



Xsolla

2024
SUMMER
EDITION

THE XSOLLA REPORT

STATE OF PLAY



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FOREWORD



As a woman in the tech industry and the Global General Counsel at Xsolla, I am honored to present the Summer 2024 Edition of "The Xsolla Report: The State of Play."

CARLA BEDROSIAN, Esq.

Global General Counsel,
Xsolla

This edition delves deep into the dynamic and ever-evolving gaming landscape and provides a comprehensive overview of the latest trends, insights, and opportunities. It is a must-read for all global gaming industry professionals, legal experts, and stakeholders.

The gaming industry is a testament to creativity, innovation, and resilience. We see this in the surge of indie game development. Indie developers, with their passion and ingenuity, are bringing fresh and captivating titles and experiences to players worldwide. This growth is fueled by the increasing (and much-needed) accessibility of game development tools in the global market, enabling creators from diverse backgrounds to bring their visions to life. Although great strides have been made, removing barriers to publication remains a challenge to overcome.

Educational initiatives are crucial in shaping the gaming industry's future. Online learning platforms and specialized programs are bridging the skills gap, offering more affordable, flexible, and targeted educational opportunities to aspiring game developers from all corners of the world. These initiatives are essential in nurturing new talent and ensuring continued innovation and growth in the global gaming industry. Xsolla's Curine Academy is just such an example of how to bridge the gap and break down barriers.

Influencer marketing has also become a powerful force. With their engaged and loyal audiences, influencers play a crucial role in driving game awareness and influencing purchasing decisions. This form of marketing is particularly effective as players increasingly turn to trusted voices to discover and evaluate new games.

Staying informed about the latest regulatory changes is essential from a legal perspective. The ongoing legal

battle between Apple and Epic Games, the implications of the UK's Digital Markets Act, and fintech innovations in Africa's gaming sector are just a few of the critical developments highlighted in this Report. Understanding noteworthy legal developments is vital for navigating the complexities of global game distribution, marketing, and monetization opportunities.

I am proud to witness and contribute to the gaming industry's inclusive and diverse growth. More voices and perspectives are represented and play crucial roles than ever before, leading to more appealing and varied gaming experiences. This diversity is not just a strength but an absolute necessity for our industry's continued evolution and sustainable growth.

I invite you to explore this edition of "The Xsolla Report" and delve into the latest trends, data, and insights from global gaming experts.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The gaming industry is constantly changing, driven by shifting trends and outcomes that are reshaping the landscape. In this quarter's report, we focus on some pivotal areas that are changing the game: the explosion of indie games alongside accessible game creation, the value of online learning programs and skills development, and the impact of influencer marketing on game success.

INDEPENDENT GAME DEVELOPMENT

Is a hotspot of growth and talent, fueled by passionate creators and innovative titles that are capturing the attention of players worldwide. This surge is supported by advancements in technology and the increasing availability of development tools, which are making game creation more accessible than ever before, and empowering aspiring developers to bring their visions to life.

ONLINE LEARNING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Is rising in importance to those entering the field and online programs are bridging the gap in nurturing continued education. With flexibility and specialized approaches, these programs are beneficial for those looking to break into the industry or advance their careers, providing opportunities for continuous learning and professional growth.

INFLUENCER MARKETING

Has emerged as a critical component in a game's success. With their vast and engaged audiences, influencers have the power to drive game awareness, generate buzz, and ultimately influence purchasing decisions. This form of marketing is proving to be highly effective as players increasingly rely on trusted voices to discover and evaluate new games.

Are you ready to dive into our topics this quarter, examine the latest data and trends, and uncover new insights from global gaming experts?

Let The Xsolla Report be your guide.

IN THE NEWS

RECENT INDUSTRY NEWS

APPLE AND EPIC GAMES ARE HEADING BACK TO COURT AGAIN - HERE'S WHY

Forbes



THE UK PASSES ITS VERSION OF THE EU'S DIGITAL MARKETS ACT

Yahoo Finance



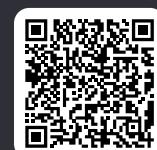
HOW FINTECH INNOVATION CAN UNLOCK AFRICA'S GAMING REVOLUTION

World Economic Forum



SUMMER GAME FEST REMINDED US THAT INDIE GAMES AREN'T GOING ANYWHERE

Boy Genius Report





INDUSTRY UPDATES

WHAT'S NEW ACROSS GAME INDUSTRY SECTORS

PAYMENTS

CONTINUING TO GO CASHLESS

Global cashless payment volumes are predicted to **increase by over 80% in the period between 2020 and 2025**. The fastest growth is expected in the Asia-Pacific region, with cashless transaction volumes growing by 109% until 2025 and then by 76% from 2025 to 2030.

Global payment gateway market, 2024 to 2029

Source:
[Research And Markets](#)

\$26.7B

\$48.4B

2024

2029

DIGITAL WALLET DOMINANCE

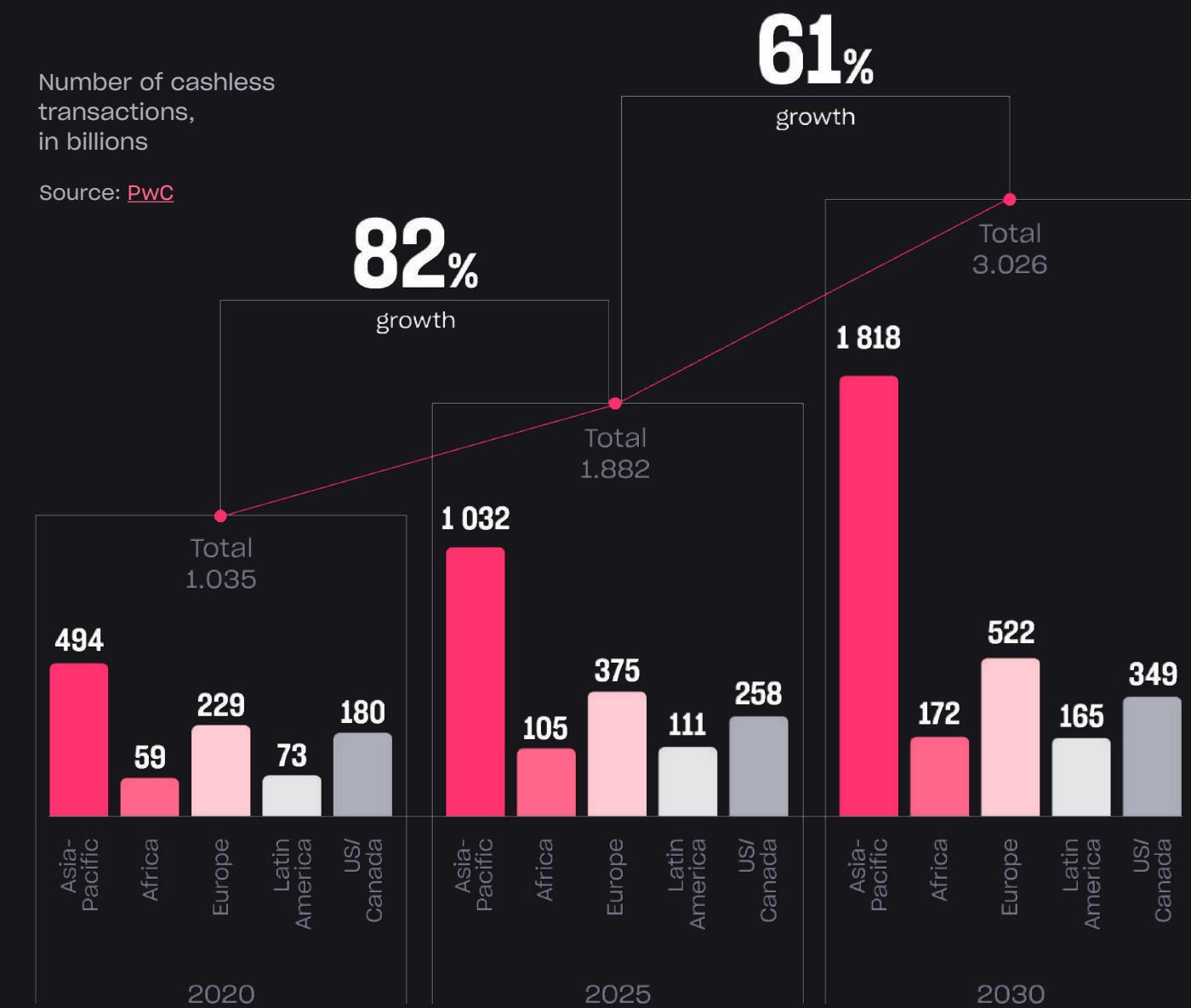
The payment gateway market is estimated to grow from \$26.7 billion in 2024 to \$48.4 billion by 2029, at a **Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 12.6%**. North America stands out as a leader in the adoption of digital wallets. Payment gateways that seamlessly integrate with popular digital wallet options play a pivotal role in catering to consumer preferences and streamlining the checkout process.

12.6%

CAGR for payment gateways from 2024 to 2029

Number of cashless transactions, in billions

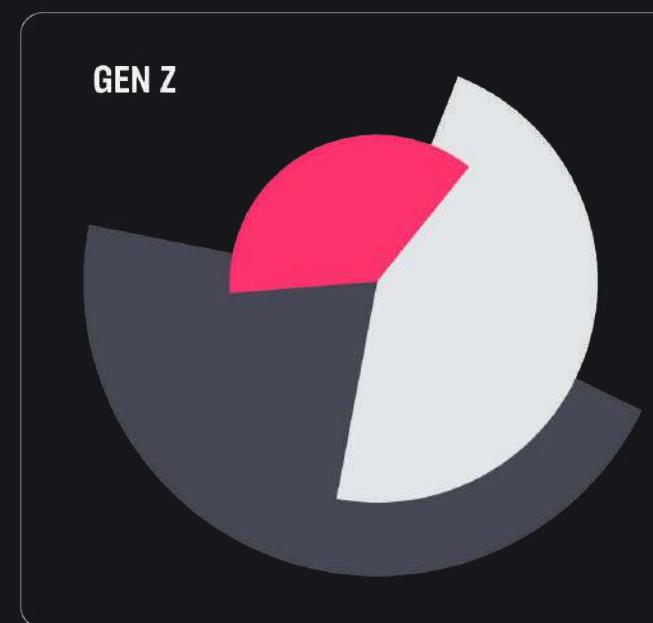
Source: [PwC](#)





POPULARITY OF BUY NOW, PAY LATER (BNPL)

The number of BNPL users in the US is expected to reach 82.1 million this year, and will exceed 100 million in 2025. Gen Z is the generation that uses BNPL the most and **adoption rates are expected to increase from 36.8% in 2021 to 47.4% in 2025.**



>10%

increase in Buy Now,
Pay Later adoption
by 2025

Core platforms
regulated by DMA

MOBILE GAMING

DIGITAL MARKETS ACT (DMA) UPDATES

In June 2024, the European Commission adopted a public statement on Artificial Intelligence and launched a call for tenders for a study into interoperability tools in the digital single market in the context of the Digital Markets Act. And most recently, the EU's General Court has ruled that TikTok parent company ByteDance meets the required user threshold to be a "gatekeeper" under the Digital Markets Act. Here's an overview of the companies and services regulated under the EU's Digital Markets Act:

Social network	TikTok	facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn
Intermediation	Google Maps	Google Play	Google Shopping	amazon marketplace
Ads	Google	amazon	Meta	
Messaging	WhatsApp	facebook Messenger		
Video sharing	YouTube			
Search	Google			
Browser	Chrome	Safari		
Operating system	Android	iOS	Windows	

Source: E-Marketer

● 2021 ● 2023 ● 2025

Source: Statista

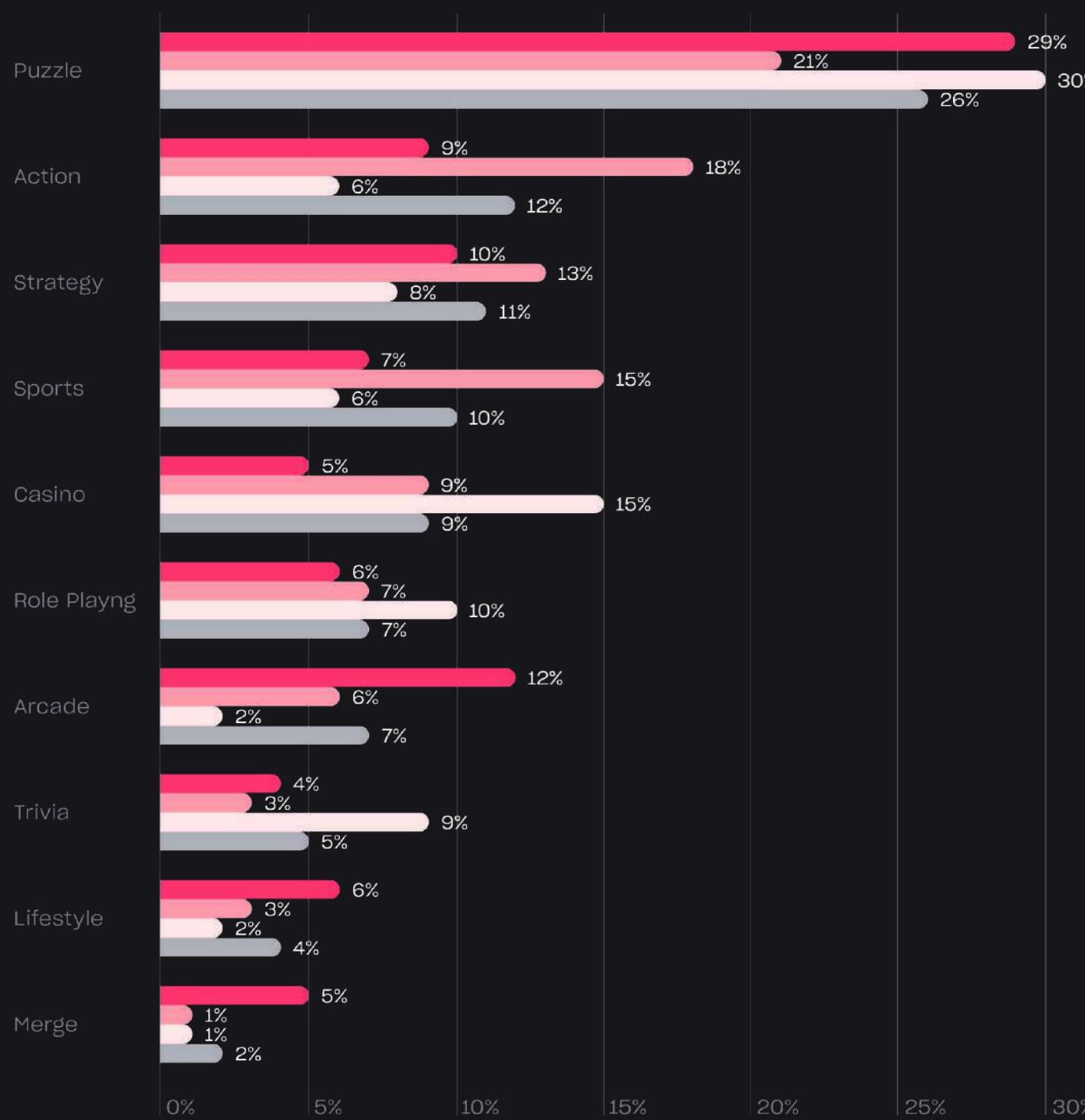
● Alphabet ● Amazon ● Apple ● ByteDance ● Meta ● Microsoft



TOP MOBILE GAME GENRES

Puzzle games are the most popular mobile games in the US, with an average of **more than 20% of all age groups** favoring the genre, followed by action, strategy, and sports.

Favorite game genre on mobile in 2024, by age



Source: Vorhaus Digital Strategy Study - 2024

● 18-34 ● 35-64 ● 55+ ● GenPop

Average game session length in North America, by genre (Q1 2024)

20 min

15 min

10 min

5 min

0 min

PERFORMANCE OF MOBILE GAMES IN NORTH AMERICA

Multiplayer mobile games consistently show the longest session lengths, even among the bottom 25% of games. Notably, this genre, along with casino games, is the only one where the **top 25% of games have session lengths exceeding 15 minutes**. Most genre medians fall within the range of 4 to 9 minutes.



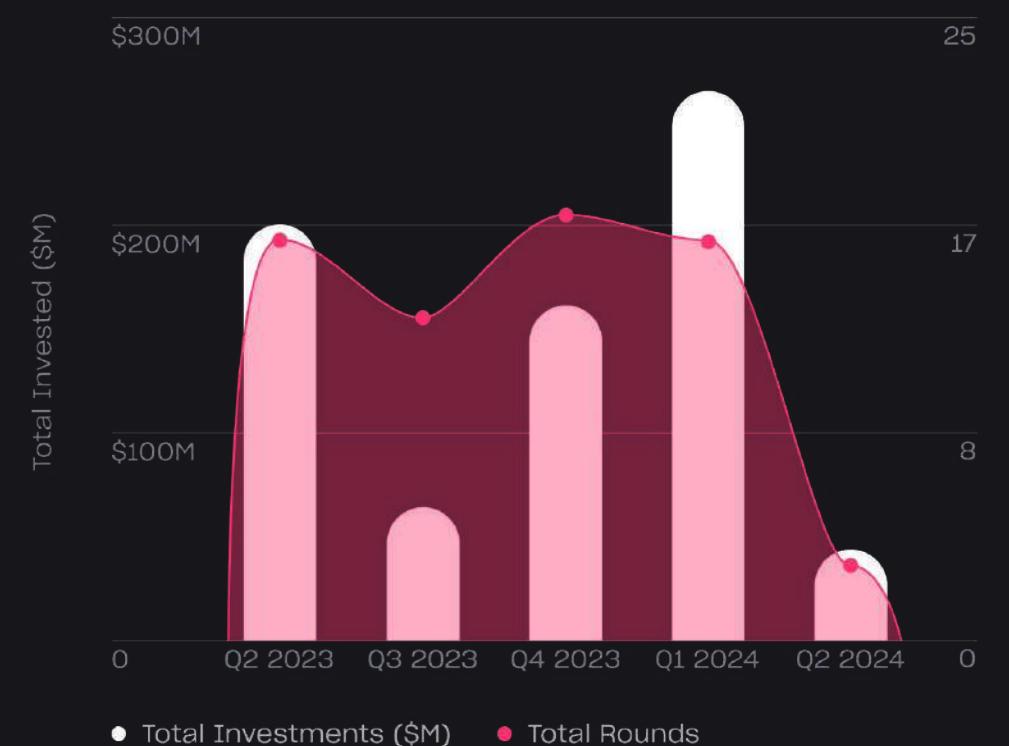
Source: GameAnalytics



INVESTMENT

FUNDING REBOUND

Following several slow quarters, funding for companies in the gaming sector has risen this year, driven by a renewed focus on early-stage investments and confidence in the ability of small studios to deliver successful titles. Crunchbase data shows that in the first quarter of this year, **investors committed \$265 million globally to early-stage gaming startups**. This represents a 65% increase from Q4 2023 and a nearly fourfold jump from Q3, which saw investment hit a multiyear low.



GAMES FOR CHANGE 2024 - OUR TOP TAKEAWAYS

This year's Games for Change Festival showcased the power of games to drive positive change. The event served as a powerful reminder that games are not just a form of entertainment; they can be powerful tools for education, advocacy, and social impact. Discussions, workshops, and presentations throughout the festival highlighted a range of critical issues, from ensuring equitable access to game development education to using games to address global challenges. Here are our top takeaways:

01 EDUCATION IS KEY

Continuous learning and a well-rounded education are crucial for driving innovation and staying competitive in game development. There was a strong emphasis on the importance of game development education, with many discussions focusing on how to make the industry more accessible and inclusive.



02

SOCIAL IMPACT IS DRIVING GROWTH

Games that focus on social impact are not only creating positive change but also driving growth and opening new opportunities in the industry.

From addressing global challenges to fostering empathy and understanding, games have the power to create positive change. Attendees and speakers alike highlighted the increasing demand for games that address real-world issues and inspire positive action, from climate change to mental health awareness.

03

TECHNOLOGY IS TRANSFORMING GAMEPLAY

From virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to artificial intelligence (AI) and blockchain, new technologies are transforming gameplay experiences and expanding the possibilities for game developers. The event featured numerous examples of how these technologies are being used to create immersive and engaging experiences, such as VR games that allow users to walk in the shoes of refugees or AI-powered chatbots that provide mental health support.

04

A RISE IN ONLINE EDUCATION

Online education is essential for making high-quality game development education accessible to a global audience.

There was a highlight of the growing importance of online educational platforms in extending the reach of game development education. Online academies can provide comprehensive curricula covering all aspects of game development, accessible to aspiring developers worldwide. These platforms can overcome geographical limitations and offer flexible learning opportunities, making high-quality education available to a global audience.

05

COLLABORATION IS ESSENTIAL

The event underscored the importance of collaboration between game developers, policymakers, and nonprofits to create a better future through games. Examples of successful partnerships were showcased, highlighting the need for combined efforts to tackle complex challenges and maximize the positive impact of games.

These takeaways provide a roadmap for educators, industry leaders, and policymakers to create a more inclusive, innovative, and dynamic future for game development. And the call to action is clear: supporting and engaging with educational initiatives can shape the future of the gaming industry for the better.



Section

01

INDIE GAME GROWTH





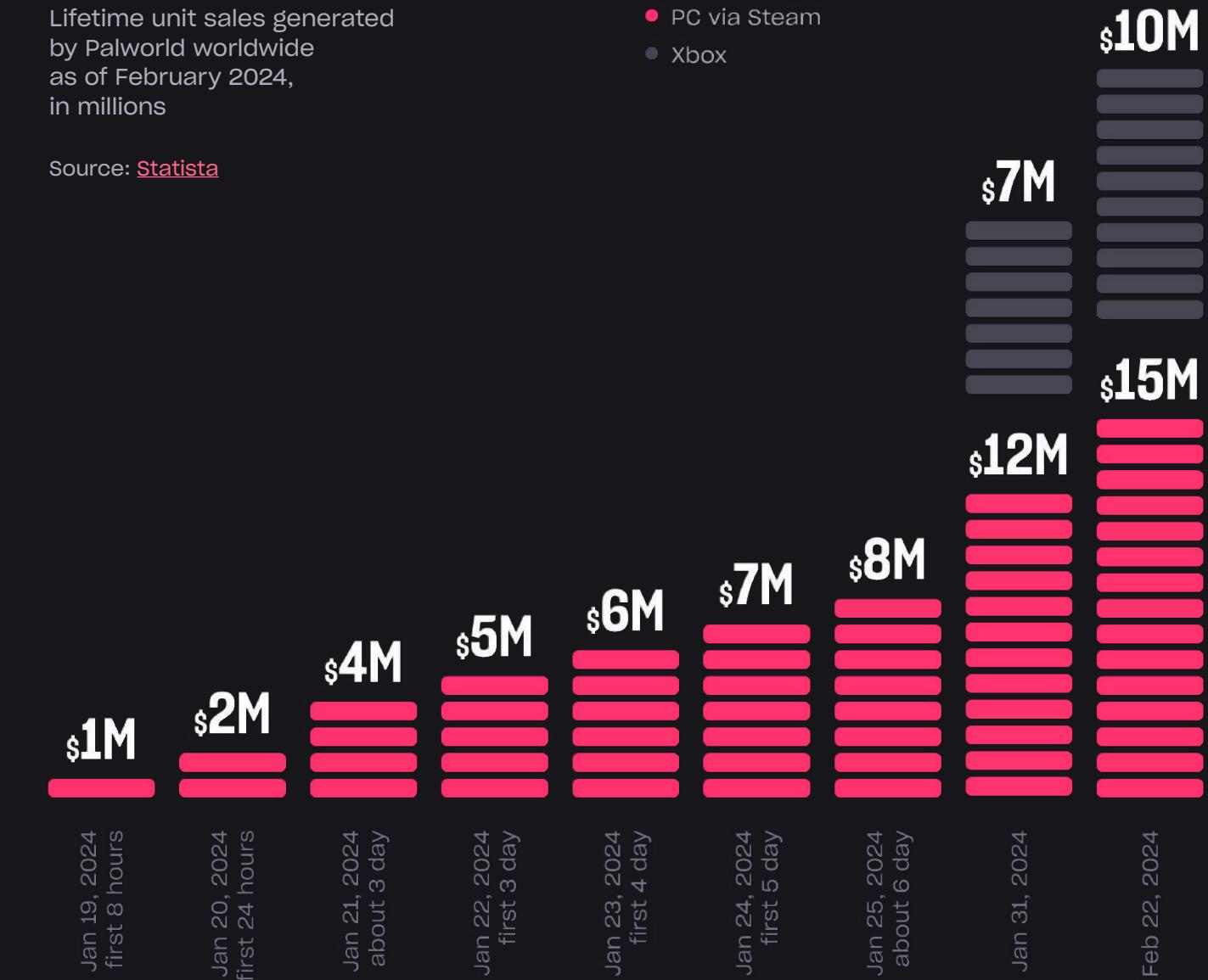
CURRENT TRENDS AND PATTERNS IN THE INDIE MARKET

So far, 2024 is witnessing an unparalleled surge in the popularity of indie games, marking a distinctive shift from the long-standing dominance of AAA titles. Recent successes include *Palworld* with a \$6.75 million budget - surpassing 25 million units sold. This trend continues the legacy of highly successful indie titles such as *Minecraft*, *Stardew Valley*, *Among Us*, *Fall Guys*, and *Valheim*.

Indie game development has resulted in the development of various game genres, each with its unique gameplay mechanics and artistic styles. The top genres for **studios below 50 people** are **action, adventure, and RPG games**.

Lifetime unit sales generated by *Palworld* worldwide as of February 2024, in millions

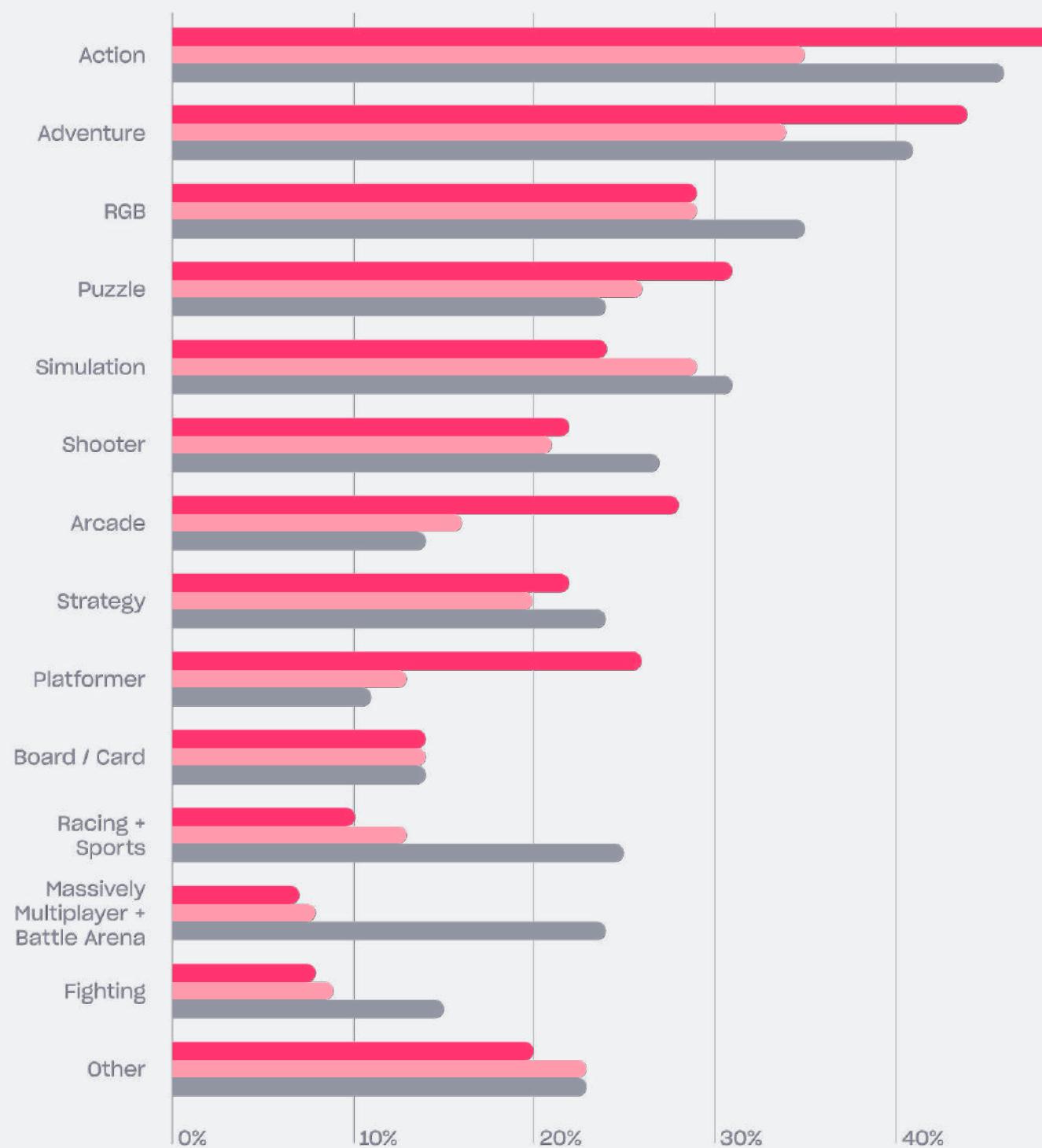
Source: [Statista](#)





Most developed indie game genres

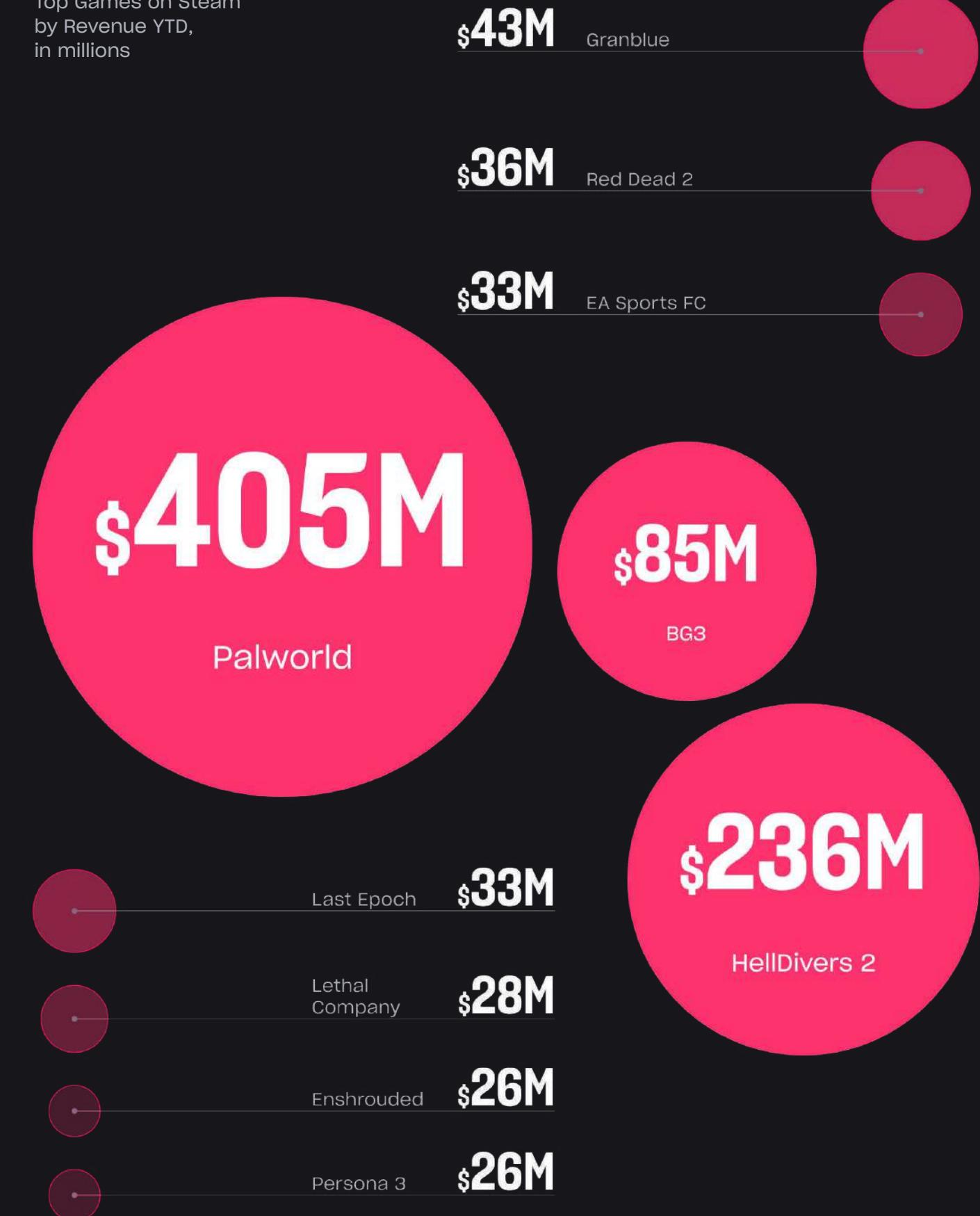
Source: [2023 Unity Gaming Report](#)



Indie games are making an unprecedented impact, with **5 of the top 10 highest-grossing games on Steam in 2024** (*Palworld*, *Granblue*, *Last Epoch*, *Lethal Company*, and *Enshrouded*) created by publishers classified as indie.

- 1-9 people (in=205)
- 10-49 people (in=80)
- 50+ people (in=71)

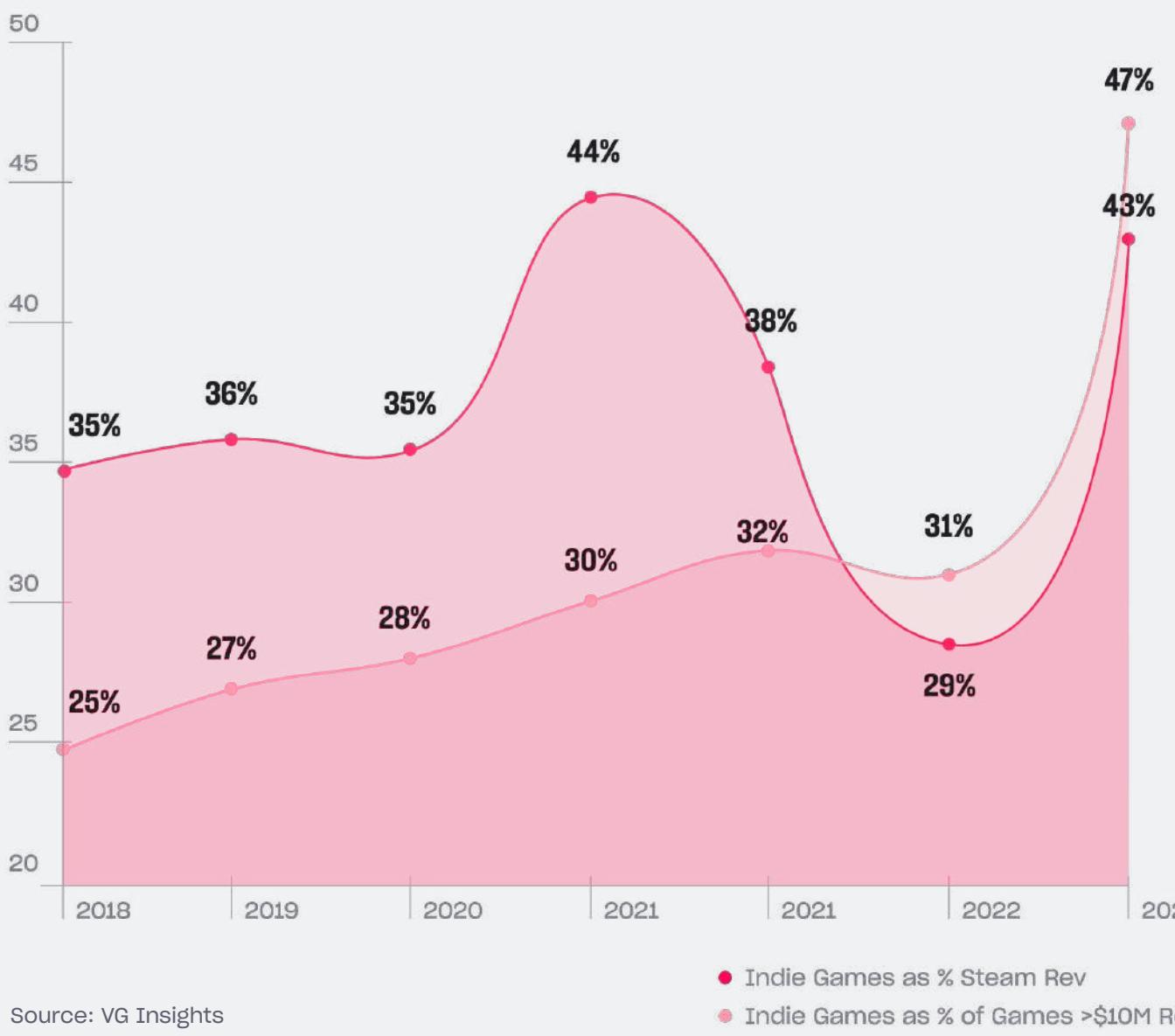
Top Games on Steam by Revenue YTD, in millions





72%

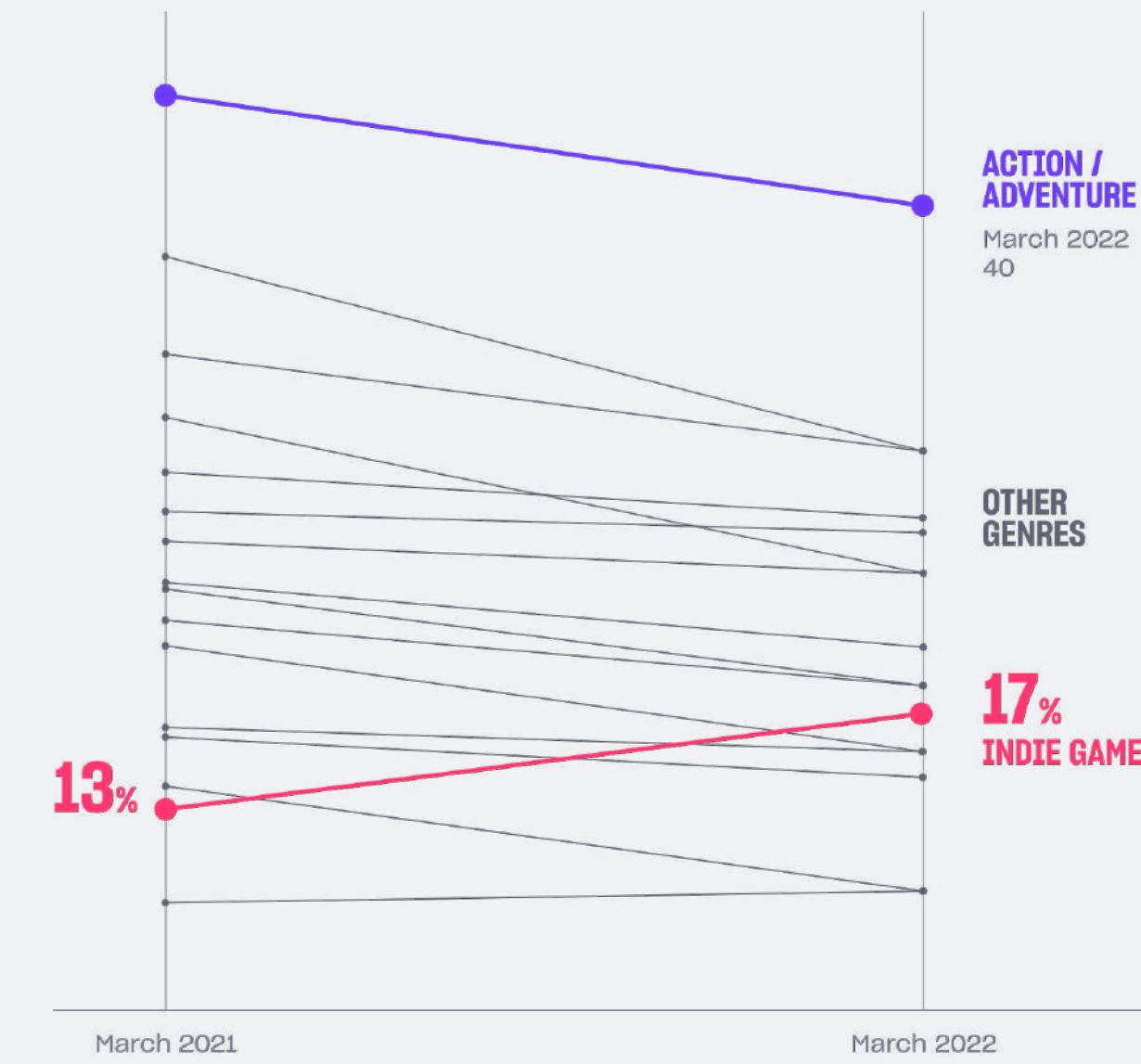
Avg Steam rating for indie games



Independent game studios and developers are on the rise, with an increasing number of gamers choosing indie games. The percentage of American PC and console [gamers playing indie games](#) grew from **13% in 2021 to 18% in 2024**.

Increase in gamers playing indie games, 2021-2022

Source: [Yougov](#)





01 A SPOTLIGHT ON INDIE GAMES

Article

Good games come from anywhere

THE RISE OF THE INDIE GAME INDUSTRY

Indie games have emerged as a focal point of interest for the gaming community over the past few years, with the percentage of PC and console gamers playing indie games in the US [increasing from 13% in 2021 to 18% today](#).

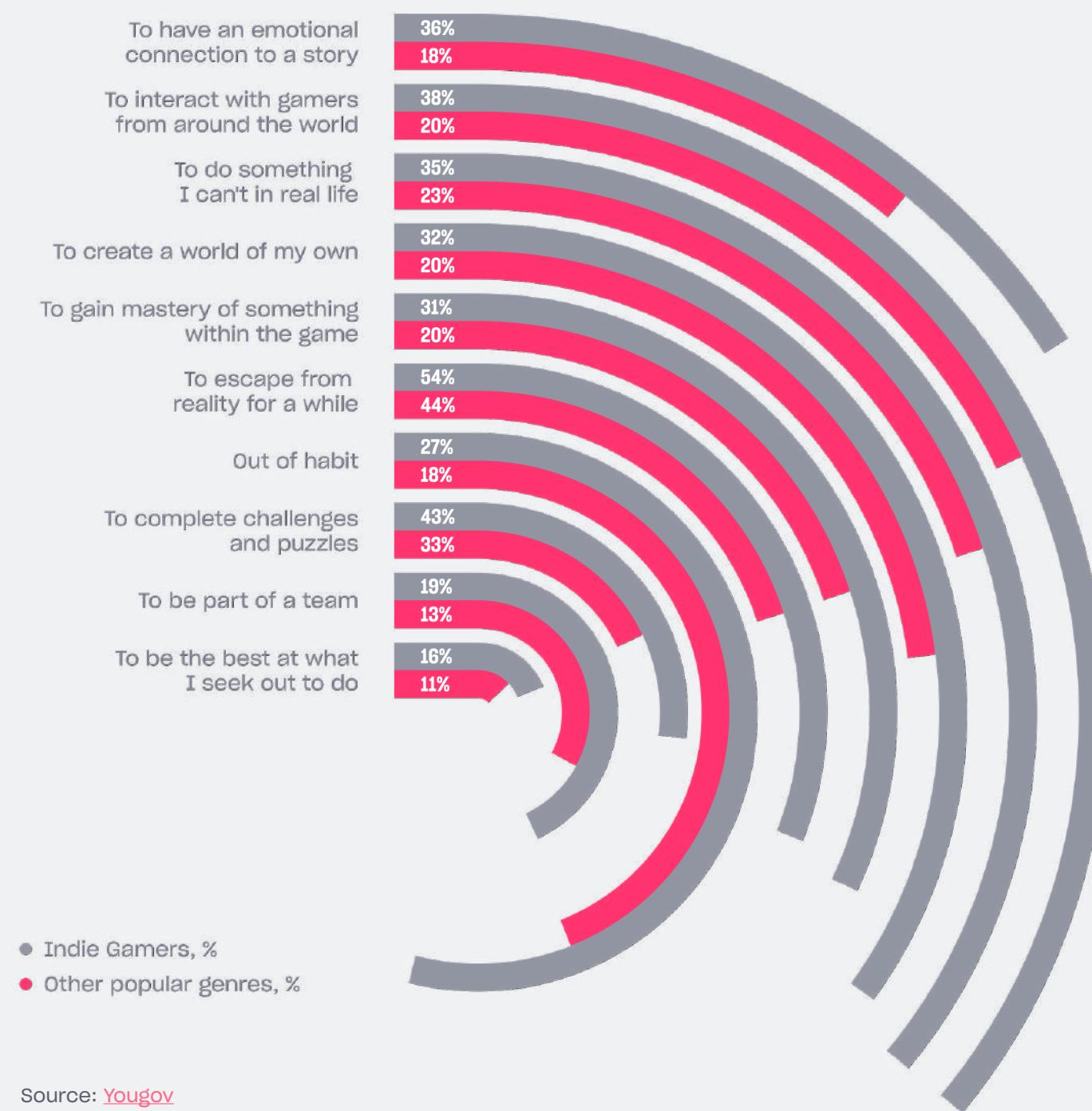
One driving force behind this trend is the unique connection indie gamers seek with their games. Emotional engagement is a hallmark of indie games, which often prioritize narrative depth and innovative storytelling. More than **36% of indie gamers look for an emotional connection** to a story, a sentiment that is notably **higher than the 18% of gamers who play other major genres**.

18%

higher interest in an emotional connection to the game for indie players, compared to other genres

What drives indie players to play video games?

Indie gamers are drawn to experiences that transcend reality. About 35% of indie gamers play to engage in activities they cannot do in real life, compared to 23% of other gamers. **Indie gamers are also 80% likelier to play for the opportunity to interact with gamers globally**, highlighting their preference for a connected, community-oriented gaming experience.





\$3M+

in monthly sales for indie games in Q1 and Q2 of 2024

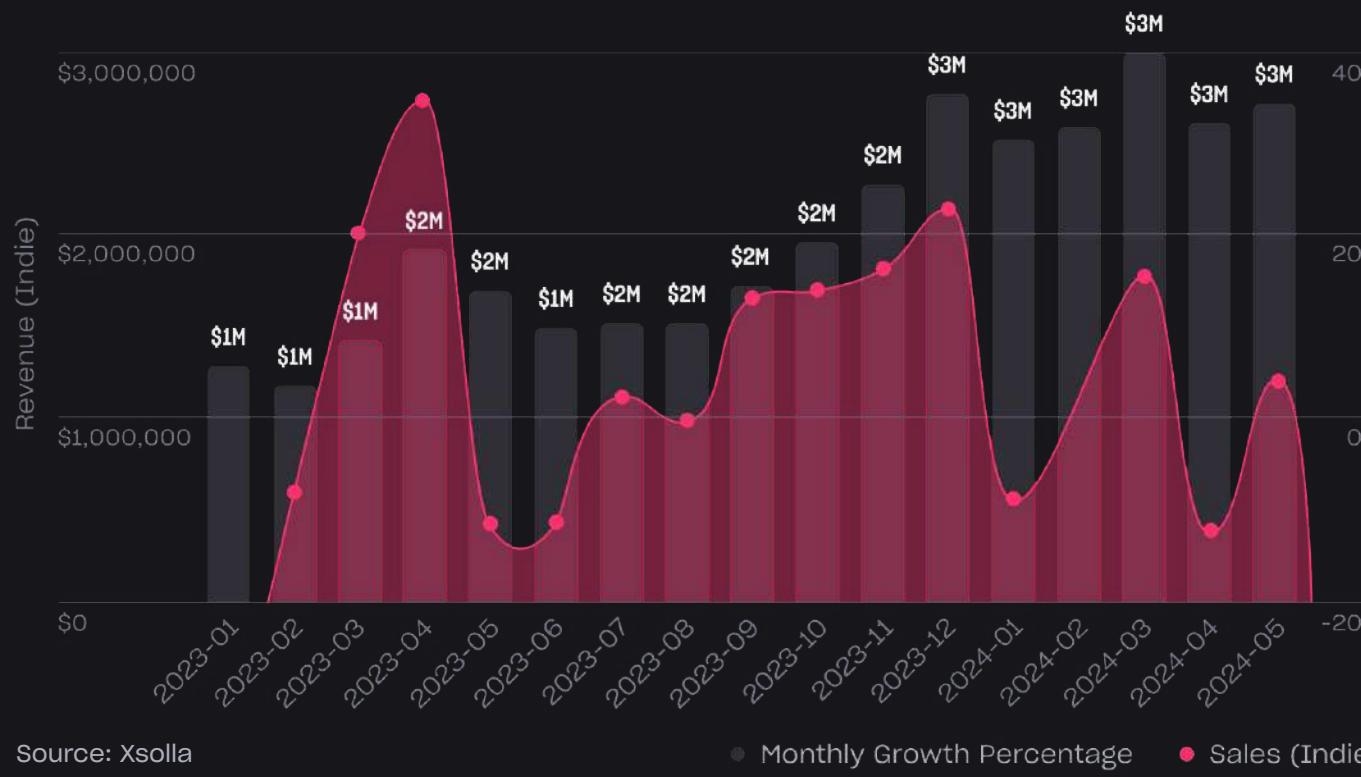
82%

year-over-year growth rate of indie sales in January 2024

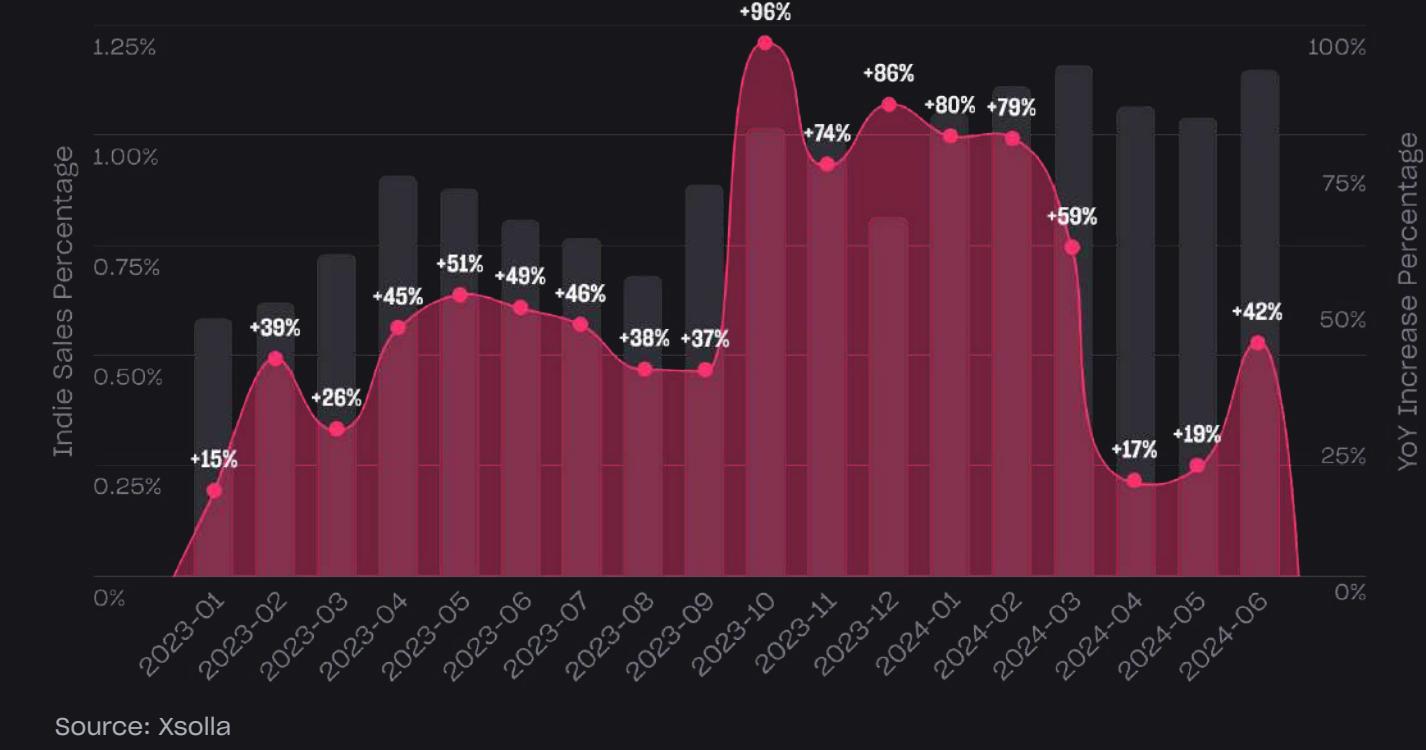
INDIE GAME TRENDS

The first five months of 2024 have been particularly strong for indie games, with **monthly sales consistently exceeding the \$3 million mark.**

Indie sales trend periodically trend analysis



Indie sales trend
YoY comparison



According to Xsolla Analytics, this upward trend began with a substantial boost in sales in December 2023, which carried into the new year. **January kicked off with a year-over-year (YoY) growth rate of 82%,** reflecting the growing popularity of indie games. February continued this momentum with a peak YoY increase of 100%, doubling the revenue compared to the same month in the previous year.

However, the growth rate experienced a slowdown in March, with the YoY increase dropping to 45%. The overall trend remained positive despite this dip, with **April and May 2024 seeing more moderate growth rates of 17% and 19%, respectively.** While these percentages were smaller compared to the beginning of the year, they still contributed to a steady upward trajectory in monthly revenue.



EMERGING MARKETS FOR INDIE GAMES

Creating opportunities for game development

The empowerment of game creators and game development has played a significant role in the growth of indie game developers worldwide.

Advances in technology, affordable development tools, and accessible distribution platforms have empowered more individuals to create and share their games.

This accessibility has lowered the barriers to entry, allowing a diverse array of voices and ideas to flourish within the gaming industry. As a result, developers from various backgrounds and regions can now contribute to the global gaming market, fostering innovation and creativity.

POLAND An indie game powerhouse

Poland stands out as a leading hub for indie game development in Europe. Home to renowned studios like CD Projekt Red, Mighty Koi, and 11 Bit Studios, the country boasts a vibrant game development scene. The local government has been instrumental in this success, providing crucial funding and resources that have fostered a thriving environment for indie developers. This support has enabled the creation of some of the industry's most acclaimed games.



INDIA A rising star in game development

India's indie game development sector is experiencing rapid growth. With a large pool of tech-savvy talent, the country is becoming a prime location for game development. Prominent indie studios like Broken Helm and Xigma Games are enhancing India's reputation in the industry. The government in India has played a supportive role, offering essential funding and resources to help indie developers flourish.



StudioOLEOMINGUS

KAZAKHSTAN Entering the game scene

Kazakhstan is quickly making a name for itself in the indie game development world. Despite its relatively small industry, the country hosts promising studios such as HugePixel and Dreamgate Company. Government support has been key to this growth, providing the necessary funding and resources to nurture aspiring game developers.



DREAMGATE

HUGEPIXEL

ROMANIA Historical and growing indie presence

Romania's indie game development sector is thriving, building on a rich history of game creation. Leading studios like 16 Bit Nights, Alien Pixel, and Metagame Studio are at the forefront of this growth. The local government has significantly contributed to this expansion, offering funding and resources to support indie game studios.



Fueled by a love of unique experiences, gamers are increasingly drawn to indie titles. This trend highlights the importance of fostering independent developers, whose creativity injects fresh perspectives and innovative mechanics into the gaming landscape. The thriving indie game sector shows that great games really can come from anywhere, bringing fresh ideas and creativity to the games industry.



INDIES CREATING GAMES WORLDWIDE IN 2023, BY COUNTRY

82.1%

Poland

66.9%

Ukraine

85.2%

Romania

115.7%

Kazakhstan

68.9%

India

Source: [2023 Unity Gaming Report](#)





02 INSTANT SOLUTIONS:

Article

Empowering every developer to launch their game

According to [NewZoo's 2023 Global Games Market Report](#), the video games market showed a slower-than-desired annual revenue of \$183.9 billion, a 0.5% year-over-year growth.

Revenue from mobile games is declining –however, the PC market remains strong thanks in part to the success of a selection of premium titles. Still, most studios are optimizing costs and delaying game releases.

To survive and thrive in the current situation, developers seek ways to optimize revenue and reduce expenses and they experiment with monetization methods to generate more revenue from current titles and players. Mobile games are directing sales to the web.

PC games are entering the mobile market and experimenting with content subscriptions and live services. Console games are moving to the cloud, and there are many more active attempts to close the game sales gap between developers and players.

OBSTACLES FOR GAME DEVELOPERS

Given the continuing struggles in the gaming market, developers face numerous challenges, including:

REACHING NEW AUDIENCES

The [cost per install \(CPI\) of a mobile game varies between \\$2.00 and \\$6.00](#), depending on the genre and operating system. This is higher than the CPI of a mobile app, which varies between \$0.80 and \$5.00. The cost of acquiring new players will continue to rise, so developers need cost-effective ways to reach and engage these potential players.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TOOLS

Indie developers often have limited resources, time, and budget to successfully bring their games to market. This often makes their games part of the [43% that are killed in development before they launch](#). Finding the right tools that will alleviate some of these challenges and streamline the game development process is essential to accelerating time to market.

76%

of launched games reach peak revenue in the first year, **but only 4% reach this in the second year**

RETAINING REVENUE

[76% of launched games reach peak revenue within the first year](#), but only 4% reach this peak during the second year, meaning finding new revenue opportunities is essential to retaining players, reducing costs, and boosting profit margins.

43%

of games are killed in development before they launch



BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO LAUNCH

The market is creating new tools that offer quick launches, testing of new monetization methods, and audience outreach tools to help developers adapt to increasing demands and address challenges.

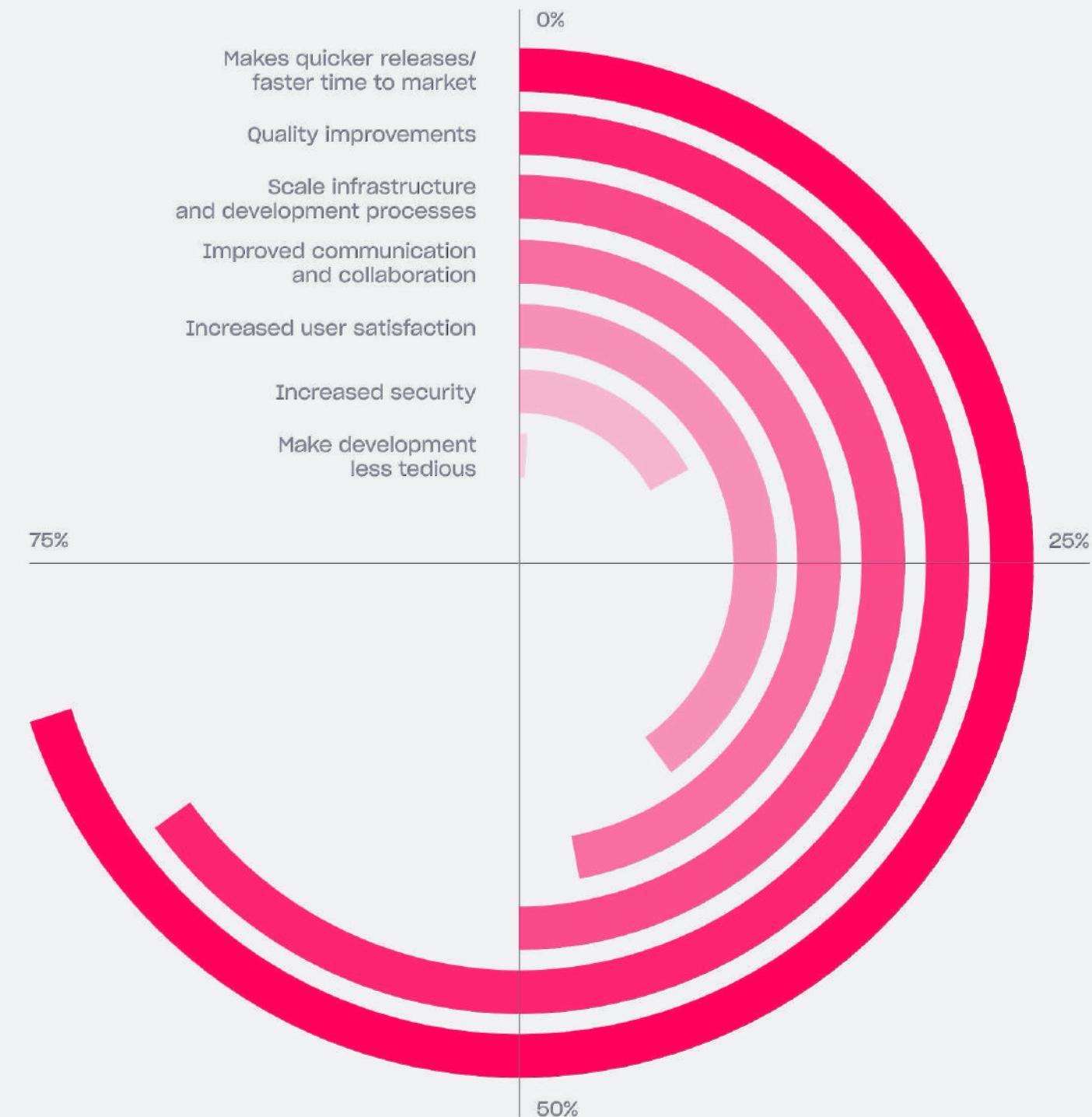
DevOps tools

Indie developers often have limited resources, time, and budget to bring their game to market successfully. DevOps tools can help alleviate some of these challenges by streamlining the game development process and accelerating the time to market.

Survey data highlights the benefits of using DevOps tools in indie game development. Indie devs emphasized the streamlined development cycle with the integration of pre-built functionalities, which not only accelerates time to market, it automates tasks like testing and deployment.

Indie developers also noted the cost-effectiveness of cloud-based DevOps solutions, which enable scalable infrastructure without the need for expensive hardware investments. This empowers indie developers to optimize their projects and overcome resource constraints more effectively.

Reasons studios use DevOps to get their games to market



Source: [Fungies](#)



INSTANT SOLUTIONS

Instant solutions can be crucial in breaking down barriers and helping developers more efficiently bring their games to market by increasing:

01

ACCESSIBILITY

02

EFFICIENCY

Developers can significantly reduce development time by utilizing pre-built assets and automated processes with [Instant Web Shop](#) allowing them to create online stores fully equipped to facilitate in-game web purchases.

03

SCALABILITY

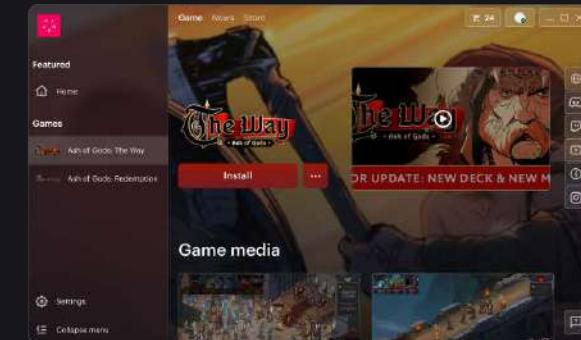
04

COLLABORATION

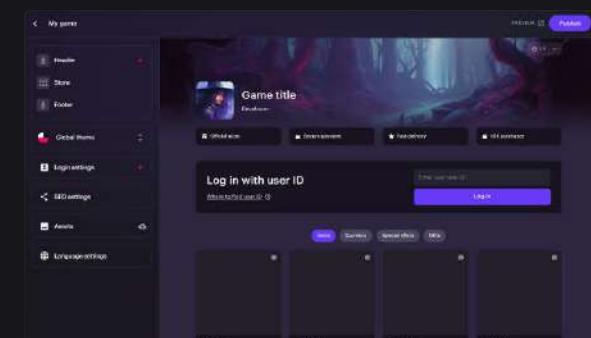
Enhanced collaboration tools improve communication and coordination among team members, streamlining the development process and ensuring a cohesive final product.

One of the most powerful approaches is [Xsolla Instant Solutions](#), which aim to provide a fast, cost-efficient way to rapidly monetize existing players and acquire new ones. A suite of solutions aimed at seamless integration and a short time to market, they offer quick access to expanded audiences and new monetization strategies for any game and any platform.

The rise of instant solutions and innovative monetization strategies is reshaping the gaming landscape, making it possible for indie developers to compete with larger studios. By leveraging these tools, developers can optimize their workflows, reduce costs, and reach a broader audience, ultimately driving growth and success in the gaming industry.



Create





03 GAME DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

Article

How building and launching a game has become more accessible

What was once an industry dominated by large studios with vast resources is now an open community where every developer, from indie to AAA can thrive.

This democratization of game development has been largely driven by the proliferation of powerful and accessible game development tools, which have lowered the barriers to entry and enabled more people to build and launch games.

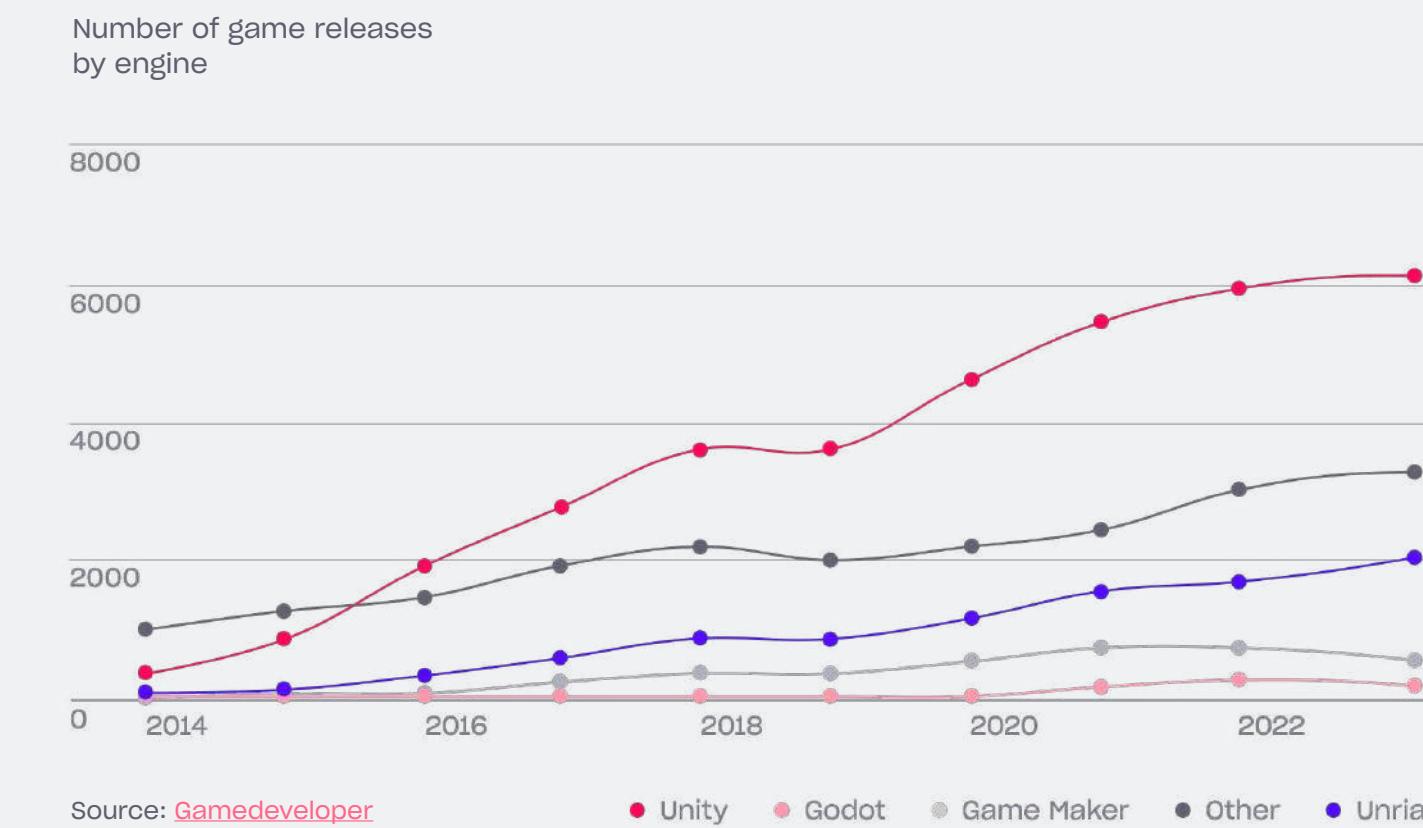
THE RISE OF ACCESSIBLE GAME ENGINES

One of the most significant factors in making game development more accessible is the availability of powerful game engines. Engines like Unity and Unreal Engine have revolutionized the way games are developed.

Unity has the largest share of the game engine market: 38% of game developers who use game engines use Unity as their primary engine. However, the number of Unity games increased by only 8% in 2023 compared to 2022. Meanwhile, **the number of Unreal games increased by 10%, while the number of Godot games increased by as much as 69%**.

38%

of game developers who use game engines use Unity as their primary engine





FREE AND LOW-COST DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

Thanks to free and affordable resources, the financial barrier to game development has also been significantly lowered.

Both Unity and Unreal Engine offer free versions for small developers and hobbyists. Additionally, online platforms like GitHub provide access to countless open-source projects and libraries that can be used in game development.

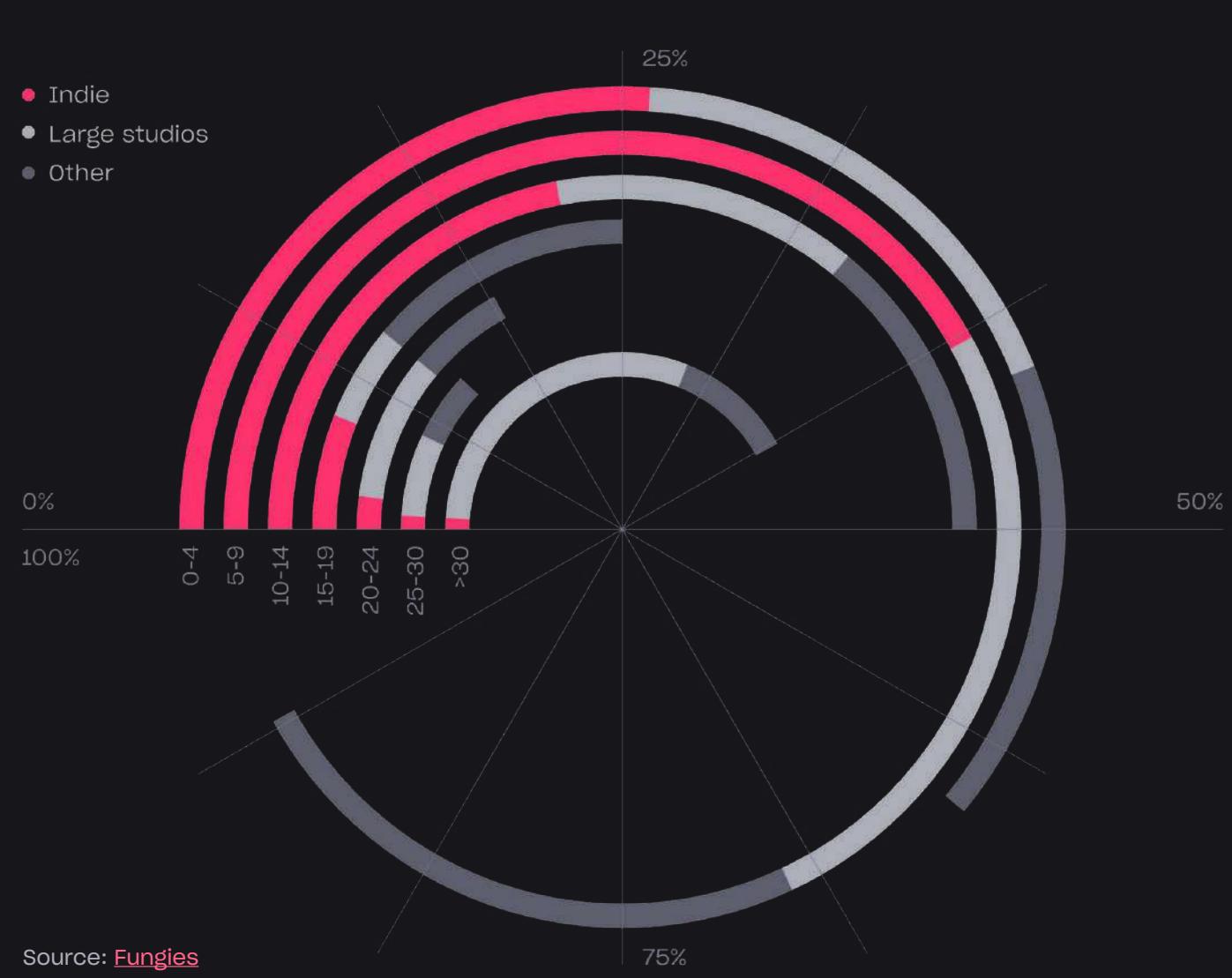
ASSET STORES AND PREMADE ASSETS FOR GAME CREATION

With game development becoming increasingly popular, many resources are now available that can make creating an indie game easier and faster. One resource is the Unity Asset Store, which offers a vast library of premade assets that can be used to create a quick prototype of an indie game.

40%

of indie developers use 5 or more packages to prototype their game

Indie use of asset packages for prototyping and conceiving
Percent of total developers



The Unity Asset Store offers a wide range of assets, including 3D models, textures, animations, sound effects, music, and scripts, created by developers and artists worldwide. Compatible with the popular Unity game engine, these assets can be purchased and downloaded directly from the store.

Since using premade assets can significantly save time and effort, many indie developers use them in their games. In fact, over **40% of indie developers use 5 or more packages to develop concepts or prototype their game**. This speeds up the development process and enables developers to focus on programming, design, and testing.



DEVELOPER-FRIENDLY AND COST-EFFICIENT BACKEND TECH

A crucial aspect of modern game development is the backend technology that supports multiplayer functionality, cross-play, and other essential features.

And depending on how much time developers dedicate to working on backend tech, how many people comprise backend development teams at the studio, and the average salary of a backend developer, the cost of the time and expertise needed can add up quickly.

The cost of building a backend

The true cost of the tech large publishers spend to scale hit games - including the hidden impact on game programmers - is an average of \$21 million to build and maintain their backend.

Historically, game developers needed to create their own internal tech and tools due to the absence of viable third-party backends. However, recent years have seen the emergence of third-party backend providers offering extensive customization and extensibility.

Tools like [Xsolla Backend](#) have become viable options, enabling developers to build solid foundations for long-term technological advantages. These third-party solutions provide all the benefits of in-house backend development and offer a suite of tools designed to streamline game development - without the associated time, effort, and millions of dollars in cost.

What a game studio spends on building their own backend:

\$21 662 784

52

developers working on in-house tech

36

months to build

Average salary of

\$138 864

per engineer, per year

As a direct result of redeploying people to work on backend tech:

1 in 3

game studios reported negative personnel and operational impact



1 in 4

game studios reported increased crunch



1 in 5

game studios reported lost game revenue



Source: [Metaplay](#)



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE INDUSTRY?

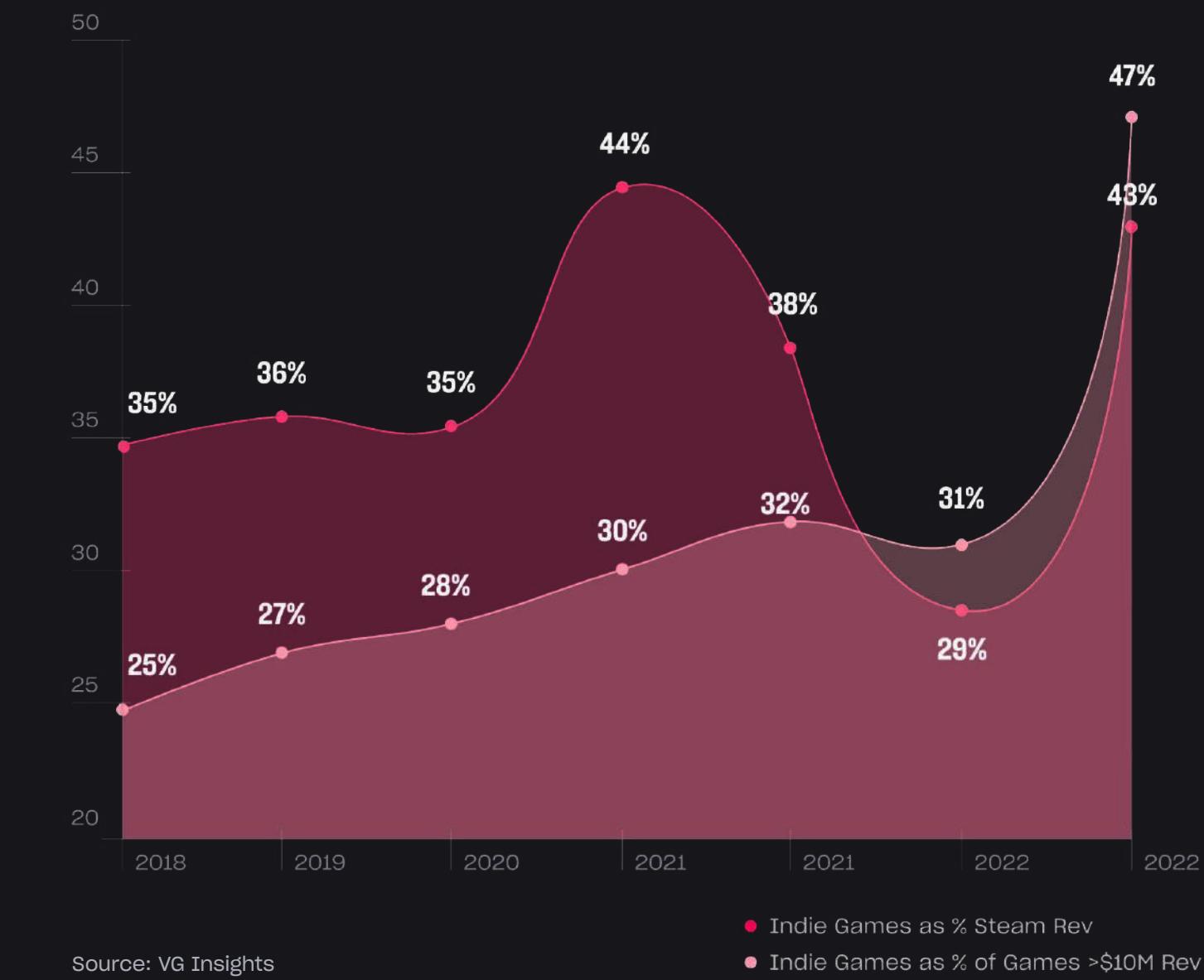
29%

of all Steam revenue came from indie games in 2023, up from **25%** in 2018

Increased market share and revenue growth

Indie Game Revenue on Steam, 2018-2024

Indie games have steadily increased their market share over the past decade. In 2023, indie games accounted for **29% of all Steam revenue, up from 25% in 2018**. Despite the attention commanded by these major titles, indie games have carved out a significant portion of the market, demonstrating their resilience and appeal and averaging well over \$100,000 per title depending

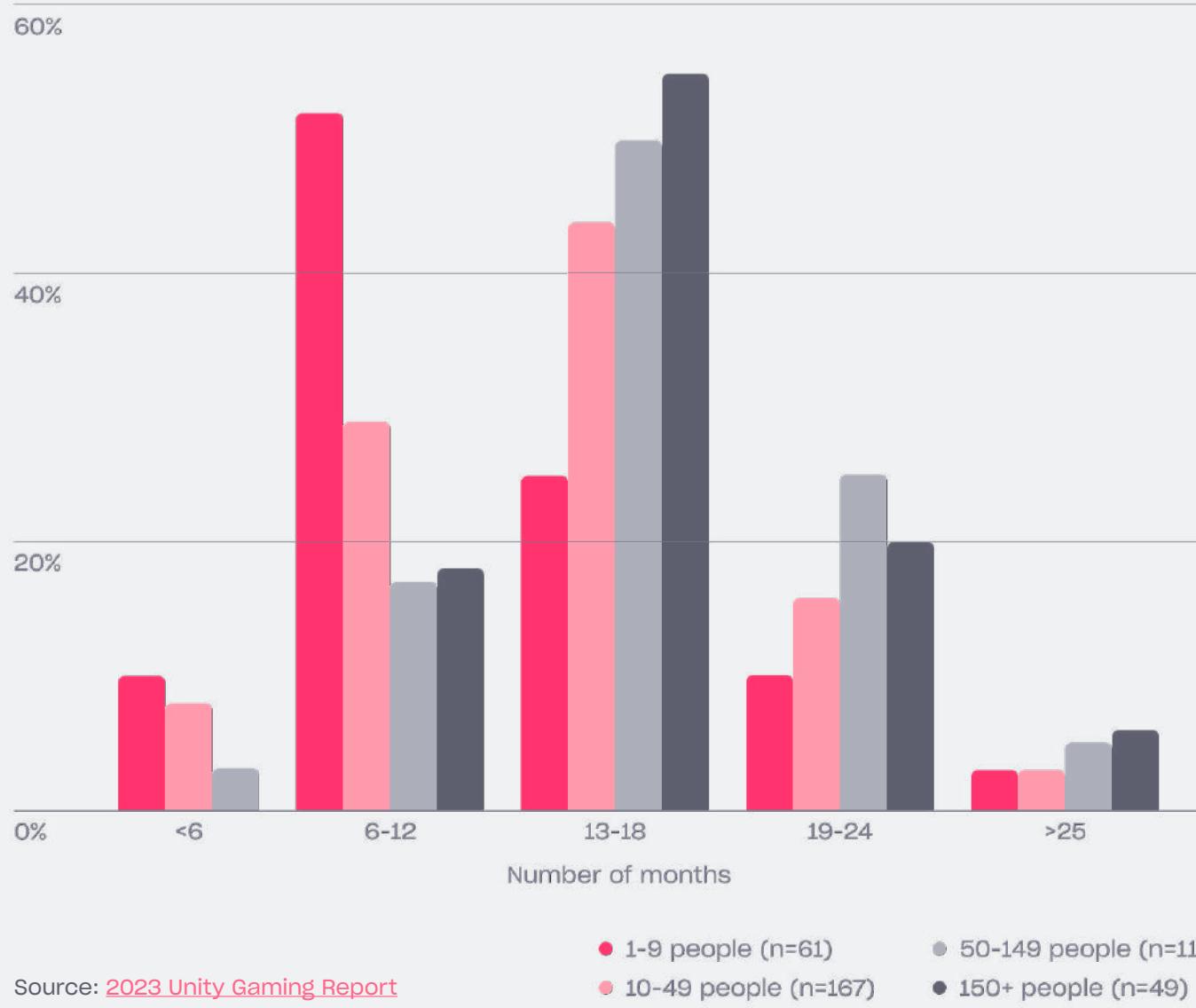




Creating access for game development

One of the primary catalysts for the rise of indie game studios is the accessibility of tools and platforms. Advancements in game development resources have significantly lowered the barriers to entry, making it easier than ever for small developers and studios to build and launch their games. In fact, **indie game developers are shipping games more quickly and developers are working fewer hours.**

Length of project development, from start to ship date



1 in 4

players are multi-platform players

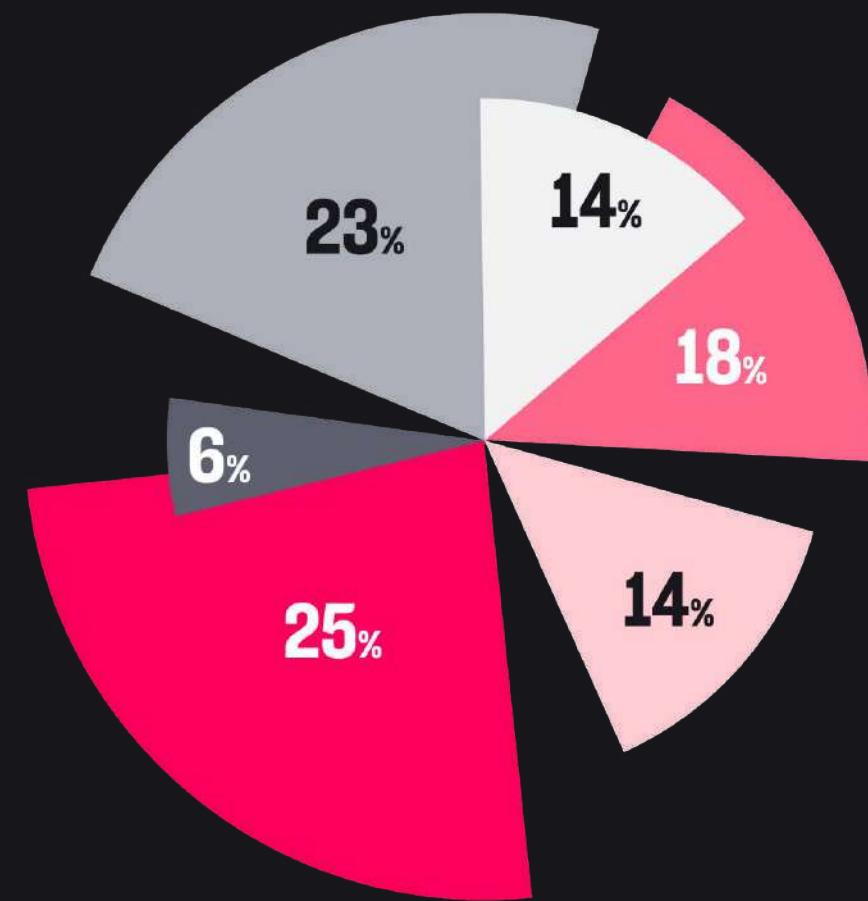
Cross-platform players in 2023

Source: [Newzoo](#)

- Console only
- PC only
- Mobile / Console
- Mobile / PC
- Console / PC
- Mobile / Console / PC

Cross-platform development

The surge in mobile gaming and the growing appeal of indie titles across various platforms have spurred independent developers to embrace cross-platform development. Nearly **one in four PC and/or console players are multi-platform players** – gamers who engage with every major gaming platform.



By optimizing games for multiple platforms—including PC, consoles, and mobile devices—indie studios can reach a vast audience and amplify their game's exposure. This strategic approach enhances the accessibility and popularity of indie games, contributing to their sustained growth.

Section

02

INDUSTRY MOVERS & SHAKERS





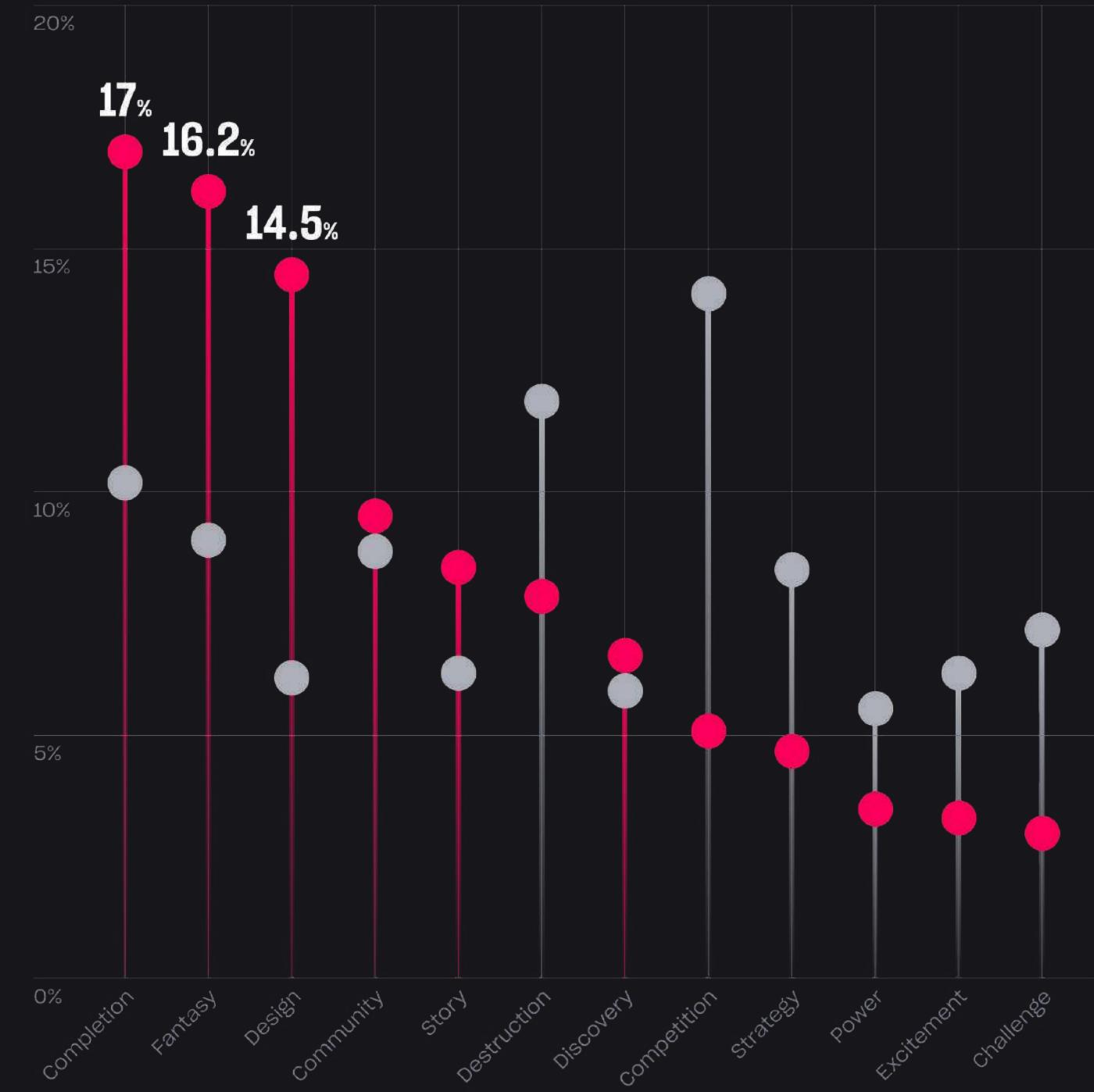
REPRESENTATION IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY

One of the primary reasons gaming companies struggle to capitalize on their female fan base is their adherence to a narrow set of motivators.

Women have identified **Completion (17.0%), Fantasy (16.2%), and Design-based games (14.5%) as their top motivators** while men prioritized Competition (14.1%), Destruction (11.9%), and Completion (10.2%).

This difference in gaming preferences highlights the need for companies to diversify their game design and marketing strategies to better engage female gamers.

Primary gaming motivations, by gender



Source: Rivaltech

● Women ● Men



30%

of all gamers in the US
are women aged 18-35

Types of gamers

PARENT GAMER

- ▶ 67% of parents play with their child at least once/week
- ▶ This has increased since COVID-19

AVERAGE GAMER

- ▶ 34 years old
- ▶ Plays ~6.5 hours/week
- ▶ Just there to have fun

HARDCORE GAMER

- ▶ 21% of players
- ▶ Professional or expert level
- ▶ The "stereotypical" gamer

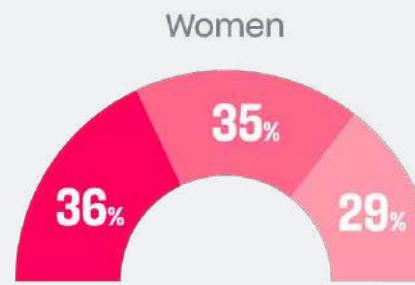
Source: [Techjury](#)

The average gamer is 34 years old and plays a little over 6 hours a week, and 21% of players are hardcore gamers who play more than 6 hours. Meanwhile, female gamers make up nearly half of the gaming market, with **women aged 18-35 comprising 30% of all gamers in the US.**

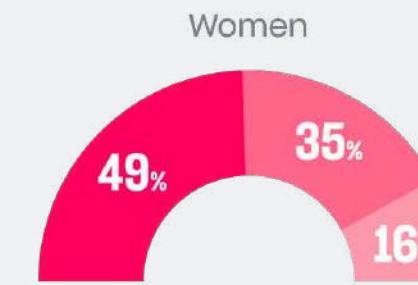
Level of gamer identification

There are many women who not only play games but hold gaming near and dear to their identities, with over **one-third of women who play on PC or console identifying as "core gamers".**

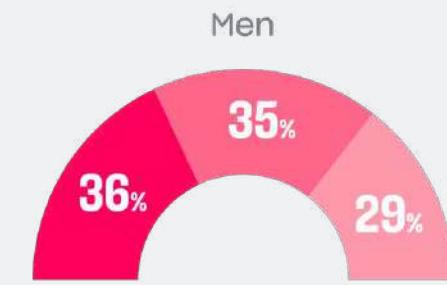
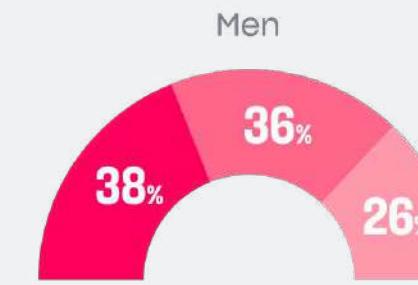
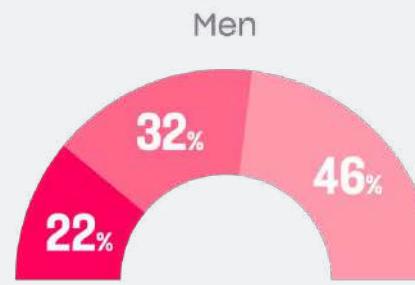
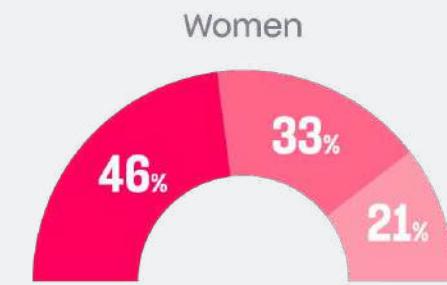
MOBILE



CONSOLE



PC



Source: [NewZoo](#)

● Casual ● Midcore ● Core

FEMALE GAMER

- ▶ 41% of gamers
- ▶ Top motivators are Completion, Fantasy, and Design

33%

of women who play on PC or console are considered as core gamers



01

Article

A CONVERSATION WITH ANGELA DACHOWSKI

Our team at Xsolla recently caught up with Angela Dachowski, a producer leading a fully remote indie studio in the Midwest US, a Women in Games Ambassador and a member of The Game Awards Future Class of 2023. With her deep passion for fostering a balanced and inclusive work environment, Angela shared her unique perspective on how indie studios can set new standards for the industry. Join us as we explore her journey, insights, and the principles that drive her vision for a healthier, more diverse gaming world.



ANGELA DACHOWSKI

Producer at Flippfly



Angela Dachowski is the producer for a fully remote indie studio in the Midwest US. Her studio focuses on developer health and sustainable growth with tenets such as a 32-hour work week and flexible working methods to set an example for other indie studios. Angela is dedicated to promoting inclusivity and diversity in games. She leads production coworking sessions and panels, co-hosts podcast interviews, and delivers talks on these topics. She is honored to be a current Women in Games Ambassador and a part of The Game Awards Future Class of 2023.

01

HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED IN GAMING?

I never really knew that games were an option as a career for me, especially when I look at some of my most loved games, I don't track as a serious gamer. I grew up playing RuneScape, which was my personality for a long time. So I would play that all day and then switch to hand-drawing maps of the world.



Image from RuneScape game

Looking back, I loved doing creative things, being around computers, and being with people, but none of those felt like the right fit to focus on just one.

I hear this often when talking to producers, but I accidentally fell into it. I started out doing some ad hoc live ops analysis for a few hours a week for a studio in Wisconsin, and that gradually grew into a full-time position in production, where I get to do all of those things now. I get a little bit of creativity, a little bit of working with computers, and also being in a team setting, leading my team to be their best selves.



02

AS AN AMBASSADOR FOR [WOMEN IN GAMES](#), HOW DO YOU EMBODY BUILDING A FAIR PLAYING FIELD FOR WOMEN IN GAMING? HOW IS THAT REFLECTED IN THE GAMES THAT [FLIPPFY](#) BUILDS, AND HOW DO YOU APPROACH YOUR ROLE AS A PRODUCER?

I still consider myself to be relatively junior, but I raise my voice and talk about what I've been learning, especially in an indie context, focusing on being visible.

I think this is true of pretty much every single woman I've talked to who's in games, but I struggle a lot with imposter syndrome. Seeing other women and biracial individuals in prominent roles has been incredibly helpful in overcoming this. Opportunities to speak at events like [MDev](#) or be visible through different initiatives with the game production community on [Game Production Community Discord](#) have also boosted my confidence within the gaming community.

From [Flippfly](#)'s perspective, this is reflected in our values. There are 10 of us, and I'm getting to work with another Chinese woman for the first time in my career. We also have a really big interest in the health of our studio with a fully remote team, a 32-hour workweek, and an inclusive work environment, which is helpful for people with different life situations, especially since a lot of our team is neurodiverse.

With that being said, Flippfly has needed to make some sacrifices in other areas to support the culture, but it's a sacrifice that we're okay with because it means a healthier team. And honestly, we get better results because of it.

03

WHILE THE GAMING INDUSTRY IS STARTING TO REALIZE WOMEN GAMERS' ENORMOUS INTEREST AND PURCHASING POWER, THE SHIFT IN MARKETING TOWARDS WOMEN IS STILL IN A TRANSITIONAL PHASE. WHAT INITIATIVES HAVE YOU LED OR PARTICIPATED IN AT FLIPPFY TO REACH THIS PLAYER BASE? AS AN INDUSTRY MEMBER AND PLAYER, WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO SEE MORE OF IN THE FUTURE?

That's a tricky question because we don't have a huge marketing arm. We're a really small studio, so we don't emphasize gendered marketing. The best way to describe it is to look at our main character, a badass pilot who happens to be female. Our approach to marketing is pretty similar. While we're play testing, we do our best to have representation in our beta groups to make sure that we're getting opinions from all people.

For me personally, the biggest thing that I see when it comes to marketing to women is players, and women, especially, can tell when marketing is disingenuous. We want products that work, and we want games that are fun, and that's what I hope to see. I hope that developers are going to make games that are fun and appealing to women instead of targeting them.

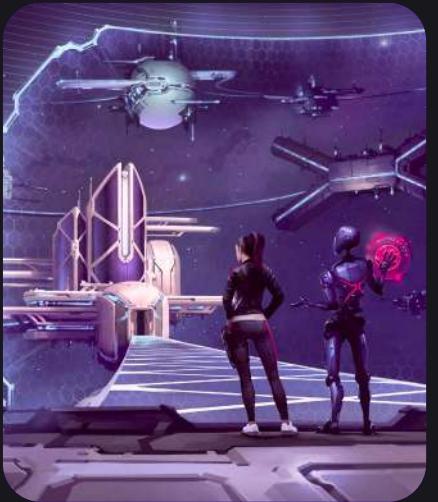
04

AS A 2023 FUTURE CLASS GAME AWARDS RECIPIENT, WHAT DID THAT RECOGNITION MEAN TO YOU? WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU OFFER ASPIRING INDIVIDUALS LOOKING TO ENTER THE GAMING INDUSTRY? ARE THERE SPECIFIC SKILLS OR EXPERIENCES YOU BELIEVE ARE CRUCIAL FOR SUCCESS?

I mentioned that I struggled with imposter syndrome for the longest time, so I thought it was an error at first. I kept looking at the email, thinking, "That's my name, that's my email." There are so many people doing amazing things for the games industry, so it's been really humbling to be included alongside them.

It's also invigorated my passion to continue advocating.

Intentional networking and asking thoughtful questions have been the most helpful for me. Being willing to do both of those is a skill, and it will serve anybody well.



05

WHAT CHANGES/BARRIERS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED IN THIS INDUSTRY, AND WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD MAKE THE INDUSTRY MORE WELCOMING?

The current industry landscape is a little difficult to navigate, and that's true whether you're trying to break into the industry or have several years of experience. That said, a heavy focus on developers' health needs to happen from the top down and I see many initiatives to uplift voices and mentor the next generation of game developers.

I also see many of these initiatives happening here in Wisconsin. You don't immediately think of it as a hotbed for gaming, but there are many publishers here like Midwest Games and organizations like the [Wisconsin Games Alliance](#) working on bringing more gaming to the Midwest through conferences and lobbying, which I think is excellent.

Supporting small studios that invest in individuals is going to be the best way to encourage sustainable studio growth and flexible ways of working is truly the future. A lot of developers end up having to leave where they're from to move to California if they want to participate in games. I think keeping games local so that people don't have to uproot their lives is important. By supporting game development locally and helping it grow, you'll see more of those small studios laying the groundwork for sustainability for the future.

Supporting small studios that invest in individuals is going to be the best way to encourage sustainable studio growth and flexible ways of working is truly the future.

06

FLIPPFY HAS SEVERAL GAMES, INCLUDING WHISKER SQUADRON, EVERGARDEN, AND RACE THE SUN. WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT THESE TITLES, AND WHAT DOES FLIPPFY HAVE COMING DOWN THE PIPELINE THAT GAMERS SHOULD START GETTING EXCITED ABOUT?



Image from Evergarden game



Image from Whisker Squadron: Survivor game

Whisker Squadron: Survivor has been a ton of fun to work with. Since launching Early Access, it's been incredible to see how the game has improved. The most exciting thing about these games is that they're genuinely fun. I have fun when I'm playtesting and talking to our audience about them. We're looking forward to our 1.0 launch in the coming months and to really wowing players with some big features they've been asking for.

Looking further into the future, we're in the prototype phase for a new game centered around co-op play that we're really excited about bringing to the market.

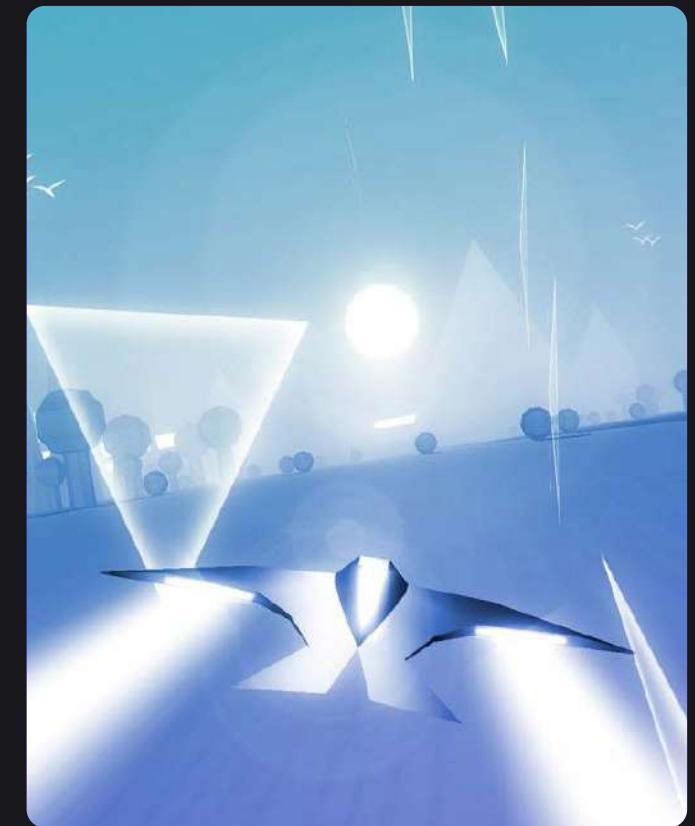


Image from Race The Sun game



02 A CONVERSATION WITH KRISTEN LAMBERT

Article



KRISTEN LAMBERT

QA Manager at
Midwest Games

MIDWEST GAMES

The Xsolla team had the pleasure of speaking with Kristen Lambert, a Game Art and Animation graduate from DePaul University with a rich background in QA at Wargaming Chicago-Baltimore. Join us as Kristen delves into her extensive experience in the industry, offers valuable insights into problem-solving in QA, and the importance of fostering healthy game development practices.

Kristen Lambert graduated from DePaul University's Game Art and Animation program in 2013, before working in QA at Wargaming Chicago-Baltimore for over 9 years. She recently joined the Midwest Games team and relocated to Milwaukee and is getting to know her new hometown. Her favorite part of the QA field is its problem-solving mindset. She loves helping Midwest Games build healthy development habits, facing a new variety of challenges daily while supporting small or inexperienced studios, and educating people on what it takes to bring a game to completion.

01

HOW DID YOU
BECOME INVOLVED
IN GAMING? IS
THERE A PARTICULAR
GAME OR GAMING
EXPERIENCE THAT
HAS SIGNIFICANTLY
INFLUENCED YOU?

So, like most people, I became exposed to games pretty early on. At first, I would watch my older cousins play video games or watch my stepfather play his PC tactical strategy games, but as time went on, I started playing them myself. And then, for my ninth birthday, I got a Game Boy Color. So, I had a lot of handheld experience rather than console experience growing up.

Professionally, I initially got into gaming through QA, planning to build my portfolio and eventually transition to an art position. However, I realized that many artists develop an unhealthy relationship with their art when it becomes their job. Over time, I found that I enjoy doing art for fun while maintaining a separate day job.



Image from Game Boy Color



02

AS A QA LEAD, HOW DO YOU INFLUENCE INCLUSIVITY IN THE GAMES YOU TEST? WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE ROLES OF QA GENERALLY MOVE TOWARDS HAVING A MORE PROFOUND INFLUENCE IN SHAPING MORE INCLUSIVE GAME CREATION?

I think it depends on the person. I'm asexual and consider myself queer, so for me, topics on inclusivity are very near and dear to my heart, especially intersectional feminism and similar topics are something I try to be knowledgeable about. Even issues like class and education access all matter when it comes to games, so there's always a lot to think about.

Quality Assurance professionals are the vanguards of advocacy for the quality of the product and advocacy on behalf of the consumer. We have to have this consumer mindset of, "What are they going to think? What are they going to experience?" and then bring that to the attention of developers before problems happen. Sometimes, that can entail more design-level suggestions and advice. Here at [Midwest Games](#), I have a lot of agency, and I'm very listened to in that respect, but that isn't always the case for every QA position. At the very least, we offer suggestions and feedback and hope they take it into consideration.

A funny example of this comes from my time at [Wargaming](#) which involved a decision to add breast physics to female soldiers. For those unfamiliar, it's a historical vehicle combat game where players drive tanks and shoot each other and I actually made quite a loud noise in the department about how our player base would very likely comment on this decision and it did end up getting pulled.

Not every game is going to have a cut and clear instance of how it catches potential concerns, but I think more importantly, we have to get people into the industry who have those perspectives and are thinking about these things. That way, at every level, we can integrate those thoughts and those processes into the final product.

Part of it is just having that conversation straight up. You speak to them, and you say explicitly, "Hey, this is a thing that I care about. I care about listening to you and fostering that comfort."

One of my favorite things to do during the hiring process for internal teams was to give people a chance who don't have experience but really want to work in this industry but haven't had the opportunities that everyone else has had. Those are always the people who end up becoming some of the strongest members of our team, and I'm really proud of them and happy that they have their foot in the door in this way.

03

AS A LEAD, HOW DO YOU EMPOWER YOUR TEAM TO SPEAK UP WHEN TESTING AND KEEP INCLUSIVITY AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE GAMES YOU WORK ON?





04

DO YOU FEEL
LIKE QUEER
REPRESENTATION
IN THE GAMING
INDUSTRY HAS
EVOLVED IN YOUR
TIME SO FAR?

There's always more work to be done. I think that the industry has evolved as society has. Historically, there's always pushback whenever there's progress, so it's a back-and-forth thing. Unfortunately, we're unfortunately, many places are currently experiencing some of that pushback right now, but in general, I think that the people of this country are more accepting than they were.

That means that the industry is at least trying. I think it's really about building the culture and breaking down the culture that occurs, especially in some big studios, where maybe there isn't that oversight and there isn't that top-down emphasis on inclusivity and handling these things well.

But progress wins out slowly, in general. So it really is about taking the spaces around you because that's what you have power over. Because I don't have power over the entire industry, but I do have the power to help my employees who need it.



Image from Oxygen Not Included game

05

WHAT CHANGES/BARRIERS HAVE YOU
EXPERIENCED IN THIS INDUSTRY, AND WHAT
DO YOU THINK WOULD MAKE THE INDUSTRY
MORE WELCOMING?

I've been very lucky, you know, but I think that it's impossible not to have been affected, at least in some way, by the more insidious subconscious stuff. Recently, one of my co-workers, they're non-binary, AFAB, and femme presenting, and they were talked down to while showing games at an industry event for us. Barriers like that still exist. Sexist people exist, and therefore, we experience some sexism, but what would make it more welcoming is a more conscious effort to call out these behaviors when they happen. More effort is needed to put people -

who haven't had these opportunities but are very deserving of them - into positions where they can first of all lead, but also prevent these things from happening more.

The more effort you can put in to find people who are deserving but overlooked, the quicker the change comes from within, hopefully. It's putting active effort into thinking about these things and recording that this is how we achieve our goals of actually making change happen, which is something we do at Midwest Games.

06

FINALLY, JUST FOR
FUN: WHAT GAMES
ARE YOU PLAYING
NOW?

I play many different games, but right now, I am very deep into *Oxygen Not Included*, a colony simulator game. It's by the people who made *Don't Starve*, and it has the same cartoony little guy art style, but you're building a colony in space.

It's really challenging, but I often find myself drawn back to those kinds of games with a ton of technical depth.

Section

03

EDUCATION IN GAMING





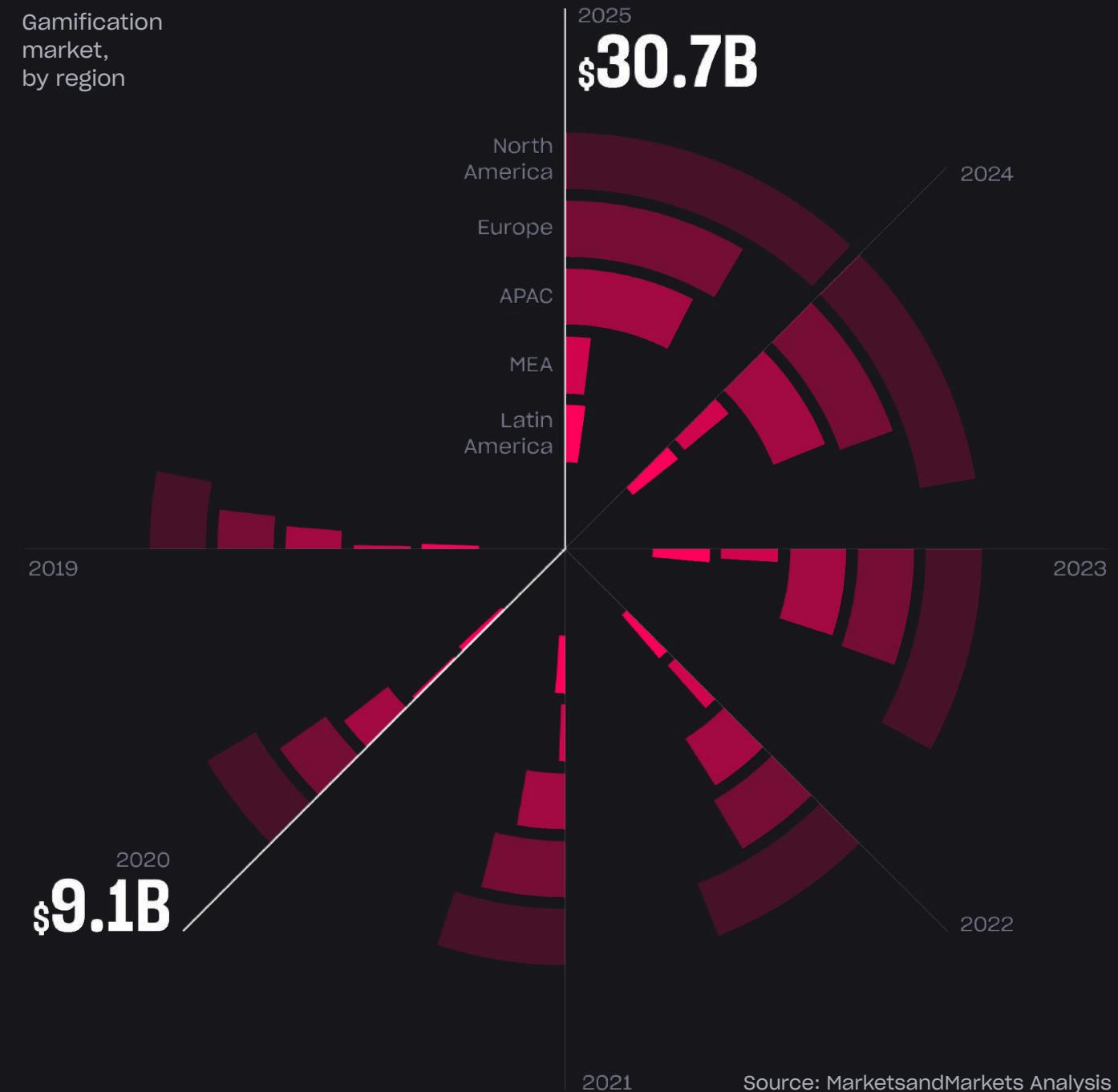
EXPLORING ACADEMICS AND GAMING

Edutainment Market Concentration



Academic market institutions are highly fragmented, with many smaller players competing extensively. Regionally, the **US witnessed the largest number of players operating in the market**, followed by China. Immense investment in technology and education in these countries further drives the market to reach its ultimate potential.

Gamification market, by region



>\$20B

growth for the gamification market from 2020 to 2025

The gamification market is expected to experience significant growth, with projected growth from **\$9.1 billion in 2020 to \$30.7 billion by 2025**.

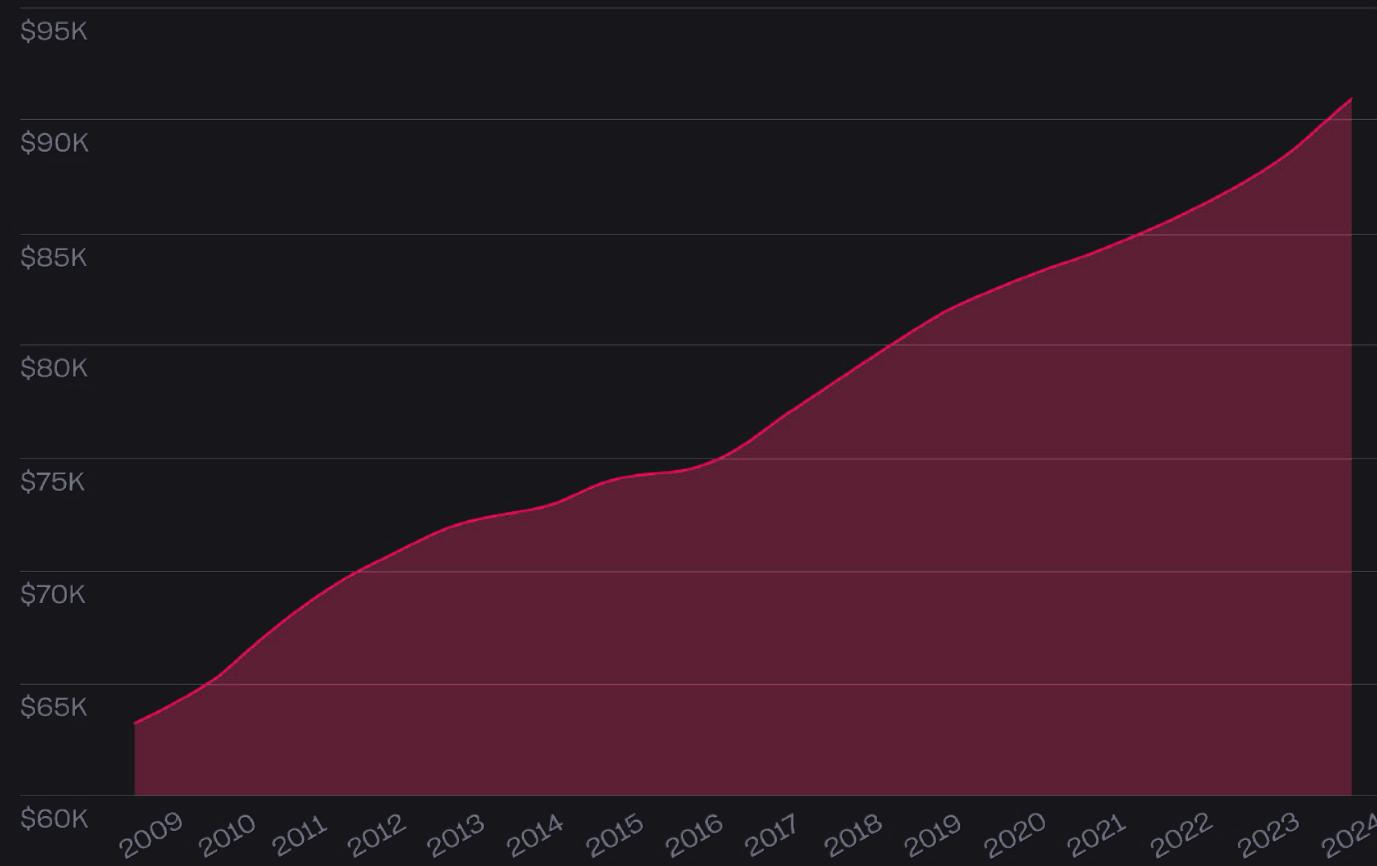
North America will remain the dominant region, while Europe is also poised for substantial growth supported by local governments and key stakeholders.



Average game developer salary, 2016 to 2024

Source: [Zippia](#)

The average salary of game developers in the US **increased from \$88,010 in 2023 to \$91,009 in 2024**. The approximate hourly rate for a game developer is \$43.75.



\$10K

increase in avg salary for game developers from 2023 to 2024





01

Article

MASTERING GAME INDUSTRY SKILLS WITH ONLINE AND ALTERNATIVE LEARNING

The video game industry thrives on the intersection of creativity and technical expertise. Traditionally, aspiring game developers and artists have pursued degrees in computer graphics, coding, animation, or game design.

But, while a formal degree can be advantageous, it's not the sole path to success. The games industry is known for its openness to diverse talent pools, recognizing that exceptional skills (including financial, operational, and management expertise) can be acquired through various avenues. Many game developers have built flourishing careers through self-directed learning, online academies, remote courses, and gaining practical experience in the field.

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION FOR THE WIN

The learning landscape for video game artists has undergone a significant transformation in tandem with technological advancements and the gaming industry itself.

While traditional art degrees continue to hold value, there's a growing emphasis on interdisciplinary programs, alternative learning, and experiential education that bridge the gap between artistic skill, management prowess, business savvy, and technical expertise. This change emphasizes more adaptable and accessible learning pathways for today's aspiring video game professionals.

Among the video game industry's most popular approaches to learning are edutainment and online academies.

\$2.6B

market size for edutainment in 2024

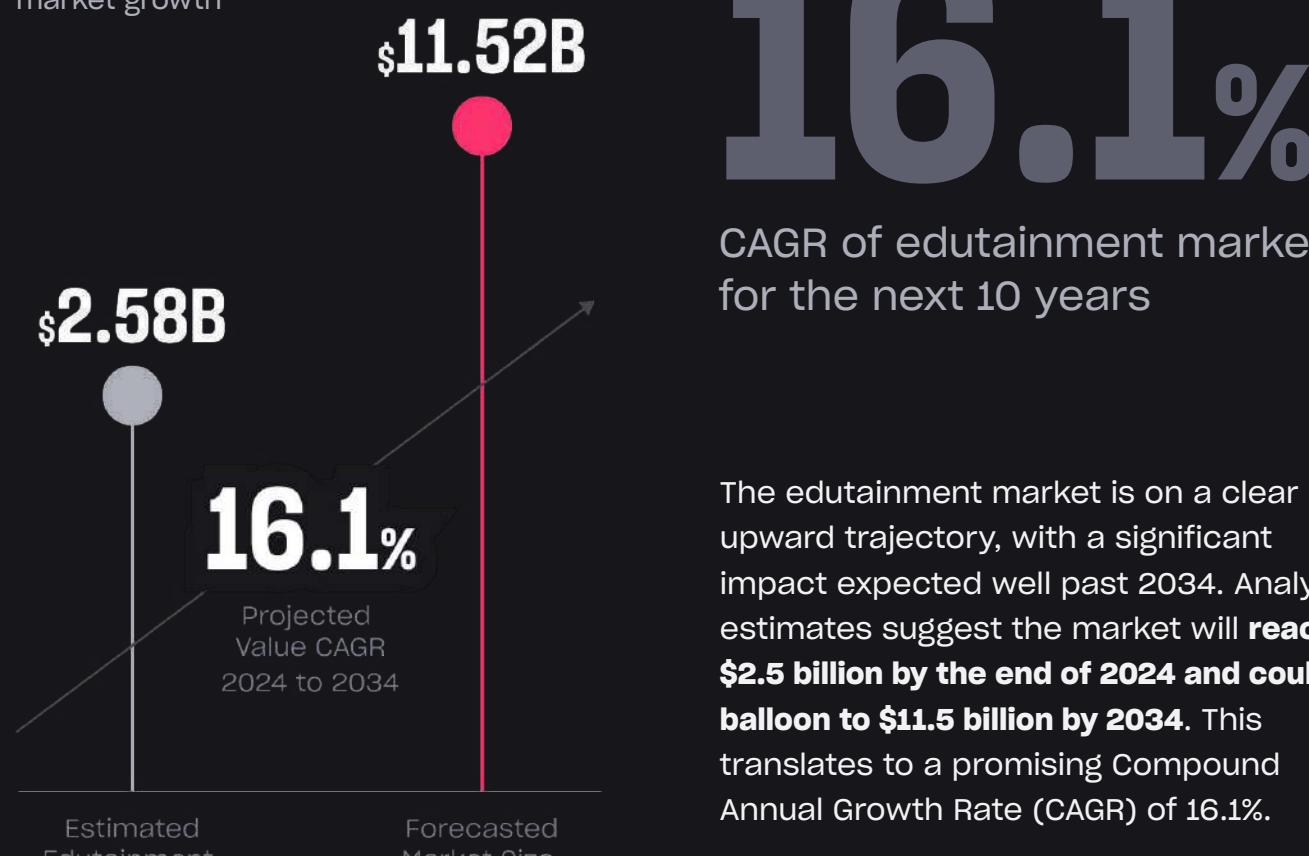
Edutainment: Serious fun

The edutainment industry is expected to [reach a market size of \\$2.58 billion in 2024](#). And with a predicted impact extending beyond the next decade, projections suggest it could **surpass \$11.52 billion by 2034**.

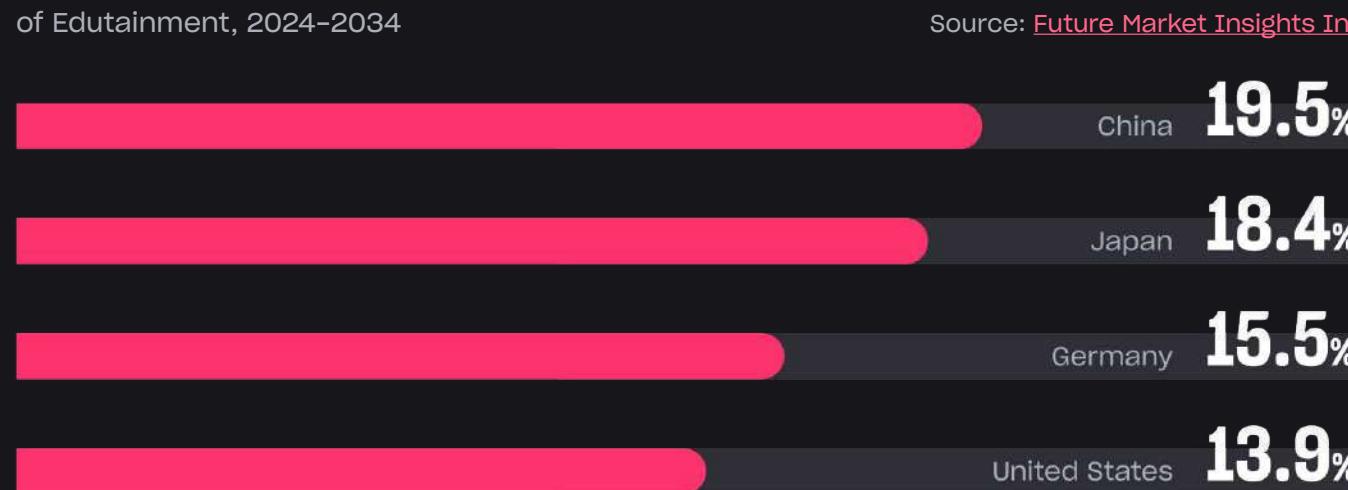
While North America leads with its strong infrastructure, resources, and investment in educational entertainment, Europe shows steady growth driven by a focus on lifelong learning and technology in education. Additionally, the Asia Pacific region is primed for explosive growth due to its young population and government investment in education with a focus on improved learning outcomes.



Edutainment
market growth



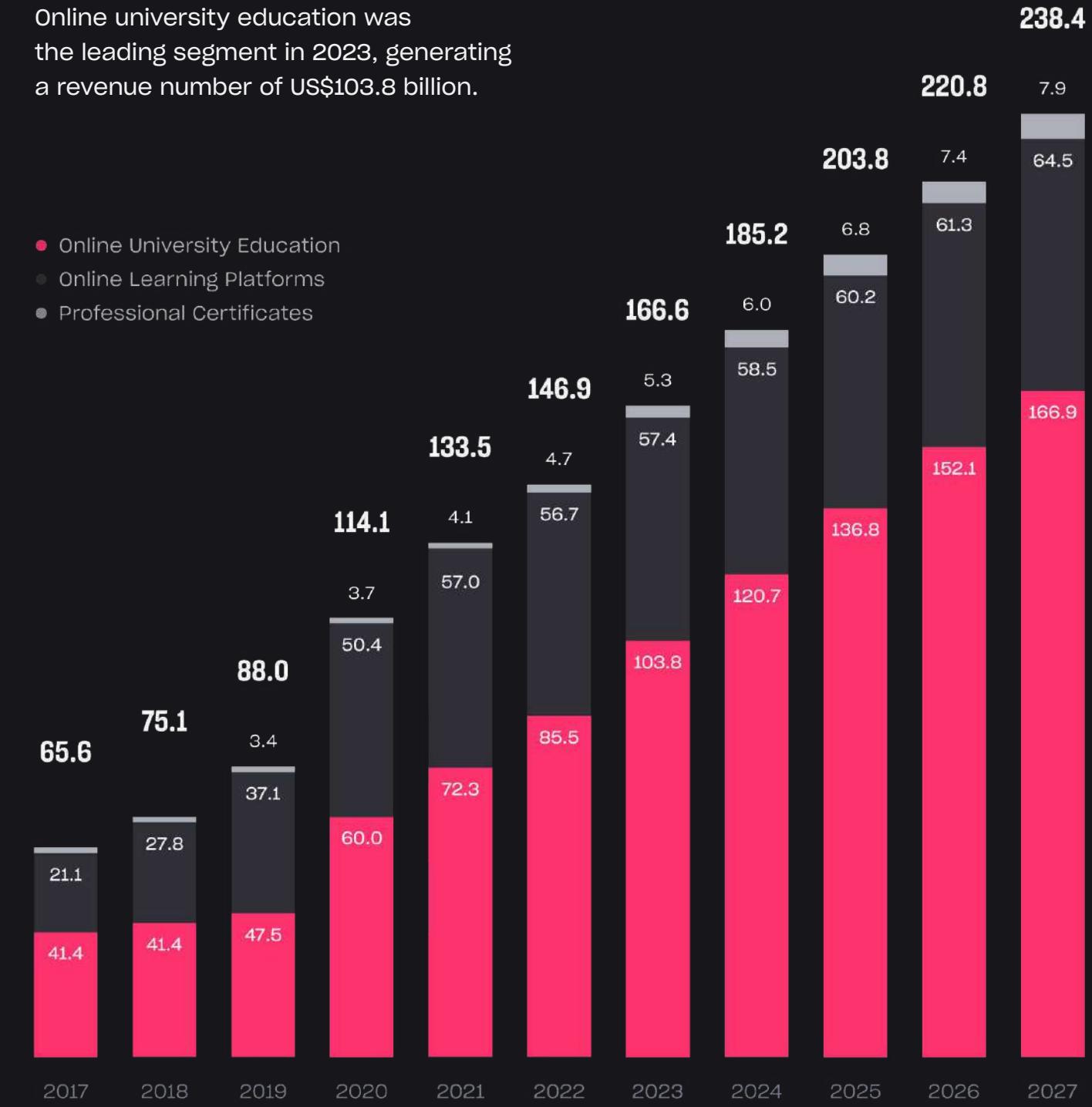
Forecasted CAGR
of Edutainment, 2024-2034



Online learning: Global reach

Online university education was the leading segment in 2023, generating a revenue number of US\$103.8 billion.

- Online University Education
- Online Learning Platforms
- Professional Certificates



14%

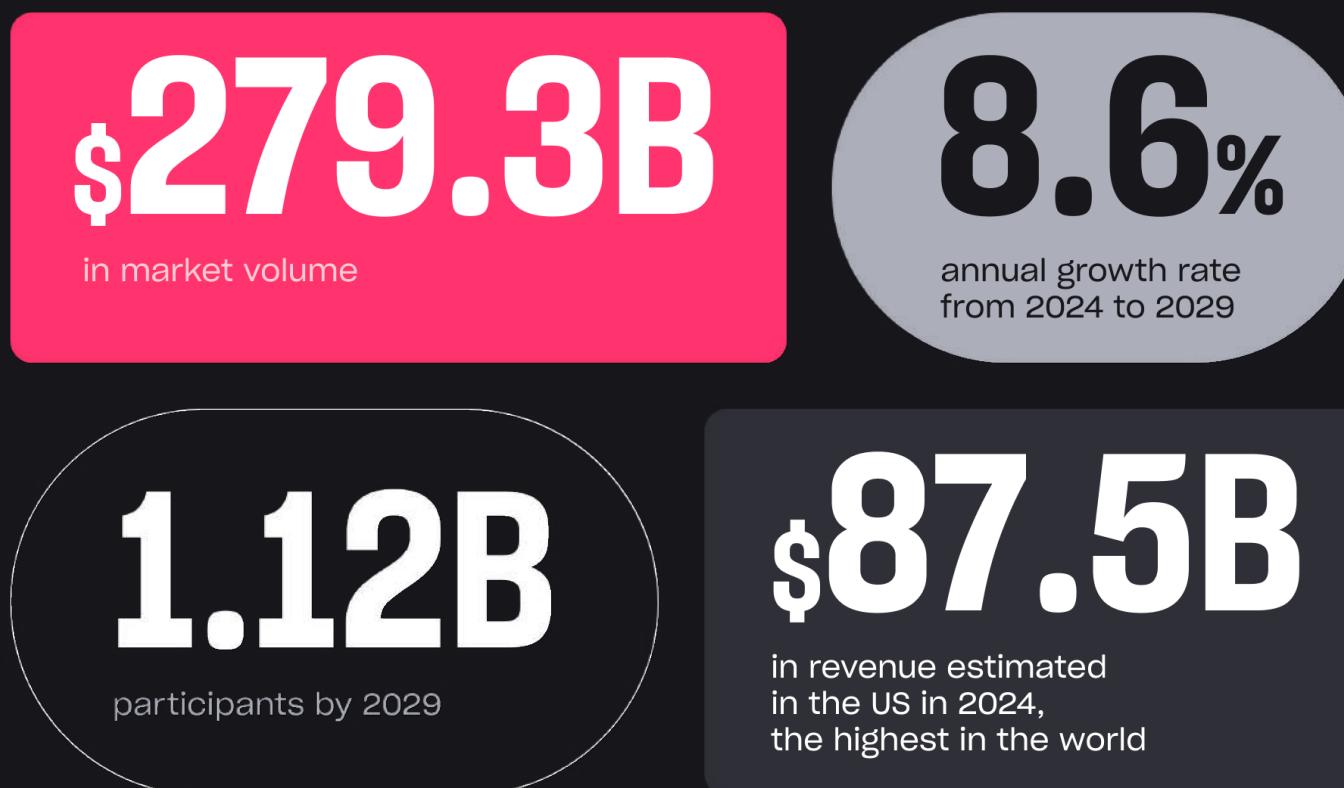
Online education market revenue, 2017 to 2027, in billion dollars

Source: Statista



Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

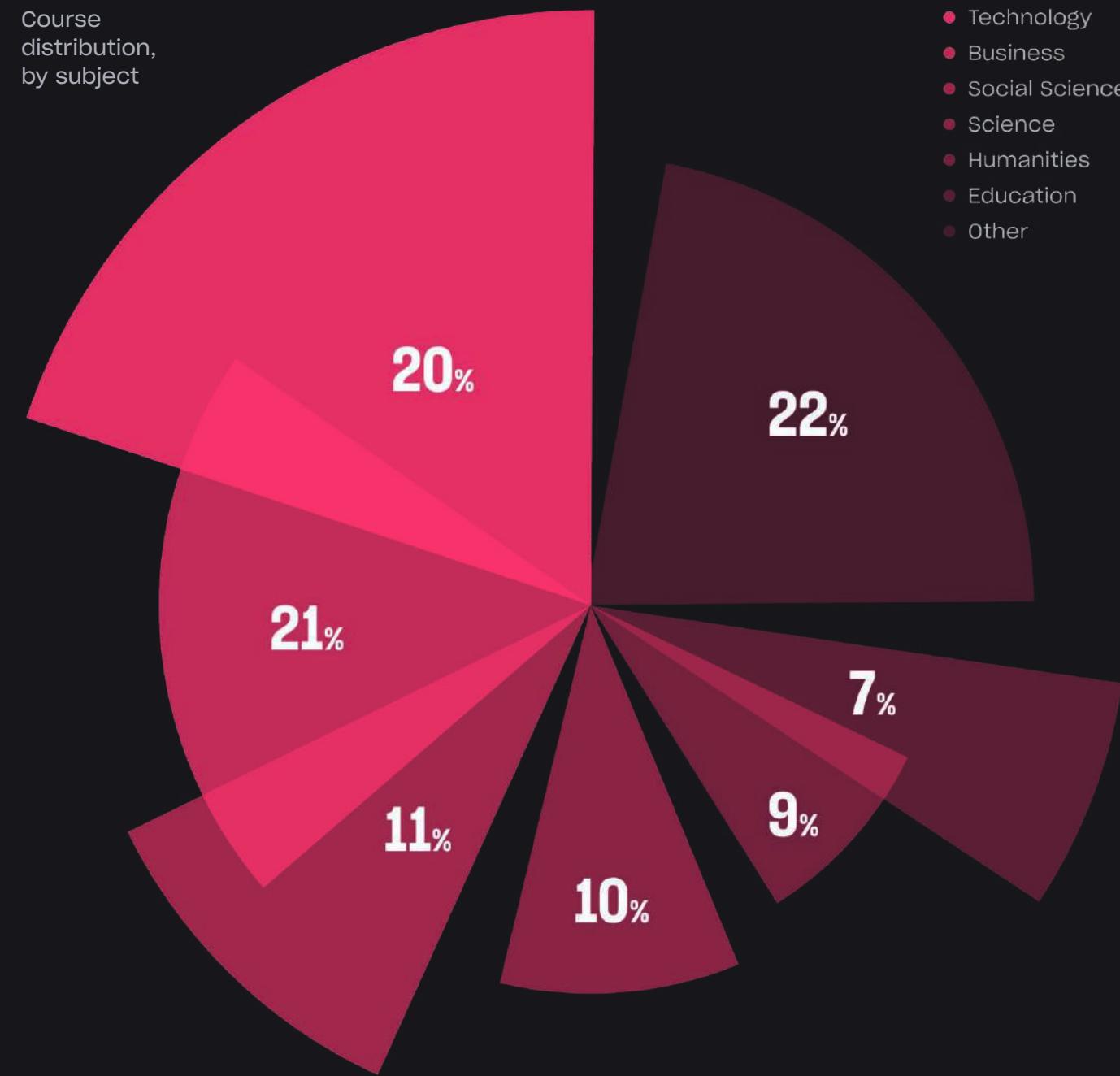
The way we learn is evolving, and the video game industry is no exception. We're seeing a surge in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), with revenue expected to grow at an annual rate of 8.56% from 2024 to 2029, reaching a [projected market volume of \\$279.3 billion](#) and an estimated number of **1.12 billion participants by 2029**. The online university education market is projected to reach \$120.7 billion in 2024, with the **United States generating the most revenue globally, estimated at \$87.5 billion in 2024**.



MOOCs are affordable and accessible, often created by top universities, and cover a wide range of topics. This allows game developers to gain new skills or dive deeper into existing ones, all at their own pace.

But MOOCs are just one piece of the puzzle. All sectors of online education are also getting a major tech upgrade. Virtual reality (VR), artificial intelligence (AI), and even gaming elements (gamification) are being used to make learning more engaging and interactive. Imagine practicing 3D modeling techniques in VR or receiving personalized feedback from an AI-powered tutor.

Course distribution, by subject



Source: [Statista](#)

While edutainment and online learning benefit all industries, the professional video game world also recognizes **the need for continuous learning**. Robust **online academies** are rising in prominence by partnering with leading companies to offer an extended learning program. These **24/7 accessible platforms** provide video game developers, designers, artists, and game leadership a path to staying relevant and competitive in a fast-paced industry.



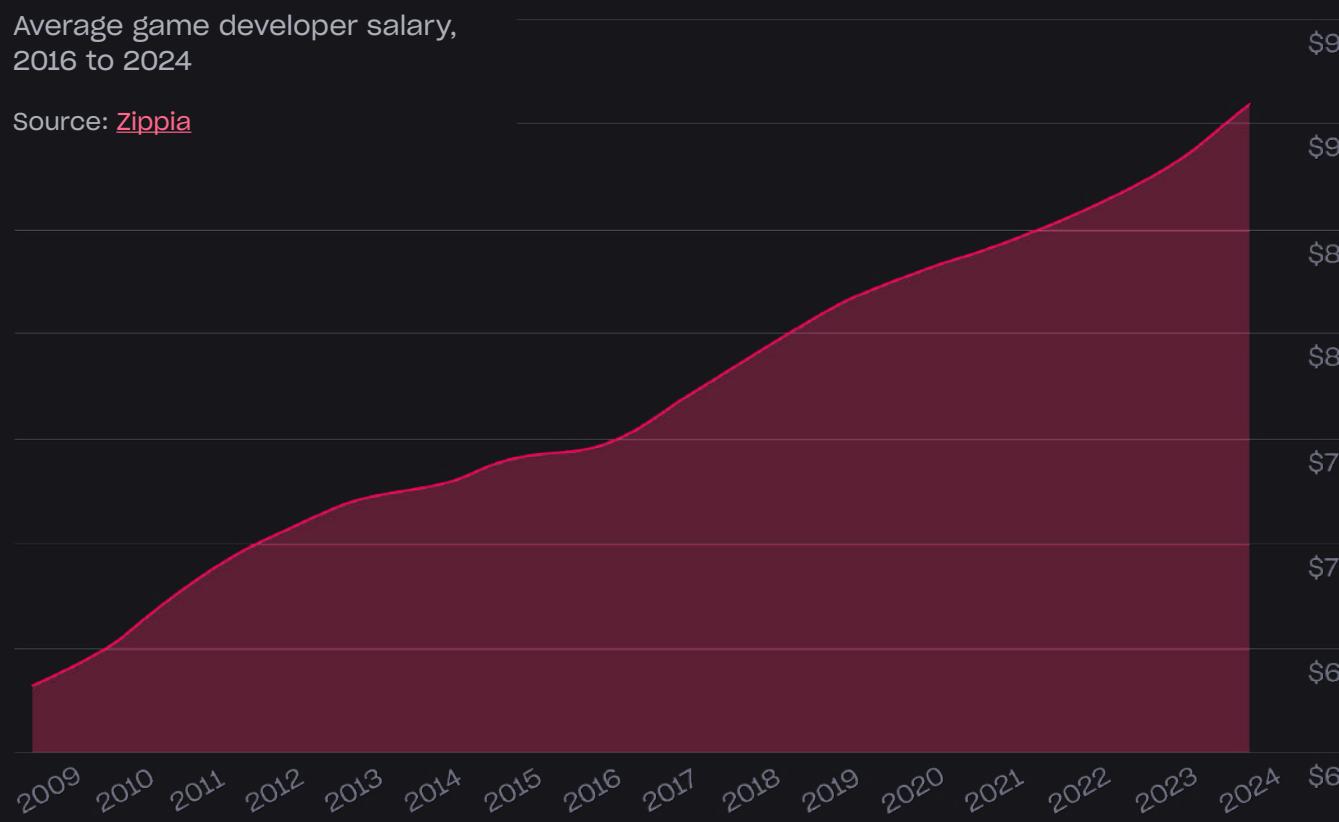
SHAPING THE FUTURE OF GAME DEVELOPMENT

A core strength of these platforms is their commitment to accessibility. Many are meticulously crafted to bridge the gap between business knowledge and the game industry's practical demands, providing professionals with invaluable insights into the industry landscape. A focus on inclusivity ensures that anyone with a passion for gaming has the opportunity to hone their skills and turn their aspirations into reality, fostering not only business savvy but also a deep understanding of current trends and challenges.





WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE INDUSTRY?



1

Enhanced skill development and industry readiness

The rise in online learning platforms tailored for game development fosters continuous skill enhancement among industry professionals. Game developers can access specialized training on evolving technologies, tools, and methodologies relevant to game design and development. This ongoing education ensures that professionals remain competitive and adaptable. And as more individuals gain industry-specific skills through alternative learning pathways, the talent pool becomes more robust and diverse.

2

Continuous learning and professional development

Online learning academies are shaping the future of game development by nurturing budding talent into skilled creative leaders. These future leaders will be equipped to tackle all aspects of the game industry, from crafting effective marketing strategies and maximizing revenue through strategic monetization to ensuring distribution reach and profitability. This empowers them to drive innovation, create fresh intellectual properties, and transform a passion for video games into thriving, sustainable businesses.

Section

04

INFLUENCERS IN GAMING

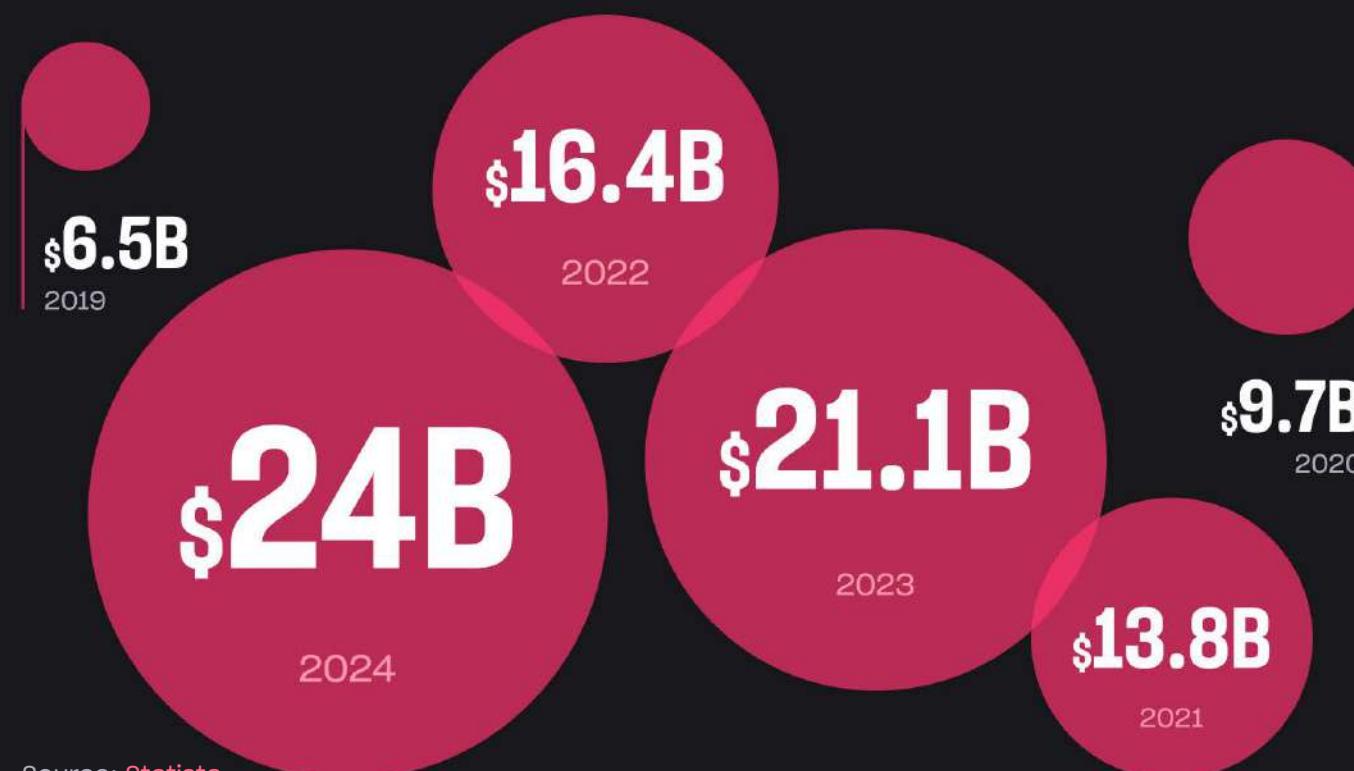




THE IMPACT OF GAMING INFLUENCERS

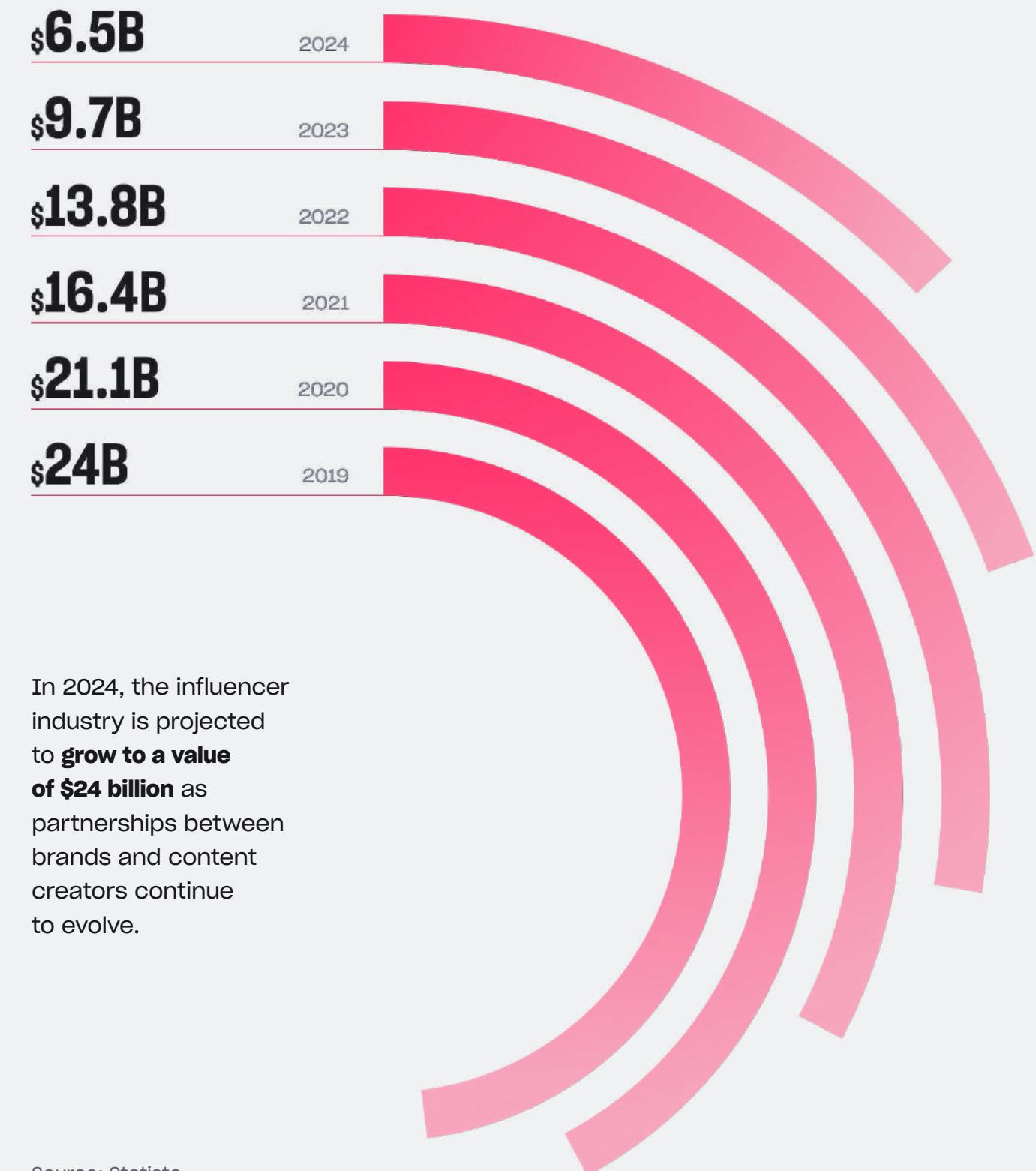
Influencer marketing worldwide, 2019 to 2024

The value of the global influencer market has tripled since 2019, reaching **\$21.1 billion in 2023**. Marketers are continuing to invest in collaborations with prominent social media figures to appeal to the millions online browsing social media for entertainment, ideas, and recommendations.



Source: Statista

Influencer marketing market size worldwide from 2019 to 2024



Source: Statista



How did influencer marketing budgets change in 2023 vs 2021?

Source: [Attrack](#)

25.41%

Decreased

22.13%

Increased 50-100%

18.85%

Unsure

15.57%

Increased 25-50%

9.02%

Increased <25%

9.02%

Stayed flat

\$2.2B

growth of influencer marketing platforms from 2022 to 2023

Influencer marketing platforms have also grown, **rising from a value of \$15.2 billion in 2022 to \$17.4 billion in 2023**. Creators use these marketing platforms to track analytics, find new clients, and manage brand relationships.

People trust influencers for their knowledge, transparency, and authenticity. According to a [Lingia survey](#), **40% of respondents said that they increased their budgets in 2023**, compared to 2021.

I've been creating videos for four years, primarily targeting a younger audience with content focused on Minecraft, Roblox, and GTA.

To date, I've amassed 110,000 subscribers on my channel and my audience mainly consists of kids aged 7-14. I interact with them via YouTube videos and comments. If I want to share personal moments, I turn to Instagram posts and stories.

Aside from YouTube, I also use Instagram. I've tried TikTok, but it's not for me, and I've used Twitch in the past, but I prefer creating content and occasionally streaming on YouTube. My average video runs for about 20-40 minutes, while streams can last 2-3 hours.

POL-MARTIN MAHMOUD ALYALDANI

Youtuber - [Shadow Fox BG](#), [Website](#)

While I'm an independent influencer, I occasionally collaborate with agencies that connect influencers and sponsors. Whenever I've worked with them, we've negotiated a fixed price for each project.

YouTube has been a great platform for me, especially for longer videos that generate a lot of views. These videos contain more ads and, as a result, generate more revenue. If a video gets demonetized, I usually look for a video that gets a lot of views and find a sponsor for it.

Promoting games on my channel is relatively easy because my viewers trust my opinions. If they know I enjoy a game, they're likely to try it. I think when kids are your fans, they're likely to try what you're promoting because they aspire to be like you in some ways.



Guest Column



01 THE POWER OF INFLUENCERS

Article

How they grow games from local to global

Influencer marketing is nothing new. Influencers have built followings on nearly every social media platform and receive thousands, hundreds of thousands, or even millions of views on content ranging from videos to tweets, blogs, and more.

With the influencer industry poised to grow even stronger over the next few years, it's worth investigating how influencers can precisely target gamers and how to create lasting partnerships with the right creators.

3.5%

engagement rate
of mid-to-large creators
on YouTube in 2022,
the best on the platform

Leverage the right platform for your game

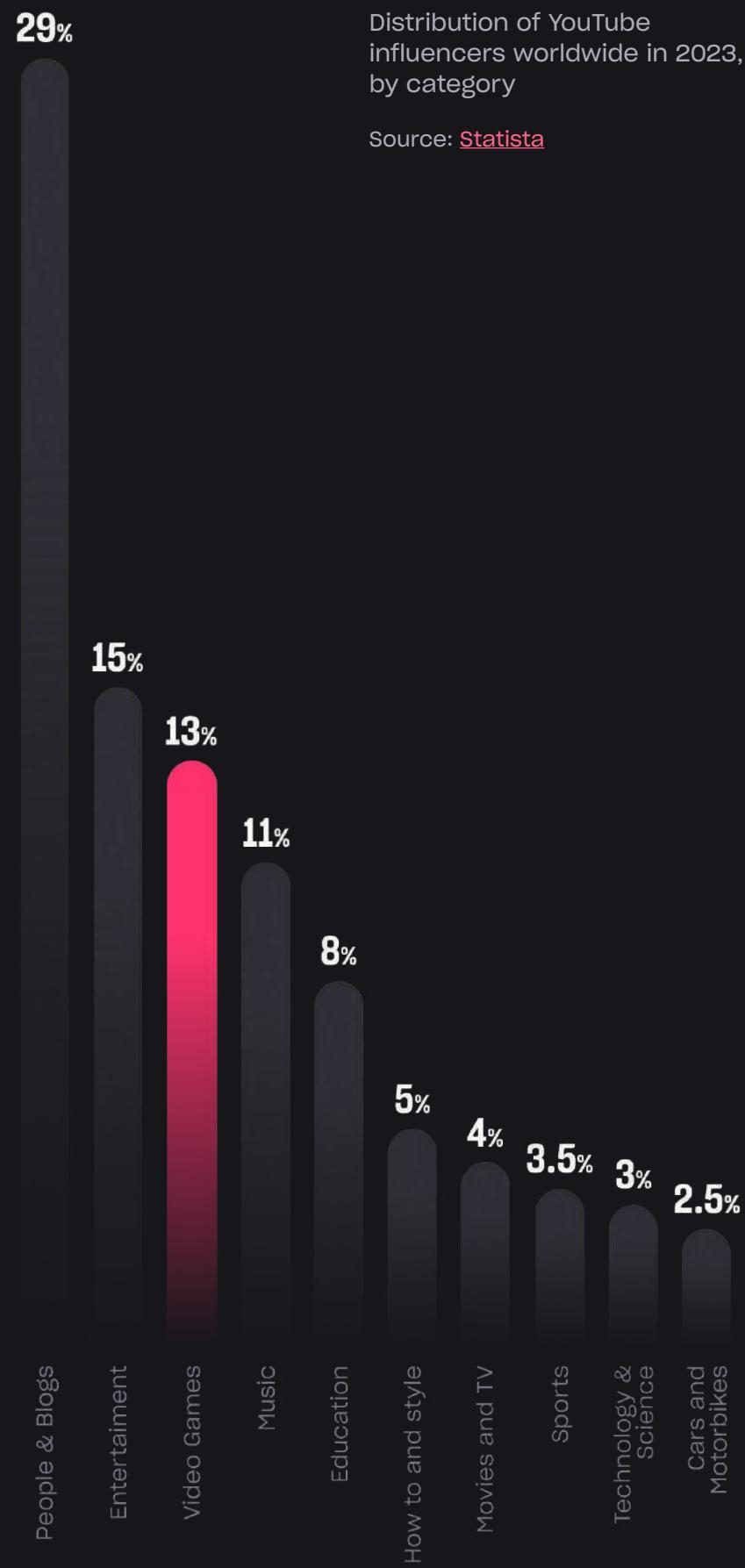
Gaming content has found a welcome home on each social media channel, from long-form reviews and walkthroughs on YouTube to highlight reel-style compilations on TikTok. However, in the current market, YouTube may be the most promising avenue for gaming-specific influencer marketing.

Marketers believe YouTube to be a fertile advertising platform for several reasons. First, YouTube influencer engagement rates are among the highest in the industry.

In 2022, mid-to-large creators with [100,000 to 1 million followers](#) had a platform-best engagement rate of 3.5%.

Second, influencers can embed promotions in longer-form 30 or 60-minute videos, reaching thousands of more viewers at the cost of higher production expenses.

Still, the most advantageous aspect of YouTube from a games marketing perspective is that gaming content is one of the platform's most popular categories of entertainment. In 2023, “Entertainment” and “Video Games” were the second and third-most popular categories for YouTube Influencers, with influencer shares of 14.5 and 12.9 percent, respectively. There's great potential to use YouTube to meet gamers where they prefer to watch gaming content.





The tools of the trade: How effective influencer tools can be a difference-maker

Developers considering leveraging gaming influencers to market their games are likely to use an influencer marketing platform to connect with a creator partner of choice. These platforms are usually tailor-made for influencers and have built-in tools for managing various aspects of their content creation business.

Influencer marketing platforms aid both the brands and the creators, offering services like client discovery, campaign management, and performance measurement. Practical tools these platforms provide help creators maximize their reach and understand audience preferences. Engagement data, options for content optimization, and solutions for streamlined workflow are all top considerations for influencers seeking a home base to connect with potential clients.

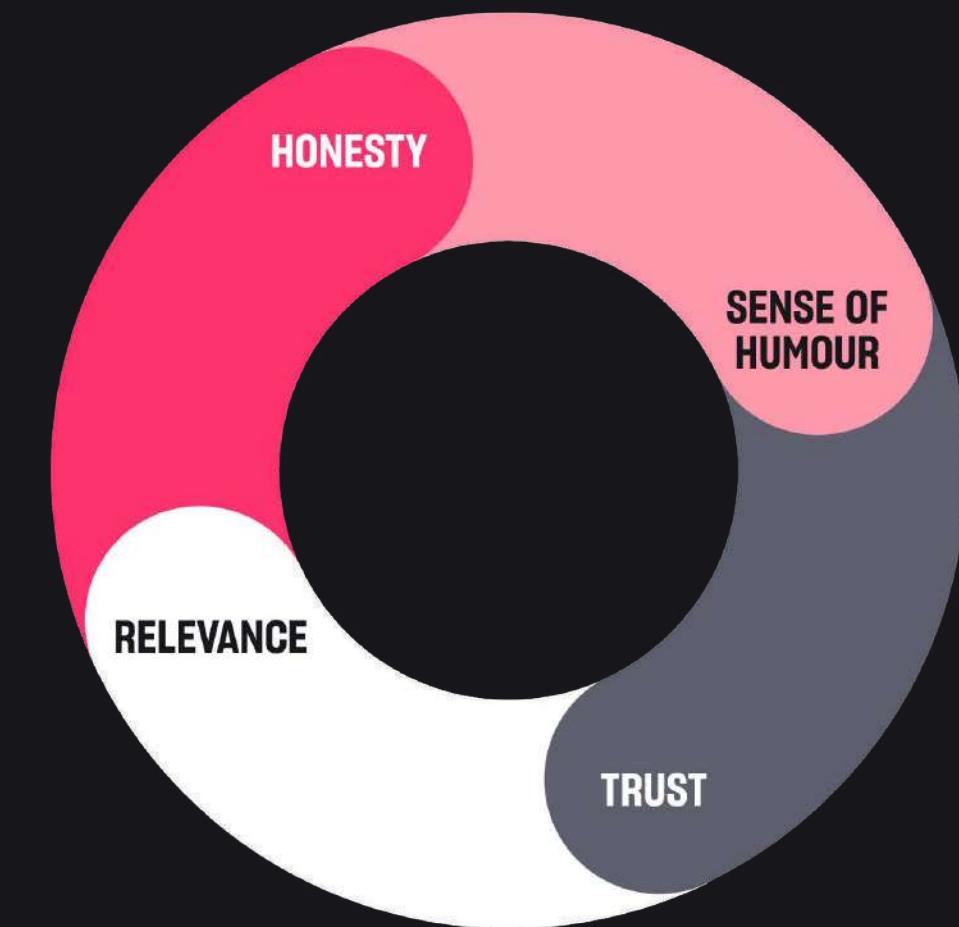
The [Xsolla Partner Network \(XPN\)](#) platform offers considerable benefits to content creators and game developers. Built specifically with gaming content and gaming audiences in mind, XPN is an affiliate marketing engine that brings top gaming influencers and brands together. With built-in tools such as performance analytics and customized landing pages, the XPN platform is a choice destination for content creators and the perfect destination for every game developer's marketing campaign.



Traits to look for in an influencer

Influencer best practices

Source: 80LV



With more and more bright, creative individuals entering the content creation scene, how do you determine the best fit for your game's promotion? Two of the most essential qualities an influencer can demonstrate to resonate effectively with audiences are **honesty** and **relevance**.

Tools like [Rainmaker](#) can be a game changer when searching for the right creator to promote a game. Rainmaker's data stream allows developers to track the viewership and awareness metrics of creators working on their campaigns. Additionally, it's a way to discover influencers who are generating content for competitive or complimentary games, which can open new partnership possibilities with those creators.





WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE INDUSTRY?

53%

more audience
loyalty
in gaming,
compared
to other industries

1

The future of influencer marketing in games is bright

The influencer marketing industry and the popularity of games as entertainment are on the rise. Gaming-specific influencers are already among the most popular content creators on YouTube, and more social media platforms are sure to follow.

2

Investing in tools for influencers is a win-win

Content creation platforms and tools benefit the influencers as well as the brands they promote. Influencers equipped with tools from platforms like Xolla Partner Network drive higher interaction, increase audience loyalty, and boost conversion rates for the brands they represent. This is especially true in the gaming industry, where **influencers have 53% more loyal audiences compared to other industries**.



\$2 500+

per video: avg cost of long-form influencer media

3

Short-form media can be a cost-effective and impactful approach

Although YouTube is still one of the best advertising platforms for its long-form formats and gaming audience, it may be relatively expensive considering the high production costs.

Mega-influencers with 9-digit follower counts, like PewDiePie, have led to increasing prices for sponsored YouTube videos.

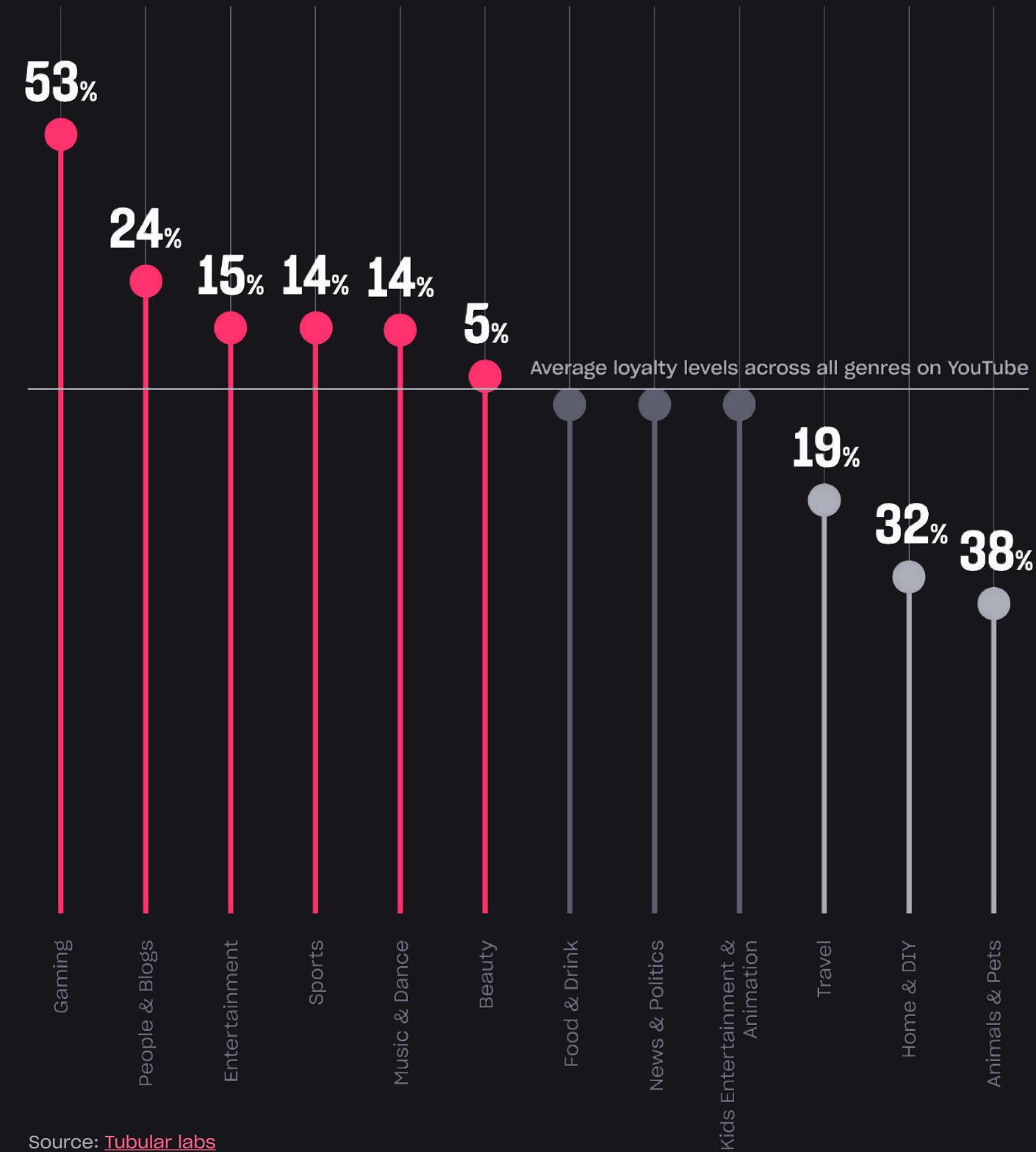
Videos can start at as much as \$2,500 and quickly go up

thousands of dollars depending on the influencer's follower count. This is why influencer endorsement on apps like Tik Tok and Instagram have proven to be an immensely cost-effective form of social media marketing, with the average minimum price per post of macro-influencers with **500,000 to 1 million followers** being **\$150**.

\$150+

per video:
avg cost
of short-form
influencer
media

Sector loyalty based on top influencers compared to average loyalty on YouTube





Guest Column

Can you give us some insight into monetization for influencers?

I've tried various streaming services to boost monetization. For instance, I've been double-streaming on YouTube and TikTok. This approach has potential for the streaming industry since it offers audiences the flexibility to choose their preferred platform.

Monetization programs for influencers vary greatly. My former contract, for example, paid me for a set number of hours streamed. Though while the monetization was good for me, it wasn't profitable for the company. On the other hand, TikTok's model only allows influencers to keep 30% of donations, so it isn't a large sum, but it attracts a lot of viewers. The platform is highly browsed, and streamers can easily gain visibility there.

ALEKS
VASILEV

Youtuber -
[GNRAK](#), [Twitter](#)



Meanwhile, Twitch splits monetization products 50/50 but requires streamers to bring their own audience. And I firmly believe that Twitch could better allocate its advertising budget by sharing it with people who can attract their friends to the platform through a referral program. I'd love to see more creator-based programs that incentivize content creation both on and off the platform. This could help attract new audiences.

YouTube's monetization model is also unique since creators keep 80% of their revenue and pay 20% in taxes. Despite some issues with this model, I appreciate the ads on YouTube for their potential benefits.

I've noticed that people typically don't visit YouTube specifically for live streams. Audiences seem to prefer well-edited content over spending hours on live streams, so perhaps the platform could benefit from some changes in this area.

What makes big influencers financially successful?

I've noticed that many influencers are hesitant to reach out to companies for collaborations or alternative monetization methods. Instead, they often prefer to capitalize on a product itself, offering merchandise, specific foods, video editing services, or other products that appeal to their audience.

But to me, building relationships with my viewers, who spend hours on my live streams almost daily, is a crucial aspect of my work. This dynamic is specific to the streaming industry and enables users and bloggers to learn more about each other on a deeper level.





CONCLUSION

Driven by growth in the indie game sector, the rise of online learning programs tailored to the games industry, evolving gamer behavior, and influencers' impact on game success, changes in the games industry are creating new avenues of opportunity for developers, investors, publishers, and gamers alike.

Indie games accounted for 31% of all Steam revenue last year, highlighting the robust potential for independent developers. The democratization of game development has empowered a new generation of creators, resulting in a diverse array of innovative games.

Educational programs have also emerged as crucial components in nurturing a skilled, diverse, and future-proof workforce for video game development. Online learning platforms have surged in popularity, with an increase in enrollment for game design courses, underscoring the demand for flexible, accessible education that equips aspiring developers with essential skills.

Finally, influencers' ability to engage large, dedicated audiences has proven to be a highly effective promotional strategy for game developers. Influencers drive

higher interaction, increase audience loyalty, and boost conversion rates for the brands they represent, which is especially true in the gaming industry, where influencers have 53% more loyal audiences compared to other industries.

Strategic planning and adaptability are keys to success in the games industry. At Xsolla, we are committed to navigating these trends and supporting our partners in leveraging these opportunities and innovating new ways to propel the gaming industry forward.



ABOUT XSOLLA



Xsolla is a global video game commerce company with a robust and powerful set of tools and services designed specifically for the industry. Since its founding in 2005, Xsolla has helped thousands of game developers and publishers of all sizes fund, market, launch and monetize their games globally and across multiple platforms. As an innovative leader in game commerce, Xsolla's mission is to solve the inherent complexities of global distribution, marketing, and monetization to help our partners reach more geographies, generate more revenue,

and create relationships with gamers worldwide. Headquartered and incorporated in Los Angeles, California, with offices in London, Berlin, Seoul, Beijing, Kuala Lumpur, Raleigh, Tokyo, and cities around the world, Xsolla supports major gaming titles like Valve, Epic Games, Take-Two, KRAFTON, Nexters, NetEase, Playstudios, Playrix, miHoYo, and more.

For additional information and to learn more, please visit: xsolla.com



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