LIONBRIDGE
GAMES

ANYONE'S GAME:
THE GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY
TO CAPTURE FEMALE GAMERS

5 Tips For Gaming Companies Seeking
to Attract Half The World

BY LIONBRIDGE GAMES

WHEN YOU THINK OF A "GAMER," WHAT IMAGE COMES TO MIND?

If it's a scruffy, bespectacled young man, you're not alone. For years, the stereotype of the nerdy male gamer has persisted — and it's had ramifications on both the demographic composition of the gaming industry, as well as the content and messaging that the industry creates.

In reality, women represent a large and growing share of the global gaming market, with more women than ever identifying as avid or hardcore gamers. Their burgeoning interest has arisen despite significant headwinds: the gaming industry is largely run by men, women's preferences often take a back seat during game development, and women are not being encouraged to take on more active roles in gaming communities.

Gaming companies are leaving money on the proverbial table by overlooking female gamers. This underrepresented population presents an incredible opportunity not only for revenue generation but for being a positive influence during this pivotal moment in gaming history. If you're a game developer or publisher looking to enhance the gaming experience for women around the globe, read on.
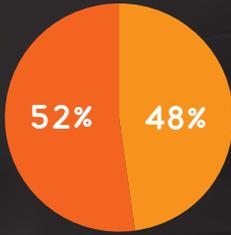
In This Paper, You Will Learn:

Where to find women in the worldwide gaming market

What motivates female gamers

Women's current gaming options
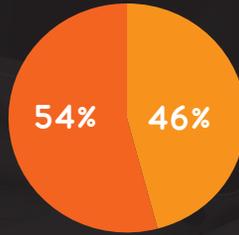
5 tips for creating games with women in mind

Over the years, women around the world have significantly increased their volume of gameplay. In the US, nearly half of all gamers are women, with other regions trailing close behind.
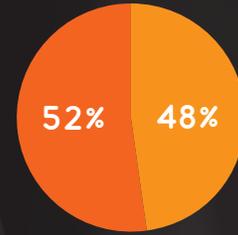
52% **48%**	**54%** **46%**	**52%** **48%**
UNITED STATES	**CHINA**	**EUROPE**
48% female | **52%** male	**46%** female | **54%** male	**48%** female | **52%** male
[source]	[source]	[source]

Where Are The Women?

Globally, female gamers seem to be ideal customers — their gaming behavior is growing, they over-index on mobile, and they're already spending money on the games they love.

Female gamers are more likely to play mobile games than male gamers. They play more frequently, too — 32% of women reported playing a mobile game at least 5 days a week, compared to just 28% of men. [Source]

On average, women gamers spend more on game consoles, downloadable content, and game accessories. For every dollar that male gamers spend on these items, female gamers spend an average of $1.07. [Source]

A Polish study found that women make up 42% of gamers who play daily, and a whopping 53% of all gamers who play 4-6 times a week. [Source]

In 2021, the games market in Asia experienced a 7.6% YoY growth in female gamers, compared to a 5% growth overall. [Source]
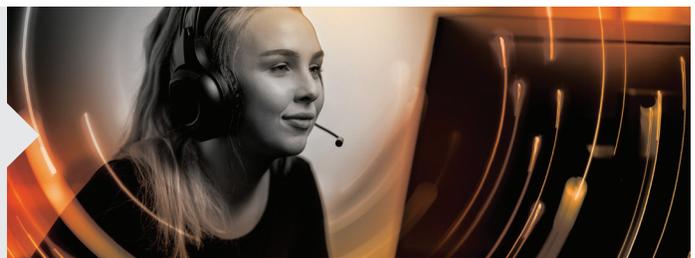
Despite these promising statistics, the notion that gaming is an inherently male activity persists, manifesting in multiple facets of the games industry. 77% of females have reported regular experiences of gender-specific harassment when gaming; only 6% of the 150 most popular video games feature a female protagonist; there are half as many female game developers as males.

Why is this the case? Though there are various reasons for gender disparity in video games, the problem may have originated from the 1983 video games industry crash. The fall of the market led game company executives to target sub-18-year-old boys as primary consumers of video gaming content.

Over the past 30+ years, gaming companies have hyper-focused on that stereotypical gaming persona. They've created games uniquely suited for the interests and motivations of young male gamers. They've designed rich narratives focused around bold, strong male protagonists. They've created female characters who are hyper-sexualized and ancillary to the protagonist's needs and actions.

They didn't necessarily need to create nuanced, female-focused games — so in large part, they didn't. Now we see that slowly beginning to change. However, as times and numbers have evolved, the development of female-focused games hasn't kept pace.

What Are Women's Current Gaming Options?

Today, most popular multiplayer games don't cater to women. Around the world, gamers choose to play for a few distinct reasons. They enjoy destruction, perhaps, or pursue the thrill of competition. Some love being transported to a fantasy world, while others are motivated by quest chains that slowly increase a player's power.

Women tend to be motivated by design, completion, and fantasy games, whereas men tend to be motivated by competition, destruction, and challenge games. In the aggregate, women aren't drawn to the types of games that have been highly marketed and successful in the past — games like Call of Duty, NBA, Grand Theft Auto, and Madden NFL. Indeed, women account for only 2% of sports game-players.

Even among the types of games that proportionately attract women, most game protagonists are male. An analysis of top-selling games found that 80% of lead characters in popular games are male, and a whopping 32% of games feature only male playable characters.

If you think this disparity doesn't matter to female gamers, think again. According to a study by Newzoo, only 48% of female gamers in the US and 39% in the UK reported feeling a sense of belonging from video games. Additionally, only 49% of female gamers in the US and 43% in the UK reported feeling like they are well-represented in video games.

Women want to (and do) play games in growing numbers, but their current options leave them underrepresented. Gaming companies have a massive, largely untapped revenue source in women who want to see themselves and their interests reflected in the games they play.

That's not to say that women have zero options — the tide is turning slowly, but there are a few shining examples of franchises with good female representation. Games like Tomb Raider and Metriod have long been favorites for their strong leading ladies, but recent releases such as NieR:Automata and Horizon Zero Dawn are quickly becoming staples with female gamers.

Though female representation in the gaming world seems to be trending positively, it's important that we keep up the momentum and continue to encourage inclusivity.

What Can we do to Change The Landscape of The Gaming Industry?

1. Develop narratives that appeal to ALL gamers

When striving to excite female gamers, it's important for writers and developers to take a critical look at their narrative design and examine how women are represented in their games.

How are uniquely female sensitivities and experiences portrayed within your narrative? What roles do female characters play in your game's story? What are the central traits, themes, and actions associated with your female characters? Does your game have female characters at all? The answers to these questions, as well as the way you address them, will have the single largest impact on how female gamers receive your narrative.

2. Re-engineer your marketing strategy to attract female gamers

Much like the differences in how men and women receive narratives, the ways that they seek out information and forge connections are different, too. Think about how women are searching for and finding new games — and make sure yours doesn't miss out.

According to consumer research from Newzoo, social networks are integral in introducing female gamers to new games. 39% of women discover games through friends or family, and 20% find them through social networks. Conversely, only 27% of men discover games through friends or family. Men largely find new games through game review sites and online video channels.

Effective marketing necessitates a deep understanding of your target customer. Understanding both what games women want to play and where they'll look to find them can catapult your company ahead of the curve.
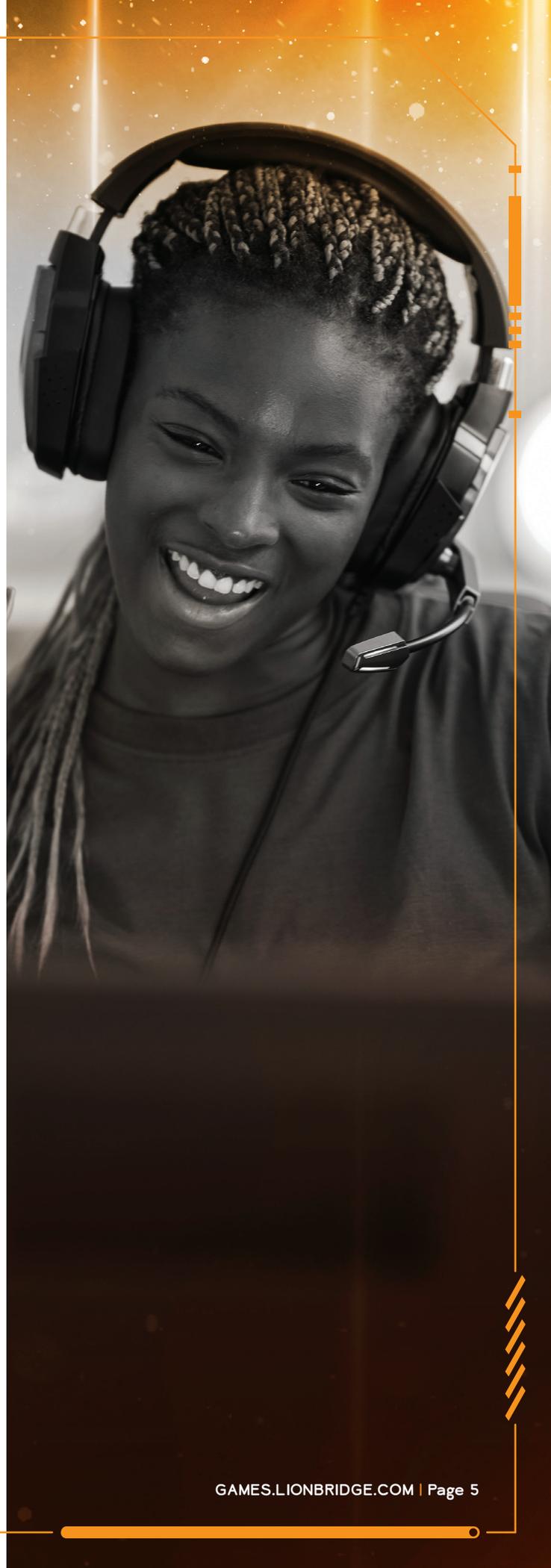
3. Target a growing community of women in eSports

In recent years, female eSports players have become an integral part of the competitive gaming world. Despite the rise in women on the scene, they remain an underrepresented and under appreciated asset to the eSports community.

Empowering female gamers is a critical next step in breaking stereotypes and changing the landscape of the competitive gaming scene. Though some progressive companies have taken solid first steps toward gender equality in eSports, there's still a massive disparity in support and resources between female and male gamers.

Women in eSports are an under-tapped market with large upside potential. While it's important to collaborate with female eSports players, make sure you're properly supporting them with the resources they need — not just exposure, but ample management, coaching, and pay.

4. Hire women to build games (and to break them)

Across industries, studies have shown that diversity in corporate leadership yields diversity in the products and services they offer. This is certainly true of the games industry, which has historically staffed a disproportionately high volume of men.

In an interview with IGN, Montreal-based game developer Tanya Short expresses her concerns about the lack of female executives in gaming. "It's been a vicious circle. If you create products primarily targeting a certain demographic, and that's the prestigious product, then the people who play that product are more likely to want to build more of that product," says Short. "Male developers create products for male gamers, who in turn are motivated to become game developers. Interrupting the cycle can be difficult for women — but it's imperative in creating games that better represent what female gamers want, and thus promote further gameplay and purchasing."

Acknowledging disparity is a great first step, but how can you encourage women to join the ranks at your company? First, ensure your corporate culture is inclusive, respectful, and encouraging of diverse perspectives and voices.

5. Invest in Mobile Gaming

The numbers are in: women are flocking toward mobile games, where they're spending more time and money than their male counterparts. 64% of women say they prefer mobile over other platforms, with 32% of women reporting that they play at least 5 days a week.

Mobile is on the rise in general, and some publishers have already caught on. While AAA releases were historically confined to console and PC, there have been many big-budget games to hit the App Store and Google Play store in recent years. With massively popular Genshin Impact, Fortnite, and Roblox seeing success on mobile, turning to phones for development looks to be a good investment.

The opportunity is twofold when female gamers are added to the equation — mobile games allow you to capitalize on a growing trend while meeting your audience where they are. If you want to start attracting female customers, go where they go. Invest in mobile. When coupled with strong female-driven narratives and a targeted marketing strategy, the investment could pay dividends.

At Lionbridge Games, we know what it takes to capture and inspire new groups of people at scale. We're committed to helping our customers bring their games to millions of gamers in hundreds of markets, helping them forge deeper connections that keep their players coming back for more.

If you're a developer, publisher, or tester looking to release the next great game, we can help. Partner with us to find out how you can better resonate with female gamers — and all other gamers — at home and across the globe.

About Lionbridge Games

Lionbridge Games delivers the gaming experience you envision to any global audience. Our passionate global gamers help bring every aspect of your game to life, without compromise. Our services include narrative design, voiceover recording, game localization, subtitling, quality assurance testing, and player experience services. Lionbridge brings the highest quality to every game you develop – everywhere it will be played.

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