



What people think,
feel and do

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Opinium

Women in Gaming - US



Key findings

7 February 2021

Project details

PROJECT NUMBER	DIVERSITY IN GAMING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP
PROJECT NAME	Women in Gaming - US
CLIENT COMPANY NAME	Opinium
SAMPLE	1,002 US gamers aged 18+
FIELDWORK DATES	1 st – 17 th October 2021

Introduction

There is an unfortunate stereotype in the gaming world that it is solely a ‘guy-thing,’ and that it’s not meant for women. We know this is not the case: women game too, and they play and engage with the community nearly just as often as men. Despite this, the gaming industry has a long way to come to champion a culture of inclusivity and equality.

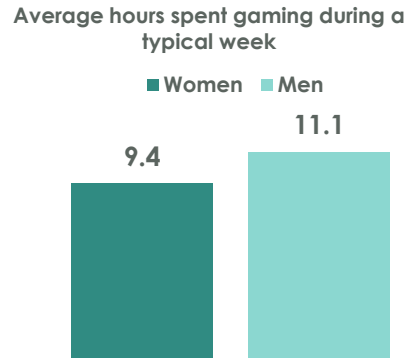
In August of 2021, the state of California sued Activision Blizzard, one of the largest gaming companies in the world, for gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and unequal pay. The sexism and discrimination of the gaming world, while long-known, came to the forefront. If female employees are subject to harassment and discrimination at one of the largest video game companies, does this happen to the millions of female gamers who play everyday too?

This report delves deeper into the female gaming experience, the good and the bad. While there is a community of female gamers that support each other, they’re inadequately represented and mistreated. Our research found that the gaming industry inadequately represents women on-screen, it’s not uncommon for female gamers to experience harassment while gaming, and the industry needs to do more to champion gender equality.

Results

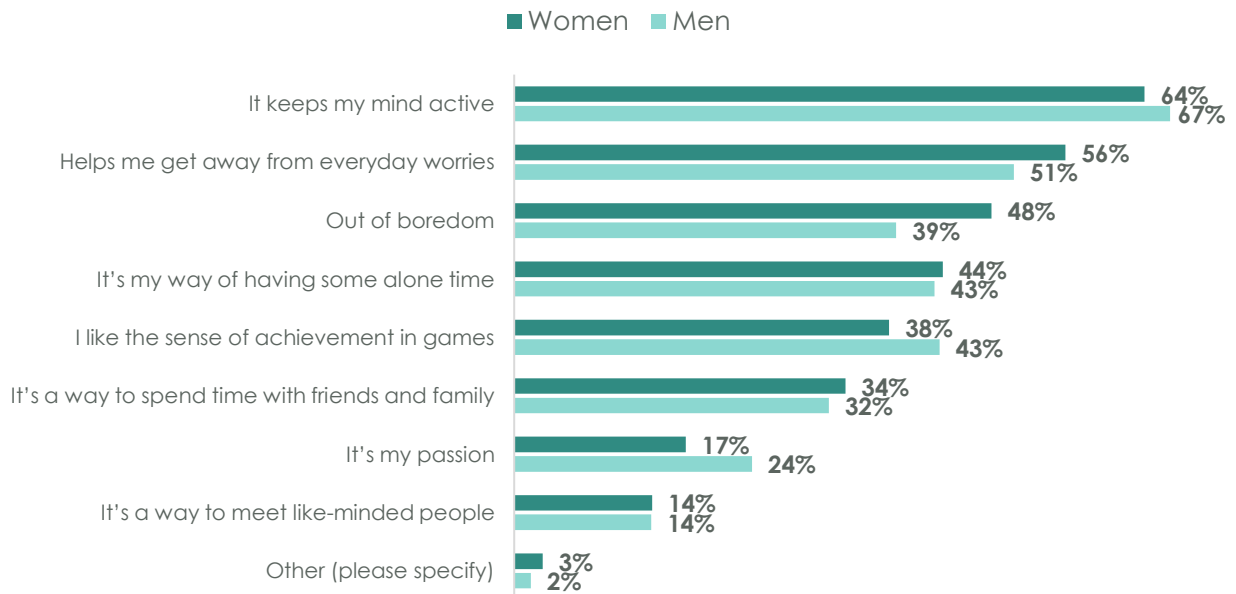
Women spend 9 hours a week playing video games, just 2 hours less than their male counterparts

Female gamers engage with the gaming world nearly just as often as male gamers. On average, female gamers spend 9 hours playing video games during a typical week, just two hours less than men. Female gamers spend an average of \$33 per month on video games and associated content, compared to \$38 for men.



Female gamers enjoy playing puzzle (64%), adventure (38%) and strategy (35%) games most – genres that help two thirds (64%) of female gamers to keep their mind active, which is the biggest motivation for gaming among female gamers. Other top reasons include escaping everyday worries (56%) and out of boredom (48%). Regardless of gender, the top reasons to play video games are largely the same.

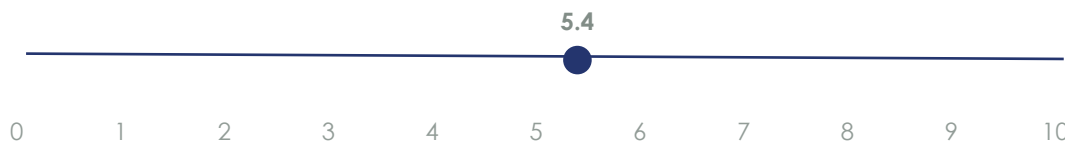
What are the reasons you play video games?



Female representation in video games

Women's representation in video games leaves much to be desired

Our research found that video games inadequately represent and give due diligence to female characters on screen. On average, gamers ranked the representation of female characters on screen as a 5.4, with '0' being 'Not represented well at all' and '10' being 'Represented in the best possible way.' Male gamers gave a slightly higher ranking (5.8) compared to female gamers (5.2).



'Not represented well at all'

'Represented in the best possible way'

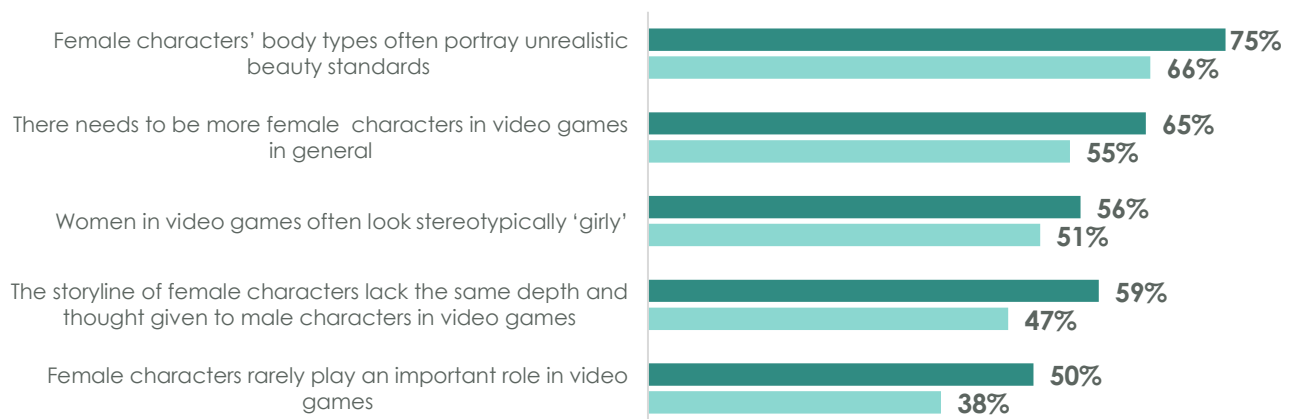
Three quarters of female gamers feel female characters' body types portray unrealistic beauty standards

The shortcomings of female representation are clear. Three fourths (75%) of female gamers feel that female characters' body types often portray unrealistic beauty standards, and 56% find female characters' appearances are often stereotypically 'girly.' Unfortunately, male gamers are less cognisant of where female representation on-screen falls short, as indicated by the chart below

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

% Agree

■ Women ■ Men



Beyond physical appearance, female characters' storyline often pales in comparison to the storyline of male characters. Three in five (59%) female gamers find that the storyline given to female characters often lacks the same depth and thought given to male characters and half (50%) feel female characters rarely play an important role.

To address the portrayal of female characters on screen, gaming companies could start by incorporating more female characters into their games in the first place. Three in five (61%) of gamers agree that there needs to be more female characters on screen in general.

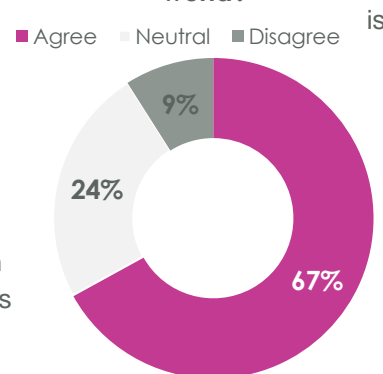
Addressing a male-dominated culture

Two in five female gamers have been 'mansplained' to or been told inappropriate things

Male and female gamers agree the gaming world has a male dominated culture (64% and 68%, respectively) and that it often toxic (47% and 46%, respectively). Unfortunately, female gamers have experienced the negative repercussions of a male-dominated culture off-screen and it's not uncommon for female gamers to be mistreated by male gamers.

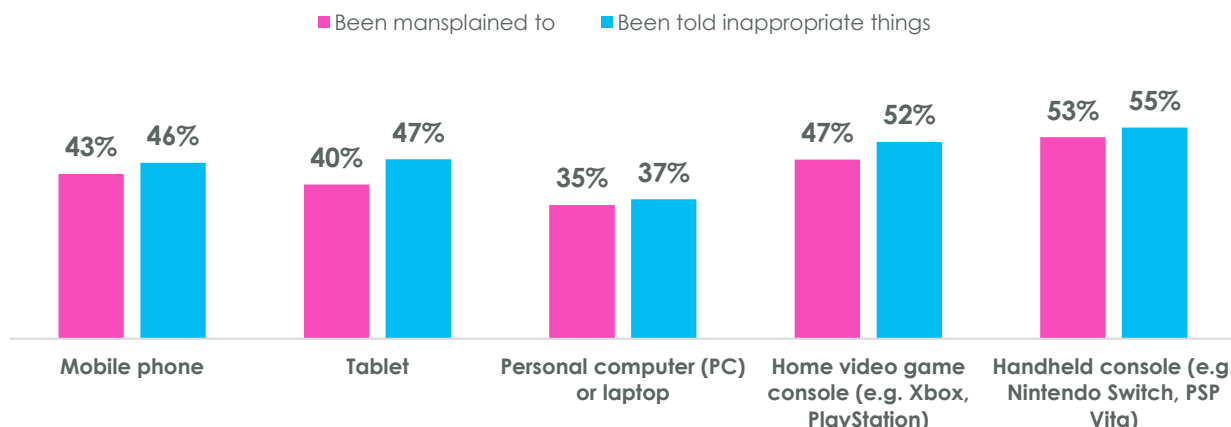
Two in five (38%) female gamers have been 'mansplained' to while playing video games, and a similar proportion (41%) have had men say inappropriate things to them while playing. This figure increases

Is there a male-dominate culture in the gaming world?



Percentage of female gamers who have been mansplained to or told inappropriate things while gaming

By device type, % Agree



for women who game using a home video game console and/or handheld console. Both formats utilize mics which can often become vehicles for harassment.

Female gamers share their experiences being discriminated against in the gaming world

“Even if I do better than the males in my group they still call me names because I’m a female. They **accuse me of cheating, having my “boyfriend” play for me** and so many other things. It’s so frustrating. It upsets me and **makes me not want to play those games anymore or just not talk.**”

Unfortunately, experiences with prejudice or harassment have discouraged some female gamers from using their mic or joining chat groups, which helps keep their gender a secret.

Some female gamers are so accustomed to the slurs or inappropriate language from male players that they view it as just a ‘fact of life’ when gaming with the mic on.

“Anytime I have to use my mic, and thus reveal my gender, either one of two things happen. Either they change the way they’ve been acting with me for the more positive, i.e. - **flirting, or they immediately start using slurs.** It doesn’t bother me but it’s a usual occurrence and **fact of life when gaming online with a mic.**”

“A few years ago I wasn’t allowed to join a online team because I’m female. It made me feel angry and sad. That was the first time it happened but never again because **I now only play with friends/family or on my own.**”

This has caused some gamers to change their behavior to avoid harassment. Like this gamer, who only plays with her family and friends or on her own.

Taking action

Video game companies have the agency to improve female gamers' experience

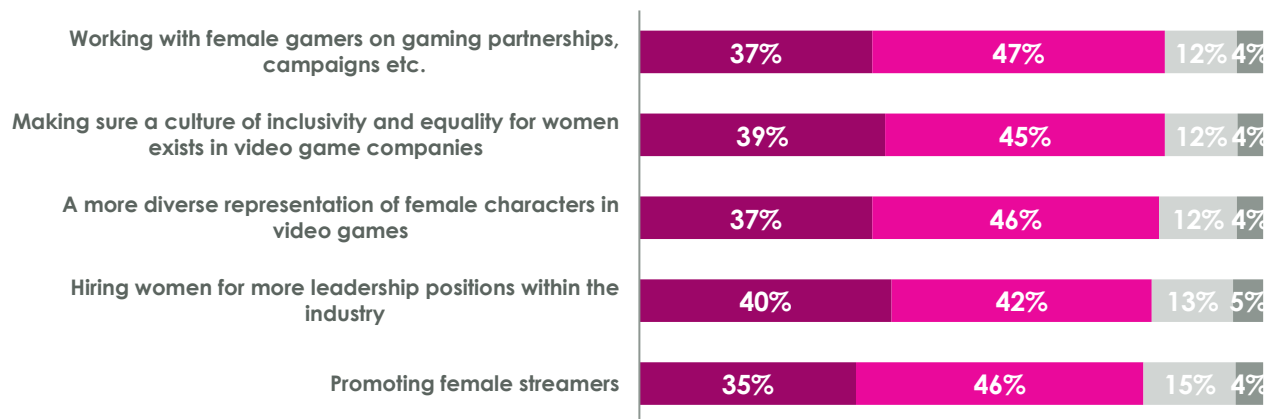
The gaming industry has an opportunity to address gender discrimination in the industry. We asked gamers which initiatives they feel would most improve the industry's representation of and relationship with women—initiatives with the greatest potential to amplify female voices.

84% of gamers feel that working with female gamers on campaigns and partnerships would have a positive impact, 82% feel hiring more women in leadership positions would, and 81% feel promoting female streamers would as well. Two in five (40%) feel that hiring more women for leadership positions would *strongly* improve the industry's relationship with women.

To what extent would the following solutions improve the gaming industry's relationship with/representation of women?

Top 5

■ Would strongly improve ■ Would somewhat improve ■ Wouldn't really improve ■ Wouldn't improve at all



Gamers call on companies to take ownership

For the gaming world to become a safer space for females, video game companies need to look inward.

- “One of the biggest issues in the gaming community *isn't the players themselves but the gaming companies themselves.*”
- “Draw more attention to female game developers/women run game companies because at this moment *I can't think of a single one.*”

Female gamers don't have control over the characters available to them on-screen, the storylines video game companies write, or who is hired in the industry. It's up to industry leaders to implement change.

*"Other developers do need to stop creating over-endowed air-headed female support characters for the males. **The industry as a whole has become much more aware of its audience and is trying hard to make the changes needed.**"*

*"**Companies need to add women, non-binary characters and other gendered characters.** This would help with representation, but they would then need to discourage mistreating others."*

*"**Uplift more women and nonbinary people** in the gaming community and industry. Treat players as just that, players"*

Summary

It's clear that male and female gamers don't have an equal gaming experience. When it comes to the characters on screen, female characters' physical appearances are often unrealistic and their storylines pale in comparison male characters. And there aren't enough or nearly as many diverse characters as there should be in games available today.

Off the screen, it's not uncommon for female gamers to experience prejudice and harassment while gaming, with around two in five female gamers having been mansplained to or told inappropriate things while playing. Some female gamers have changed their behavior and stopped using a mic or only game with friends or family, to avoid harassment by male gamers. Male and female gamers acknowledge that the gaming industry is male dominated, which contributes to the discrimination female gamers experience.

Our research suggests that the gaming industry needs to prioritize inclusivity, representation, and collaboration to truly make an impact and improve its representation of and relationship with women. By partnering with more female gamers on campaigns, ensuring a culture of inclusivity and equality for women exists at video game companies, and diversifying female representation on screen, video game companies can drive positive change. It is notable that the most effective solutions are from the top; for the gaming world to truly support female gamers, the industry may need to look inward first.



About Opinium

OPINIUM is an award winning strategic insight agency built on the belief that in a world of uncertainty and complexity, success depends on the ability to stay on pulse of what people **think**, **feel** and **do**. Creative and inquisitive, we are passionate about empowering our clients to make the decisions that matter. We work with organisations to define and overcome strategic challenges – helping them to get to grips with the world in which their brands operate. We use the right approach and methodology to deliver robust insights, strategic counsel and targeted recommendations that generate change and positive outcomes.

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