

Authentic Representation Is Good for Business

With well over three billion people playing video games worldwide, players of all ages, backgrounds, and perspectives are connected through the shared joy of gaming. However, various studies have revealed a sizable gap between who today's players are and their reflection on screen.

Do top video games reflect players?

Who are video game players?

- 46% are women.
- 20% are Latinx, 15% are Black, and 5% are Asian American.
- 31% have a disability.¹
- 29% are 50+.²
- 20% are LGBTQ+.³

Who are the main characters in video games?

- 21% are women, and 8% are women of color.
- Nearly nine in ten leading characters are white.⁴
- 1% of characters shown in the top 10 trailers have a disability.⁵
- 3% of characters are 50+, and less than 1% of lead characters are 50+.⁶
- Less than 2% of games on major consoles and PC include LGBTQ+ characters.⁷

In video game dialogue, a 2023 study found that male characters speak **twice** as much as female characters.⁸

¹ Le, M. T. N. (2022, April 8). "Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in Games: Gamers Want Less Toxicity in Games and Want Publishers to Take a Stance." *Newzoo*. Retrieved from <https://newzoo.com/resources/blog/newzoos-gamer-sentiment-diversity-inclusion-gender-ethnicity-sexual-identity-disability>

² Entertainment Software Association. (2024). "Essential facts about the gaming industry." Retrieved from <https://www.theesa.com/essential-facts-about-the-gaming-industry/>.

³ GLAAD. "GLAAD's Inaugural GLAAD Gaming Report Finds Growing Number of LGBTQ Gamers While LGBTQ Characters in Games Lag Far Behind." GLAAD, 7 Apr. 2022. Retrieved from <https://glaad.org/releases/glaads-inaugural-glaad-gaming-report-finds-growing-number-of-lgbtq-gamers/>.

⁴ Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media. "The Double-Edged Sword of Online Gaming: An Analysis of Masculinity in Video Games and the Gaming Community." Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, 2023, Retrieved from <https://geenadavisinstitute.org/research/the-double-edged-sword-of-online-gaming-an-analysis-of-masculinity-in-video-games-and-the-gaming-community/>.

⁵ Shell, Jethro. (2021). "What Do We See: An Investigation Into the Representation of Disability in Video Games". 10.48550/arXiv.2103.17100.

⁶ Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media. "The Double-Edged Sword of Online Gaming: An Analysis of Masculinity in Video Games and the Gaming Community." Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, 2023, Retrieved from <https://geenadavisinstitute.org/research/the-double-edged-sword-of-online-gaming-an-analysis-of-masculinity-in-video-games-and-the-gaming-community/>.

⁷ GLAAD. "GLAAD's Inaugural GLAAD Gaming Report Finds Growing Number of LGBTQ Gamers While LGBTQ Characters in Games Lag Far Behind." GLAAD, 7 Apr. 2022. Retrieved from <https://glaad.org/releases/glaads-inaugural-glaad-gaming-report-finds-growing-number-of-lgbtq-gamers/>.

⁸ Rennick, Stephanie, et al. "Gender Bias in Video Game Dialogue." *Royal Society Open Science*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2023, article 221095, Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.221095>.

Players want inclusive content and spaces.

- 70% of PC and console players say that it's very or extremely important that games feature diverse characters and stories.⁹
- 64% of players agree with the statement, "I am more likely to play a video game if it has characters that are more diverse than the characters I usually see in video games."¹⁰
- 60% of players decided not to spend money in a game because of how others treated them in that community.¹¹
- 80% of adolescents expressed a desire to see characters that look like them in games. However, a majority (50.6%) indicate that they find it challenging to discover such games.¹²

It's estimated that video game companies working toward more inclusive representation ...

- Can generate \$500M+ incremental monthly revenue.
- Yield an incremental monthly spend of \$4.50/player.
- Double their average spending with women.¹³

Authentic representation is good for innovation.

While there is a strong business case for representation, gaming scholar Adrienne Shaw cautions that there are limitations in this thinking because it "positions marginalized groups' representation as contingent upon their consumption of the medium and gives the impression that if no women played games, there would be no case for representing women well or making them protagonists in games." Instead, Shaw challenges us to view diversity as the "expected norm" to open up the creative possibilities for the entire universe of players.¹⁴

Video games provide spaces for more than just entertainment. They are spaces to explore new ideas and different ways of life, try on alternate identities, solve problems, strategize, and connect with players from all walks of life. The GDI Playbook presents an opportunity to break new ground in terms of authentic and inclusive representation in gaming, helping creators craft new realms where all players have an opportunity to belong.

⁹ Google. "2022 PC & Console Insights Report." Google, 2022. Retrieved from <https://games.withgoogle.com/reports/2022-pc-console-insights-report/>.

¹⁰ Nielsen Video Game Tracker Survey June 2024

¹¹ Take This. "Research Report: Toxic Gamers Are Alienating Your Core Demographic – The Business Case for Community Management." Take This, 16 Aug. 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.takethis.org/2023/08/research-report-toxic-gamers-are-alienating-your-core-demographic-the-business-case-for-community-management/>.

¹² Burrus, A., Hines, A., Rivas-Lara, S., & Uhls, Y.T. (2024). "CSS Teens & Screens 2024. Center for Scholars & Storytellers." Retrieved from <https://www.scholarsandstorytellers.com/teens-screens-24>.

¹³ Deloitte Digital. (2023). "Media Reimagined." Retrieved from <https://www.deloittedigital.com/us/en/insights/perspective/media-reimagined.html>

¹⁴ Shaw, A. (2017). "Diversity without defense: Reframing arguments for diversity in games." Kinephanos, 54-76. Retrieved from: http://www.kinephanos.ca/Revue_files/2017_Shaw.pdf