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FEATURE BY ^GDEV

# Examining a Decade of Gaming Startup Exit Paths

^GDEV

**iG** invest  
game



FIRST-TIME GAMING STARTUP EXITS OVER THE LAST DECADE<sup>1</sup>

42

GAMING EXITS MATCHING  
FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

1

\$500M+

VALUATION AT EXIT

(UPFRONT EV for M&A or  
MARKET CAP at INITIAL LISTING)

2

FIRST-TIME EXIT  
DURING 2014 - 2024

## EXIT VIA MERGER OR ACQUISITION

BIG FISH

CMGE  
中手游DIANDIAN  
INTERACTIVE

Easybrain

GSN  
games

KABAM

MOJANG  
STUDIOS

MOONTON

MY.GAMES

NATURALMOTION

OUTFIT7

peak  
GAMES

PLARIUM

SCOPELY

SMALL  
GIANT

SpinX Games

STARLARK

SuperPlay

TECHLAND®

Tonic

UNKNOWN  
WORLDS

## EXIT BY GOING PUBLIC

APPROVIN

ARCHOSAUR  
GAMES

azerion

DEVOLVER  
DIGITALDOUBLEU  
GAMESG-bits  
吉比特

GDEV

HUUUGE

kakaogames

king

KRAFTON

nacon

PEARLABYSS

ROBLOX

ROVIO

unity

XD

sea  
connecting the world

SHIFT UP

skillz

Build

## ILLUSTRATIVE: COMPANIES EXCLUDED FROM OUR ANALYSIS

ACTIVISION  
BLIZZARD

BUNGIE

CD PROJECT RED

CODERMASTERS

CORSAIR

DON'T  
NODDOUBLE  
DOWN  
INTERACTIVEEast Side  
GAMES  
GROUP

glu

JAGEX

netmarble

paradox  
INTERACTIVE

Playdemic

PLAY MAGNUS  
GROUP OF COMPANIES

Playtika

REMEDY

SUP  
ERC  
ELL

team17

UBISOFT


ZeniMax  
MEDIA INC.

Note: (1) A company was excluded if the company was acquired or went public before 2014 (e.g., Supercell - first sale in 2013). If the company had multiple deals in 2014 - 2024 - only the first deal was included as an exit (e.g., King - IPO in 2014 included, but M&A in 2016 was excluded).











Source: InvestGame

### 3 FEATURE BY GDEV

#### SELECT LARGEST M&A EXITS BY UPFRONT EV

DATE	TARGET	EV <sup>1</sup>	PLATFORM <sup>2</sup>	LAST ROUND	RAISED <sup>3</sup>	BACKING <sup>4</sup>	INVESTORS <sup>6</sup>
Apr'23	 <b>SCOPELY</b>	\$4.9B	MOBILE	SERIES E (2020)	\$1,920m	VC-backed	Greycroft  Anthem Venture Partners
Mar'21	 <b>MOONTON</b>	\$4.0B	MOBILE	SEED (2014)	N.A.	VC-backed	 挑战者资本 CHALLENGERS CAPITAL
Sep'14	 <b>MOJANG</b> STUDIOS	\$2.5B	PC & CONSOLE	N.A.	N.A.	Bootstrapped	N.A.
Aug'21	 <b>SpinX Games</b>	\$2.2B	MOBILE	N.A.	N.A.	Bootstrapped	N.A.
Jul'20	 <b>peak</b> GAMES	\$2.1B	MOBILE	SERIES C (2013)	\$19m	VC-backed	Hummingbird  EARLYBIRD

#### SELECT LARGEST PUBLIC LISTINGS BY INITIAL MARKET CAP

DATE	TARGET	MKT CAP <sup>5</sup>	PLATFORM <sup>2</sup>	LAST ROUND	RAISED <sup>3</sup>	BACKING <sup>4</sup>	INVESTORS <sup>6</sup>
Mar'21	 <b>ROBLOX</b>	\$38.3B	MOBILE	SERIES H (2021)	\$856m	VC-backed	andreessen. horowitz  TIGERGLOBAL
Apr'21	 <b>APPLOVIN</b>	\$28.6B	MOBILE	PE GROWTH (2018)	\$542m	VC-backed	KKR  东方弘泰 Oriental Horizon Capital
Aug'21	 <b>KRAFTON</b>	\$19.3B	MOBILE	LATE-STAGE (2020)	\$656m	VC-backed	Tencent 腾讯  KNI
Sep'20	 <b>unity</b>	\$13.7B	MOBILE	SERIES E (2019)	\$899m	VC-backed	SILVER LAKE  SEQUOIA 红杉
Mar'14	 <b>king</b>	\$7.1B	MOBILE	Series A (2005)	\$46m	VC-backed	Apax PARTNERS  Index Ventures

Note: (1) Upfront EV; (2) By the time of exit; (3) Total amount raised raised before exit excluding debt financing; (4)

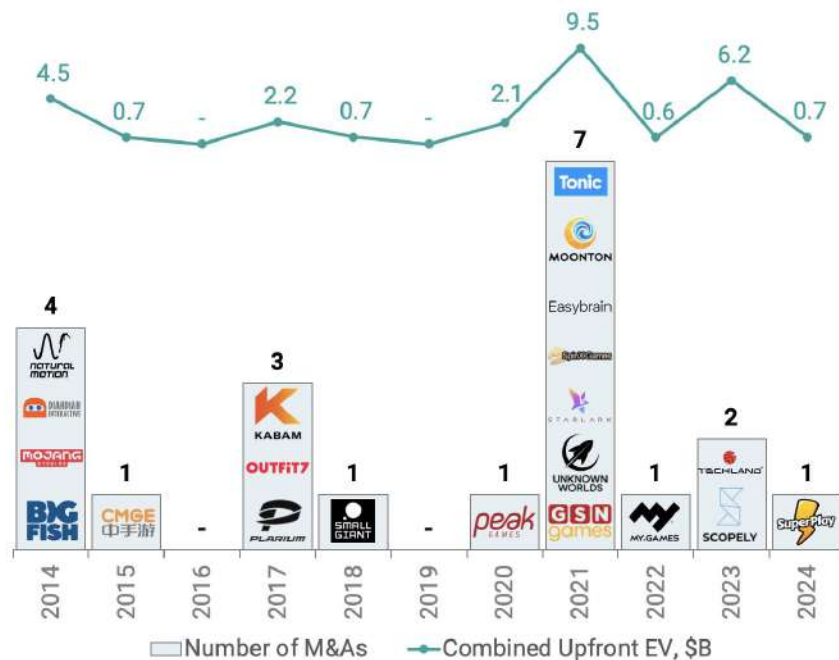
Including PE-backed companies; (5) Market Cap at IPO; (6) Lead investors in all rounds of financing

Source: InvestGame; PitchBook

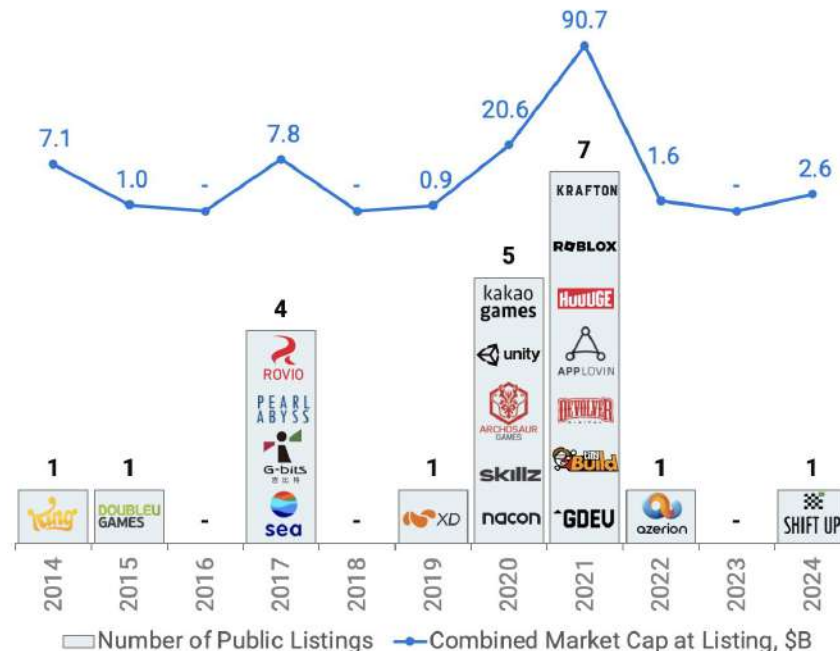
#### 4 FEATURE BY GDEV

There were 42 gaming exits over the last decade with ~45% of exits happening in COVID years (2020-2021).

EXITS VIA M&A WITH UPFRONT EV ≥\$500m



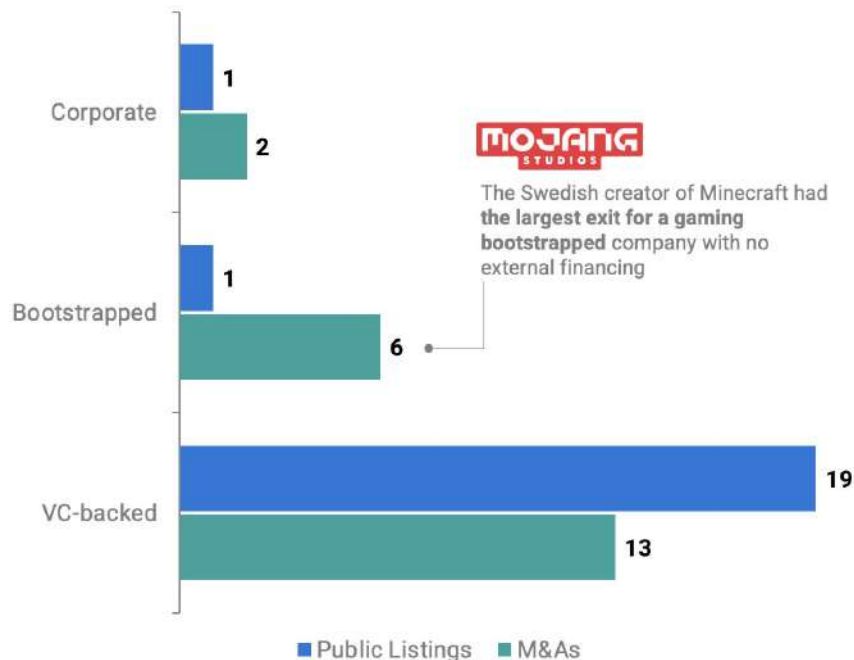
EXITS VIA PUBLIC LISTING WITH INITIAL MARKET CAP ≥\$500m



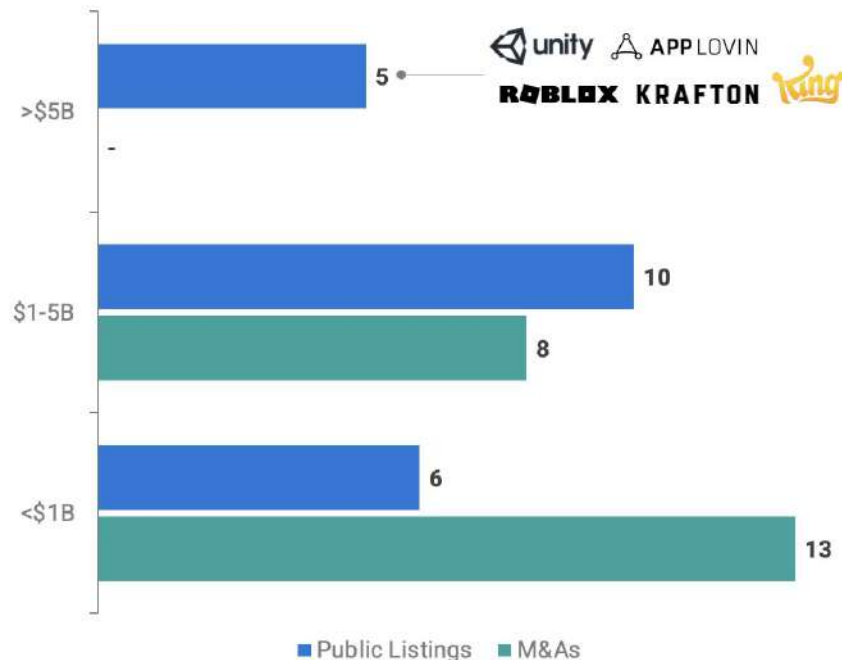
## 5 FEATURE BY GDEV

M&As are more common for exits below \$1B, while public offerings are naturally associated with higher valuations. Only companies that went public achieved valuations of \$5B or more. However, VCs tend to prefer public offerings, whereas bootstrapped businesses are more inclined toward M&As.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMPANIES BY THE BACKING STATUS<sup>1</sup>



DISTRIBUTION OF EXITS BY SIZE<sup>2</sup>



Note: (1) Corporate - sponsored by corporate investors, Bootstrapped - no external financing prior to exit, VC-backed - also includes PE-backed companies; (2) For IPOs, Market Cap at IPO pricing is used; for M&A deals, Upfront EV is used.

Source: InvestGame

## 6 FEATURE BY GDEV

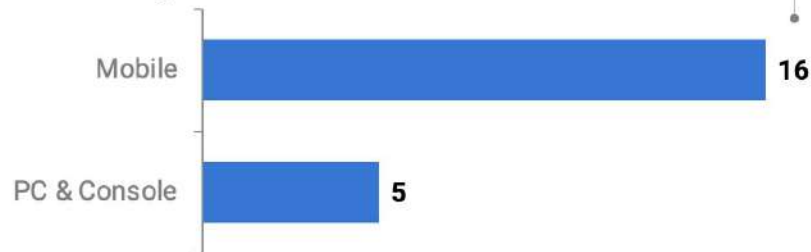
In the analyzed period, 75% exits were gaming companies focused on Mobile, regardless of the deal type (M&A or IPO) given that Mobile companies take ~40% less time to reach an exit compared to PC & Console companies.

### DISTRIBUTION OF EXITS BY PLATFORM<sup>1</sup>

#### M&As

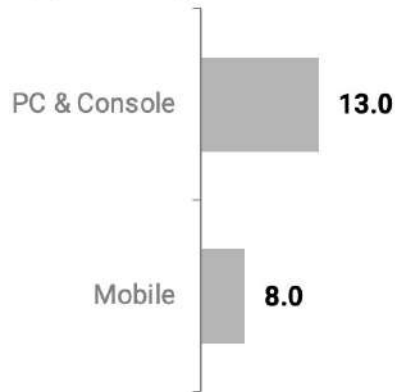


#### Public Listings

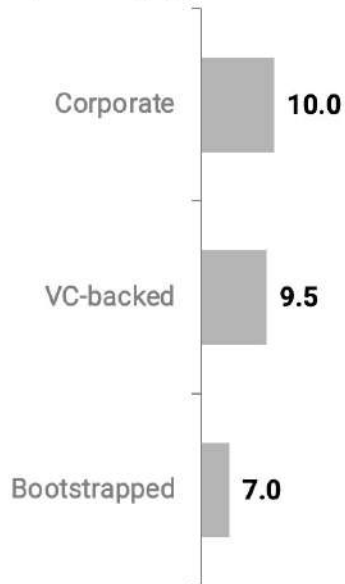


### YEARS TO EXIT SINCE THE YEAR FOUNDED

#### By platform type



#### By backing type



Note: (1) Refers to the primary platform in the company's revenue structure at the time of exit.

Source: InvestGame

## 7 FEATURE BY GDEV

Over half of the analyzed gaming companies achieved an exit within 10 years of founding. M&As are more skewed toward quicker exits (median for M&As ~8 years), whereas going public takes more time (median for public offerings ~9 years).

### DISTRIBUTION OF EXITS BY YEARS SINCE FOUNDING



Source: InvestGame; Pitchbook "Exit Alternatives for US VC" August 2024