analyze several factors influencing the respondents' satisfaction and probability to recommend working at their current company to other job seekers. Factor analysis is a form of exploratory multivariate analysis that is used to either reduce the number of variables in a model or to detect relationships among variables. All variables involved in the factor analysis are assumed to be normally distributed.

IN THE FACTOR ANALYSIS, 4 MAIN FACTORS WERE DISTINGUISHED

1. Managers' mindfulness (5 questions from the survey)

- Emotional intelligence of the manager and empathy to the team;
- A positive and inclusive work environment;
- Supporting professional development and growth;
- Acting ethically and leading teams by example;
- Recognising and praising contributions.

2. The company's care for employees' wellbeing (3 questions from the survey)

- Experiencing burnout
- Satisfaction with the company's attempts to increase staff diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Satisfaction with the company's attempts to improve employees' mental health

3. Remote work support (2 questions from the survey)

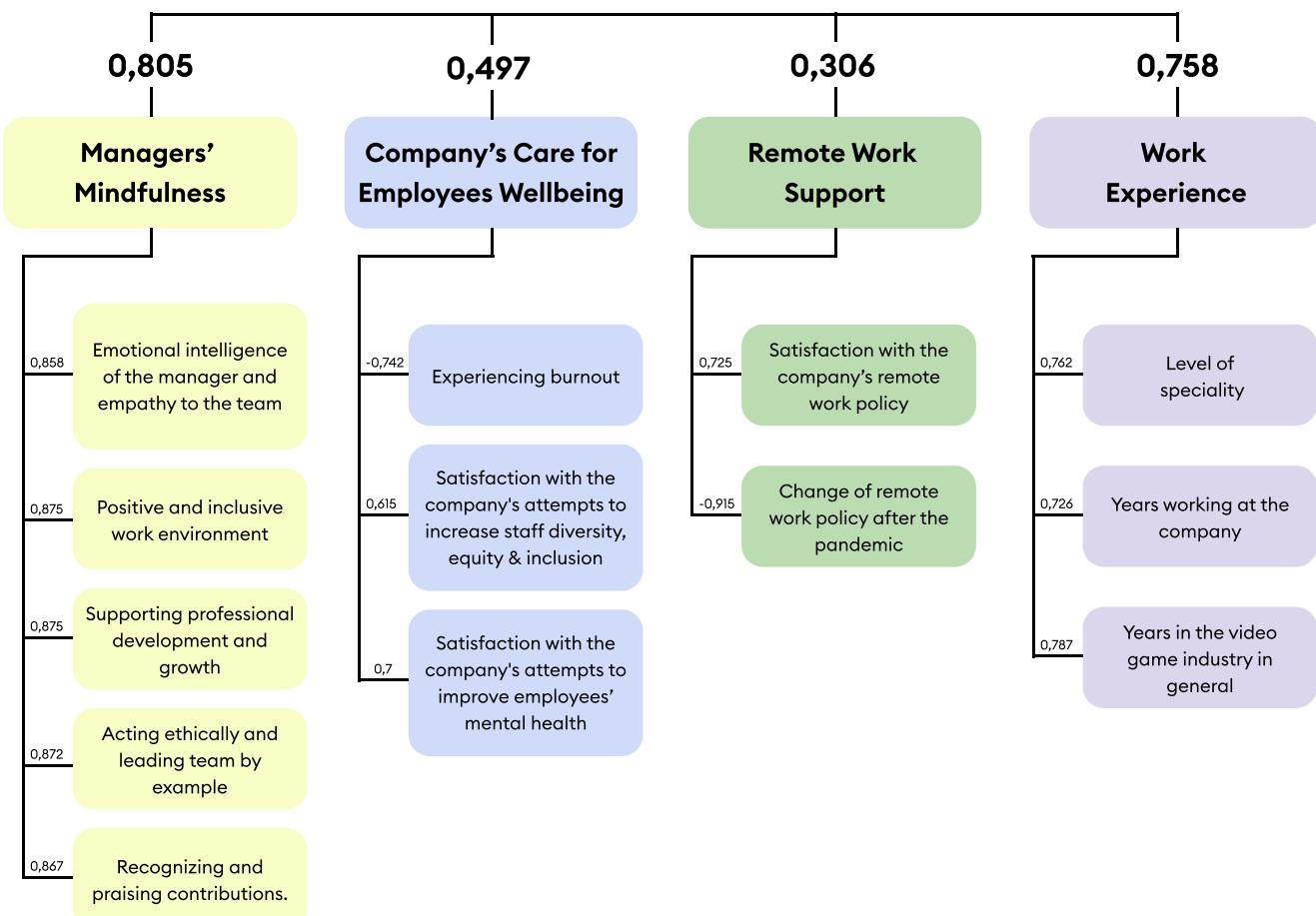
- Satisfaction with company's remote work policy
- Change of remote work policy after the pandemic

4. Work experience (3 questions from the survey)

- Level of specialty
- Years working at the company
- Years in the video game industry in general

Communality (the opposite of uniqueness) is the proportion of variance when all the factors are taken together, and a high number of communality indicates that variables belong with the other factors in the group.

- From the component matrix table, all 5 of the test scores load onto the first factor (managers' mindfulness), being integral for the eNPS score. All 5 of the manager component scores are higher than 0.85;
- The second factor (the company's care for employees wellbeing) also indicates that these 3 factors have a communal effect in determining the eNPS score. The component scores of 0.6 and higher among these 3 questions are included in the factor;
- The third factor (remote work support) showed high component scores with the satisfaction of remote work policies with a component score of 0.725, and the negative component factor of 0.915 – the pandemic's influence on remote work policy contributing to the overall eNPS;
- Last but not least, "Work Experience" is one of the other major factors contributing to the eNPS score, with the compound score close to 1 - 0.758. This factor included 3 sub-factors, such as the level of speciality, number of years working at the company, and number of years in the video game industry in general.



While loyalty to a company is valued, it is also important to ensure job satisfaction in the long term. Employees may choose to switch companies despite their loyalty. However, more personal reasons such as aligning with a company's principles and being passionate about its products can contribute to longer tenures. For example, I remained with a company for a decade because I believed in its mission and the product we created. It was the product itself that made the company stand out to me, apart from just the perks or culture.

From the interview with Mufizal Mokhtar, General Manager at Virtuos Kuala Lumpur

FACTOR ANALYSIS: CONCLUSION

The results of the factor analysis indicate that all 5 test scores in the “Managers’ Mindfulness” factor have a strong positive influence on the employees’ loyalty rate. The “Company’s Care for Employee Well-being” factor also significantly contributes to the eNPS, as evidenced by the high component scores. “Remote Work Support” and the level of specialization are also important aspects influencing the eNPS score. Overall, these findings highlight the significance of factors such as managerial mindfulness, company’s support for employee well-being, remote work policies, and individual expertise in determining the eNPS. By understanding and addressing these factors, companies can work towards improving employees’ loyalty and satisfaction.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Furthermore, the research team ran a regression analysis in order to help determine the impact of independent variables (the factors above) on the dependent variable (eNPS) and to make predictions or draw conclusions based on the observed data. The independent variables included the experience of the individuals, the management style/mindfulness, the remote work policy, and the level of care provided by the employers for employees' mental health. **Independent variables collectively explain approximately 60% of the variability observed in the eNPS.** This is indicated by the standard R square value of 0.6, which represents the proportion of the variance in the eNPS that can be accounted for by the independent variables.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS REPORT

Model	R	R-square	Adjusted R-square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0,752	0,565	0,561	1,891

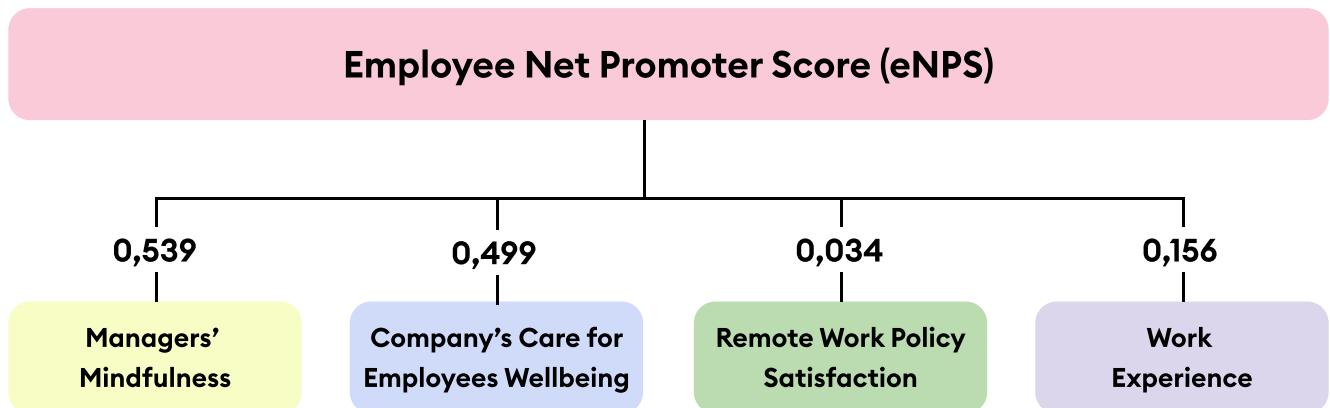
These findings suggest that **management style/mindfulness, employers' care for employees' mental health, remote work policy, and the experience of individuals have a significant impact on the eNPS.** The higher the scores in these independent variables, the more positive the eNPS tends to be.

COEFFICIENTS

Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Beta	t	Significance
	B	Std. Error			
Constant	6,242	,092		67,485	,000
REGR factor score 1 for analysis 1	1,537	,093	,539	16,603	,000
REGR factor score 2 for analysis 1	1,424	,093	,499	15,379	,000
REGR factor score 4 for analysis 1	,445	,093	,156	4,809	,000
REGR factor score 3 for analysis 1	,097	,093	,034	1,043	,298

“ I think, is that because you are creative and know how to make a game, does not mean you know how to manage a team; those are different skills.

From the podcast with Eve Crevoshay, Executive Director at Take This



For example, investing in management mindfulness and training programs for managers have a significant impact on the eNPS score, and if employee's perception of management style/mindfulness were to increase by just 1 point - the eNPS would grow by 50%.

“ This year, we introduced leadership training from external experts, which I personally attended and found highly valuable. These skill sets can't be internalized through a one-time seminar. To ensure effectiveness, it's crucial to host these classes annually and provide opportunities for people to practice these skills. And to be honest, providing ongoing growth opportunities like this is also part of our retention strategy. People prefer to stay in an environment that offers excellent opportunities for improvement.

From the interview with Joshua Axner, CEO at Gimbal Zen

This information can be valuable for organizations to identify areas for improvement and implement strategies that enhance employee satisfaction and engagement, ultimately leading to a higher eNPS.

HOW TO MAKE EMPLOYEES HAPPY AND INCREASE ENPS? PRACTICAL TIPS

“ When you're managing a team or leading an organization, at the root, this is a group of individuals, and they will give you the best work they can do when you respect them, make them feel safe, and are transparent and open with them about how this is working and what's going on in the organization.

From the podcast with Eve Crevoshay, Executive Director at Take This

TIPS ON HOW TO INCREASE ENPS FOR BUSINESS

So what should businesses do to increase the level of employees' satisfaction with the company and readiness to recommend working there? According to our factor and regression analysis, they should first and foremost invest effort and resources in manager training programs, as only 13% of respondents mentioned that their companies are currently doing it. These programs should focus on important factors such as emotional intelligence and empathy towards the team, creating a positive and inclusive work environment, supporting professional development and growth, and leading by example. Managers should also learn how to recognize and praise employees' contributions. Investment into these training programs will be fruitful as this factor has the biggest impact on the eNPS score.

The next crucial factor that influences employees' loyalty and willingness to recommend working at their company is the development of company-wide policies for improving employees' well-being. This includes burnout prevention, caring for mental health at work, and promoting diversity and inclusion. It's important to remember that these efforts should be clear, fair to everyone, consistent, and proactive. And it starts with management approach improvement as well. If the company is poorly managed, and then there's a lot of stress, pressure, and overtime work - all well-being policies might turn into another "band-aid for unaddressed problems" and won't work.

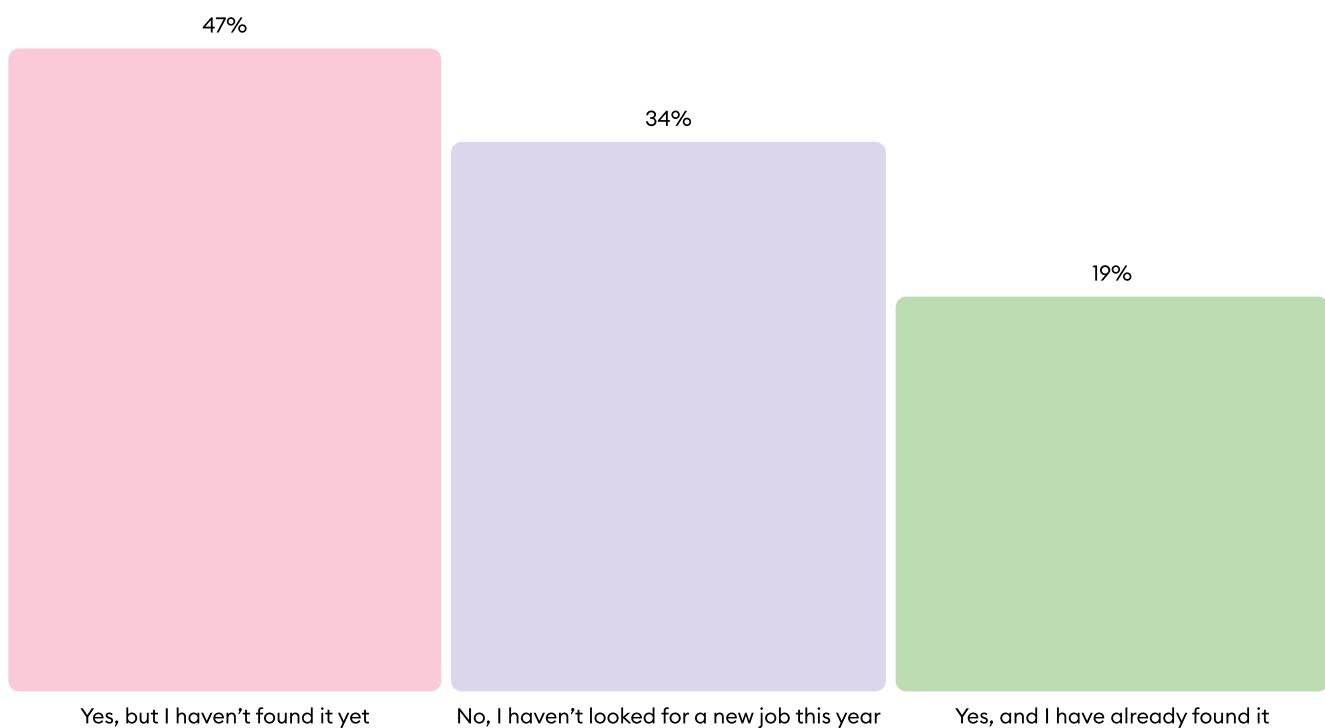
The third most-influential factor is the remote work policy. That factor deserves attention, as companies may improve their eNPS (Employee Net Promoter Score) through the flexibility and benefits of providing remote work.

Last but not least, work experience, which includes years in the industry, company, and level of employee's expertise. It's a factor that individual businesses may not be able to address directly, but it's still worth keeping in mind.

DECODING THE JOB SEARCH

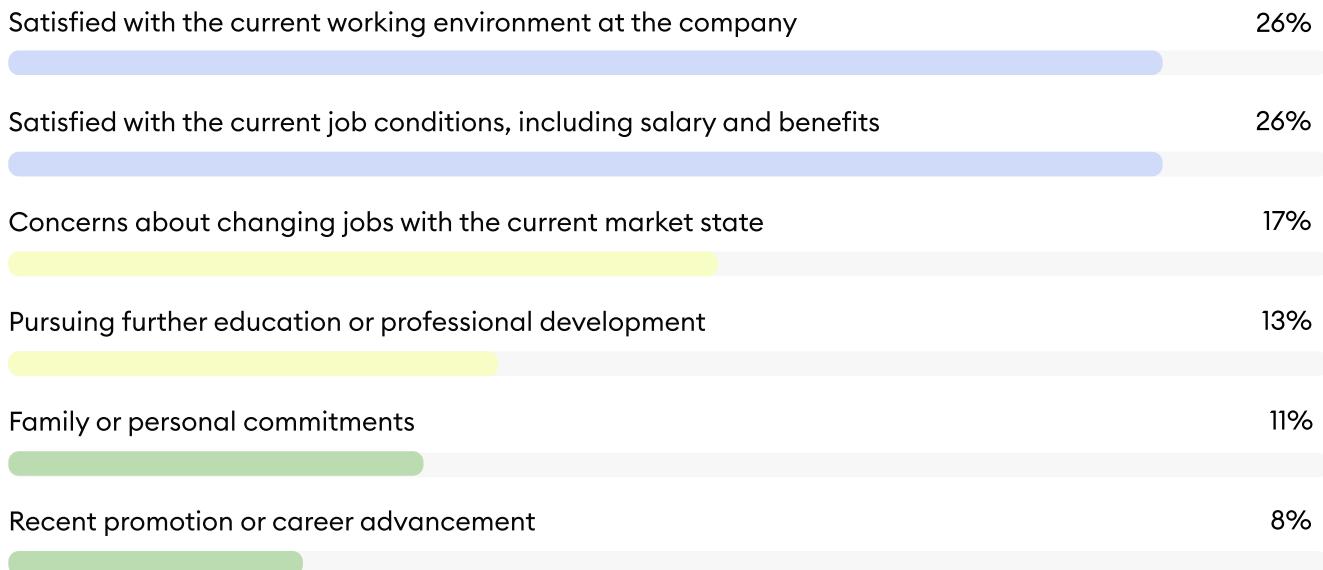
Almost half of the currently employed/unemployed specialists, freelancers and students (47%) reported that they have been actively searching for a new job this year, but have not yet secured a new position. 34% indicated that they had not actively sought new job opportunities during the year. However, despite the challenges, 1 out of 5 respondents successfully found a new job in 2023.

HAVE YOU BEEN LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB THIS YEAR?



THE PRIMARY FACTORS THAT ARE KEEPING EMPLOYEES AT THEIR CURRENT COMPANIES:

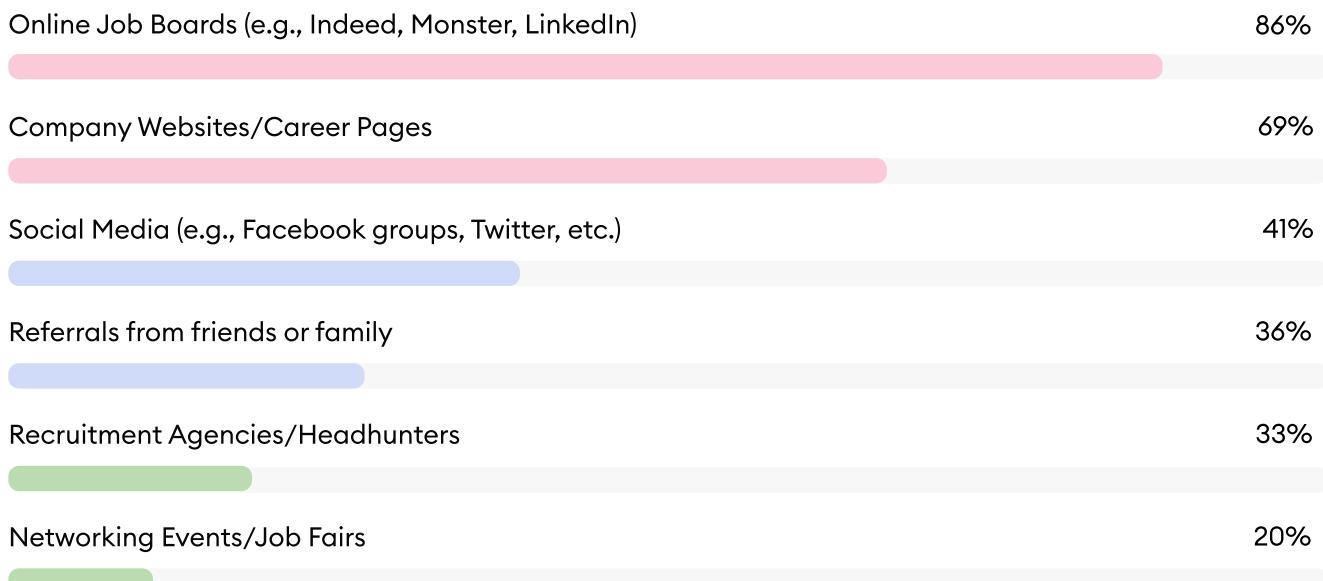
- A quarter of respondents (26%) expressed contentment with the current working environment at their company, emphasising the pivotal role of a positive and nurturing workplace atmosphere;
- Moreover, an equal percentage of respondents (26%) highlighted their satisfaction with the existing job conditions: salary and benefits. The significance of these factors suggests the importance of fair compensation and favourable job conditions in fostering employee loyalty;
- However, with 17% expressing concerns about changing jobs due to the current market situation, it becomes evident that external influences, such as market instability, exert an impact on employee retention;
- An additional 13% attributed their decision to the pursuit of further education or professional development.



Regarding the channels that were utilized by respondents in their most recent job search, the following data was received:

- Online job boards, such as Indeed, Monster, and LinkedIn, emerged as the most popular choices, with the majority of respondents (86%) utilizing these platforms;
- Company websites and career pages followed closely behind, almost 70% of respondents utilizing these direct channels;
- Additionally, 41% of job seekers leveraged social media platforms, including Facebook groups and X, formerly known as Twitter;
- Referrals from friends or family played a significant role for 1/3 of respondents (36%), demonstrating the power of personal connections;
- Recruitment agencies and headhunters were utilized by 33% of respondents as a means of finding job opportunities, while 1 out of 5 people (20%) reported attending networking events and job fairs.

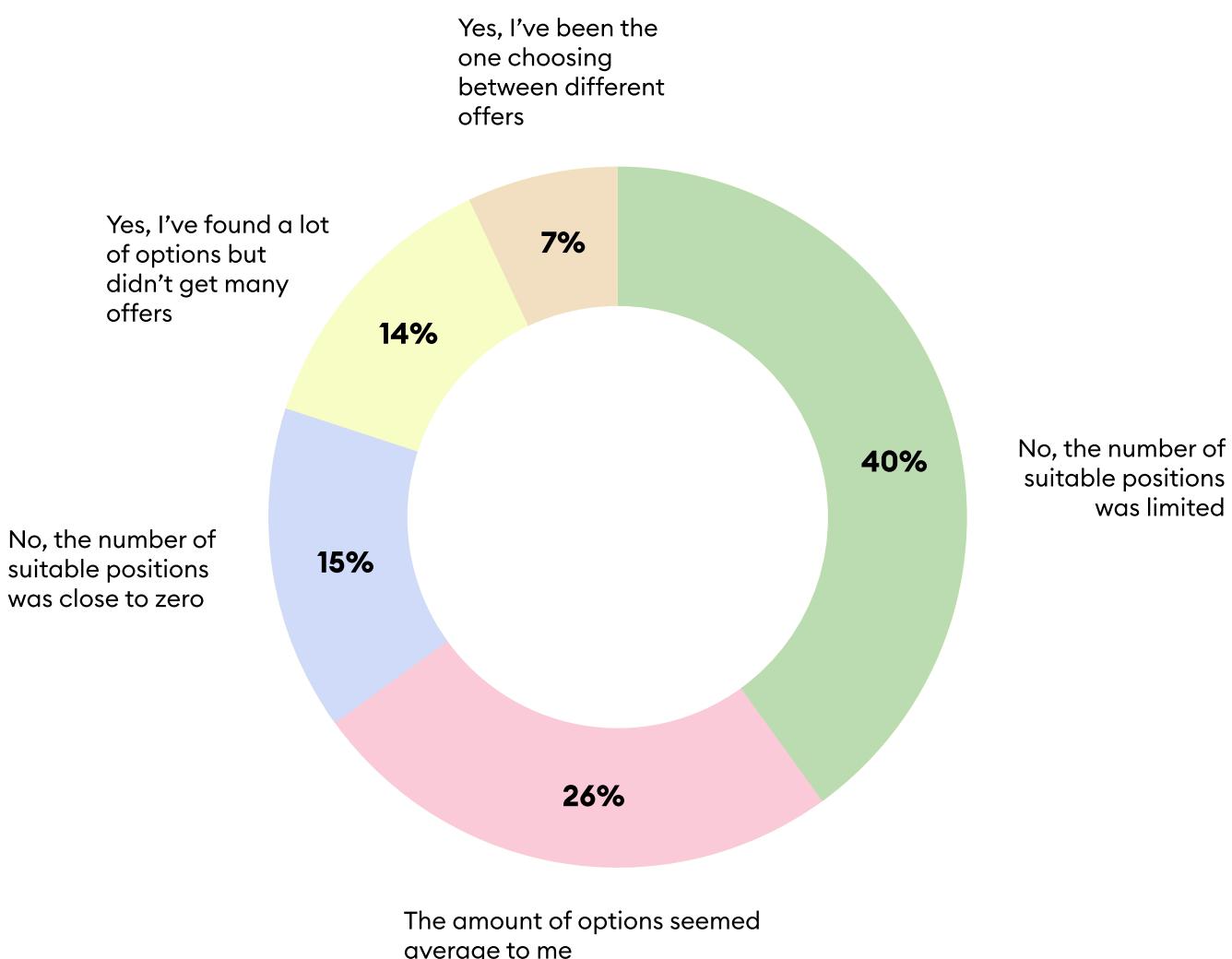
CHANNELS USED DURING THE LATEST JOB SEARCH



These findings highlight the importance of online platforms and personal connections as prominent channels in the job search process within the game development industry, emphasizing the need for a diversified approach to job-seeking strategies.

According to our survey, more than half of game industry professionals (50%) have a negative perception of the current amount of suitable job opportunities on the market. A notable 15% of respondents indicated that the number of suitable positions for specialists of their level was close to zero, and **a larger portion (40%) expressed that the number of suitable positions was limited, reflecting a competitive job market**. On top of that, a quarter (26%) of respondents felt that the number of options seemed average, indicating a balanced mix of available positions. However, 14% reported finding many options but receiving few offers, indicating potential challenges in securing desired positions. In contrast, 7% of respondents stated that they were fortunate enough to have multiple offers to choose from, highlighting a favorable job market for a select few.

RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE AMOUNT OF SUITABLE JOB OPENINGS FOR THEIR LEVEL OF EXPERTISE IN 2023



There is a trend indicating that individuals with less job experience face challenges in receiving job offers. **The data reveals a statistically significant connection between job experience and the likelihood of receiving a job offer**, with candidates who possess more experience being more likely to secure employment. This trend highlights the value placed on prior work experience by employers.

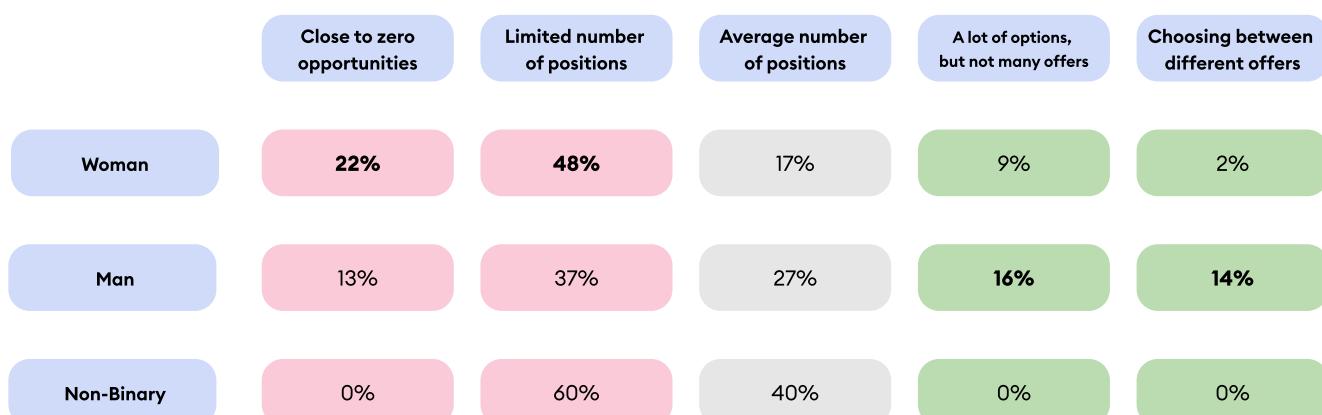
Looking at the last group of professionals who have 11 to 25 years of experience, its representatives are not following the same market pattern as professionals with other amounts of experience. This phenomenon is explained by the limited character of the job market in this high level of expertise.

YEARS IN THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY VS. AMOUNT OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES



Based on statistical analysis, there is a concerning trend indicating that **it may be harder for women to secure employment within the game development industry compared to men**. The data reveals a significant disparity, with fewer women having received job offers than men, and less men choosing the answer of “close to zero or a limited number of opportunities.” This disparity suggests the existence of gender-based biases or barriers that hinder equal opportunities for women and non-binary people in the job market.

GENDER VS. AMOUNT OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES



The main factors considered by respondents when searching for a new job reveals several key aspects that weigh heavily on their decision-making process:

- Job conditions, including salary and benefits, emerged as the most crucial factor, with a significant 71% of respondents prioritizing this aspect;
- Additionally, opportunities for remote or hybrid work were highly valued, with half of respondents – 50% seeking flexible work arrangements;
- The opportunity for skill development and learning ranked third, with another half of respondents – 46% – emphasizing the importance of continuous growth;
- Career growth and advancement opportunities followed closely behind at 41%, highlighting the desire for professional progress;
- **The company's culture and work environment were also significant considerations for 40% of respondents, emphasizing the importance of a positive and nurturing workplace atmosphere;**

3 MAIN FACTORS RESPONDENTS CONSIDER WHEN LOOKING FOR A JOB

Job conditions, including salary and benefits	71%
Opportunities for remote/hybrid work	50%
Opportunity for skill development and learning	46%
Career growth and advancement opportunities	41%
Company culture and work environment	40%
Being interested in product/projects & day-to-day responsibilities	37%
Reputation and brand of the company	15%

Respondents are assured that **work experience and a strong portfolio are the top factors, influencing HRs/Managers decision when choosing candidates**, with the vast majority of answers (88%) indicating their importance. Industry knowledge and level of expertise followed closely behind, with a significant 71% highlighting it. Soft skills and alignment with company values were also recognized, although to a lesser extent, with 38% of respondents emphasizing these qualities.

3 MAIN THINGS HRS CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING CANDIDATES

Work experience and portfolio	88%
Industry knowledge and level of expertise	71%
Soft skills & sharing company values	38%
Demonstrated passion and enthusiasm for the role	33%
Adaptability and willingness to learn	26%
References and recommendations	23%
Educational background and qualifications	17%

SOLVING CHALLENGES OF HIRING

Looking at the frequency at which companies hire new employees, from companies' perspectives, you can see the following data:

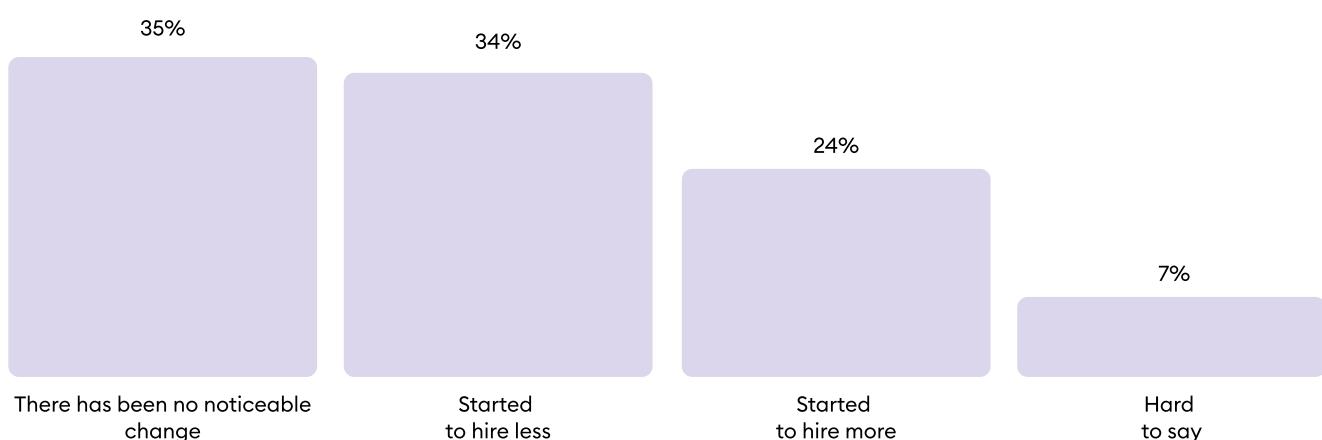
- An equal 17% of respondents reported that their company isn't currently hiring, hires rarely (only when absolutely necessary), or hires occasionally (without it being a frequent occurrence);
- 28% reported that their company hires new employees multiple times per year, indicating a more active recruitment process;
- Another 17% stated that their company hires regularly throughout the year, pointing to an ongoing need for talent acquisition.

THE FREQUENCY OF HIRING ROUNDS WITHIN COMPANIES



In this research, we reveal the diverse perspectives regarding hiring trends. A significant portion (35%) reported that there has been no noticeable change in the number of open positions. However, almost the same number of responses (34%) expressed that their company started to hire less. On the other hand, 24% reported that their company started to hire more, indicating a growth in available positions.

CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF OPEN POSITIONS WITHIN SURVEYED COMPANIES



Surveyed HRs and other managers shared the main factors that recently aided candidates in securing a job at companies within the industry. Industry knowledge and level of expertise emerged as the top factor, with 19% of respondents highlighting its importance. Work experience and a strong portfolio closely followed, at 18%, indicating the value placed on practical skills and previous accomplishments. Adaptability and willingness to learn were considered significant factors by 17% of respondents. Demonstrated passion and enthusiasm for the role is also important, with 16% of respondents acknowledging its impact. Soft skills and alignment with company values were mentioned by 13% of respondents, emphasizing the importance of cultural fit. References and recommendations carried weight for 8% of respondents. **Interestingly, educational background and qualifications were only emphasized as important by 5%.**

FACTORS THAT HELPED CANDIDATES SECURE THEIR POSITION AT A RESPONDENT'S COMPANY: EMPLOYERS' POV



The majority of surveyed HRs and other managers, 93% of respondents, also revealed that their companies have not yet implemented AI in their recruitment processes and have no plans to do so. This suggests a prevailing reliance on traditional methods of candidate evaluation and selection. However, 7% of companies indicated a willingness to embrace technology for more efficient and effective hiring practices by reporting that they have already implemented AI in their recruitment processes.

93%

of game dev companies have not yet implemented AI in the recruitment processes, and are not planning to
source: 80 Level Survey

Respondents warn that AI tools are a new system, so there's a possibility that they can "rule out" good candidates. Specialists suggested applying AI for external users, providing them with information and double checking the data.

MAIN CHALLENGES COMPANIES ENCOUNTER WHEN SEEKING FOR NEW EMPLOYEES

The main challenge for HR managers is finding candidates with the right skill set. There are a lot of interns with little experience, knowledge, or skills but with high expectations about work. The situation is aggravated by high competition in the market: there are bigger and more established studios looking for workers. So, it's very hard to find candidates for positions above middle level. Even if a company finds them, there can be a mismatch, not aligning with the company's values. Moreover, the location questions adds up to it: prospective workers not be willing to relocate, even for the right position.

“Perhaps one of the main challenges would be finding people that are genuinely interested or motivated to develop exciting new projects, instead of just being focused on a paycheck - that's fine too, good salaries are important if you want to have a happy team - but some people might find no joy in actually working on a project due to various reasons”

Anonymous from 80 Level Survey

CONCLUSION

The game development industry definitely needs improvement. **More than 70% of professionals are dissatisfied with the workplace environment at their current companies.** Unpaid overwork, layoffs, and the lack of managers' support have a negative effect on employees' mental health.

To enhance employees' willingness to endorse their company as a place to work, it's crucial for businesses to prioritize the cultivation of mindful managers. This involves focusing on key aspects such as emotional intelligence, empathy towards the team, fostering a positive and inclusive work environment, supporting professional development and growth opportunities, and serving as role models for their teams. However, not many companies do it now, leading to staff turnover.

Moreover, our survey revealed that many professionals wanted to switch workplace this year but their job-seeking efforts were unsuccessful. The current job market possess a lot of challenges for both employees and employers. Most of the surveyed specialists stated that the number of job opportunities on the market was very limited, while employers mentioned that they struggle to find experienced candidates with the right skill set.

We at 80 Level can understand the challenges you face so, we can't end this report without giving you some practical tools that can help you solve these problems:

80 Level Talent is a premium job-matching service catering to all creative industries. We offer highly effective ways to hire and be hired;

- **As a specialist:** sign up to our platform, publish your portfolio, get your works promoted on our website and social media, and browse our job openings. It's free!
- **As a company:** sign up to search our database of pre-screened, job-ready, high quality candidates; post job openings; and promote your organization to a growing audience of video game professionals.



80 Level Talent

Check out our website to join Talent

In this report, we tried not to just describe the current state of workplace culture in the game industry, but also give businesses practical tips on how to improve it. We hope you found it useful. However, every company is different and you may face some unique challenges that need to be addressed. All of us know that every strategic decisions should be wise, research-based and backed by data.

80 Level Research can help you with that. We do quantitative and qualitative research, tailored to your company's needs, to help you get valuable market insights to drive business success.



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