

2025 GAME INDUSTRY SALARY REPORT



A **[CAREER]** IN MAKING GAMES

The game industry has been through a hard time, to put it mildly. One-fourth of game industry professionals have been laid off sometime in the past two years, with many of them still looking for work. Add studio closures, mergers, and potential automation via generative AI: It's enough to make anyone think twice about a viable career in the game industry.

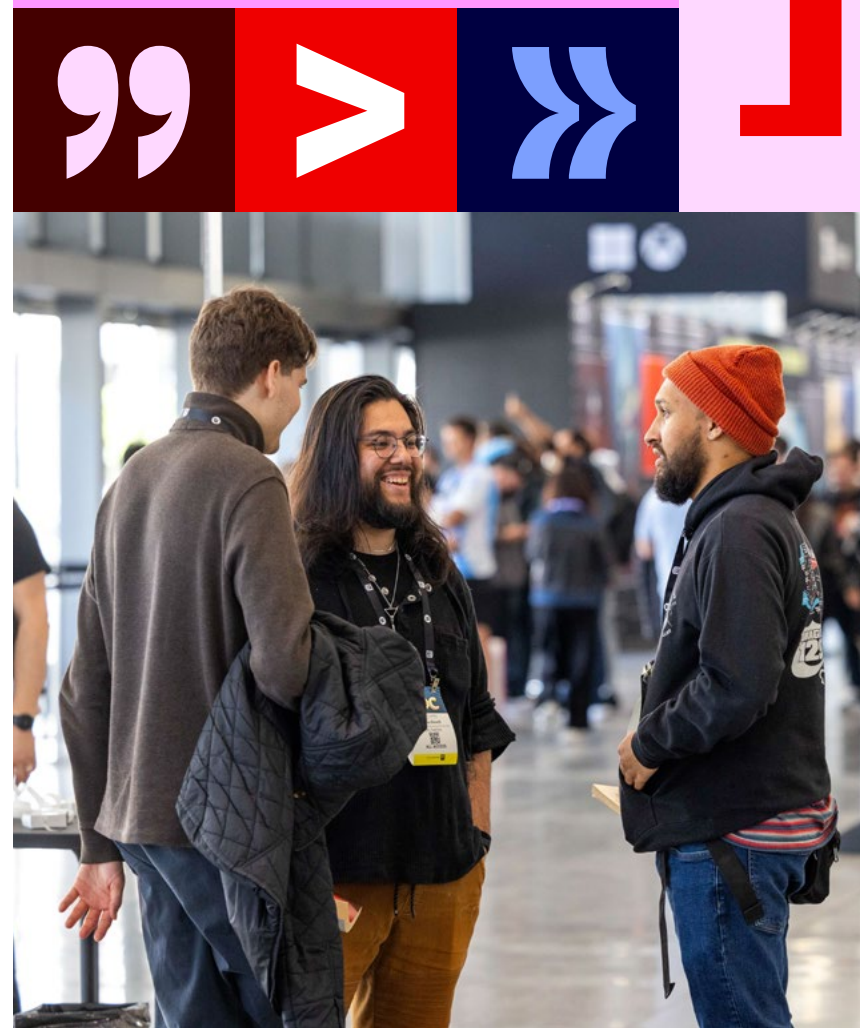
But the industry persists. Studios are recruiting, developers are making games, and mentors are guiding the next generation. There's so much passion that goes into games, and it's reflected in the people getting paid to make them. But are they being paid enough?

In July 2025, we surveyed 562 game industry professionals based in the United States. We wanted to see how salaries have grown (or not in some cases), along with how layoffs have impacted the job landscape. This survey has a 3% margin of error at a 95% confidence level.

The average salary for US-based game industry professionals in 2025 was around \$142,000, which 60% said was at least a slight increase from their 2024 salary.

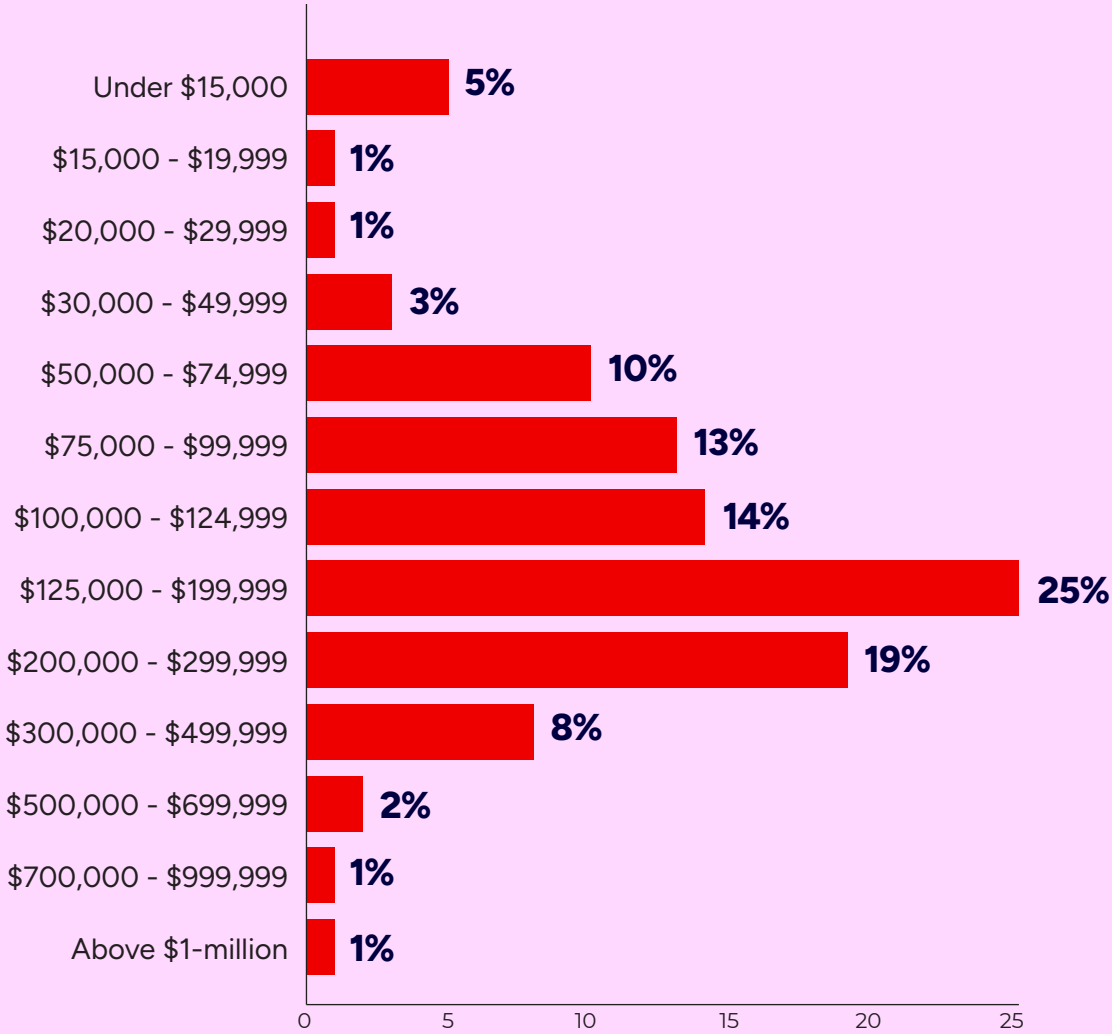
The median salary sits around \$129,000.

\$142,000
The average salary
for US-based game industry
professionals in 2025



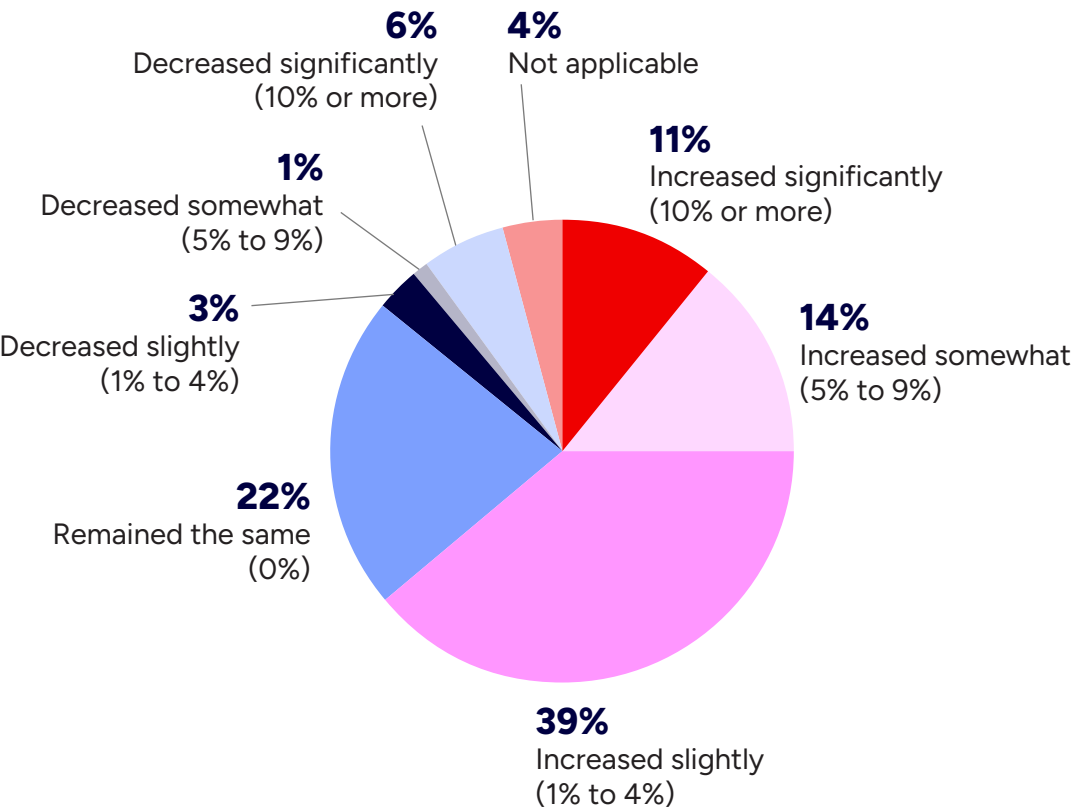
2025 Game Industry Salaries

Total Respondents 505



2025 Salary vs. 2024*

Total Respondents 504



*currently employed

SALARY DIFFERENCES

According to our survey, salaries tend to be higher for professionals in AAA studios, individuals working at larger companies, and those who were recruited or referred for their current positions instead of applying through a job posting.

Not surprisingly, seniority and years in industry also have an impact on salaries, with more years (or a higher title) usually resulting in higher pay. However, for the most part, education levels don't seem to significantly impact average salaries—except for those with a master's degree or PhD, who tend to get paid more.

Benefits

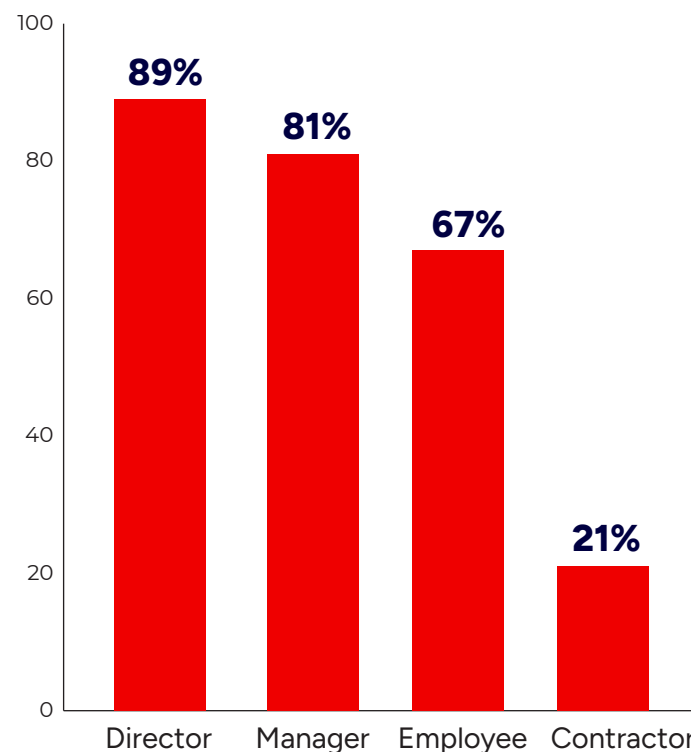
About 85% of game industry professionals employed by another person or company receive health insurance. Some of the other more common benefits received are employer-matching contributions and stock options. Interestingly, developers working at companies with fewer than 50 people were less likely to report having health insurance, but they were more likely to have stock options.

Some of the least common benefits include certification/tuition reimbursement and childcare subsidies.

% Making \$100K+ Per Year

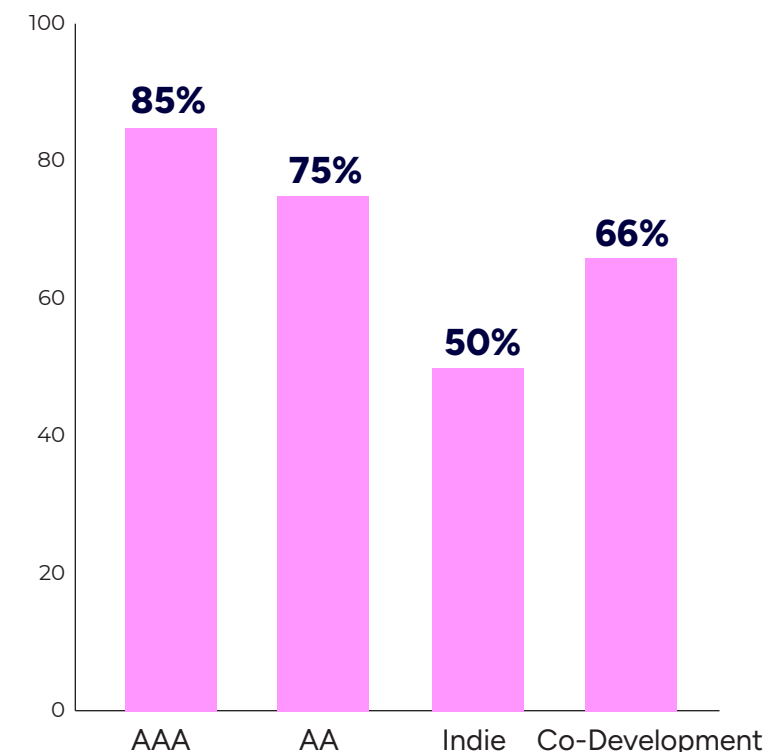
By Seniority

Total Respondents 504



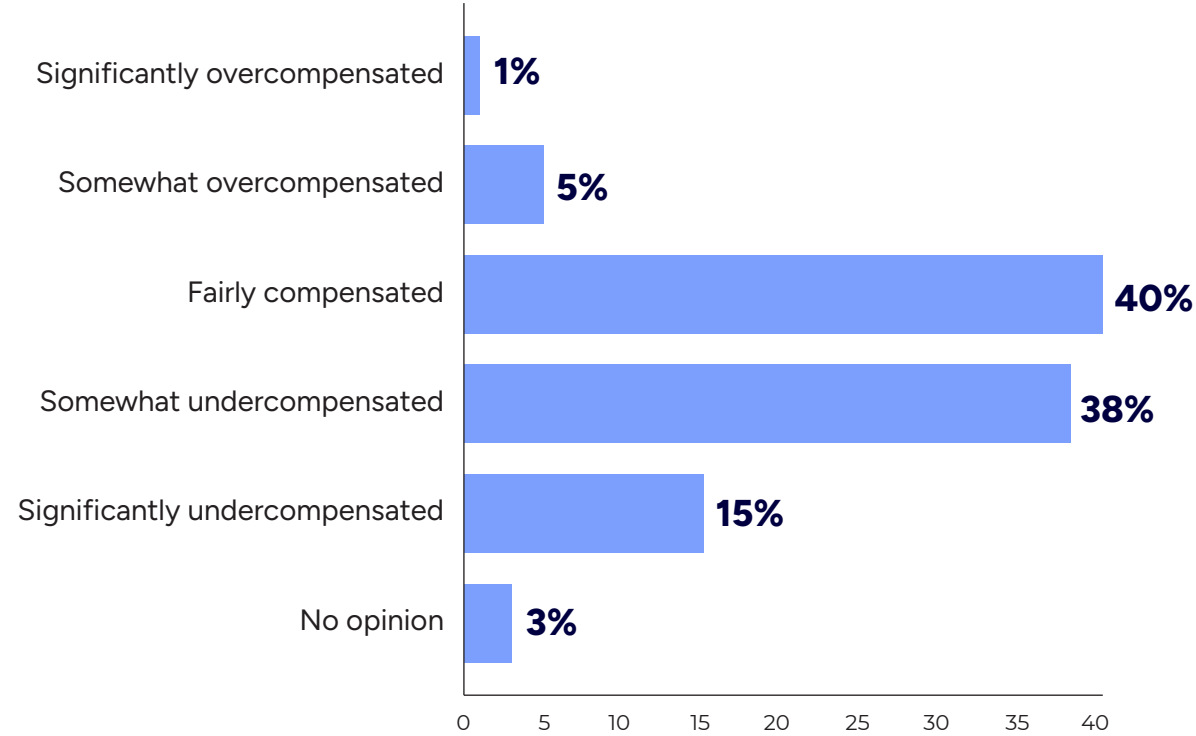
By Studio Type

Total Respondents 504



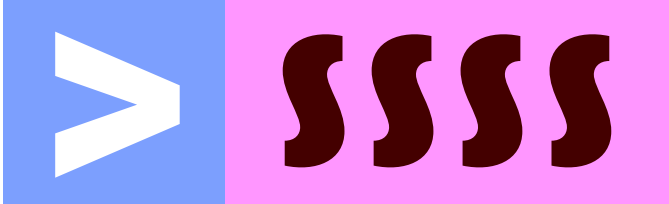
Do you feel fairly compensated for your work?*

Total Respondents 505



*currently employed

About 85%
of game industry professionals
employed by another person or company
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SALARY [SATISFACTION] ISN'T UNIVERSAL

Around 80% of employed respondents said their current salary meets or exceeds their basic needs. The highest levels of comfort were reported among workers in programming, visual arts, and management/operations. Overall, one-third of respondents feel they are fairly compensated for their work (5% say they are overcompensated). But not everyone feels as fortunate.

Over half (53%) of respondents say they feel somewhat or significantly undercompensated at their job—based on their role, experience, and market conditions. That number increases to 69% for contractors, consultants, and people working part-time.

Respondents working in business/marketing, visual arts, and management/operations were more likely to say they feel undercompensated, along with those holding a supervisor or managerial position.

In addition, 60% of women and non-binary people report feeling undercompensated (compared to 50% of men), along with 62% of non-white game workers (compared to 50% of those who identify solely as white).

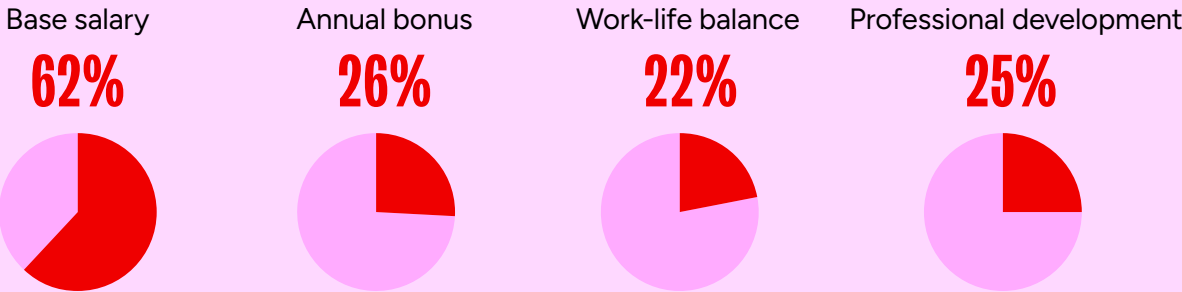




Over 53%
of respondents say they feel
somewhat or significantly
undercompensated at their job

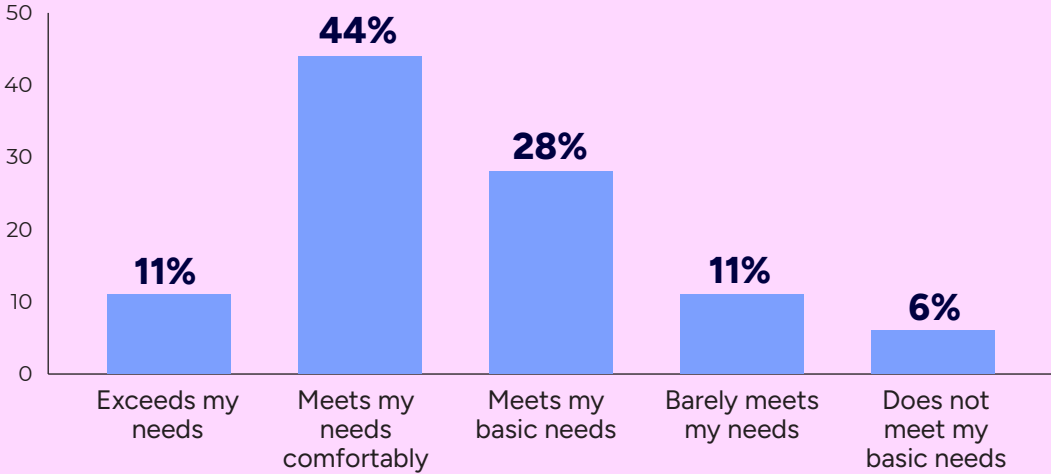
Which aspects of your compensation need the most improvement?

Total Respondents 484



How well does your compensation meet your living needs?

Total Respondents 505





EXTRA WORK & SIDE [HUSTLES]

For the most part, working in games is a full-time commitment. Three-fourths (74%) of currently employed respondents work a single full-time position, while one-tenth are freelancers or contractors and 2% have one or more part-time positions.

For those who work directly on games, one-fifth say they also perform outside tasks like marketing, sales, business development, and research. In addition, 11% of employed respondents (including 11% of full-time workers) take on additional work outside of their primary job.

The most popular side gigs are independent game development, consulting, and contract work for other studios. One-tenth of respondents with side jobs are streamers or content creators.

When asked why they take on additional work, over half (57%) said it's because they need additional income. This was followed by creative fulfillment (52%), career development (31%), and project diversity (30%).

11% of employed respondents
take on additional work outside of their primary job.

CURRENT STATE OF [LAYOFFS]

The game industry can be a tumultuous place—especially for those in the more creative fields. According to our survey, 32% of folks working in audio, game design, or visual arts have worked for at least five companies over the past 10 years (compared to 13% of those in programming, business, or operations). This includes people working full-time, along with those who’ve done freelance, contract work, or part-time.

This is also reflected in the layoffs crisis. According to our survey, 28% of people working in audio, game design, or visual arts experienced a layoff during the past two years (compared to 22% of those in programming, business, or operations).

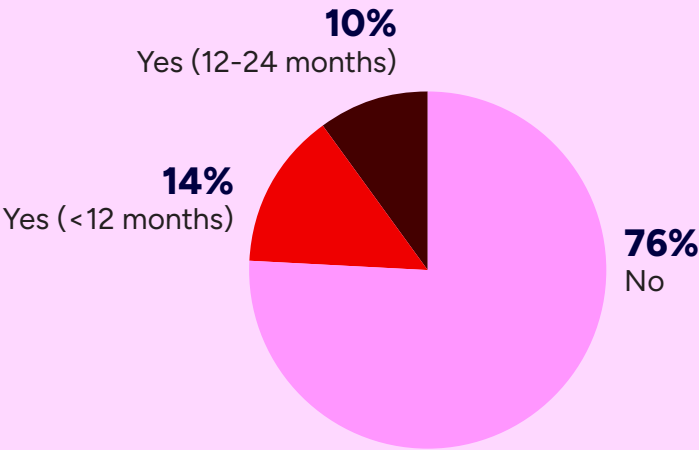
Overall, one-fourth (24%) of respondents say they’ve been laid off at some point in the past two years. Almost half haven’t found another job yet.

When asked about their current job search, 44% of still-unemployed respondents said they spend 6-10 hours per week looking for work, and 40% noted that they’ve filled out at least 100 applications so far.

For those who’ve found work after being laid off, 90% said their new jobs are at least somewhat like their previous ones. But their salaries might not be. While 19% of respondents did say their new salary is the same as their previous one, 19% said their pay increased by at least 10%... and one-fourth (25%) said it decreased by that same amount.

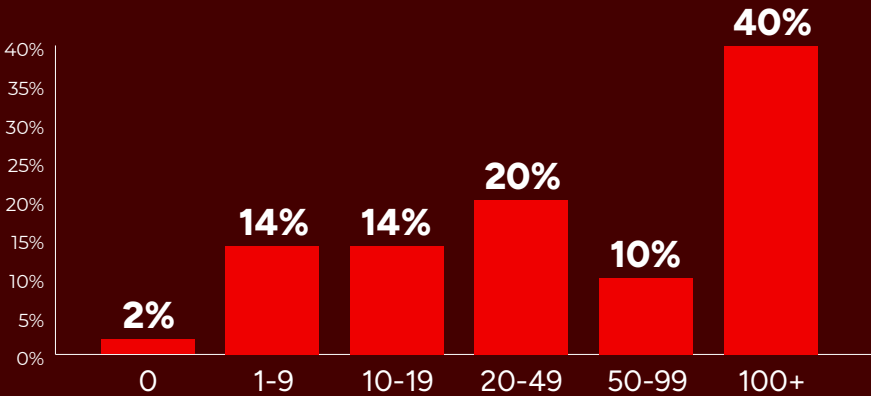
Have you been laid off in the past 24 months?

Total Respondents 562



How many jobs have you applied to so far?

Total Respondents 50



LAYOFF FEARS IMPACT INDUSTRY CONFIDENCE

The climate of ongoing layoffs and studio closures has led some game industry professionals to question the stability of their own careers—though most still feel relatively secure. Almost two-thirds of employed respondents said they feel somewhat or very confident in their current job security, while one-third of them said they do not.

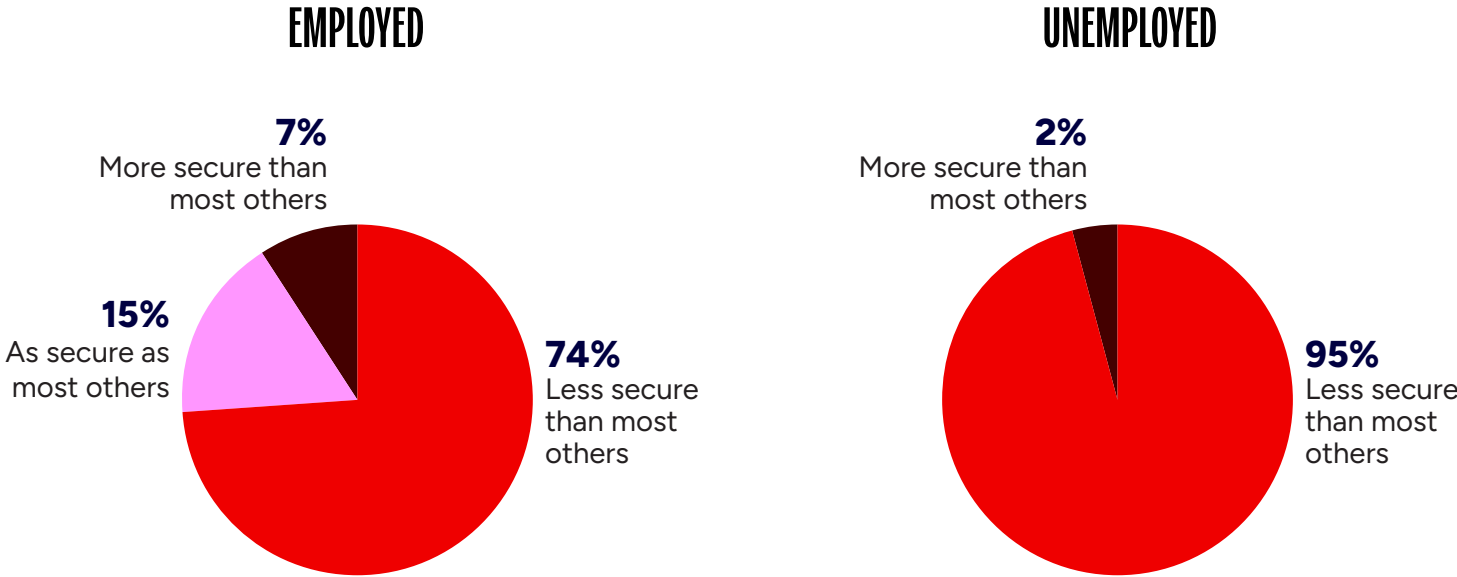
Less can be said about confidence in the game industry as a whole. When asked to rate the stability of game development in comparison to other careers, 80% said it was a “less secure” profession.

That’s not stopping them from continuing to do what they love: 82% of respondents said they are somewhat or very likely to stay in the game development industry for the next five years (11% said they were unlikely to stay and 7% were unsure).

The story is a little less hopeful for those who are unemployed. A whopping 98% of them rate the game industry as less secure than others, and 29% of them said they are unlikely to stay (21% were unsure).

How would you rate the career path security of game development, in comparison to other careers?

Total Respondents 562



” ! } *

80% of total respondents said game development was a less secure profession in comparison to other careers.

WAGE [GAP] PERSISTS FOR WOMEN AND NON-WHITE EMPLOYEES

Pay equity remains a complicated issue: 33% of employed respondents said their companies are working to close existing pay gaps for women and employees of color, while one-tenth said no efforts are being made (about 38% of respondents said they didn't know). However, 15% said there was "no need" to establish salary parity based on race or ethnicity, and 17% said their companies didn't have a gender pay gap (including 21% of men).

The numbers tell a different story.

According to our respondents, non-white workers on average receive 27% less than their white peers. Women earn 24% less than their male counterparts. For context, the current gender pay gap in the United States sits around 15%.

To test this further, we compared the salaries for one specific group that had statistically similar representation to the core survey: currently employed game designers with at least six years of experience (75 respondents in total). Within this subset, two-thirds of men (68%) received at least \$125K per year, compared to 38% of women and non-binary respondents. In addition, 62% of white respondents made at least \$125K per year, compared to 45% of non-white game industry professionals.





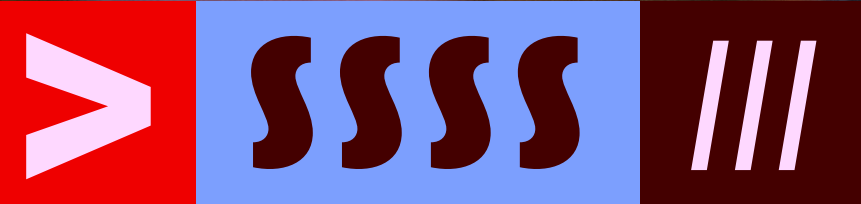
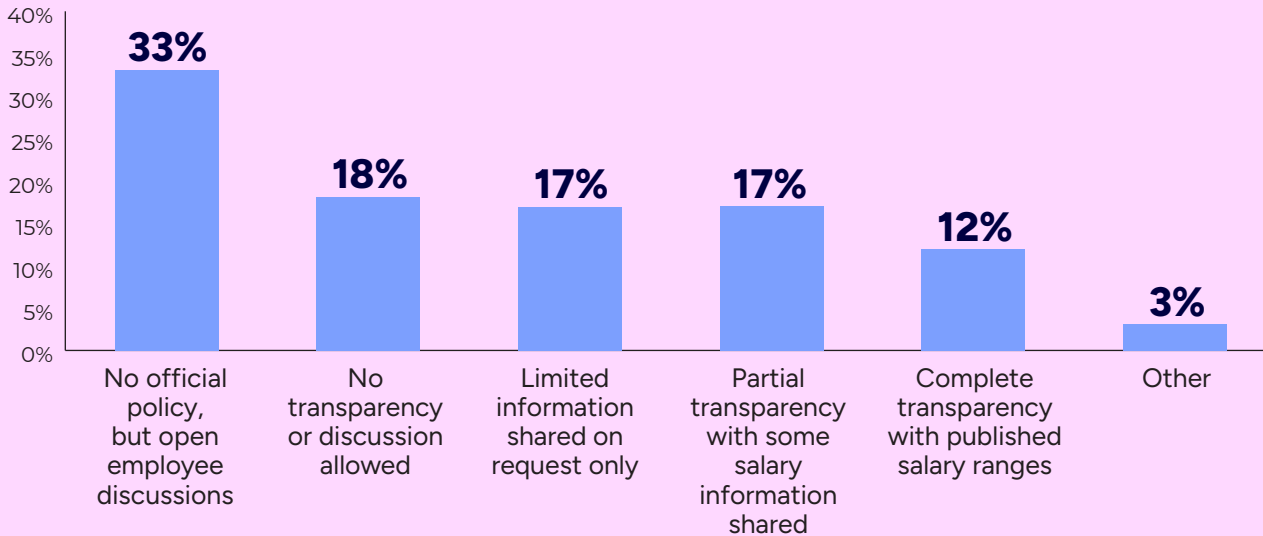
PAY [TRANSPARENCY] IN GAMES

Pay transparency is a complex issue in the United States. There are no federal laws regarding the practice, but several cities and states have passed their own regulations that require employers to post expected salary ranges for new positions or promotion opportunities. According to our survey, about 29% of respondents work at companies with some level of open pay transparency.

Informally, people working in the United States have a protected right through the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to discuss their wages—even if their company is based outside the US. However, almost one-fifth (18%) of respondents said there’s “no transparency or discussion allowed” at their places of work. Those working in visual arts (29%) were most likely to say that no pay discussions are allowed.

How would you describe your company’s approach to pay transparency?

Total Respondents 442

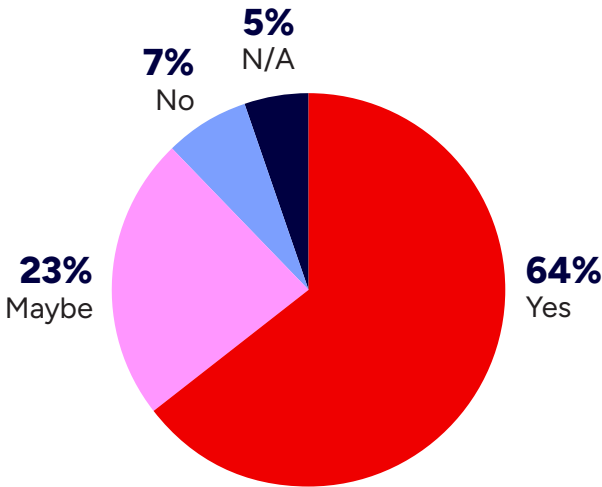


HALF OF GAME WORKERS SAY THEY'D LIKE TO JOIN A [UNION]

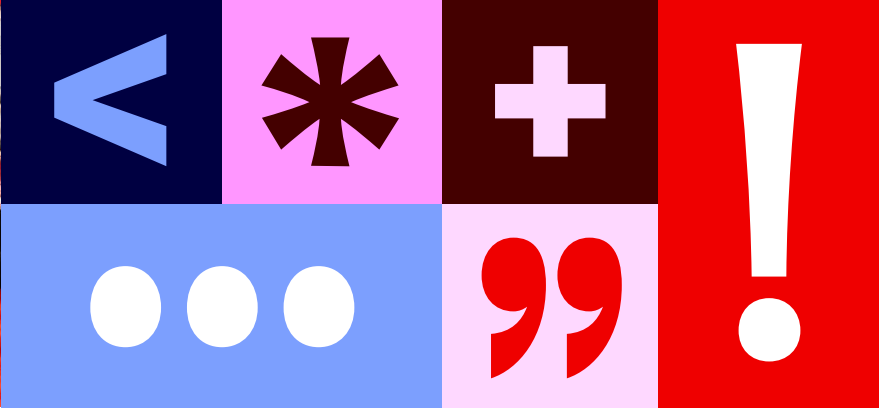
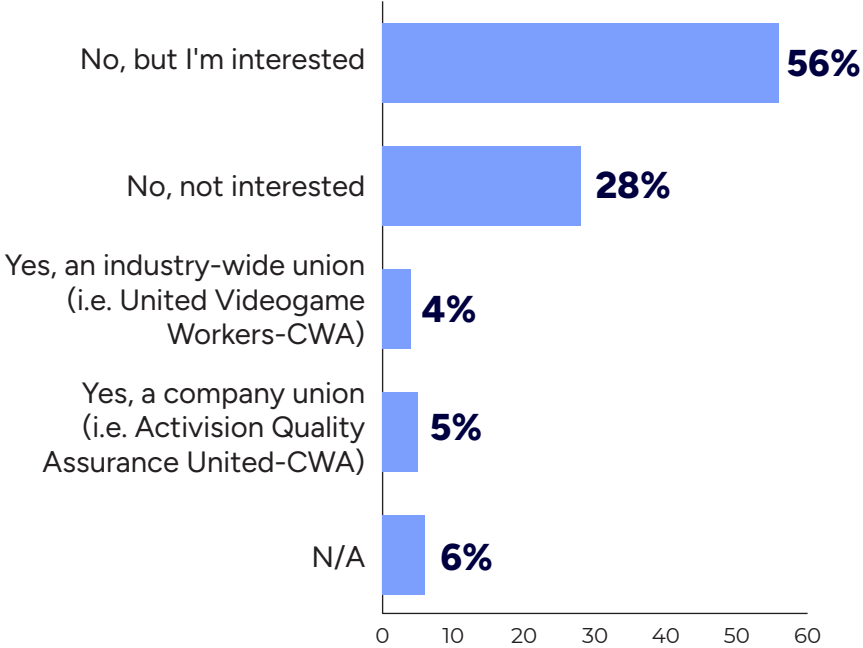
Almost two-thirds (64%) of respondents said they support the unionization of game industry workers, with union support higher among younger workers, people who are currently unemployed, and those making less than \$100K per year. One-tenth (9%) of respondents say they are currently part of a union.

Over half (56%) said they are interested in joining one.

Do you support the unionization of game industry workers?



Are you part of a union?



64% of respondents said they support the unionization of game industry workers

Game Industry Salaries: By the Numbers

AUDIO

32+ RESPONDENTS

Roles include: sound designer, technical sound designer, music composer, audio programmer, producer, and audio mixer.

ANNUAL SALARY
\$132K

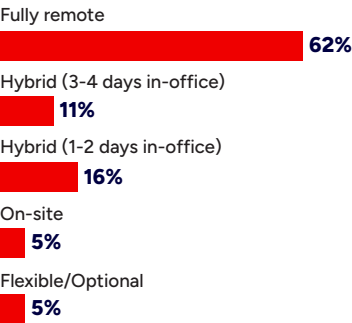
7% less than industry average

23%

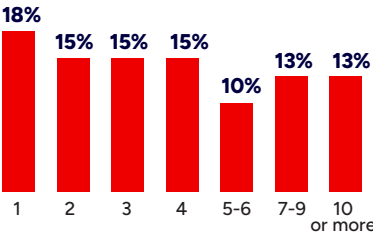
HAVE BEEN LAID OFF

1 In 5 are still looking for new jobs

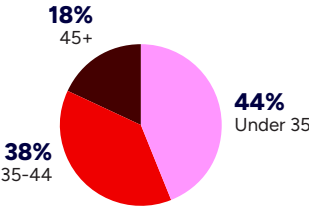
REMOTE VS. IN OFFICE



COMPANIES WORKED FOR



AGE



DEMOGRAPHICS



SALARY CHANGES YOY



70%

Are interested in joining a union

92%

Are likely to stay in game industry

BUSINESS & MARKETING

41+ RESPONDENTS

Roles include: business development, marketing, community manager, public relations, and investment.

ANNUAL SALARY
\$134K

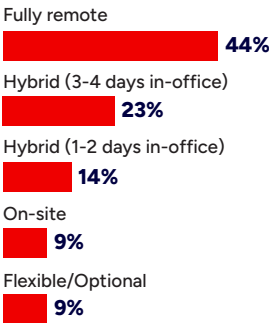
6% less than industry average

20%

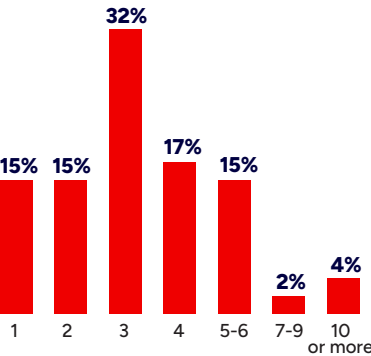
HAVE BEEN LAID OFF

1 In 2 are still looking for new jobs

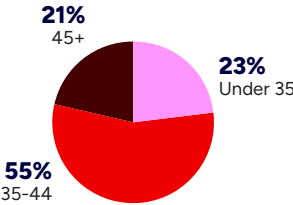
REMOTE VS. IN OFFICE



COMPANIES WORKED FOR



AGE



DEMOGRAPHICS



SALARY CHANGES YOY



43%

Are insecure about their job future

70%

Say games industry less secure than others

GAME DESIGN

103+ RESPONDENTS

Roles include: localization, monetization specialist, and narrative, systems, level, combat, technical, UX, and AI designers.

ANNUAL SALARY

\$133K

6% less than industry average

28%

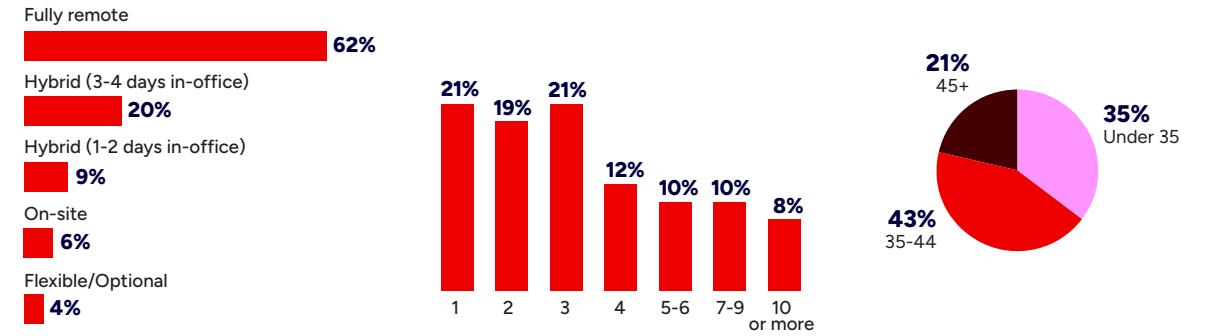
HAVE BEEN LAID OFF

1 In 2 are still looking for a new job

REMOTE VS. IN OFFICE

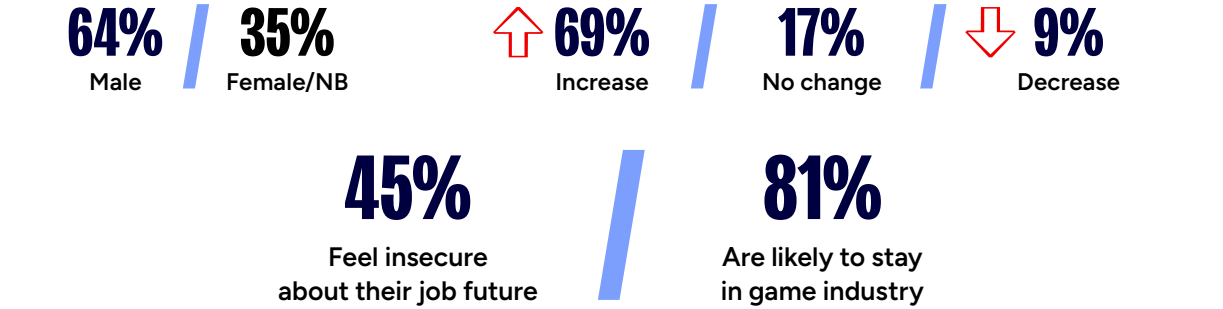
COMPANIES WORKED FOR

AGE



DEMOGRAPHICS

SALARY CHANGES YOY



GAME PROGRAMMING

132+ RESPONDENTS

Roles include: game programmer, software engineer, QA analyst, game tester, and tools, AI, and UI programmers.

ANNUAL SALARY

\$150K

6% more than industry average

21%

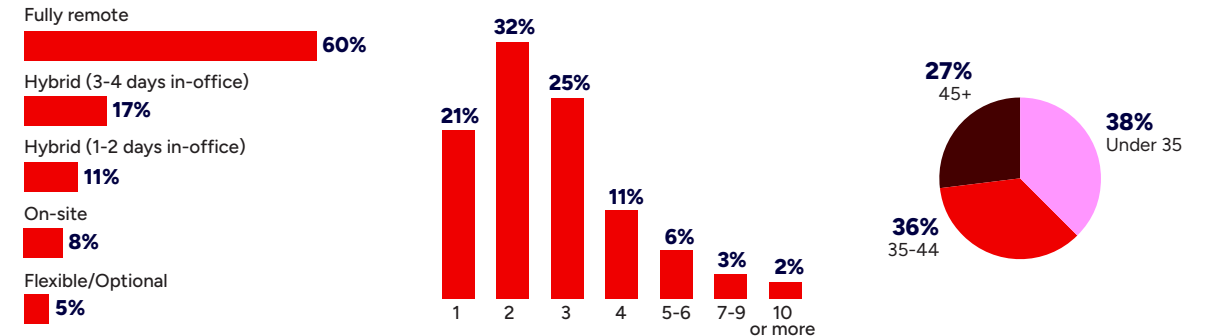
HAVE BEEN LAID OFF

2/3 are still looking for new jobs

REMOTE VS. IN OFFICE

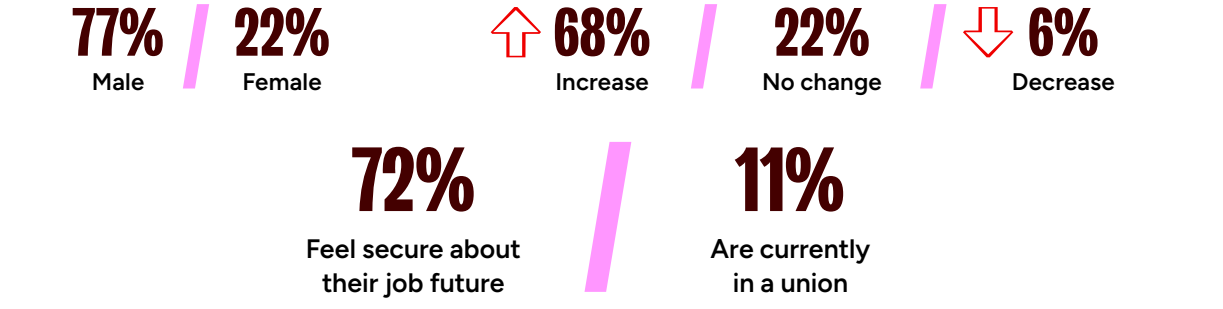
COMPANIES WORKED FOR

AGE



DEMOGRAPHICS

SALARY CHANGES YOY



MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONS

93+ RESPONDENTS

Roles include: game producer, executive, product manager, game director, studio director, information technology, and outsourcing manager.

ANNUAL SALARY

\$160K

13% more than industry average

25%

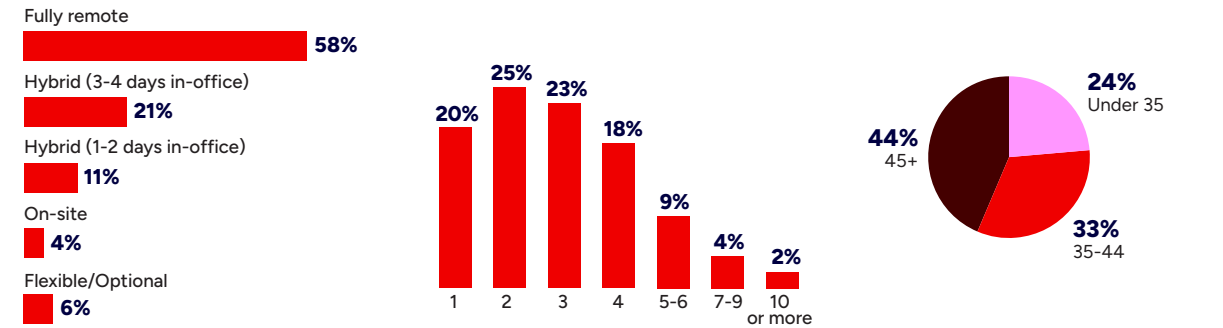
HAVE BEEN LAID OFF

Half are still looking for a new job

REMOTE VS. IN OFFICE

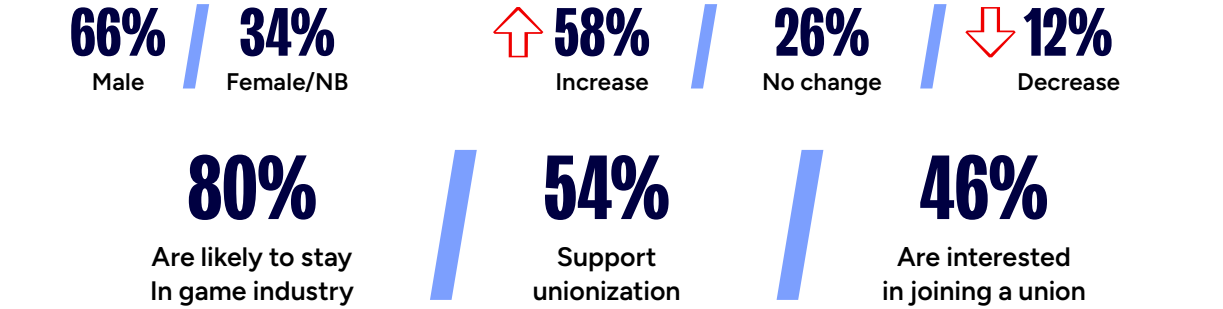
COMPANIES WORKED FOR

AGE



DEMOGRAPHICS

SALARY CHANGES YOY



VISUAL ARTS

54+ RESPONDENTS

Roles include: animator, VFX, art director, and technical, 2D, 3D, character, lighting, and environment artists.

ANNUAL SALARY

\$124K

13% less than industry average

33%

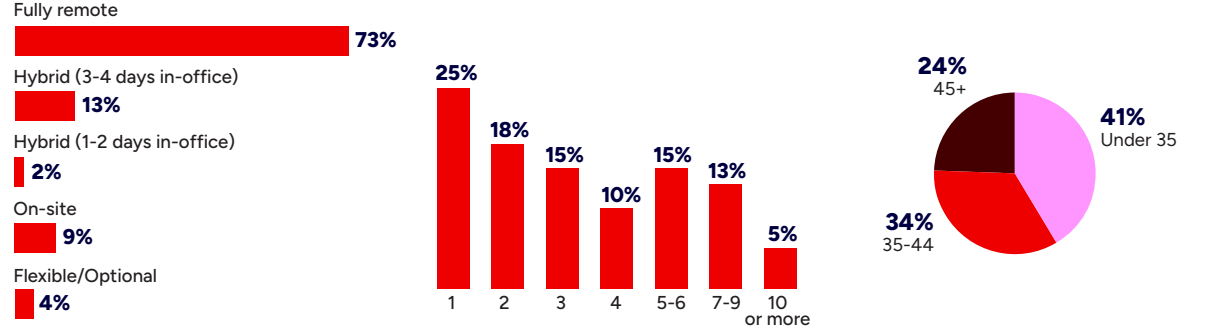
HAVE BEEN LAID OFF

30% are still looking for a new job

REMOTE VS. IN OFFICE

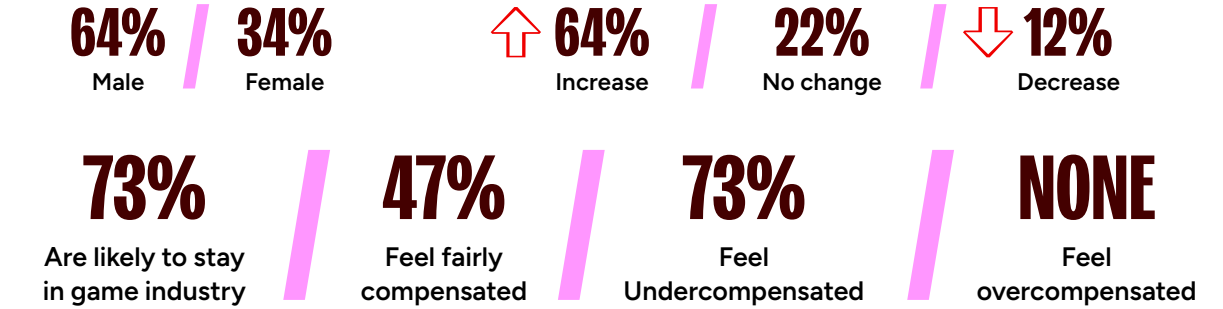
COMPANIES WORKED FOR

AGE

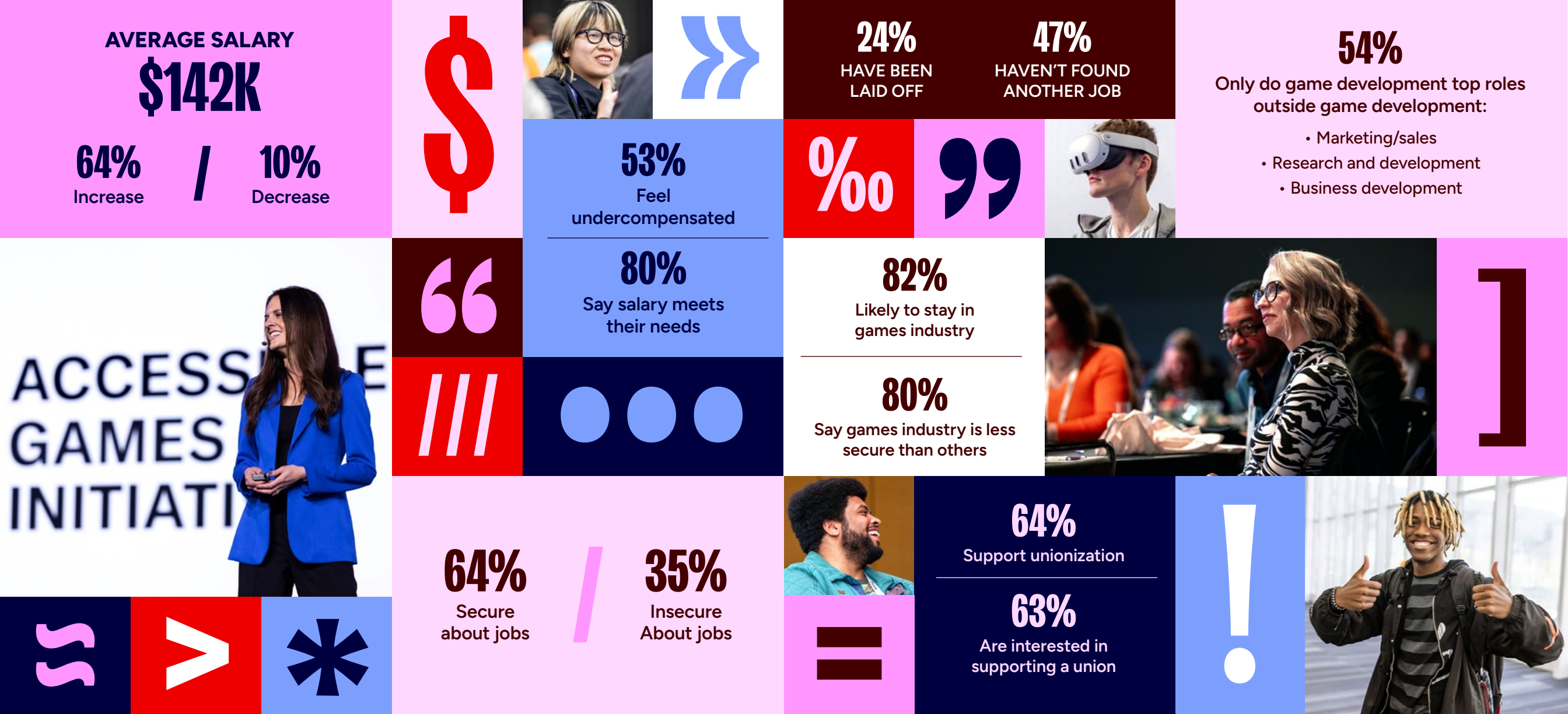


DEMOGRAPHICS

SALARY CHANGES YOY



GAME INDUSTRY TOTALS



AUTHOR



Beth Elderkin serves as content marketing manager for GDC Festival of Gaming, part of Informa Festivals, helping to tell the stories of the people and ideas shaping the game industry. She's also the primary author and researcher for the annual GDC State of the Game Industry, the GDC Trends Report, and GDC Insights.

DATA SUPPORT



Cheryl Ball is a senior research analyst for Omdia, part of Informa TechTarget, that frequently collaborates with GDC Festival of Gaming. As part of Omdia's primary research team, she works on survey creation and ensuring data quality and integrity through survey tools and data creation.

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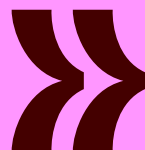
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