

# From Souls to Sims: Shifts in Video Game Players' Preferences From 2013-2025

## Process Book

By

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# Team Members

## Team Name: **Sting Ops**

**Team Leader:** Davis Haden

### **Team Members:**

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# Team Contract

[Link to Contract](#)

# Project Proposal

**Title: From Souls to Sims: Shifts in Video Game Players' Preferences From 2013–2025**

**Abstract:** Over the past few decades, video games have undergone dramatic changes due to a large mass of technological advancements, but also due to the changes in gamer sentiments and culture. The genres that dominate the video game market are therefore easily swayed by these same factors as various desires such as comfort, nostalgia, stress, community rise and fall. Affordances such as ability to play online, streaming platforms, and ease of access to indie development also influence the way genres grow not only in popularity but also in quantity. This project will show how different genres grow and shrink over time as a result of these factors and will map how these changes may be linked to other cultural influences. Publicly available datasets listed below will allow us to have access to a wide range of data about release volume, engagement, and sentiment of genres, such as Battle Royale, Souls-like, Cozy, Roguelikes, Sandbox, etc. Through grouping similar genres we can show how cultural moods cause changes. For example, players craving a challenge during one time period, comfort in another, highly social or competitive interactions, or the desire for nostalgia through remakes. This data is applicable towards many kinds of visualizations, such as bar graphs, scatter plots, map graphs,

sankey graphs, time windows, etc. Interactive visualizations can be used to show connections between genres and allow the user to narrow down their focus and desired focus for connections. Finally, the project will show how genre dynamics are more than just changes in the market, and will open a window into how tech, culture, and psychology change with each other.

Data Sources: **Steam API, SteamDB, RAWG.io, IGDB, Kaggle, Google Trends, HowLongToBeat**

## Mapping

### Audience Options

Our audience may range from a set of

- a. Casual gamers who want to explore the trends behind their favorite games.
- b. Game Developers who want to find more about the connections between the player psychology and culture along with market trends to create interesting games.
- c. Gaming streamers where looking into new and popular games may contribute to their audience.

### Chosen Target Audience: Casual Gamers

- Knowledge: They know the big titles but not the long-term genre trends.
- Interests: Why did certain genres explode and others fade?
- Visualization Literacy: Comfortable with line charts, bar charts, annotated timelines, but need clean explanations, not technical dashboards.
- Level of Detail: High-level insights with clean visuals, short captions, and cultural overlays.

### Questions

1. Which genres were the most popular in 2013 compared to 2023?
2. Why did Battle Royale blow up so suddenly around 2017?
3. Why did it start to fade after 2021?
4. Did COVID change what kinds of games people were playing?

5. How much did Twitch and streaming help certain genres take off?
6. How have playtimes changed across genres over the past decade?
7. Which genres were most popular in specific regions?
8. Do prices or discounts correlate with the rise (or/and fall) of certain genres?
9. How do Metacritic scores compare with player engagement across genres?
10. Do completionist playtime lengths affect genre popularity?
11. What were the biggest spikes in Google Trends searches for each genre, and what cultural events align?
12. How did multiplayer vs single-player genres rise or fall over time?
13. Which genres benefitted most from the rise of indie development?
14. How do ESRB ratings (E, T, M) line up with the popularity of genres over time?
15. Which genres showed the fastest rise-and-fall cycles, and how do their lifespans compare?

## Data

- **SteamDB / API**
  - Attributes & Data Types:
    - AppId (Number, Categorical, Identifier) Unique numeric ID for the game or application
    - name (String, Categorical) Game's name
    - type of game (String, Categorical) Store entry type such as "game", "dlc" or "demo"
    - **age (Number, Quantitative, Discrete) Minimum age required to purchase**
    - is free (Boolean, Categorical, Binary) Indicates whether the game is free
    - devs and publishers (String/Array, Categorical) Developers and publishers associated with the game
    - description of game (Text, Categorical) Game description text
    - price (Number, Quantitative, Decimal) Current price of the game
    - **metacritic (Number, Quantitative, Score) Metacritic rating (0–100)**
    - **genres (Array of Strings, Categorical) List of game genres**
    - **release date (Date, Ordinal, Temporal) Release date of the game**
- **SteamSpy**

- Attributes & Data Types:
  - appid (Number, Categorical, Identifier) Steam application ID
  - name (String, Categorical) Name of the game
  - developer, publisher (String/Array, Categorical) Lists of developers and publishers
  - **score\_rank (Number, Ordinal)** Rank of the game based on user reviews
  - owners (Range, Quantitative) Estimated number of owners as a range (e.g., "2,000,000..5,000,000")
  - **average\_forever, average\_2weeks (Number, Quantitative, Minutes)** Average play time since 2009 and over the last two weeks
  - median\_forever, median\_2weeks (Number, Quantitative, Minutes) Median play time (minutes)
  - **ccu (Number, Quantitative)** Peak concurrent users (yesterday)
    1. price, initialprice (Number, Quantitative, Cents) Current and original price in cents
    2. discount (Number, Quantitative, Percentage) Discount percentage
    3. tags (Array/JSON, Categorical) Tags with vote counts
    4. languages (Array of Strings, Categorical) List of supported languages
    5. **genre (Array of Strings, Categorical)** List of genres
- **HowLongToBeat (HLTB)**
  - Attributes & Data Types:
    1. id (Number, Categorical, Identifier) Game ID
    2. name (String, Categorical) Game name
    3. imageUrl (String/URL, Categorical) URL of cover image
    4. timeLabels (Array of Pairs, Categorical) Maps internal keys to human-readable labels (gameplayMain to Main Story)
    5. **gameplayMain (Number, Quantitative, Hours)** Hours to complete the main story
    6. gameplayMainExtra (Number, Quantitative, Hours) Hours to complete main story plus side content
    7. **gameplayCompletionist (Number, Quantitative, Hours)** Hours to achieve 100% completion
    8. similarity (Number, Quantitative, Score) Search similarity score
    9. searchTerm (String, Categorical) Term used in the search

- **Kaggle, Video Game Sales with Ratings**
  - Attributes & Data Types:
    1. Name (String, Categorical) Name of the game
    2. Platform (String, Categorical) Console or platform on which the game runs
    3. Year\_of\_Release (Number, Quantitative, Year) Release year of the game
    4. **Genre (String, Categorical) Game genre (Action, Adventure, etc.)**
    5. Publisher (String, Categorical) Publisher's name
    6. **NA\_Sales, EU\_Sales, JP\_Sales, Other\_Sales (Number, Quantitative, Millions of units) Regional sales by geography**
    7. Global\_Sales (Number, Quantitative, Millions of units) Worldwide sales (sum of regional sales)
    8. **Critic\_Score, Critic\_Count (Number, Quantitative) Aggregated critic score and number of critics**
    9. User\_Score, User\_Count (Number, Quantitative) User score and number of user ratings
    10. Developer (String, Categorical) Developer's name
    11. **Rating (String, Ordinal) ESRB rating (E, E10+, T, M, AO, RP, K-A, etc.)**
- **Google Trends**
  - Attributes & Data Types:
    1. Keyword (String, Categorical) The search term
    2. Keyword Type (String, Categorical) Indicates whether the term is a topic or search query
    3. **Geo (String, Categorical) Geographic area (e.g., Worldwide, United States, Texas)**
    4. Category (String, Categorical) Topic category (e.g., video games, sports)
    5. Query (String, Categorical) Related search query (for the "Related Queries" report)
    6. Type (String, Categorical/Ordinal) Whether the related result is a "top" or "rising" query/topic
    7. Topic Type (String, Categorical) Category of related topic (e.g., person, franchise)
    8. City (String, Categorical) City for the "Interest by City" report

9. **Rising Value (Number, Quantitative)** Rising score for related queries/topics
10. **Interest (Number, Quantitative)** Interest score (0–100) for a keyword over time
11. Value (Number, Quantitative) Value for related queries and topics

## Data Cleanup & Processing Plan

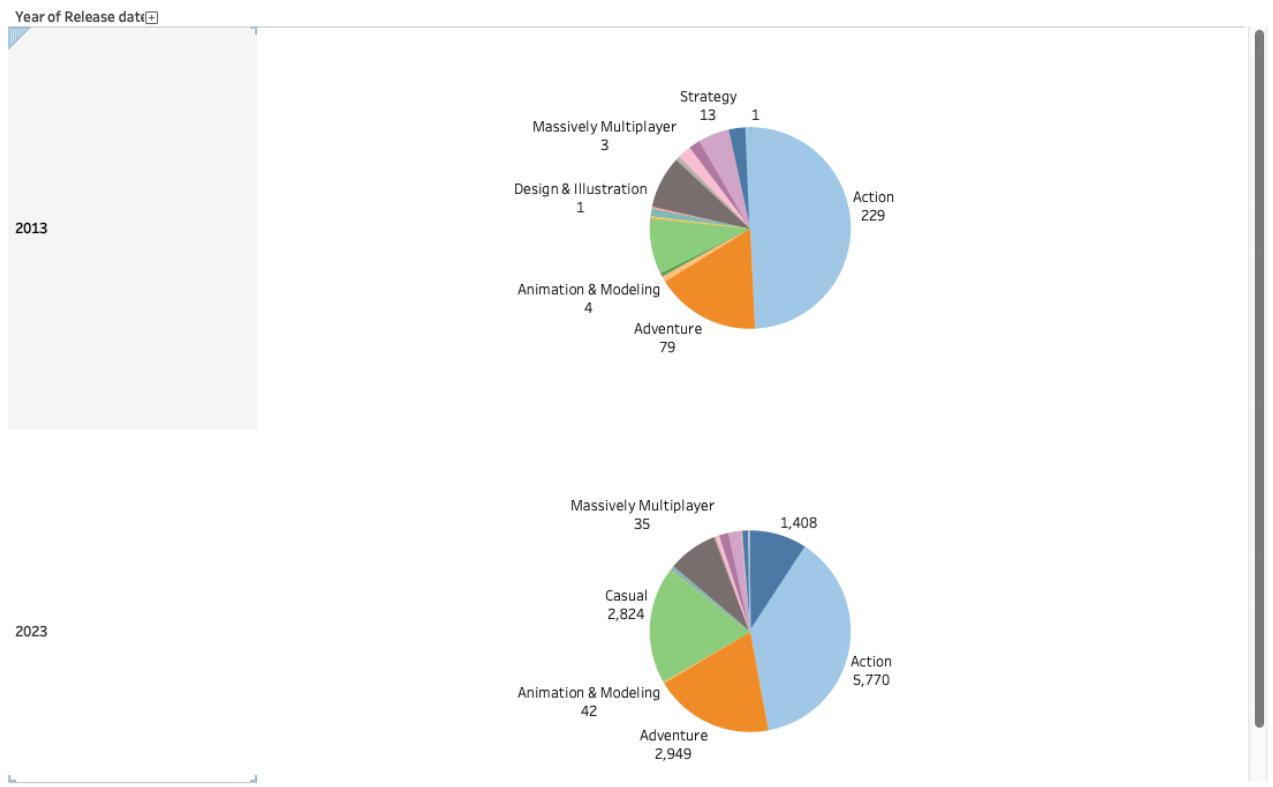
Kaggle's Video Game Sales and SteamSpy are pre-cleaned sources so clean up for those should be minimal. However Google Trends, HLTB, and Steam DB will need some clean up.

- SteamDB -> needs to be flattened by unpacking data from lists. Also cleaning up missing data and indicating correct data types when importing
- HLTB -> this will likely require clean up with converting time labels to usable formats such as HH:MM:SS instead of just seconds. Time labels column should help with this
- Google Trends -> converting interest values into something usable and making sure date columns are correctly formatted.

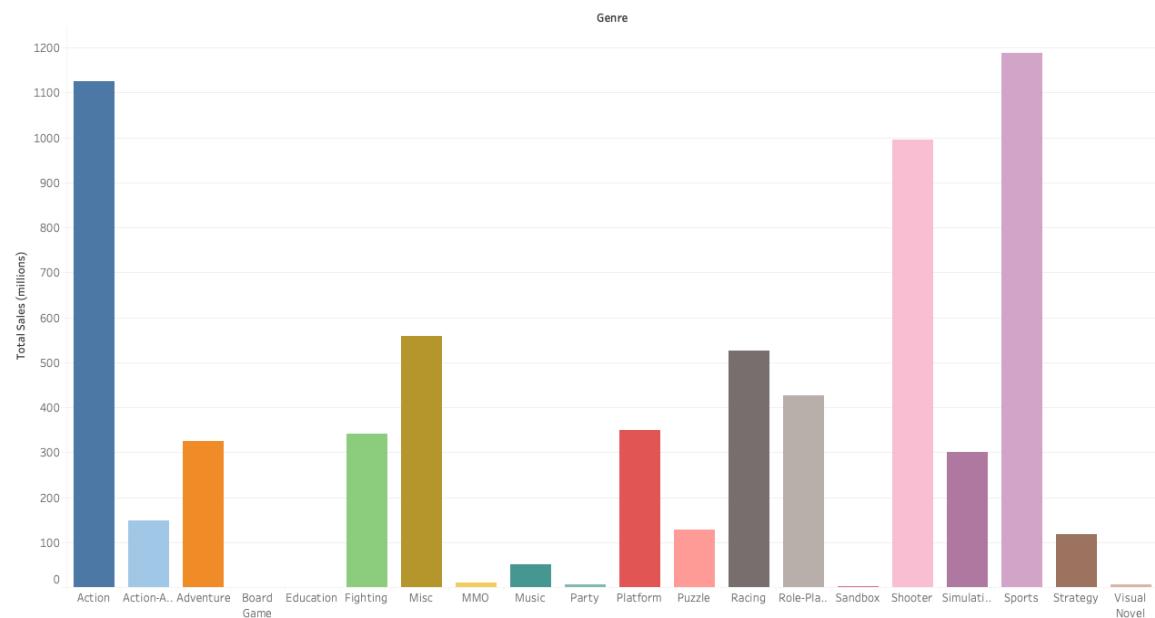
## Data Exploration

We used a mix of SteamDB, SteamSpy datasets, and Google Trends to start answering our audience questions. Each of us explored the data separately, then compared notes. Below are some of the findings so far.

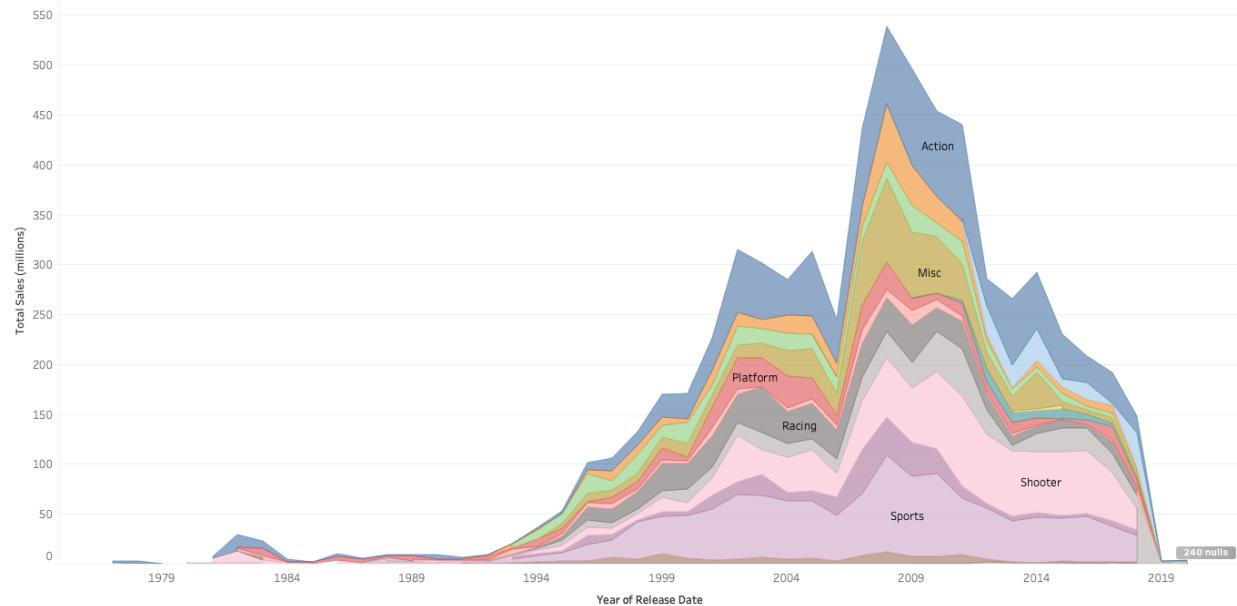
Which genres were the most popular in 2013 compared to 2023?



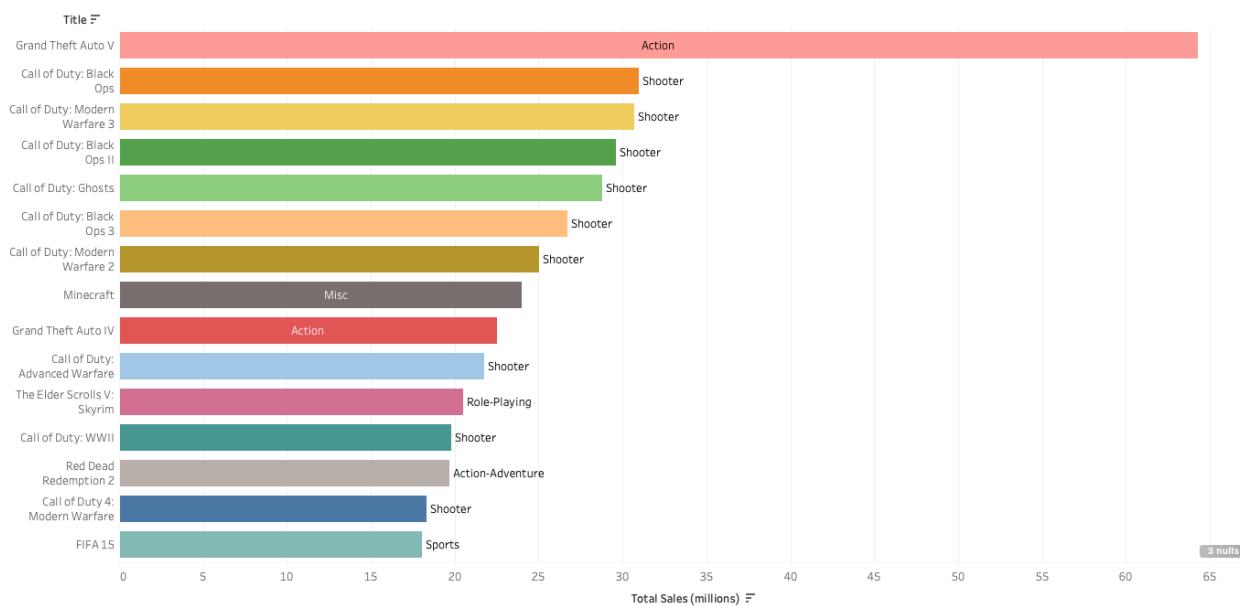
Total global sales by genre



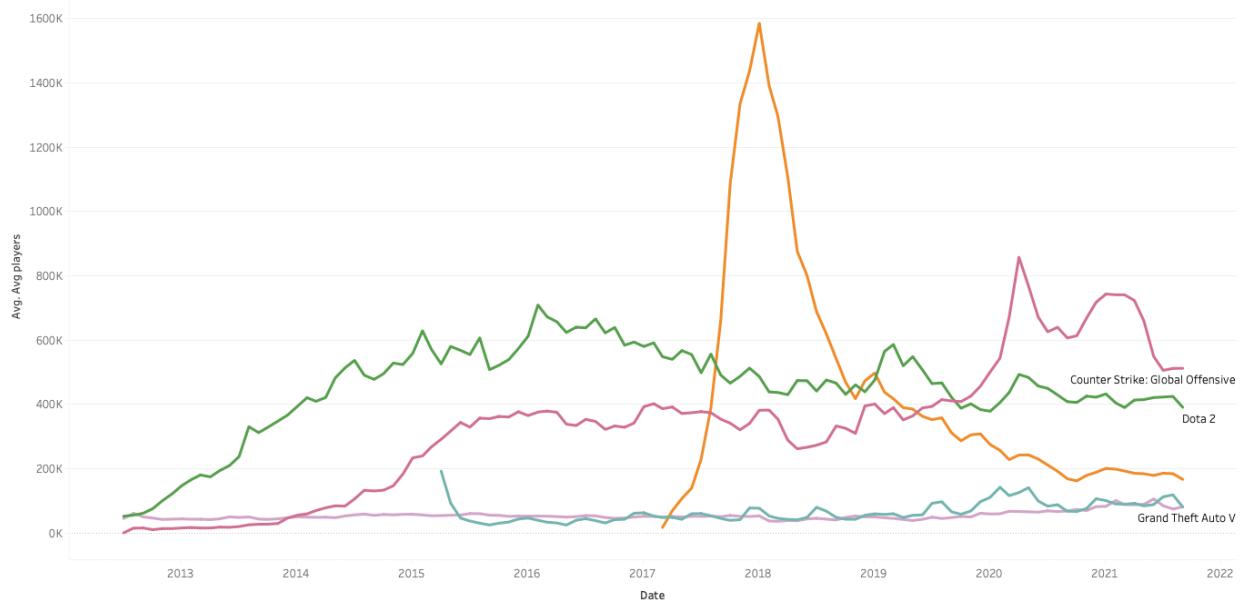
Genre Total Sales over Time split up by genre



Top 15 Best-Selling Games

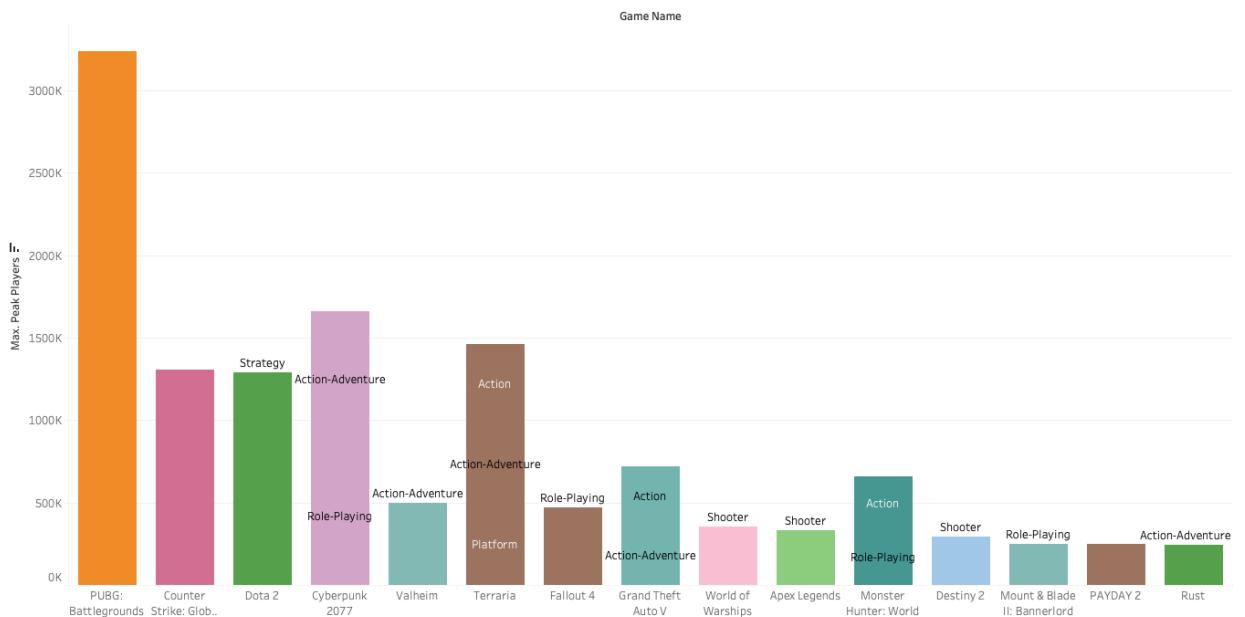


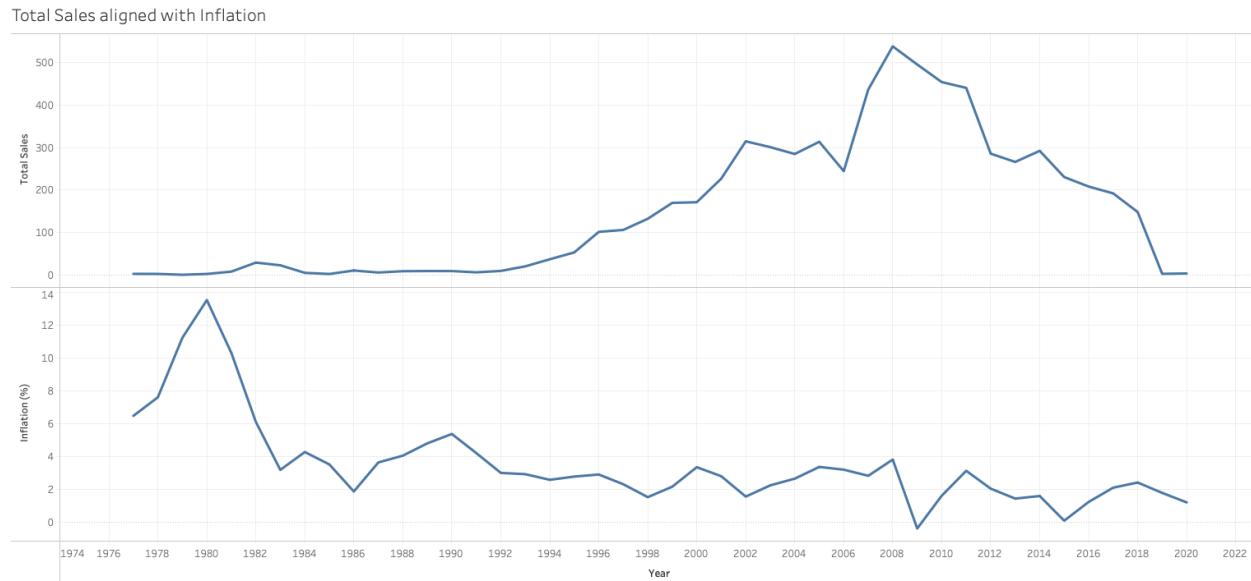
Avg Players by Year for Top 5 Games



\*orange line is PUBG

All-Time Peak Players by Game





## Data Exploration Findings

- Jenna
  - The number of average PUBG players spiked heavily from 2017-2019.
  - The spike matches the overall surge in Battle Royale releases on Steam during that same period.
  - Google Trends shows Fortnite/PUBG peaking in 2018.
- Davis
  - Over time shooter and sports games became more popular while compared to action.
  - However GTA an action game is still the highest in total sales.
  - Counter strike offensive saw an unexpected spike later on showing an anomaly considering most never had a new spike after the first
- Tiffany
  - There has been a large spike in player base and sales in game genres since the past decade.
  - There are less action oriented gamers and a higher ratio of casual gamers, likely due to the introduction of a lot of novice players to the scene. Gaming is not so niche anymore.
- Gwen

- Nine out of the top 15 games best selling games are part of the Call of Duty series
- Despite this, Shooters haven't been the most popular genre at any point, and no other shooter is in the top 15. This suggests that Call of Duty may be far more successful than its peers.
- Interestingly, the Call of Duty games don't get more successful as they get more recent, despite the industry growing larger during its run, suggesting other factors are at play.

## Storyboard

### Main Message

Genres shift when new tech meets what players need – community, comfort, or challenge

### Why We Chose This

Looking at our findings, we noticed that the most interesting pattern wasn't just that genres rose or fell, but when those changes happened and what lined up with them. Battle Royale exploded right when streaming took off, cozy games peaked during COVID, and Souls-like titles kept growing as consoles got more powerful. Each of these trends connected a tech change with a player need (community, comfort, challenge). Most players lived through these moments themselves. By connecting the data back to experiences they actually had, the story feels personal and relatable for our audience. This makes the narrative more engaging and persuasive, since they can see their own choices reflected in the broader trends.

## Story Arc

### 1. Hook

"Think back to your own library – Fortnite in 2018, Animal Crossing in 2020, Elden Ring in 2022. Those weren't just your choices, millions of others made the same ones."

- Ask: "Which of these games do you think peaked in 2018, 2020, and 2022?"
- User Guesses -> timeline reveals

### 2. Rising Insights

- Battle Royale
  - Spike in releases and Twitch viewshit (2017–2019)
  - Streaming tech made it possible -> players wanted competition/community.
- Cozy Sims (Comfort)
  - Sales and releases surged in 2020 (Animal Crossing).
  - COVID lockdown created the mood -> players wanted comfort/stability.
- Souls-like (Challenge)
  - Steady growth over the decade, long playtimes, high reviews.
  - Console power + online communities -> players wanted mastery and challenge.

### 3. Climax

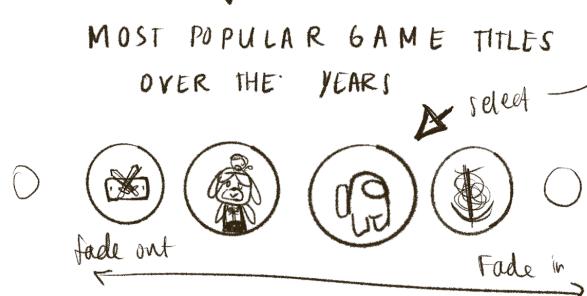
"The data shows genres don't shift randomly. Tech creates new possibilities, but psychology decides which ones players actually embrace."

### 4. Resolution

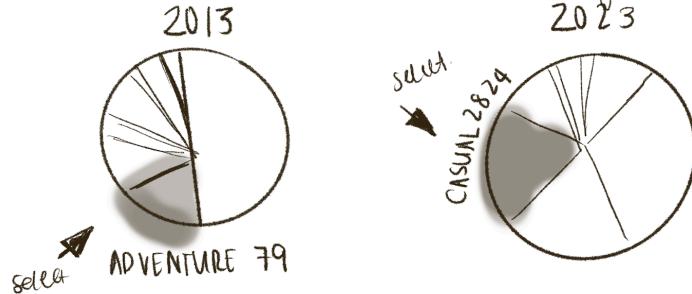
"If every tech leap shifts genres, what's next? VR and AR for community? More cozy titles for comfort? Or a new kind of challenge altogether?"

## Visualization Idea Sketches

Video game genres shifting over time to meet player needs  
⇒ when video games meet culture

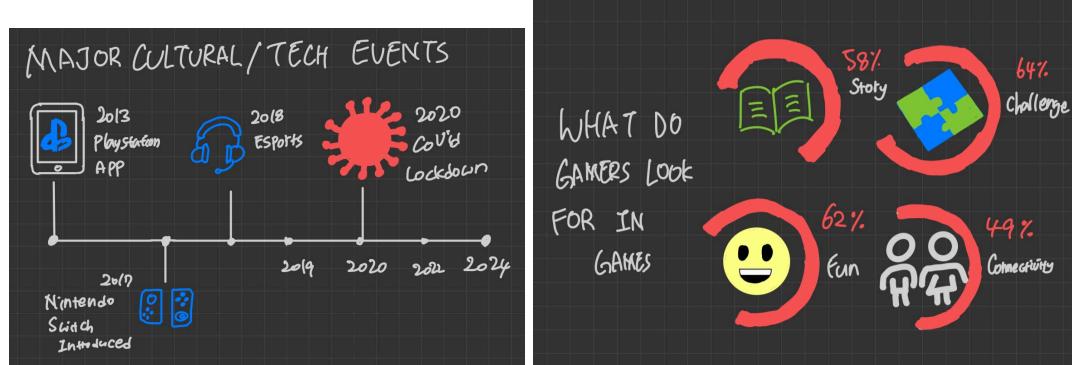
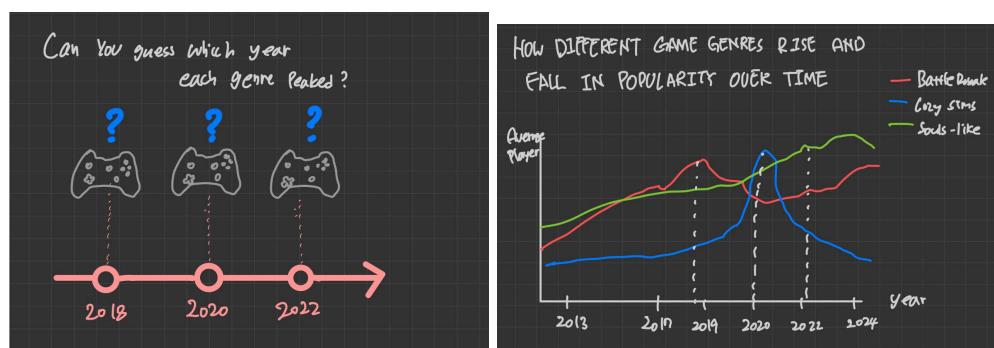
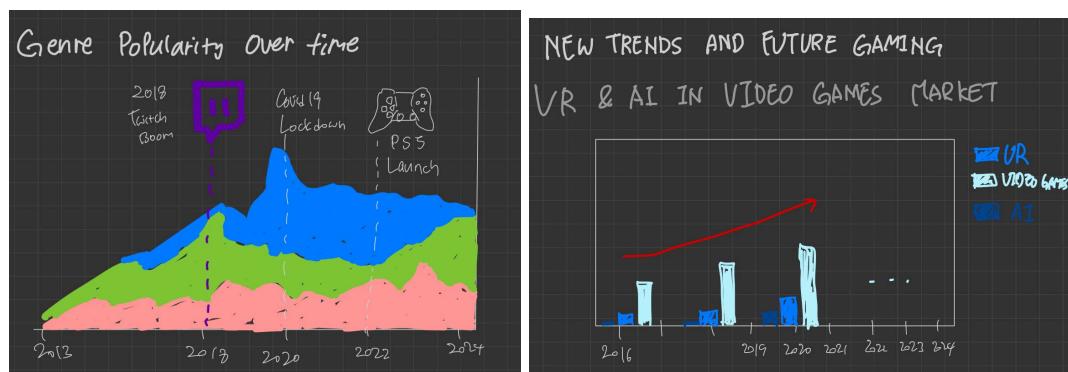
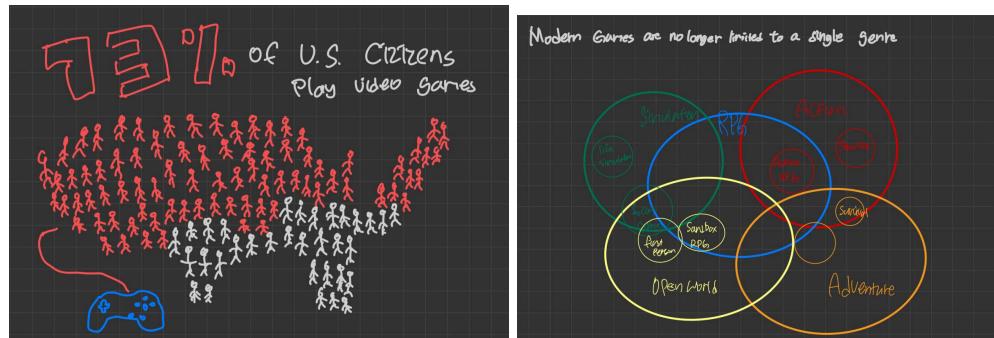


VIEW OF GENRE POPULARITY CHANGES: decade ago to how...

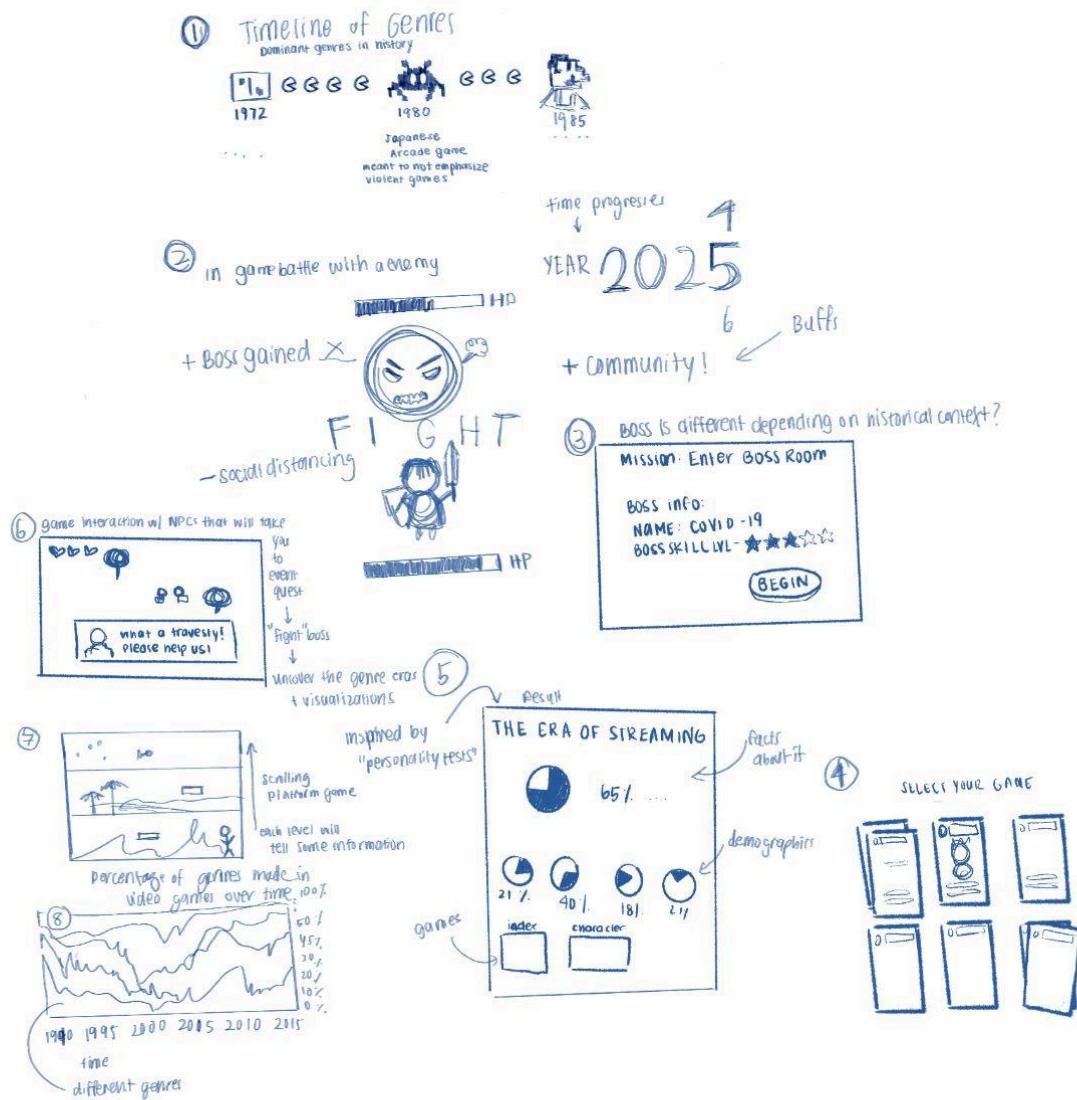


## Sketch (Week 5)

Jenna (J1-8)



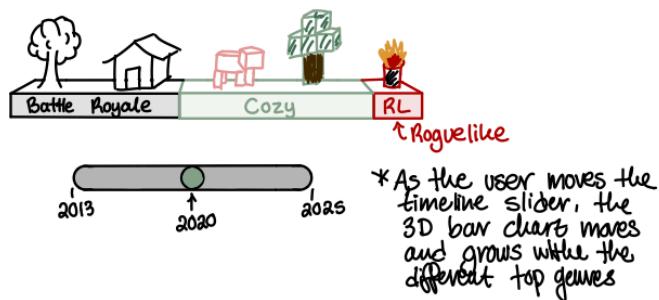
## Tiffany (T1-8)



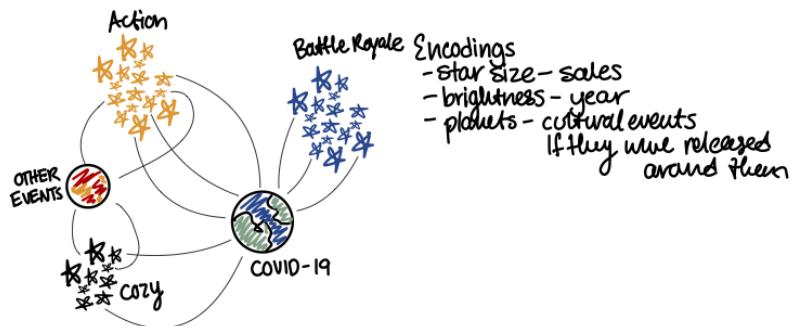
Davis

## For Project

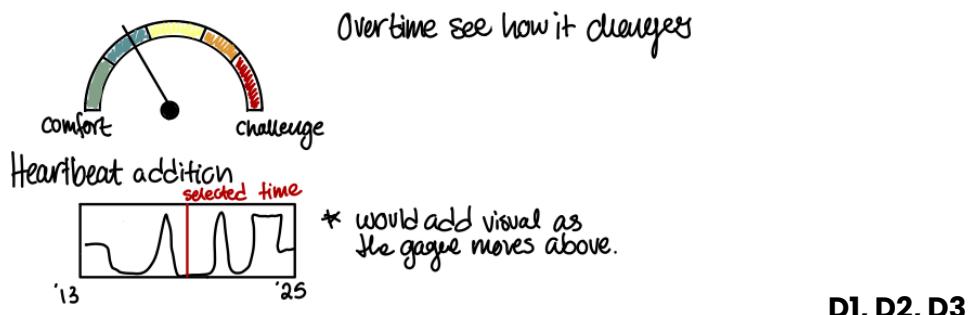
### Top Genres of All Time (Platformer)



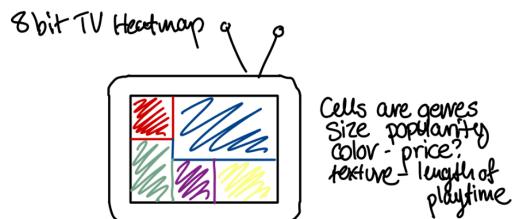
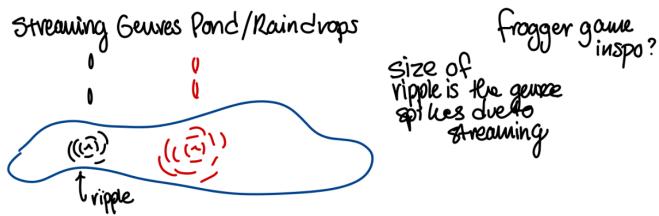
### Cultural Connections



### Mood Gauge

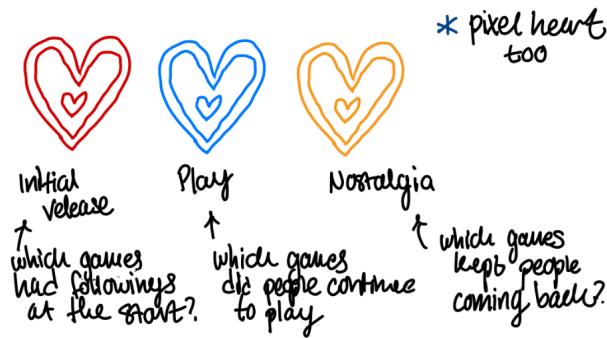


D1, D2, D3



### D3,D4,D5,D6, D7, D8

Player love over time (what kinds of games do people come back to)

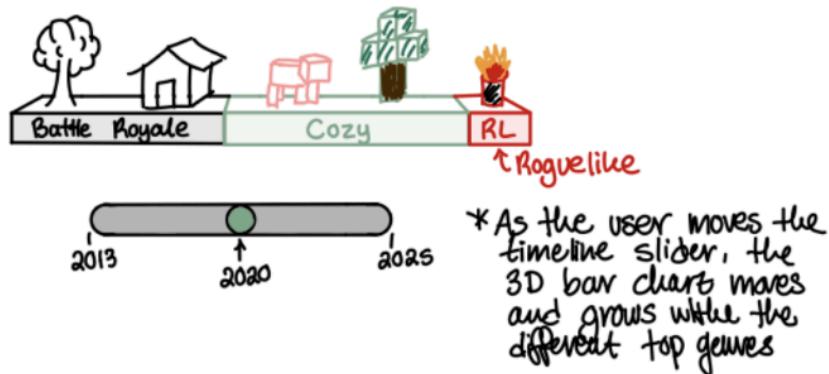


## Decide (Week 6)

Sketch ideas we picked

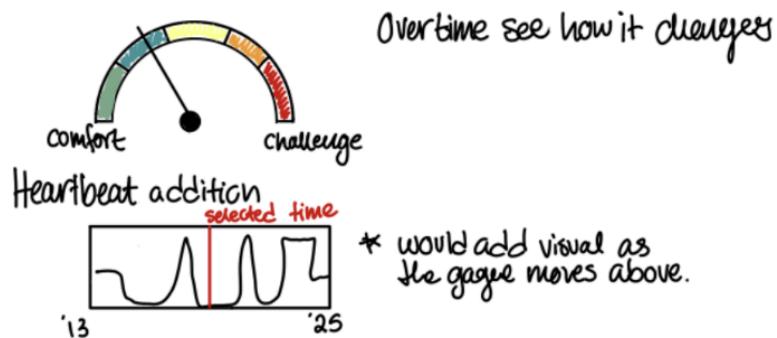
Sketch 1

### Top Genres of All Time (Platformer)

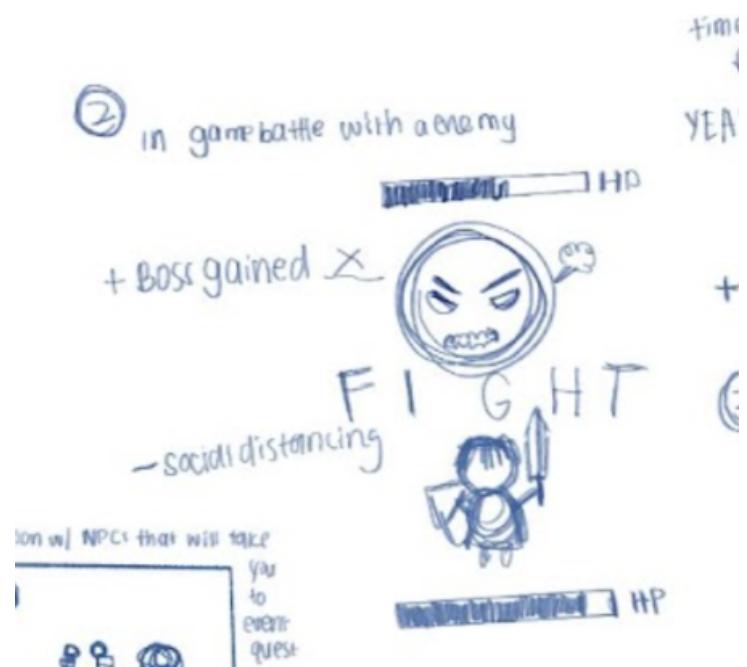


Sketch 2

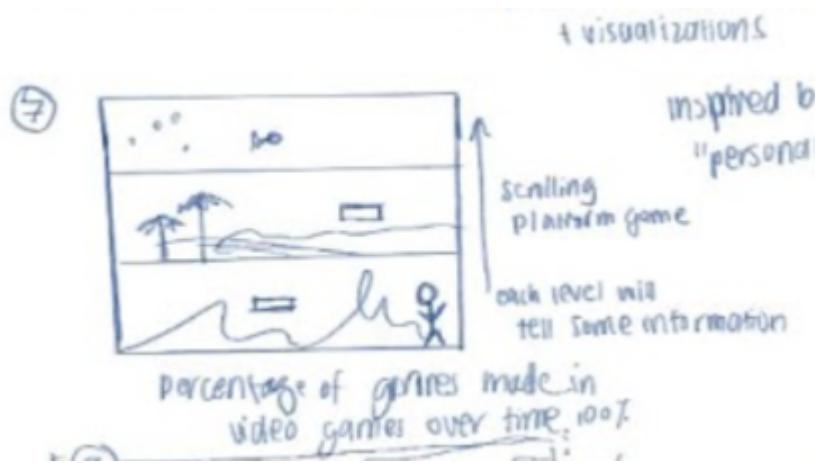
### Mood Gauge



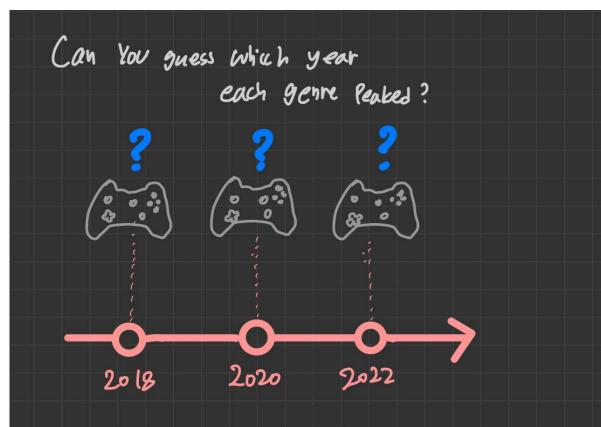
## Sketch 3



## Sketch 4



## Sketch 5



## Affinity Diagramming

Sketch ID	Message ID	Author	Votes
D1		Davis	Davis, Tiffany, Jenna
D2		Davis	
D3		Davis	Davis, Tiffany, Jenna

D4		Davis	Davis
D5		Davis	
D6		Davis	Jenna
D7		Davis	
D8		Davis	Davis
T1		Tiffany	Jenna
T2		Tiffany	Davis, Tiffany, Jenna
T3		Tiffany	
T4		Tiffany	
T5		Tiffany	Davis
T6		Tiffany	
T7		Tiffany	Tiffany
T8		Tiffany	
J1		Jenna	Davis
J2		Jenna	
J3		Jenna	Davis
J4		Jenna	
J5		Jenna	Davis, Tiffany
J6		Jenna	
J7		Jenna	Davis
J8		Jenna	

## Summary of Our Decision

The reason that we chose these visualizations starts with the first one, which gives the user a dynamic bar chart that changes with user interaction using a slider to show the data for that year. Sketch 1 will show which genre dominated the market during each year, but also display fan, favorite characters, items, etc., to help the user better understand what the game's aesthetic was like as well. The second sketch, like the first, is over time, but shows a more general scope about when people preferred comforting games or challenging games and also displays a heartbeat-like visual to show the user spikes over a wider range of time and not just in the instant, represented by the meter. The first two visualizations tie in well because it gives the user a more informative, visual, and then moves backward to give the user a bigger picture and changes in the market. The third sketch incorporates a creative visual, like a video game, to show the negative and positive effects of cultural shifts in the style of boss attack attacks and health points, which could represent positive or negative trends and culture. We chose this visual to tie in with the first two because the first two lack the scope of cultural influences, and this visual now gives more context to why there were changes in genres over time. Sketch 4 provides a more interactive visualization to help the user through a more story-oriented visual to show changes and genres over time and allow them to absorb more information through playing a game. Finally, the last visual challenges the user to test what they learned and point out and remind the user of important information throughout the story.

## Phase 1 (Week 8)

### Data Scrapping & Cleaning

#### Raw Data Sources

<https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/terencicp/steam-games-december-2023?select=games.csv>

1. games.csv
2. t-games-tags.csv (Tag Mapping)
3. t-games-categories.csv (Category Mapping)

<https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/asaniczka/video-game-sales-2024>

1. vgchartz-2024.csv

### Data Cleaning

1. Extracted year as integer and filtered to 2013–2025 range.
2. Calculated review metrics ( $\text{total\_reviews} = \text{positive} + \text{negative}$ )
3. Calculated average owners ( $\text{avg\_owners} = (\text{min\_owners} + \text{max\_owners})/2$ )
4. Genre mapping rules
  - Action: Action, FPS, Shooter, Platformer, Beat 'em up, Fighting, Hack and Slash
  - Adventure: Adventure, Exploration, Story Rich, Narrative, Walking Simulator
  - RPG: RPG, JRPG, Action RPG, Turn-Based, Turn-Based Combat, Character Customization
  - Strategy: Strategy, Real-Time Strategy, Turn-Based Strategy, Tower Defense, Grand Strategy, 4x
  - Simulation: Simulation, Life Sim, Farming Sim, Flight Sim, Sports
  - Indie: Indie, Pixel, Graphics, Retro, Minimalist, 2D
  - Horror: Horror, Survival Horror, Psychological Horror, Gore, Dark
  - Multiplayer: Multiplayer, Co-Op, Online Co-Op, PvP, Battle Royale, MMO, Massively Multiplayer
  - Puzzle: Puzzle, Puzzle-Platformer, Match 3
  - Casual: Casual, Relaxing, Cozy, Family Friendly
  - Other: Games that don't fit the above categories

### Clean Datasets

1. Games\_processed.csv
  - Joined with tag data to add genre classifications
  - Columns: app\_id, name, year, price, positive, negative, total\_reviews, review\_score, min\_owners, max\_owners, avg\_owners, hltb\_single
2. yearly\_statistics.csv
  - year(2013–2025), game\_count(total games released), total\_reviews, total\_owners, avg\_price(market average price), avg\_review\_score, avg\_reviews\_per\_game
  - Purpose: to show market growth statistics and provide context for major events and market shifts

Raw Data Source:

<https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/hbugrae/best-selling-steam-games-of-all-time>

Uncleaned data: bestSelling\_games.csv

### Data Cleaning

- Extracted release year, then filtered to include only games from 2013–2025.
- all column names to lowercase for consistency.
- standardized the genre column.
- Removed extra symbols in genres
- removed duplicate genre names
- Expanded each game's genre list so each (year, genre) pair is represented as an individual record.
- Removed duplicate rows to avoid counting the same genre twice per game in the same year.
- Counted occurrences of each genre per year and selected the top 5 by frequency for every year.
- Exported final results to steam\_top5\_genres\_best\_selling\_by\_year\_2013\_2025.csv with columns: year, genre, count.

### Drafts for Visualizations

1. The Shifting Gameboard
  - a. Data files used:  
steam\_top5\_genres\_best\_selling\_by\_year\_2013\_2025.csv
  - b. Horizontal bar chart with labels and legend for coloring
  - c. Top 5 displayed at all times
  - d. Time series slider that triggers the different versions of the bar charts over the years and also triggers an animation.
  - e. Interactive elements are the slider.
  - f. **Possibly a tool tip later to show the top 5 games of the top genre selected.**
2. Mood Gauge
  - a. Semi circle donut chart that shows a dial for which mood dominated the market

- i. Vgchartz-2024.csv
  - b. The user is able to look at a "Heartbeat monitor" style view that shows both waves of comfort and challenge
  - c. They can brush/select to look at an average over time or just one instance in how preferences were for comfort or challenge.
3. "Games That Match the Mood"
- Data files used: vgchartz-2024.csv
  - Mood mapping rules
    - Connection & Comfort : Casual, Multiplayer, Simulation
    - Challenge & Competition: Action, Strategy, RPG
    - Discovery & Creativity: Indie, Adventure, Puzzle

Connection & Comfort	Challenge & Competition	Discovery & Creativity
Era: 2020 – 2021 Pandemic Color: TBD Emoji: 🤝 Description: "Seeking warmth, community, and togetherness during uncertain times" Gauge position: 0	Era: Pre-2015 & Battle Royale Color: TBD Emoji: ✌️ Description: "Testing limits, proving mastery, and chasing victory" Gauge Position: 1	Era: 2015–2018 Indie Revolution Color: TBD Emoji: 🎨 Description: "Exploring new worlds, expressing yourself, and innovating" Gauge Position: 2

#### Interactive Elements

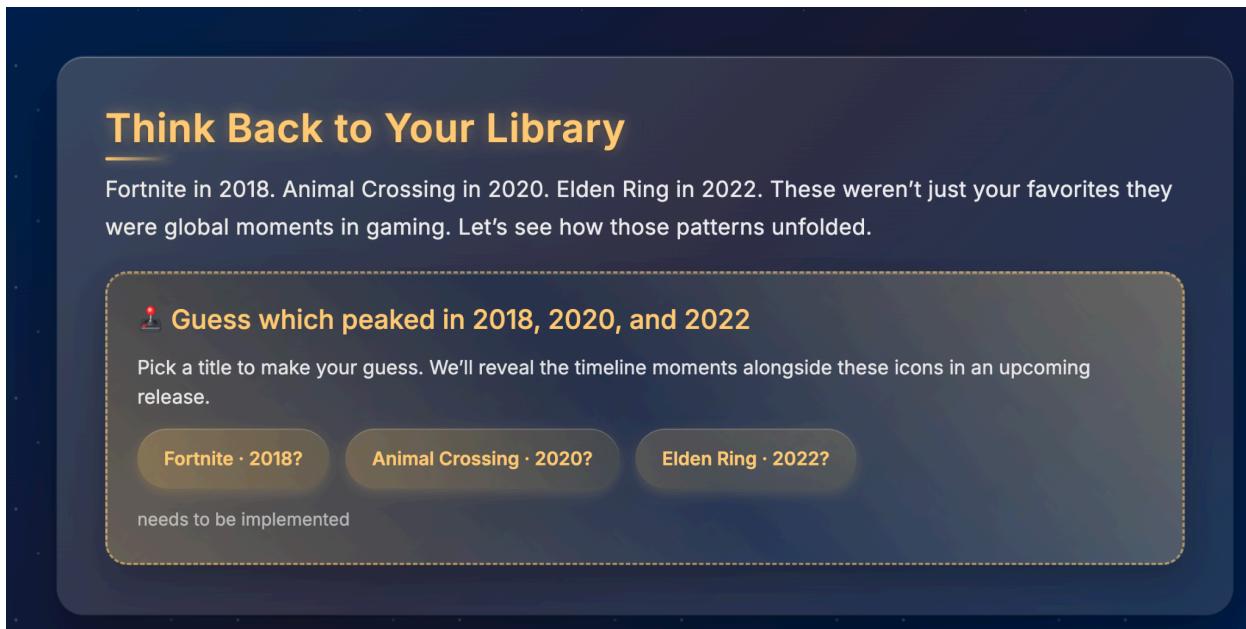
- 3 clickable mood buttons with emojis and era labels
- Select mood -> show top 5 games for each mood
- Navigation with prev/next buttons
- Horizontal scrolling for browsing all games
- Hover effects on mood buttons

#### Visual Design

- Color-coded cards matching each mood
- Rank badges (#1, #2, etc.) with mood colors

- Game statistics (Name, reviews, score, owners)
  - Dynamic description based on selected mood
  - Image?
4. "Trends "

## Screenshots of Current Implementation





## What Were We Searching For?

Each era carried a different emotional current comfort, competition, discovery. Select a mood to surface representative games and stats from that vibe.

place holder for mood gauge visual that implements a linked view with brushing

Select a mood to explore game recommendations

👉 Connection & Comfort

✗ Challenge & Competition

💡 Discovery & Creativity



#5 The Sims: Unleashed  
Console: PC

#6 MySims  
Console: DS



#7 Cooking with Friends

## Can You Predict the Trends?

An interactive guessing game will challenge you to call the genre peaks before revealing the historical data. Think you know which genre dominated 2017?

🎮 Guess the Genre

Question 1 of 3

Score: 0

Which genre dominated 2017?

Action

RPG

Simulation

Strategy

✗ Wrong. The answer was Action.

Next

**Where Culture Meets Data**

combined Twitch and Google Trends dashboard

Dual-Axis Chart Twitch Streaming vs. Google Trends

**More Than Market Shifts**

These trends weren't random. Every shift followed a moment where new technology and new events met human need the desire to connect, to escape, etc.

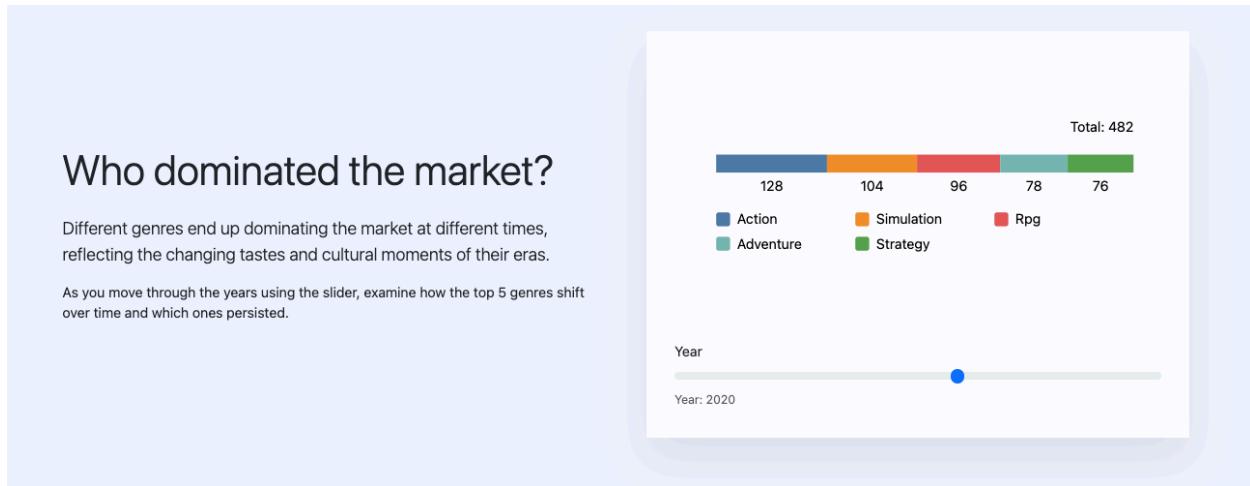
**What's Next?**

Each leap in tech brings new emotions to gaming. What will the next era bring VR for community, AI companions for comfort, etc?

Link to Downloadable ZIP StingOps file:

 [StingOps.zip](#)

## Phase 3 & 4



**Certain genres dominate the market**

Every console cycle rewrites expectations: the Souls saga pushes users to game smarter and hone skills, cozy games promise an escape from stressful life, and battle royales ramped up player to player interaction and competition between players.

Think back releases that had such widespread influence that they leached into broader culture. (ex. TV Ads, Toys, Social Media trends, etc.)

**WARM-UP**

Click on each genre to see the aspects/appeal it represents.

**Soulslike**   **Cozy Sim**   **Battle Royale**

**SOULSLIKE**

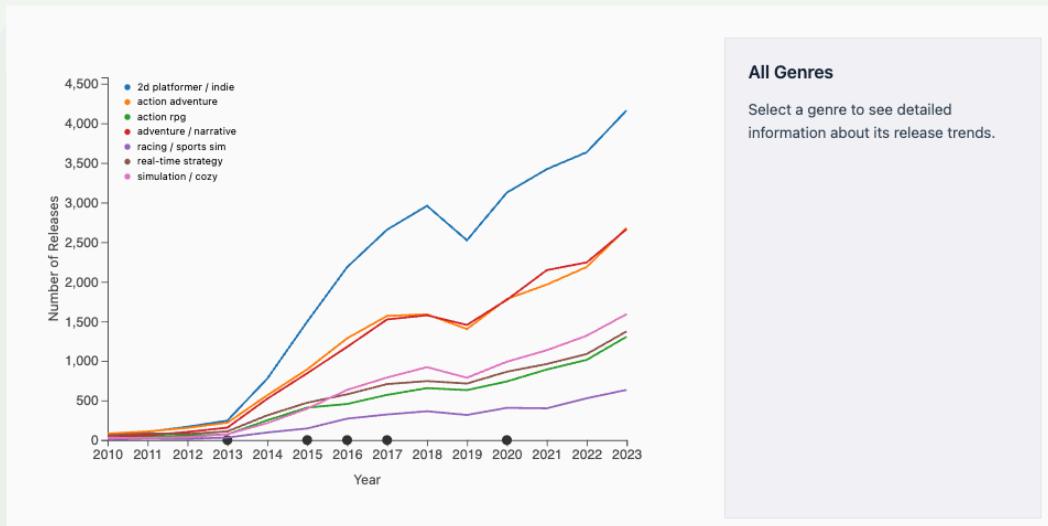
Punishing combat and intricate world design reward patience and mastery.

**Top game:** Elden Ring

## How did major world events shape and correlate with gaming?

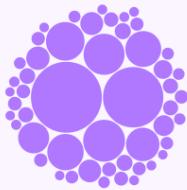
Major events, from platform launches to game disruptions, leave a clear fingerprint on release trends. Explore how genre momentum rises and falls, and hover over the black markers to see the cultural sparks that pushed each swing.

All    2d platformer / indie    action adventure    action rpg    adventure / narrative    racing / sports sim    real-time strategy  
simulation / cozy

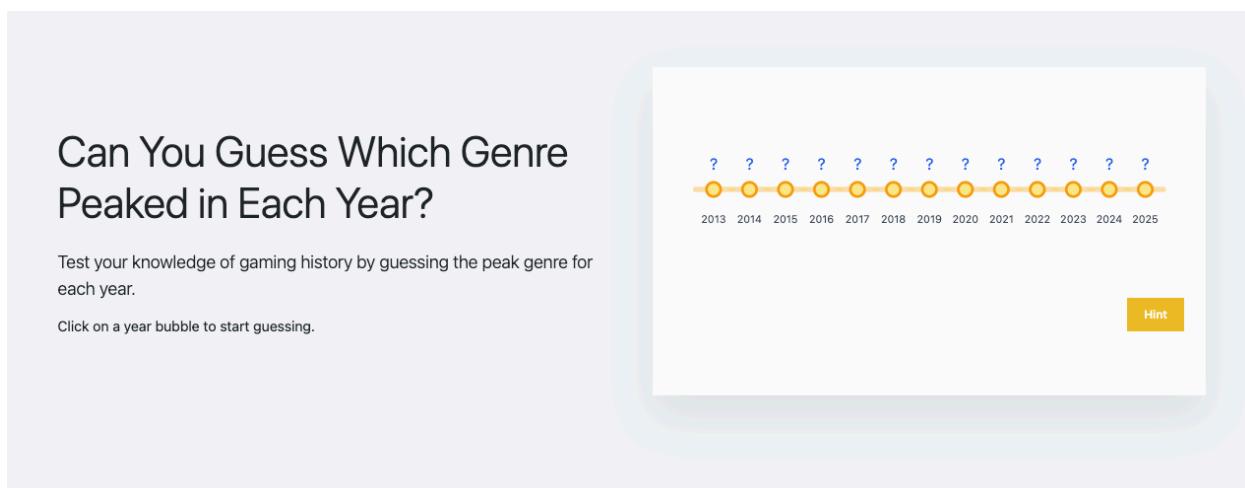
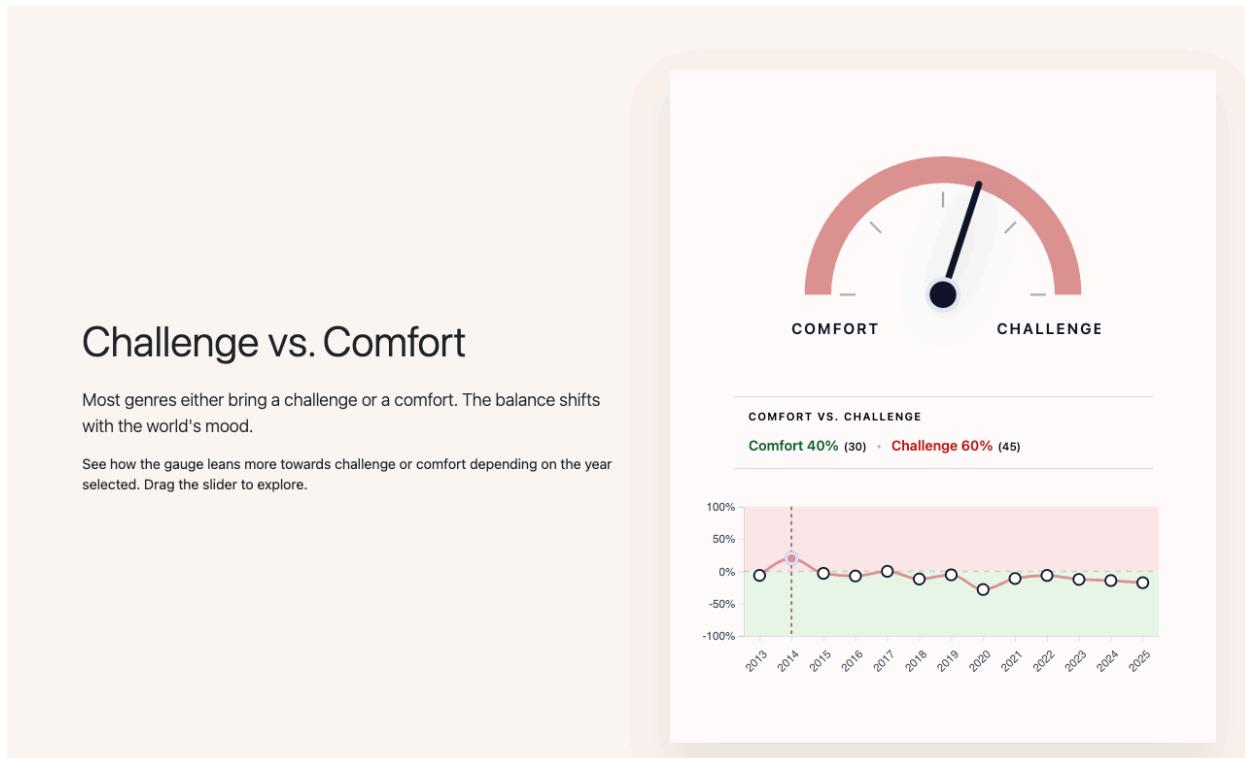


2018

PRE-PANDEMIC BASELINE



In 2018, Fortnite dominated with 81 billion minutes watched, becoming a cultural phenomenon that transcended gaming. The game's dances went viral on social media, and celebrities started streaming it. League of Legends (59B minutes) and Dota 2 maintained their esports stronghold, while PUBG proved that battle royale wasn't just a fad. This was when gaming truly broke into mainstream culture, with Twitch becoming a platform that everyone knew about, not just gamers.



Link to Download Zip for Phase 3 & 4:

[https://gtvault-my.sharepoint.com/:u/g/personal/rhaden8\\_gatech\\_edu/EYzbBXcm5Q9OqMTAjHUMyFoBI5Y2zsKV60AzNnpqRBLClqe=OoBNsF](https://gtvault-my.sharepoint.com/:u/g/personal/rhaden8_gatech_edu/EYzbBXcm5Q9OqMTAjHUMyFoBI5Y2zsKV60AzNnpqRBLClqe=OoBNsF)

# Evaluation and Wrapup

## Test

**Tester Name:** Will Shaw

**Tester Email:** wshaw31@gatech.edu

### **General Observations from the think-aloud study:**

Overall, the testers responded positively to our data study. They felt that the interface was visually clean and approachable.

### **What does the tester like about your data story?**

They liked the slide-based format and the use of color coding through the visualizations and slides. They also described the overall design as intuitive and appreciated that the layout and text cues generally made it clear where to look first and how to interact with each visualization.

### **What improvements does the tester point out?**

The main improvement the testers suggested was adding a progression indicator, such as a progress bar, since the experience is structured like a slide deck. Without it, they sometimes weren't sure how far along they were in the story or whether they had missed anything. They also noted that a few slides felt slightly confusing because there was no clear indication that they should continue to the next step, especially when there wasn't much explicit instruction or visual hint to move forward.

### **Was the intended key message clear to the tester? Why or why not?**

The testers reported that the key message of the project came across clearly. They understood that we were showing how video game trends shift over time and how these changes connect to broader player preferences and cultural moods. They described the message as "pretty clear and intuitive."

### **Did the tester get your next steps or call to action? Why or why not?**

For the most part, the tester understood what to do next on each slide and how to continue through the story. They were usually able to infer interactions without needing extra instructions. However, they hesitated briefly when it wasn't obvious whether they were supposed to scroll more or move forward. They suggested that adding a visible progress indicator and more consistent "next step" cues would help make the call to action clearer.

## CS 4460 B – Final Group Project

Please copy this form into your process book first!

Tester Name: Will Shaw

Tester Email: wshaw31@gatech.edu

General Observations from the think-aloud study:

- animated bg is a good addition → movement/transition



What does the tester like about your data story?

- likes the slide format → broken up to help the user focus
- challenge/confront was a nice creative touch, color coding makes sense
- very intuitive design

What improvements does the tester point out?

- progression bar would be helpful.
- tool tips for more information on hover. what do the numbers mean?
- strange there's no 2021, might be worth trying to fit into the narrative.
- subscription game?

Was the intended key message clear to the tester? Why or why not?

relatively clear and intuitive.

Did the tester get your next steps or call to action? Why or why not?

- potentially work on the progress bar.

## Evaluation

**1. Based on the results of your think-aloud study, what would you improve in your data story?**

From the think-aloud session, the main issue was about orientation and flow rather than the visuals themselves. The tester occasionally felt unsure about where they were in the overall story because the interface is slide-based but has no explicit indication of progress. A few slides felt slightly confusing when there were no clear cues about what to do next. The main improvements we would make are:

- Add a clear progression indicator (e.g., progression bar)
- Include clearer instructional texts, mainly on slides that rely on interaction

**2. Are there any additional insights and visualizations you would use? Would you amplify or change your message? Did your narrative work? Did the tester get your takeaways?**

- Additional insights / visualizations

We decided not to add any entirely new visualizations, since the current set already communicates the core message.

- Amplifying or changing the message

We are keeping the core message the same.

- Did the narrative work? Did the tester get your takeaways?

Overall, yes. The tester understood that the story was about how game genres rise and fall over time and how these patterns relate to broader trends. They described the visuals and color coding as intuitive and felt guided through most of the slides.

**3. Decide as a team which of these improvements you will implement and write down your decisions and why you made them in your process book as a numbered list.**

As a team, we decided on the following improvements and our reasoning:

- 1) Add a visual progress indicator

The tester specifically mentioned not knowing how far along they were, which created small moments of uncertainty. A progress bar would directly address that and fits the slide-based format.

- 2) Add short instructional text on slides where the interaction is not obvious.

The tester mostly understood what to do but hesitated on a few slides. Small, consistent hints reduce this friction.

- 3) Add a background to the last slide for flare

## Implementation Status

1. Progress bar - done
2. Instructional text for bubble vis - done
3. Clarify interaction instructions for other vis if needed - done

## Overview Video Link

<https://youtu.be/pYfwi8fBWOU>

## Link to Github

<https://github.com/davis-haden/stingOps-V2>