



80LV

BEHIND THE SCREENS: THE SALARY STATS IN GAMEDEV

Art by Michael Kroz

Prepared by 80 Level © 2024. All Rights Reserved.

January 2024

METHODOLOGY AND SURVEY SCOPE

In an industry as dynamic and rapidly evolving as ours, understanding compensation trends is crucial, not only for professionals navigating their career paths, but also for companies striving to attract and retain top talents. Our study aimed to explain the patterns and factors influencing salaries in game development.

80 Level Research surveyed a pool of over 1000 respondents, all actively engaged in various facets of game development. 80 Level readers and industry representatives from 80 Level Research panel were respondents of this survey. These professionals shared insights, salary brackets along their job titles, and factors influencing their compensation such as years of experience in the industry, level of proficiency, and geographical location.

[All data are represented in US Dollars unless stated otherwise]

THE FOLLOWING TOPICS WILL BE COVERED IN THIS REPORT

METHODOLOGY AND SURVEY SCOPE

2

MAPPING THE MONEY: THE ROLE OF GEOGRAPHY

5

LEVELLING UP: THE IMPACT OF EXPERIENCE

9

C-LEVEL SPOTLIGHT, A CURIOUS MIX OF PROSPERITY AND CHALLENGE

10

THE PAY SPECTRUM: SALARY HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS JOB CATEGORIES

11

The salary data for game developers is distributed across a wide range, with clusters in the lower, middle, and higher salary brackets.

In the **lower bracket**, almost 40% of game developers earn less than \$40,000 annually:

- 11.4% earning between \$0-\$9,999,
- 8.3% earning \$10,000-\$19,999,
- 8.9% earning \$20,000-\$29,999
- 11% earning \$30,000-\$39,999.

In the **mid-range bracket**, approximately 1/3 part of developers (34%) earn between \$40,000 and \$79,999:

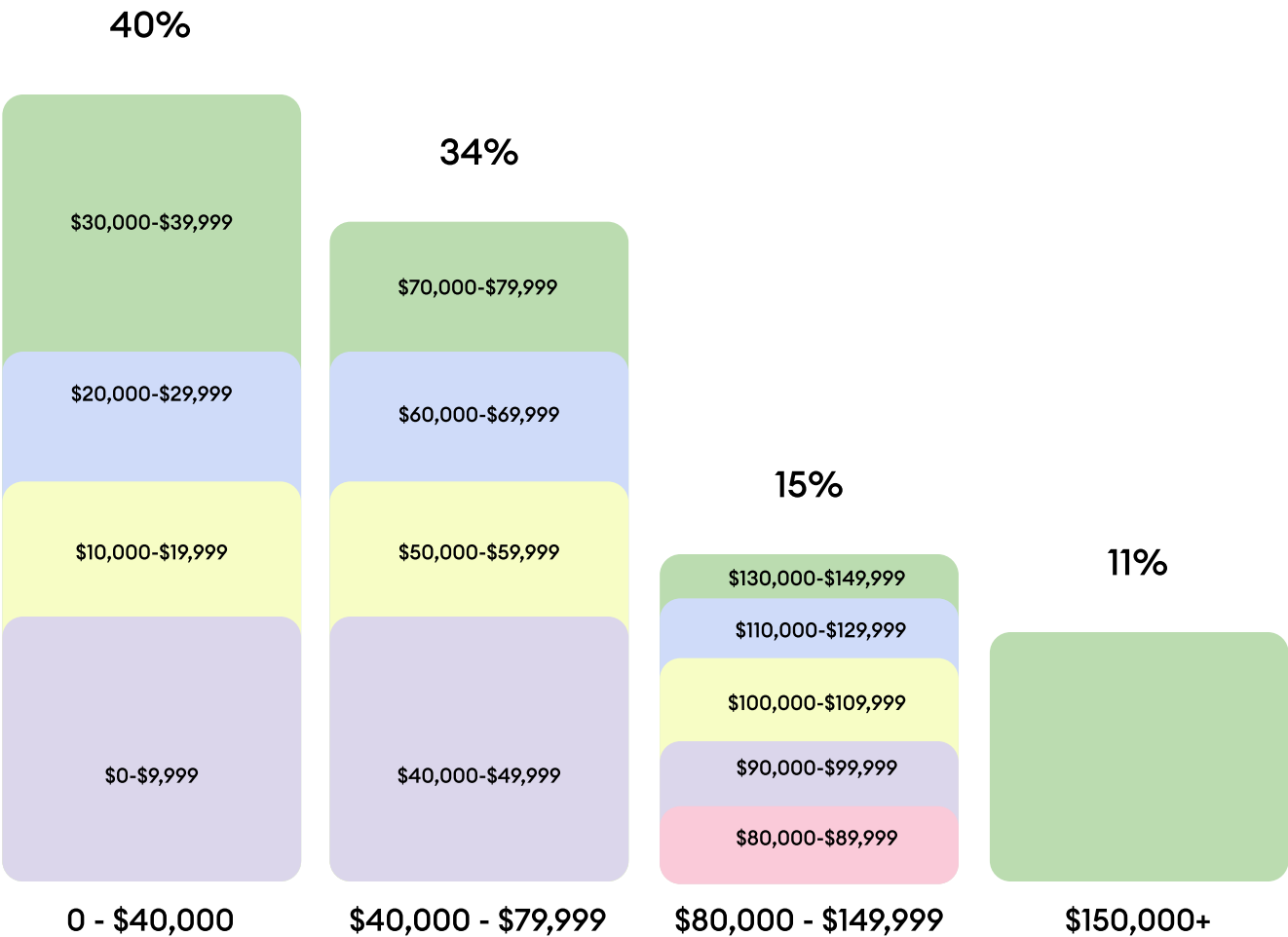
- 10.4% earn between \$40,000-\$49,999,
- 8% earn between \$50,000-\$59,999,
- 5.4% earn between \$60,000-\$69,999,
- 6.2% earn \$70,000-\$79,999.

Roughly 15% of respondents earn between \$80,000 and \$149,999.

And in the higher range, 11% of developers earn over \$150,000 annually.

This distribution gives us valuable insights into the average salary for game developers, although it's important to remember that these figures are influenced by several factors such as years of experience, proficiency level, location, and specific roles within game development.

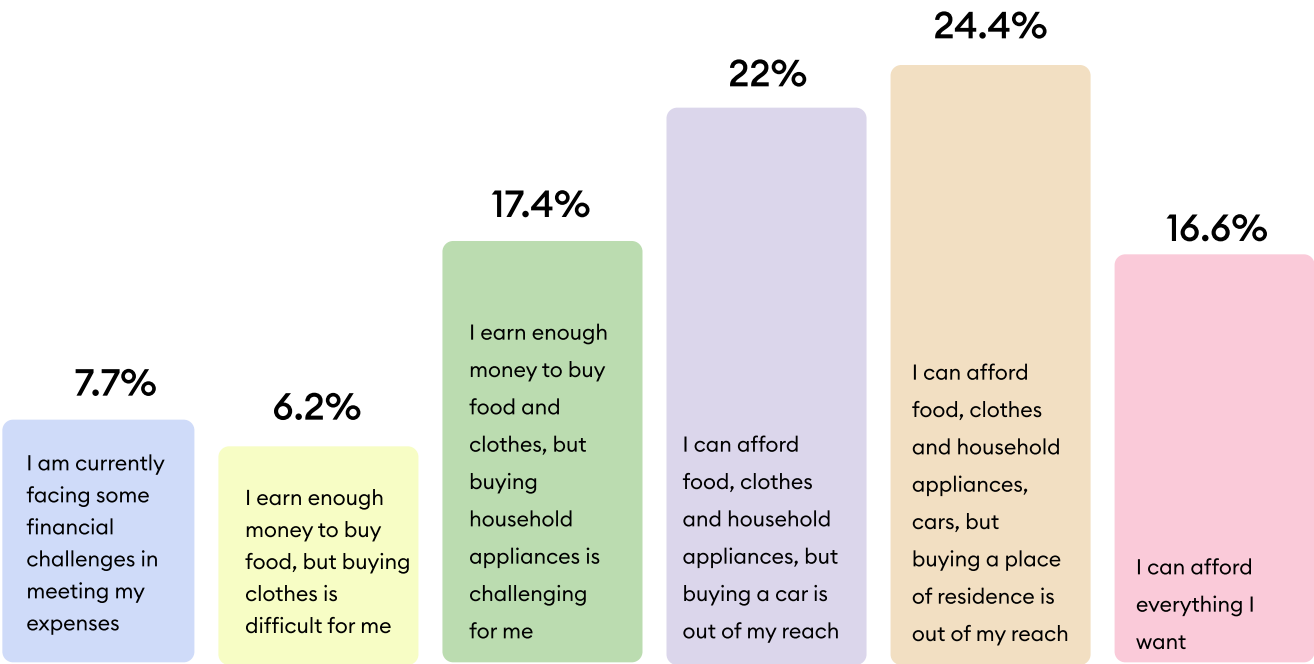
ANNUAL INCOME GROUPS OF GAMEDEV PROFESSIONALS



The income data for game developers paints a multifaceted picture of their financial situations. Salary size cannot be examined in isolation from the socio-economic factors that illustrate the economic diversity within the industry.

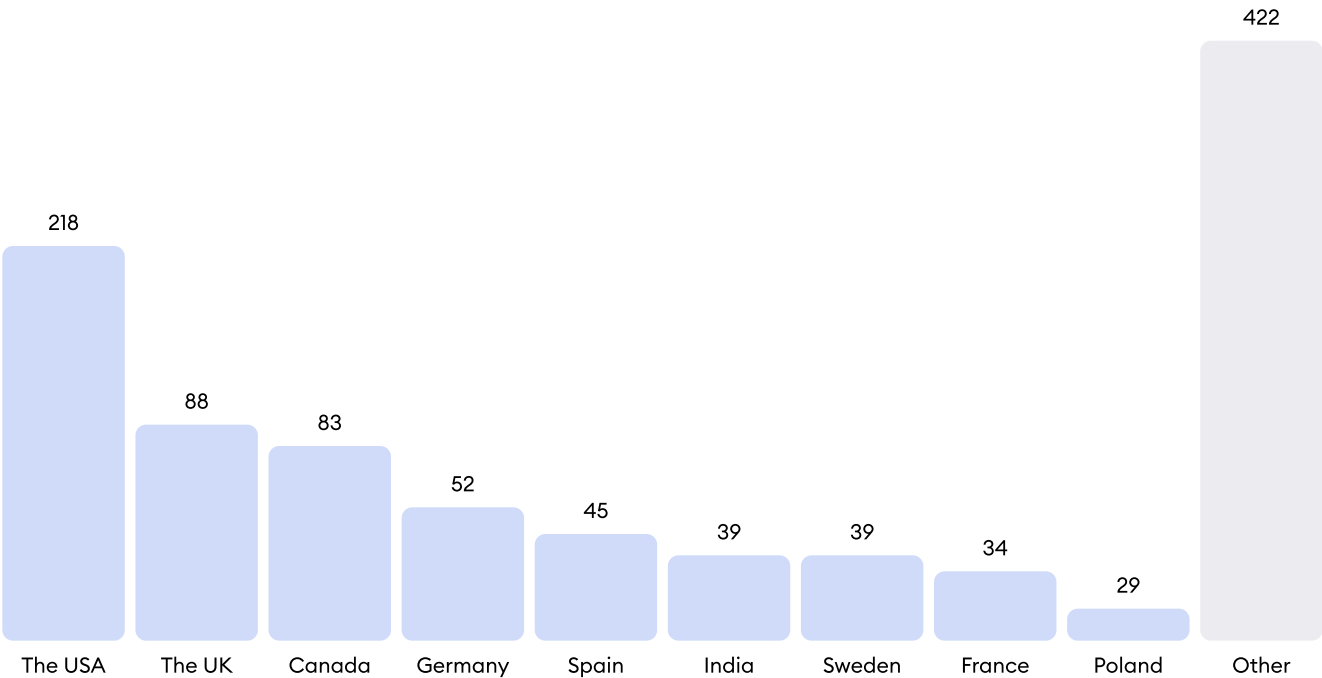
- A small group of respondents (5.8%) finds it difficult to define their financial status, indicating that their financial situation might be complex, unstable, or fluctuating.
- 7.7% of developers are facing financial challenges in meeting their basic expenses, suggesting they might be in the early stages of their careers or living in high-cost areas.
- The next tier (6.2%) can cover food expenses but struggle to afford clothing,
- Further up, there’s a bigger group of 17.4% developers who can cover expenses for food and clothes but find it challenging to afford household appliances. **The larger portion of developers falls within the middle-income group. 22% can afford food, clothes, and household appliances, but cannot stretch to buying a car.**
- **Another substantial group (24.4%) can afford all of the above, including a car, but struggles to buy a place of residence.** This could be indicative of senior professionals or those in high-demand specializations.
- Finally, **16.6% can afford everything they want, suggesting they are likely well-established professionals, possibly at senior or executive levels or successful freelancers, who've attained financial stability and comfort in their careers.**

ANNUAL INCOME GROUPS GAME DEV PROFESSIONALS
(EXPENSES)



MAPPING THE MONEY: THE ROLE OF GEOGRAPHY

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS



In the USA, 36% of surveyed game development professionals earn over \$150,000. Our data is backed by other external sources (Source: [Pingle Studio research on salaries in 2023](#)). The US is a hotspot for game programming, which means game developers in the US usually earn a good salary, setting the standard for other countries. On average, someone starting in the field can expect to make about \$79,799 a year. The average salary for a Game Developer is \$101,392 per year in the United States. Salaries estimates are based on 721 salaries submitted anonymously to [Glassdoor](#).

In contrast, the majority of our respondents from the UK earn between \$40,000-\$59,999. 36% of game development professionals from the USA have a salary of \$150,000+ . Based on [generalized data from Glassdoor](#), the average salary for a Game Developer is \$50,256 USD per year in the United Kingdom.

In Canada no surveyed game development professionals earn less than \$40,000, with 19% earning over \$150,000 and 40% earning between \$100,000-\$150,000. The average salary for a Game Developer is \$50.785 per year in Canada (source: [Glassdoor](#)).

The majority of surveyed game developers from Germany receive a salary between \$30,000 and \$79,999. According to [Glassdoor](#), the average salary for a Game Developer is \$56,000 per year in Germany. These numbers represent the median, which is the midpoint of the ranges.

In the USA, 36% of surveyed game development professionals earn over \$150,000. Our data is backed by other external sources (Source: [Pingle Studio research on salaries in 2023](#)). The US is a hotspot for game programming, which means game developers in the US usually earn a good salary, setting the standard for other countries. On average, someone starting in the field can expect to make about \$79,799 a year. The average salary for a Game Developer is \$101,392 per year in the United States. Salaries estimates are based on 721 salaries submitted anonymously to [Glassdoor](#).

In contrast, the majority of our respondents from the UK earn between \$40,000-\$59,999. 36% of game development professionals from the USA have a salary of \$150.000+ . Based on [generalized data from Glassdoor](#), the average salary for a Game Developer is \$50,256 USD per year in the United Kingdom.

In Canada no surveyed game development professionals earn less than \$40,000, with 19% earning over \$150,000 and 40% earning between \$100,000-\$150,000. The average salary for a Game Developer is \$50.785 per year in Canada (source: [Glassdoor](#)).

The majority of surveyed game developers from Germany receive a salary between \$30,000 and \$79,999. According to [Glassdoor](#), the average salary for a Game Developer is \$56,000 per year in Germany. These numbers represent the median, which is the midpoint of the ranges.



the USA

36% of game development professionals from the USA have a salary of \$150.000+



the UK

The majority of game development professionals from the UK have a salary between \$40.000–\$59.999



Canada

- None of gamedev professionals from Canada receive the salary less than \$40.000
- 40% have a salary in a higher bracket of \$100.000–\$150.000
- 19% have a salary of \$150.000+



Germany

The majority of game developers from Germany receive the salary between \$30.000 and \$79.999

*based on the 80 level salary survey 2024

In Spain, 38% of respondents earn between \$20,000-\$29,999 and 22% earn between \$40,000-\$49,999. The estimated total pay for a Game Developer is \$36,000 per year in the Spain area. (Source: [Glassdoor](#))

More than half (54%) of surveyed Indian game developers earn under \$9,999, and 15% earn between \$10,000-\$19,999. In the US dollars, the average yearly salary for a Game Developer in India is approximately \$9,328. (Source: [Glassdoor](#))

In Sweden, 28% of our respondents earn between \$50,000-\$59,999, with the majority of salaries falling between \$30,000 and \$79,999. According to [Statista](#), in recent years, the monthly pay for game and digital media developers in Sweden has generally gone up. From 2021 to 2022, men in this field saw a big raise, making an average of about \$5,300 a month. However, women in the same jobs made less, around \$4,600 a month.

French game developers , for the most part, earn between \$20,000-\$49,999. Based on generalized [Glassdoor data](#), the average salary in the France area is \$44,000 per year.

While in Poland, nearly one-third of the professionals find themselves in the \$30,000-\$39,999 salary bracket. In the Poland area, the estimated average salary in gamedev is \$2,258 per month. (Source: [Glassdoor](#))



Spain

- 38% of game dev specialists from Spain have a salary of \$20.000–\$29.999
- 22% – \$40.000–\$49.999



India

- 54% have the salary under \$9.999
- 15% of game dev professionals from India earn \$10.000–\$19.999



Sweden

- The biggest chunk of respondents have a salary of \$50.000–\$59.999 (28%)
- The majority in the country earn \$30.000–\$79.999



France

Overall, the majority in the country have a salary between \$20.000 and \$49.999



Poland

⅓ (31%) of game development professionals in Poland have a salary of \$30.000-\$39.999

*based on the 80 level salary survey 2024

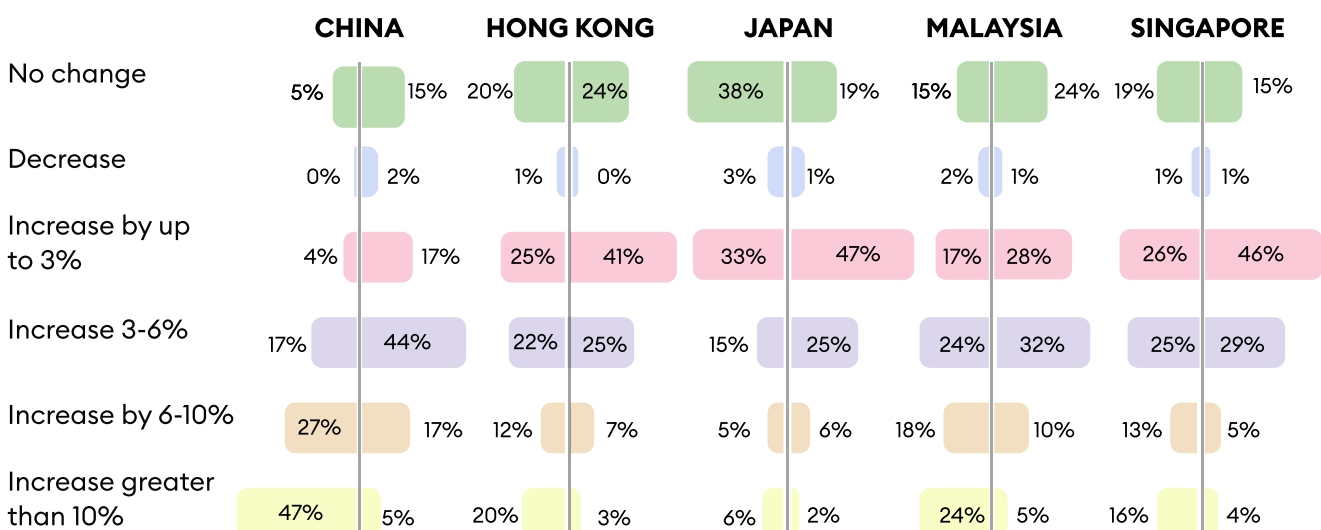
Based on the fact that in this survey, Asian countries representatives didn't make statistically significant numbers, we relied on the external sources of other research agencies. Based on the research conducted by HAYS, almost half (44%) of employers from China expect an increase in their salaries above 3% and less or equal to 6% in 2023, whereas 47% of employees expect an increase of greater than 10%. Based on the data from [Salary Explorer](#), A Game Developer in China typically earns around \$3,972 per month. Salaries range from approximately \$1,942 (at the lower end) to \$6,185 (at the higher end).

In Hong Kong, 41% of employers expect a salary increase of up to 3%, and 25% of employees have the same expectations. Another 1/3 of employees there expect a salary increase of greater than 10% in 2023. An entry-level game developer with 1-3 years of experience earns an average salary of approximately \$60,053 in US dollars. On the other hand, a senior-level game developer with 8+ years of experience earns an average salary of around \$103,592. ([Source](#))

38% of employees from Japan don't expect any changes in their pay in 2023, as well as 19% of their employers. However, almost an equal amount of employees (33%) are expecting a salary increase by up to 3%, as well as 41% of employers. In Japan, 1/3 of employees have rather an unoptimistic view on their salaries in 2023, with 38% of workers expecting no increase. According to [Glassdoor](#), in Japan, the estimated total annual pay for a Game Developer is approximately \$71,282, with an average salary of about \$48,018 per year.

In Malaysia, 24% of employers also don't possess a generous disposition to increase salaries in 2023. However, a greater portion of 32% employers see the salary increase to be from 3 to 6%. An equal amount of questioned employees from Malaysia expect a salary increase of 3-6% and another same portion expect an increase of greater than 10%. According to [Glassdoor](#), in the Malaysia area, the estimated total monthly pay for a Game Programmer is approximately \$1,942, with an average salary of around \$971 per month.

SALARY EXPECTATIONS (EMPLOYEE & EMPLOYER) 2023



Source: HAYS Research

LEVELING UP: THE IMPACT OF EXPERIENCE

- 1. 74% of interns and fresh graduates, typically fall within the earning bracket of under \$9,999 per year. Junior professionals, having dipped their toes deeper into the industry pool, echo a similar trend with 27% in the same salary range.
- 2. Mid-level professionals see their salaries increasing, commonly falling within the \$10,000 - \$49,999 range.
- 3. Among senior professionals, and the seasoned representatives of the industry, 19% boast salaries exceeding \$150,000. Although, it's noteworthy that a good proportion (60%) still nestles within the \$30,000 to \$89,999 range.
- 4. In the level of Lead and Director level professionals, the earnings landscape becomes as broad as their responsibilities. Salaries can commence from a sturdy \$40,000 and rocket beyond \$100,000. These figures are influenced by professional dynamics such as years in the industry, geography, and the size of the company.

LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE & SALARIES

Intern & Junior

74% of interns have salaries under \$9,999

27% of juniors professionals have salaries under \$9,999

Middle level

Middle level specialists salaries vary from \$10,000 to \$49,999

Senior level

In the majority of represented cases, senior level specialists have a salary in the range of \$30,000 to \$89,999

19% of senior level professionals have a salary higher than \$150,000

Lead/Director

Lead and director level salaries can start all the way from \$40,000 and go higher than \$100,000

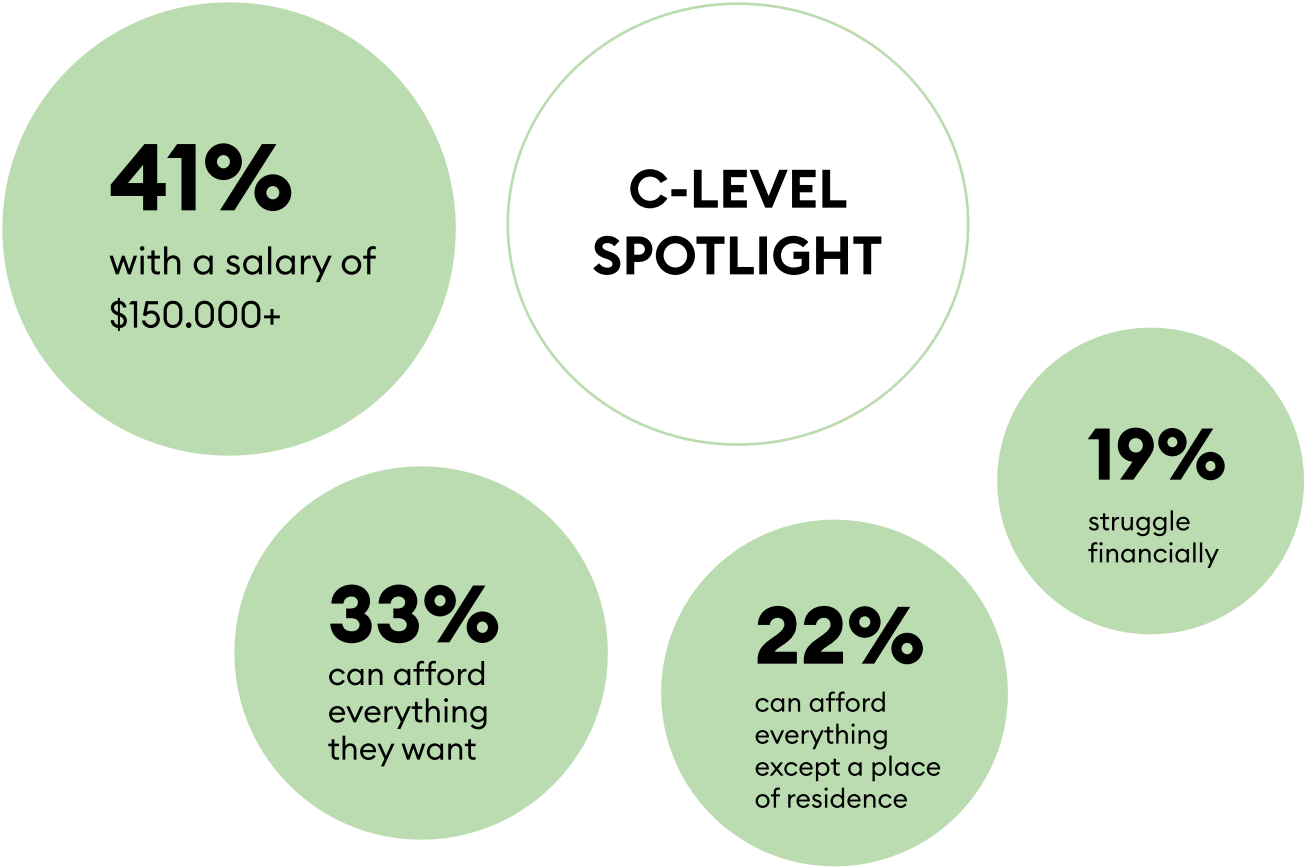
24% of Lead/Director level professionals have a salary higher than \$150,000

C-LEVEL SPOTLIGHT, A CURIOUS MIX OF PROSPERITY AND CHALLENGE

A substantial 41% of these decision-makers have salaries above the \$150,000 mark. It’s interesting that in 80 Level survey this category of respondents is represented by a diverse landscape: the USA, Canada, Denmark, India, Germany, Sweden, Slovenia, and Poland.

Financial comfort varies among these top-tier professionals. A fortunate 33% have the means to afford everything they want, while 22% have the resources to afford everything, save for a place of residence. The C-Level professionals who can afford everything represented the following countries: Serbia, Canada, Denmark, India, the USA, Germany, Sweden.

However, prosperity isn't universal at this level. A surprising 19% struggle with financial challenges. This could be linked to the fact that not all C-level professionals are on the top of large corporations. Some are representatives of indie/1-person studios, where financial strains are often part of the growth journey.



THE PAY SPECTRUM: SALARY HIGHLIGHTS ACROSS JOB CATEGORIES

The salaries for Animators and Artists vary significantly within their professional group. Factors beyond the job category play a crucial role in shaping these figures. Among the respondents in these roles, we observed an even distribution across various salary brackets, ranging from under \$9,999 to over \$79,999.

On another note, when assessing the affordability factor, we found that a quarter of the respondents on “Artist” position fell into each of these three categories:

- "I can afford food, clothes, and household appliances, but buying a car is out of my reach." (25%)
- "I can afford food, clothes, household appliances, and a car, but buying a place of residence is out of my reach." (25%)
- "I earn enough money to buy food and clothes, but purchasing household appliances poses a challenge for me." (25%)

These findings highlight the diverse financial situations within the artist community in the gaming industry.

ANIMATORS & ARTISTS

- Salaries vary and depend on the factors other than the job category, starting all the way from \$9.999 all the way to \$79.999+.
- $\frac{1}{4}$ can afford food, clothes and household appliances, but buying a car is out of the reach.
- $\frac{1}{4}$ can afford everything besides a place of residence.
- Another $\frac{1}{4}$ earn enough money to buy food and clothes, but buying household appliances is challenging for them.

Creative Directors are usually in a higher segment of salaries with 38% of them having salaries higher than \$150.000 (13 answers). Furthermore, nearly half (46%) of the surveyed Creative Directors reported that they can comfortably afford everything they desire.

CREATIVE DIRECTORS

- are in a higher segment of salaries with **38%** of them having salary higher than \$150.000.
- **46%** of creative directors can afford everything they want.

An equal proportion of developers in gaming earn salaries in the following brackets: \$10,000-\$19,999, \$20,000-\$29,999, \$30,000-\$39,999, \$40,000-\$49,999, and \$50,000-\$59,999.

- Typically, the starting salary for a developer falls between \$10,000 and \$19,999. 17% earn over \$150,000.
- When assessing the quality of life, **game developers appear to be slightly better off compared to artists.** About 26% of developers can afford everything they desire. Moreover, a quarter (24%) can afford everything except a place of residence, and another 24% can afford everything but a car or a place of residence.

SOFTWARE
DEVELOPERS

- **17%** have a salary higher than \$150,000.
- On average, the starting salary for a software developer is between \$10,000 to \$19,999.
- Equal amount of software developers in gaming have a salaries in each of this groups: between \$10,000 to \$19,999, \$20,000 to \$29,999, \$30,000 to \$39,999, \$40,000 to \$49,999, \$50,000 to \$59,999.
- **26%** can afford everything they want.
- **24%** can afford everything besides a place of residence.
- **24%** can afford everything besides cars or place of residence.

When examining salary brackets, 20% of game designers reported earning less than \$9,999 . This is an interesting contrast to other job categories we examined. For instance, a lesser proportion of developers are in this lower salary bracket.

Yet, despite lower salary, game designers report having being able to afford various items. A quarter of game designers can afford essentials like food, clothes, and household appliances, but find purchasing a car outside their financial reach. Similarly, another 25% can afford all of the above, including a car, but find the prospect of buying a residence unattainable.

The ability of game designers to afford various items suggests that factors such as geographic location and level of experience may play a more significant role in their financial well-being.

GAME
DESIGNERS

- **20%** of game designers have a salary lower than \$9,999.
- **¼** of game designers feel like they can afford food, clothes and household appliances, but buying a car is out of their reach.
- **¼** of them can afford food, clothes and household appliances, cars, but buying a place of residence is out of their options.

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.



80 Level Research

Check out our website to learn more

80 Level Research Team



Viktoria Steshina

Research Team Lead
V.STESHINA@80.LV



Irina Ignatova

Senior Research Analyst
I.IGNATOVA@80.LV



Anna Gulyaeva

Marketing Manager
A.GULYAEVA@80.LV



Averyan Anchugin

Research Specialist
A.ANCHUGIN@80.LV



Anna Librekht

Marketing Research Specialist
A.LIBREKHT@80.LV

Do You Want More?

You can read latest reports by 80 Level Research for free:

1. [Adopting New Solutions: Cloud Gaming & More. Gamers POV](#)
2. [Revenue Challenges: Privacy & Platform Changes for Mobile Game Developers](#)
3. [Navigating Character Creation in Metaverse](#)