



Bryter.

Women Gamers 2026

9th Annual Edition

Nine years of quantitative research on how women play, spend and shape gaming — 2018 to 2026

INTRODUCTION

About Bryter

Bryter are an insight consultancy specialising in the gaming sector – supporting developers and publishers across platforms and genres, throughout the game development process...

01

Market understanding

Understand brand equity, identify keys to success and opportunities for your brand or IP.

02

Concept testing & market sizing

Testing new game concepts at various stages of development, to size and understand key audiences, as well as identify concept USPs.

03

UX & playtesting

UX and playtesting at key milestones of development. 360 insights combining in-person observation, surveys and gameplay tracking.

04

Pre-launch refinement

Test and refine pre-launch marketing assets, such as game logo, box art and messaging.

05

Player understanding & segmentation

Detailed player profiling or segmentation – understanding behaviours, and motivations, to inform player engagement and marketing strategies.

Understand markets and audiences — futureproof your game

About Bryter

bryter-global.com

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Contents

- 01 Introduction
- 02 PC & console behaviours
- 03 Mobile gaming
- 04 Toxicity & representation
- 05 Conclusion

Introduction

Women now make up nearly half of the global gaming audience, but their experiences are anything but uniform. This ninth edition of Bryter’s Women Gamers Study shows an audience broadening its genre choices, concentrating on fewer platforms, shifting back towards solo play and discovering games through social proof and community.

However, alongside these opportunities is a persistent barrier: 51% of women gamers have experienced toxicity, rising to 79% among Gen Z. Many respond by hiding their gender, avoiding voice chat or limiting online play.

Drawing on nine years of research, this report explores how women play, discover and spend — and what the industry must do to build safer, more engaging experiences for everyone.



Jenny McBean
Head of Gaming Insights
& Women in Games Ambassador

Note on significance testing: Small arrows throughout this report indicate significantly higher or lower differences in data subgroups. ↑ ↓

42%

of women gamers have been told by a male player that they “**don’t belong**” in a gaming space — rising to 71% among Gen Z.

This leads to a disconnect with the gamer identity, with 29% claiming they wouldn’t call themselves a gamer. 46% have even been told they are not a real gamer.

Women are not rejecting games; they are rejecting a “gamer” identity that is based on old stereotypes and gatekeeping.

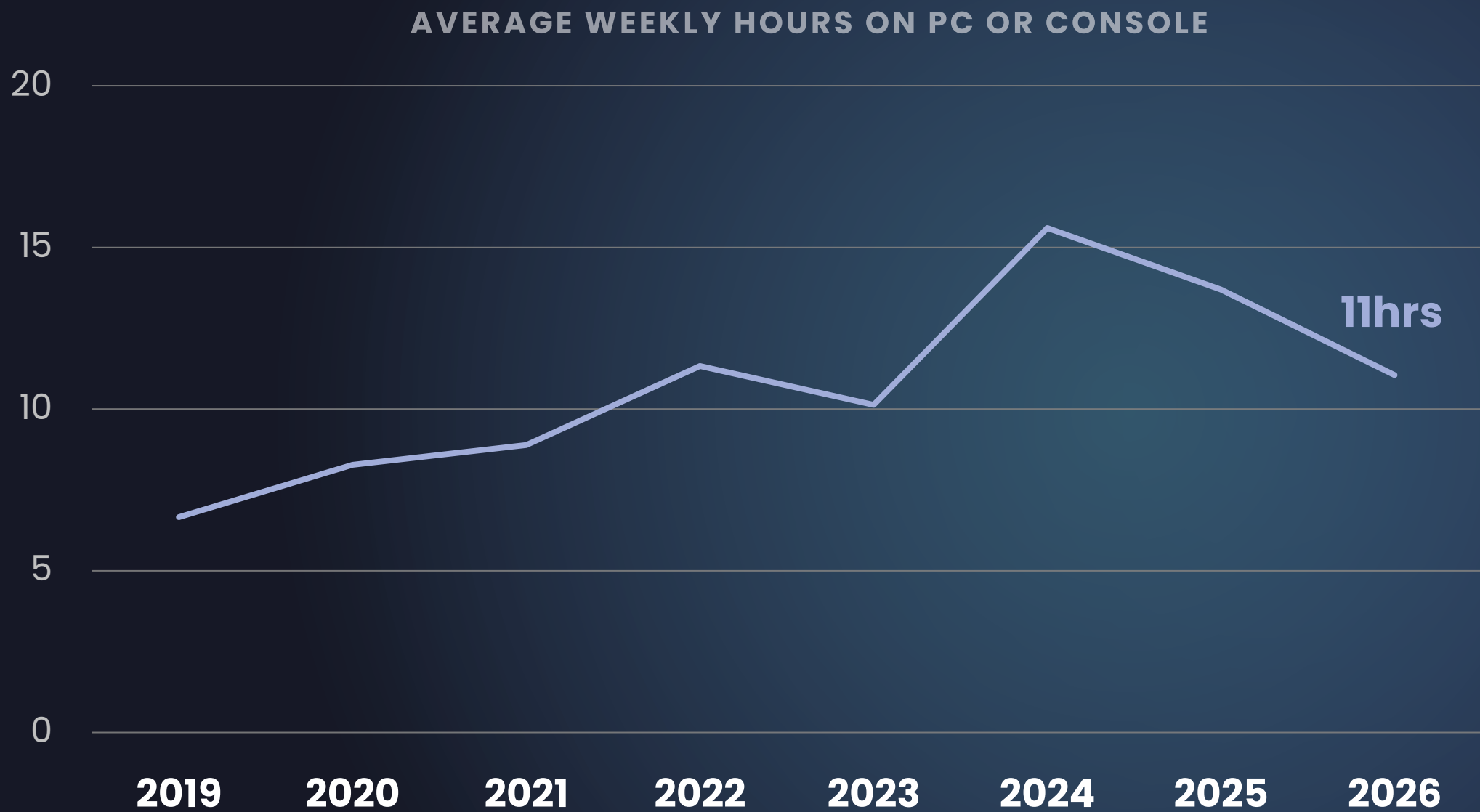
To understand this audience, we need to look beyond the label, to how women play and discover, and the barriers that shape those choices.



PC & Console Behaviours



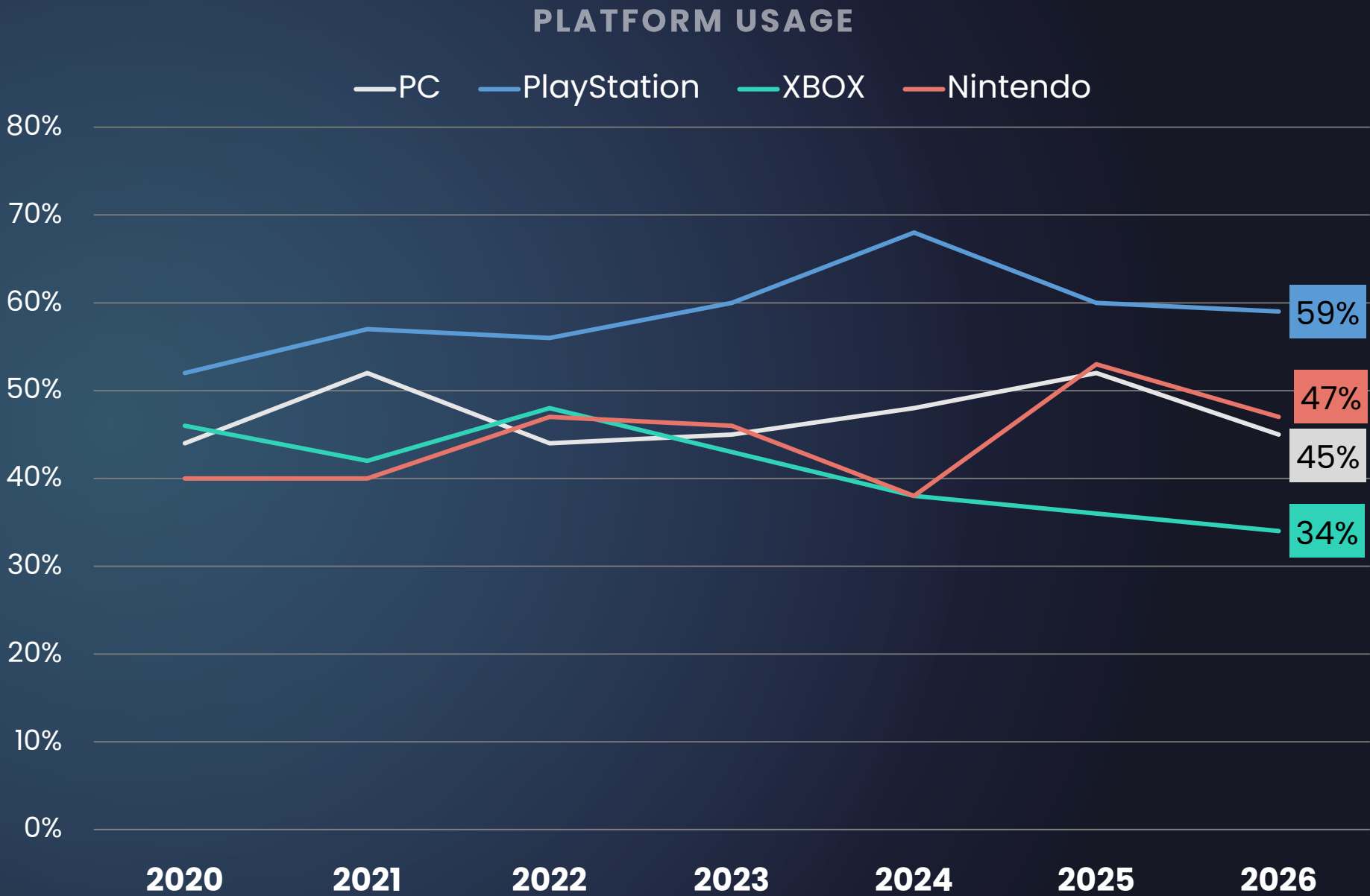
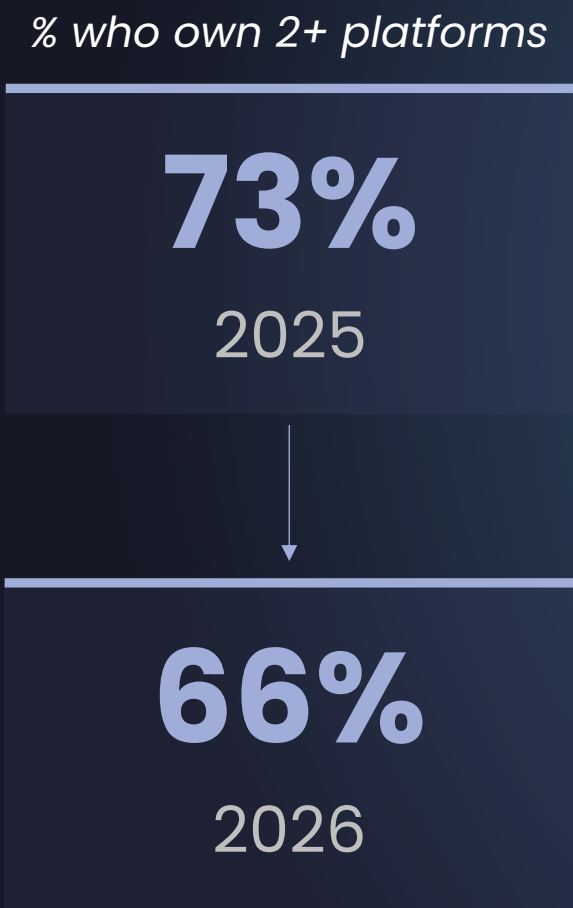
Gaming time is threatened by other digital content



After peaking in 2024, PC and console play time is beginning to settle, as gaming competes for a finite share of attention. **Gen Z** shows the strongest pull-back: **45% say they play less** than they used to, with social media the main competitor for their time. Among women aged 25+, entertainment streaming services pose the greater challenge.

Women are concentrating play across fewer platforms

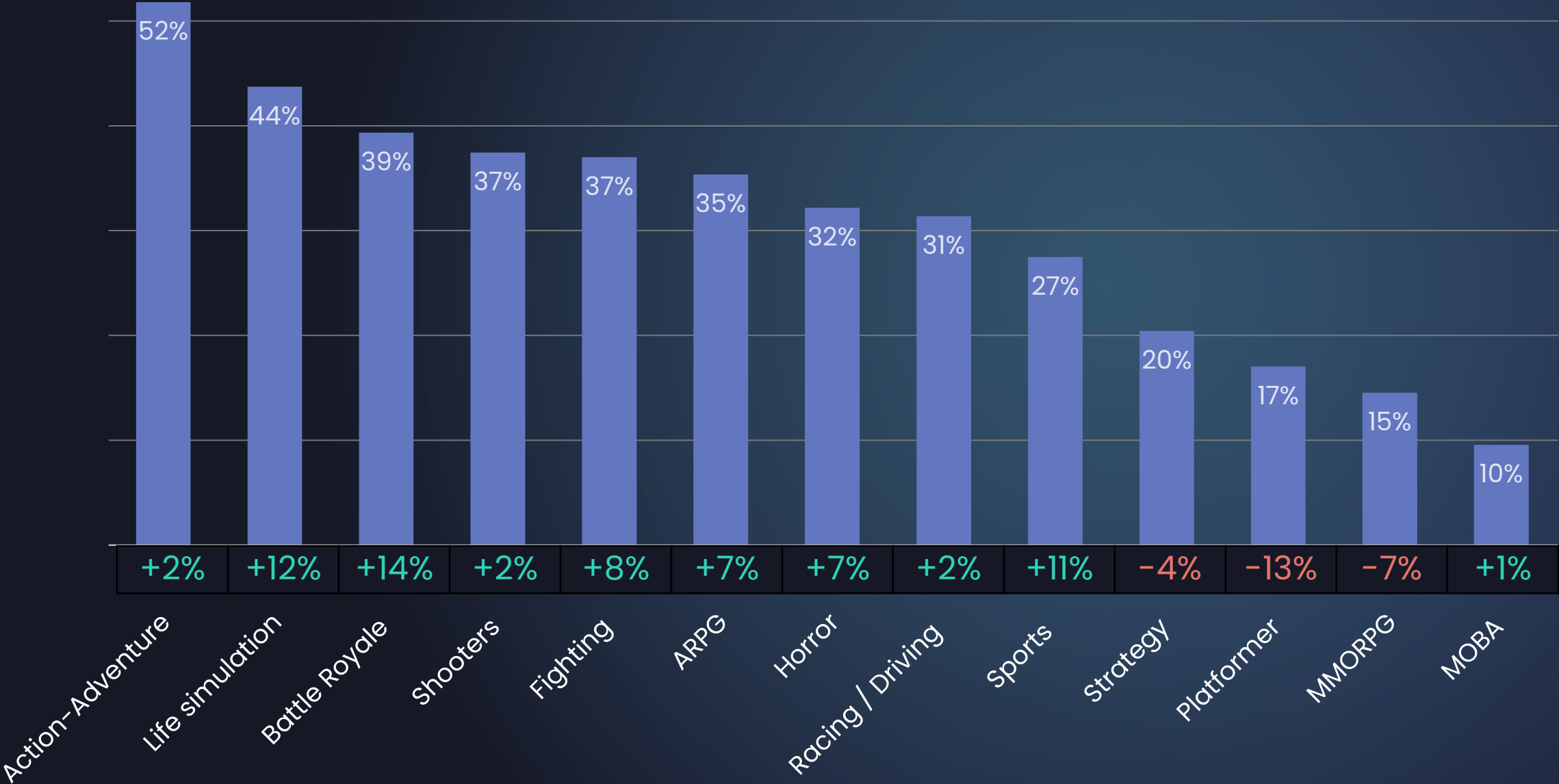
7%-point decline in multiple platform ownership



As console prices rise, multi-platform ownership declines amongst women gamers. Rather than having different platforms for different styles of games, players concentrate their time and spend within fewer ecosystems.

Further engagement with immersive and competitive genres

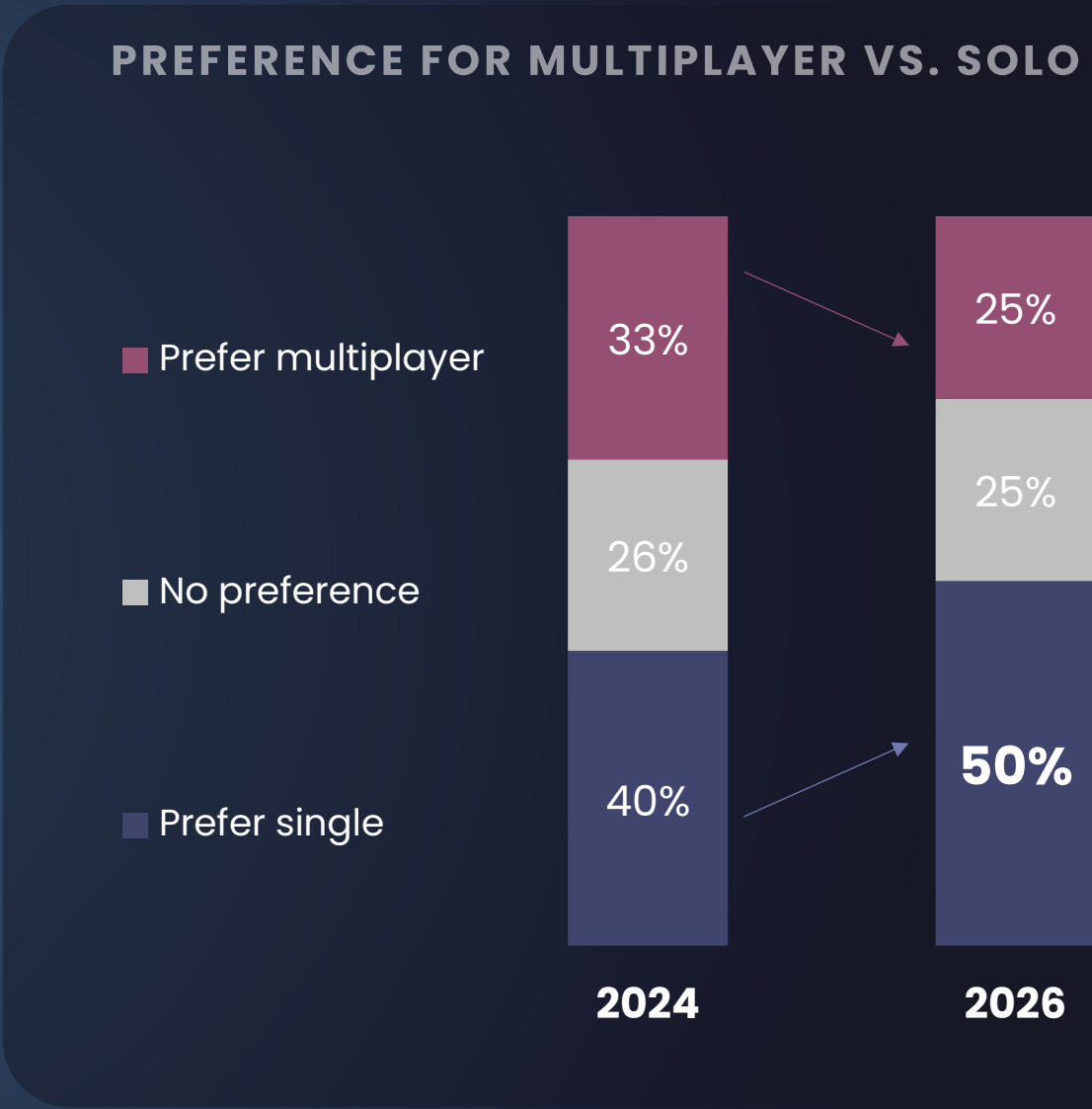
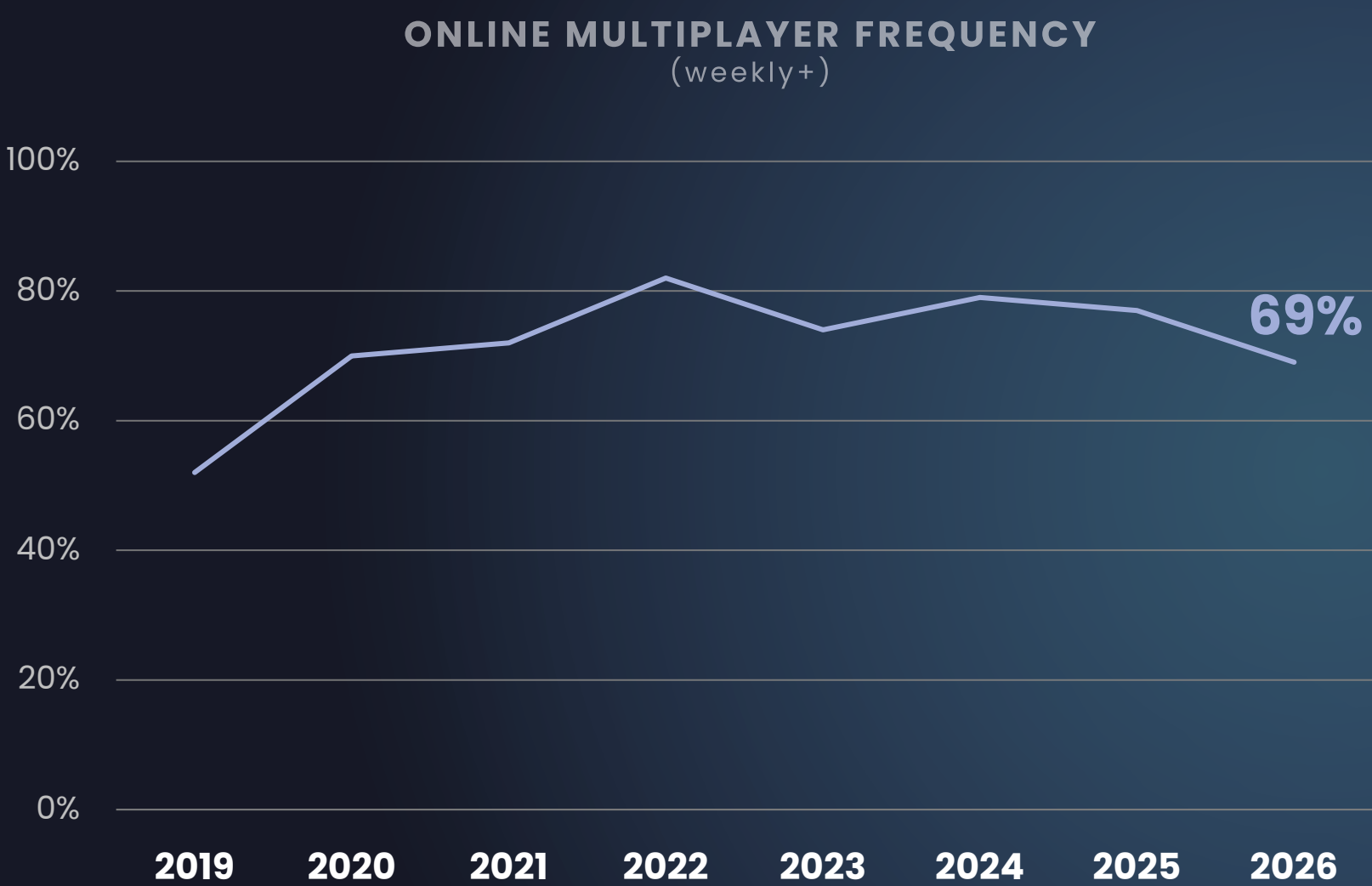
PC/ CONSOLE GENRES PLAYED REGULARLY
(+/- versus 2020)



Women no longer play just casual platformers or puzzle games but indulge in a variety of genres. Spanning from competitive battle royale, to immersive life sim, playing an average of 6 genres.

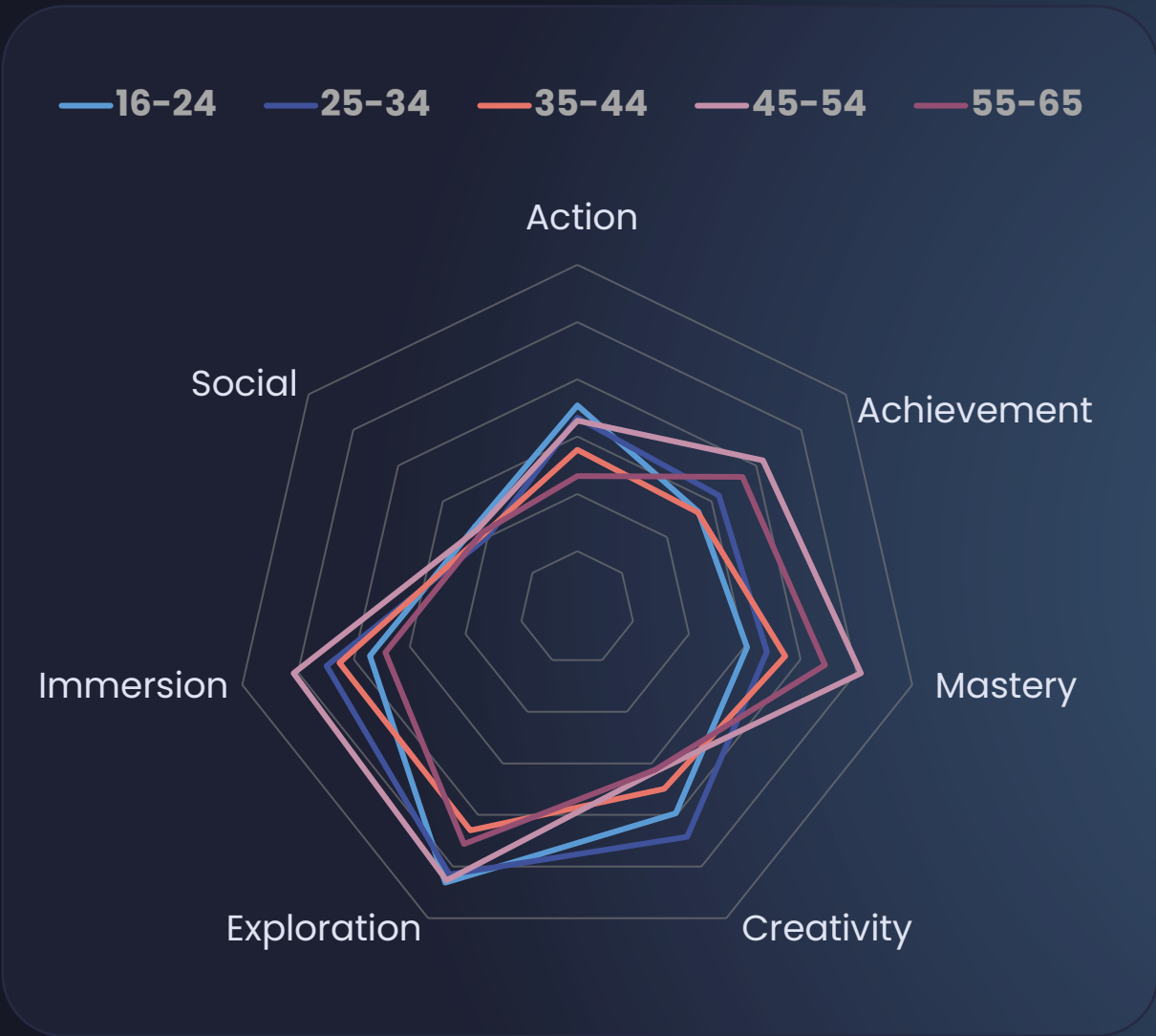
Gen Z over-index significantly on **Life Simulation** (62%) and **Horror** (45%). While these genres represent opposite emotional experiences, both foster strong social engagement. Multiplayer gameplay allows players to create shared experiences with each other but also share funny, memorable moments on online platforms.

Multiplayer remains popular but preference is turning to solo



Online multiplayers grew in popularity rapidly around the global pandemic, but there has been a gradual decline since 2024, with more women moving back towards solo play. Gen Z are the most multiplayer-inclined (with 78% playing weekly+), but preference remains for solo play (45%).

What women seek from games changes with age



AGE	#1 MOTIVATION	#2 MOTIVATION
16 – 24	Variety of characters to get to know	Exciting, fast gameplay
25 – 44	Deep storyline	Creativity & expression via customisation
45 – 54	Deep storyline	Feeling challenged
55 – 65	Perfecting skills & strategy	Feeling challenged

Women gamers are highly motivated by **immersion and exploration**, where they can feel part of the game world. These motivations evolve across life stages – Gen Z prioritise characters and fast-paced experiences; women aged 25–44 seek immersive stories and self-expression; and older players increasingly value challenge, skill and strategy.

Game discovery & spending

Game discovery is led by social proof

TOP SOURCES OF GAME DISCOVERY BY AGE

	<u>16-24</u>	<u>25-34</u>	<u>35-44</u>	<u>45+</u>
1	Recommendations from friends	Watching videos of gameplay ↑	Recommendations from friends	Recommendations from friends ↑
2	Seeing other people play ↑	Recommendations from friends	Familiarity with franchise or brand	Word of mouth ↑
3	Recommendations from streamers ↑	Browsing game stores	Word of mouth	Familiarity with franchise or brand

For women gamers, game discovery is highly influenced by **social proof**. Younger gamers are more likely to use online platforms and social media to see real gameplay and look for validation from well known creators or streamers. Older gamers look to their immediate vicinity for personal recommendations and franchise familiarity.

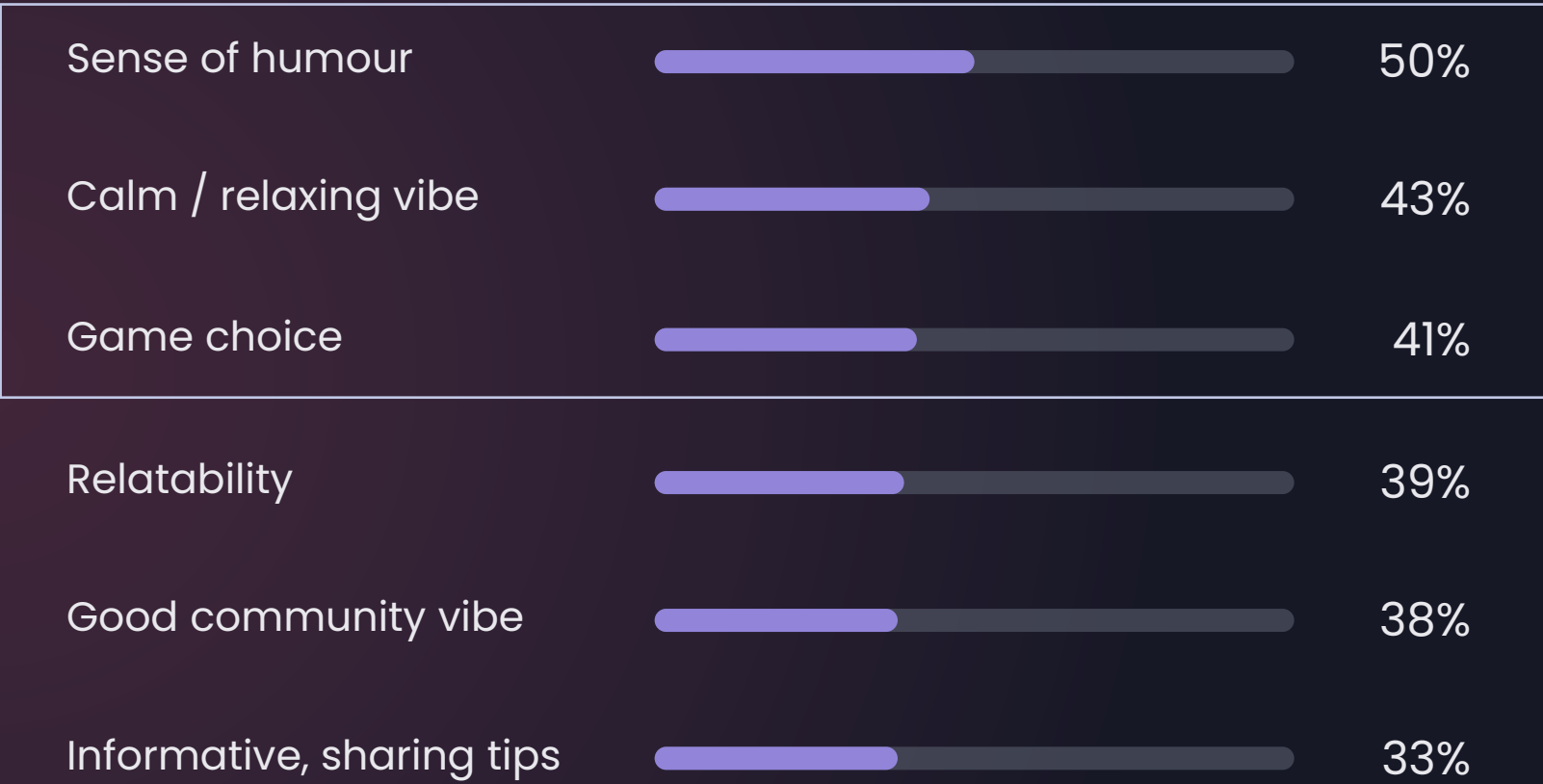


Creators drive discovery through personality, not just game choice

CONTENT MOST ENJOYED

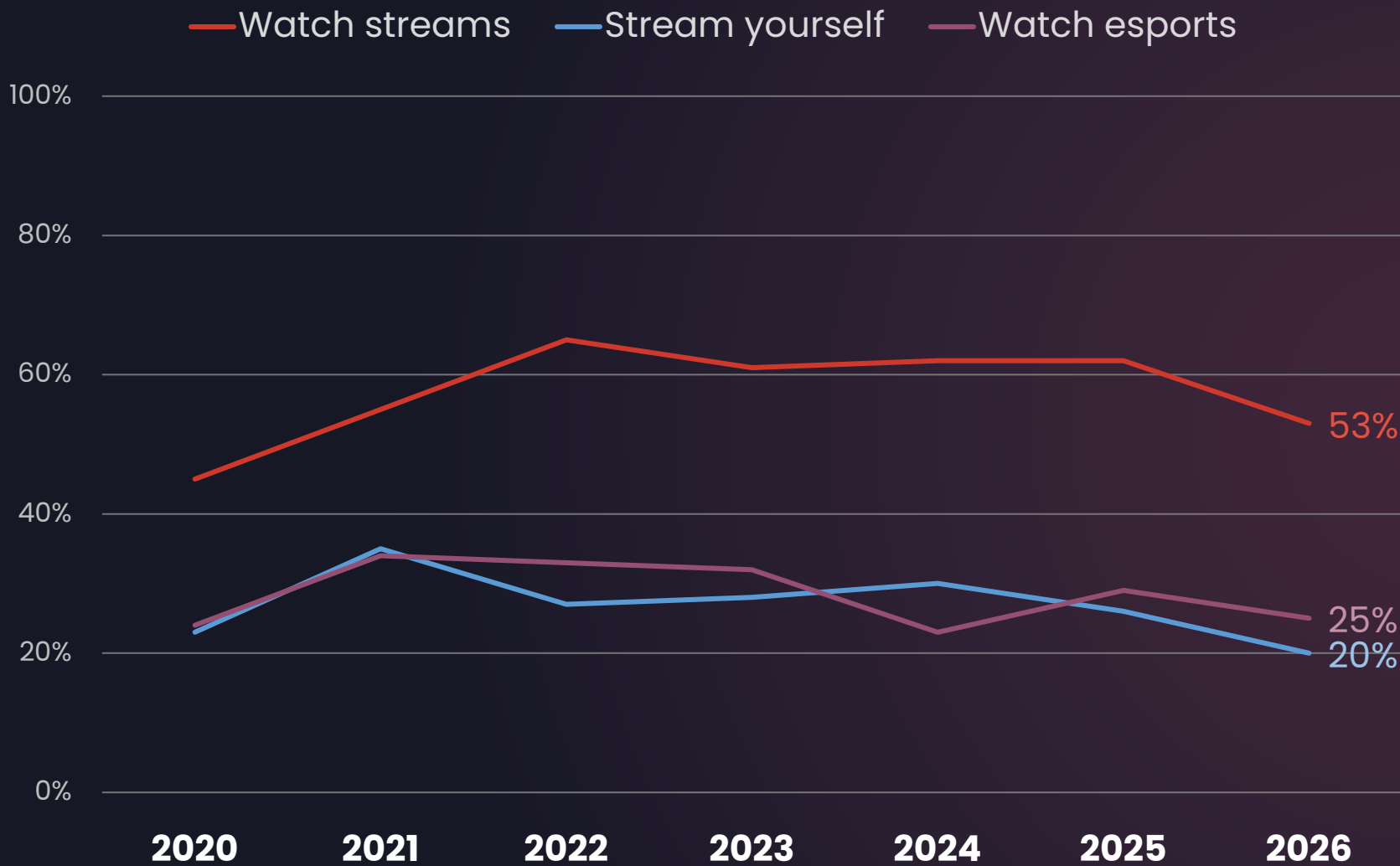


WHAT MAKES A CREATOR WORTH FOLLOWING



Gaming content is an important route to discovery: **69% of women gamers follow gaming creators or streamers**. Reviews and relaxing gameplay attract viewers, but creator personality sustains engagement – humour and atmosphere rank ahead of game choice. This is particularly relevant for Gen Z, who favour natural, live content.

Gaming adjacent activities are competing for a shrinking share of attention

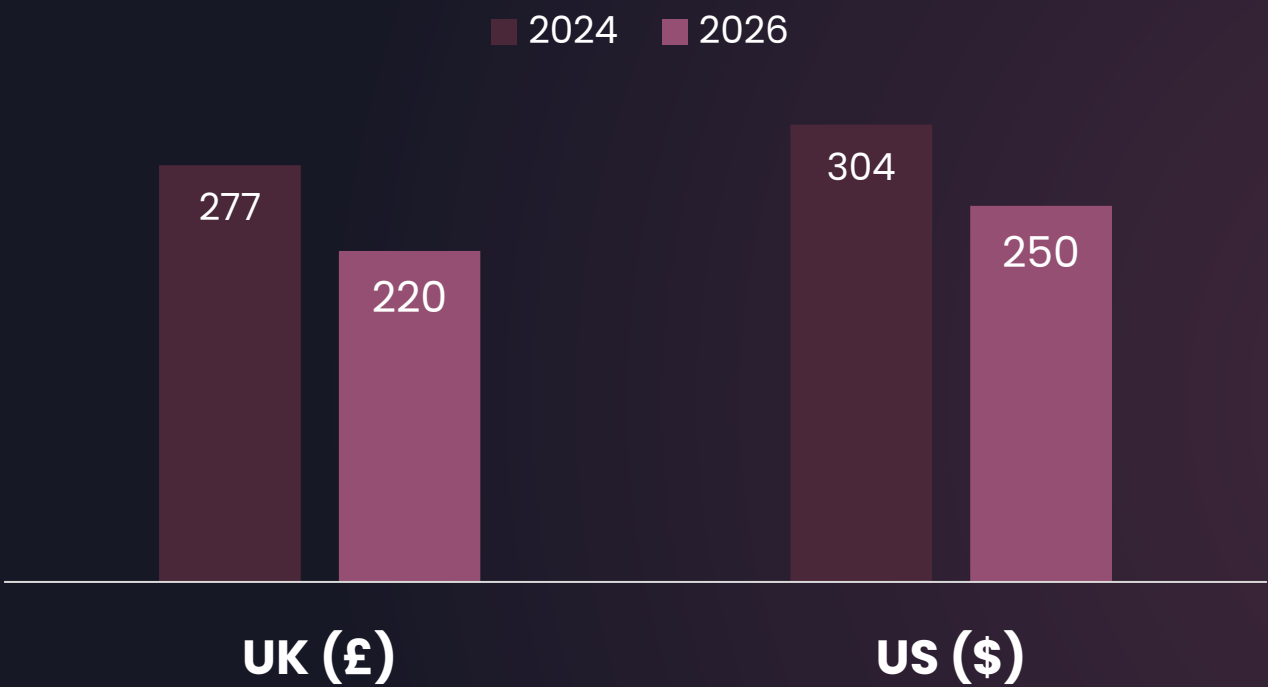


WATCH STREAMS WEEKLY+	2025	2026	CHANGE
16-24	77%	68%	▼ -9
25-34	70%	67%	▼ -3
35-44	61%	52%	▼ -9
45-54	39%	39%	—
55-65	29%	30%	▲ +1

Gaming-adjacent behaviours have seen limited growth – weekly stream viewing has fallen –9% points since 2025. The recent drop-off is strong amongst Gen Z — once the most engaged audience online, now watching noticeably less. As streams are an important discovery channel, brands may need to work harder to reach these audiences.

Growing selectivity around additional spend

YEARLY GAMING SPEND



CHANGE IN SPEND AMONGST GEN Z
2024 > 2026



Average no. of Premium games bought per year: **4**

Overall gaming spend has fallen since 2024, particularly among Gen Z. Yet the average number of premium games bought per year has remained unchanged since 2025, suggesting that spending is being reduced elsewhere.

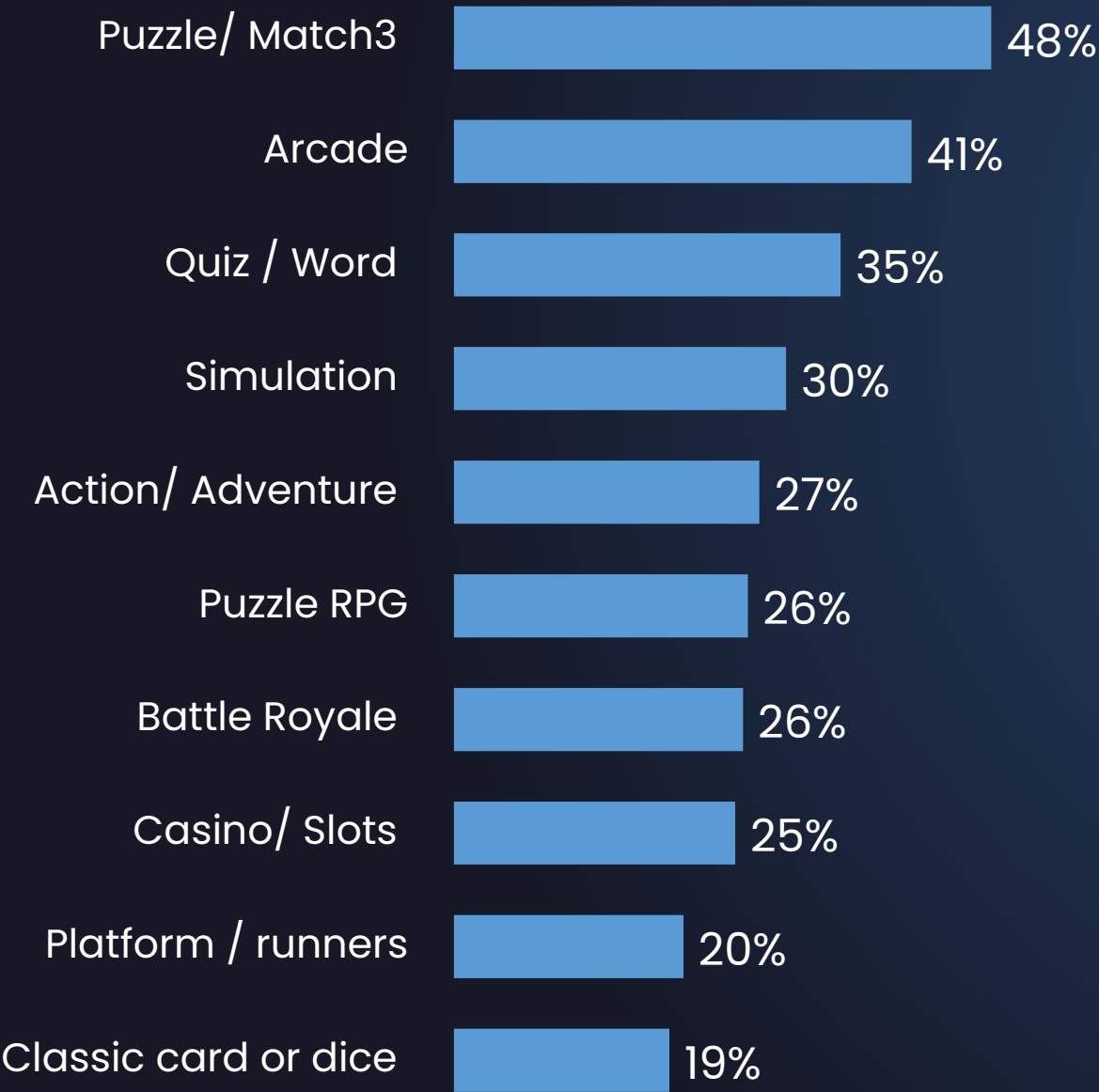
Regular DLC purchasing fell from 66% in 2024 to 58% in 2026, pointing to greater scrutiny of value.

58% feel too often that DLC is being released that should be in the base game

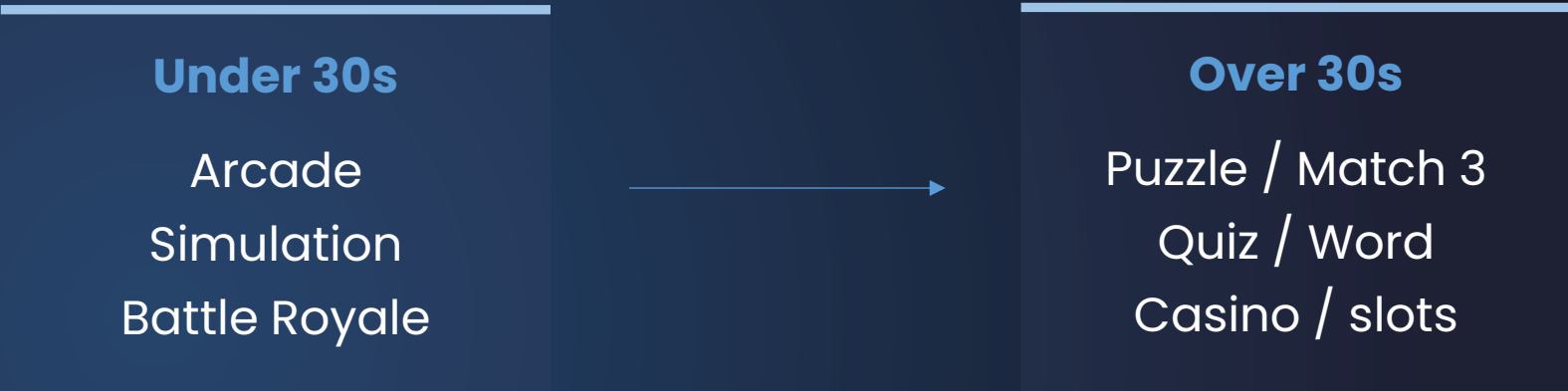
Mobile gaming

Younger women gamers are broadening mobile gaming beyond puzzles

MOBILE GENRES PLAYED REGULARLY



TOP GENRES BY AGE



Puzzle and Match 3 games have long dominated the mobile game charts. However, younger gamers are beginning a shift towards other genres, including Simulation and Battle Royale.

Mobile gaming is no longer focused on repetitive gameplay loops, tracking progress and getting high scores. Younger gamers are looking for more **in-depth, dynamic experiences and social interaction.**

Social connection helps drive engagement

WHAT DRIVES REPEAT PLAY	TOTAL	GEN Z
Good level of challenge	40%	
Daily login bonuses	37%	27%
Rewarding progression	32%	
Friends playing the same	29%	34%
Trying to beat all levels	26%	
Compelling storyline	26%	
Constant new content	25%	

Challenge, login rewards and visible progression are the strongest drivers of repeat play overall.

Gen Z respond differently: friends playing the same game motivates 34% of players aged 16-24, while daily login bonuses fall to 27%. For younger players, social relevance may be more effective than habitual reward mechanics.



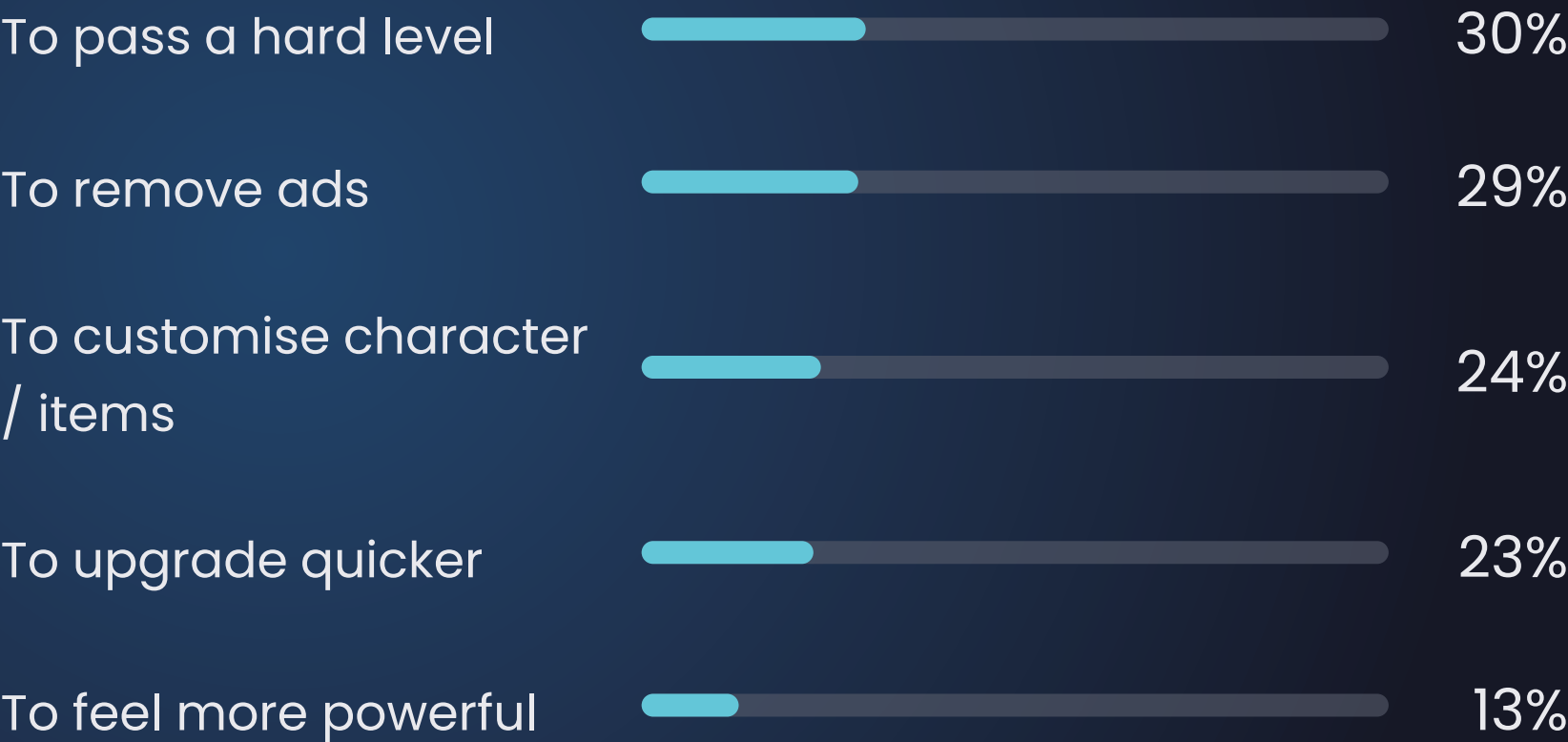
In-app purchasing is mainstream, but value varies across age

54%

of women mobile gamers make in-app purchases

Average spend is £24 / \$32 per month.

SPEND DRIVERS



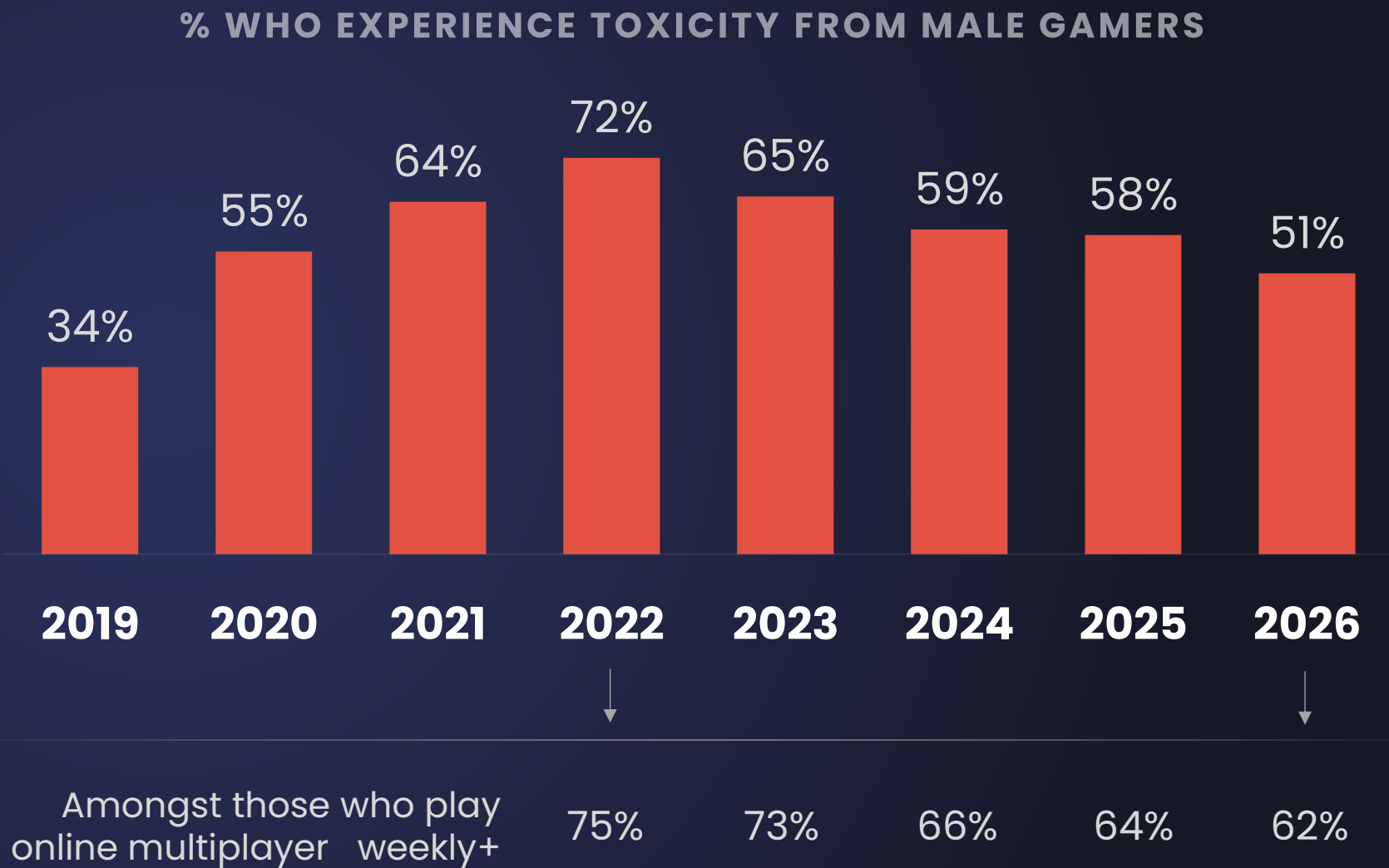
Progress is a big driver of in-app purchases, but the audiences delivering the most value vary by age and market – in the US, ages 35-44 are the most valuable audience, compared to 25-34s in the UK. For those not currently making in-app purchases, **ad removal is the biggest potential driver** – 25% said that the ability to remove ads might convince them to spend.

Toxicity and representation

Toxicity has declined from its peak – but still affects half of women gamers

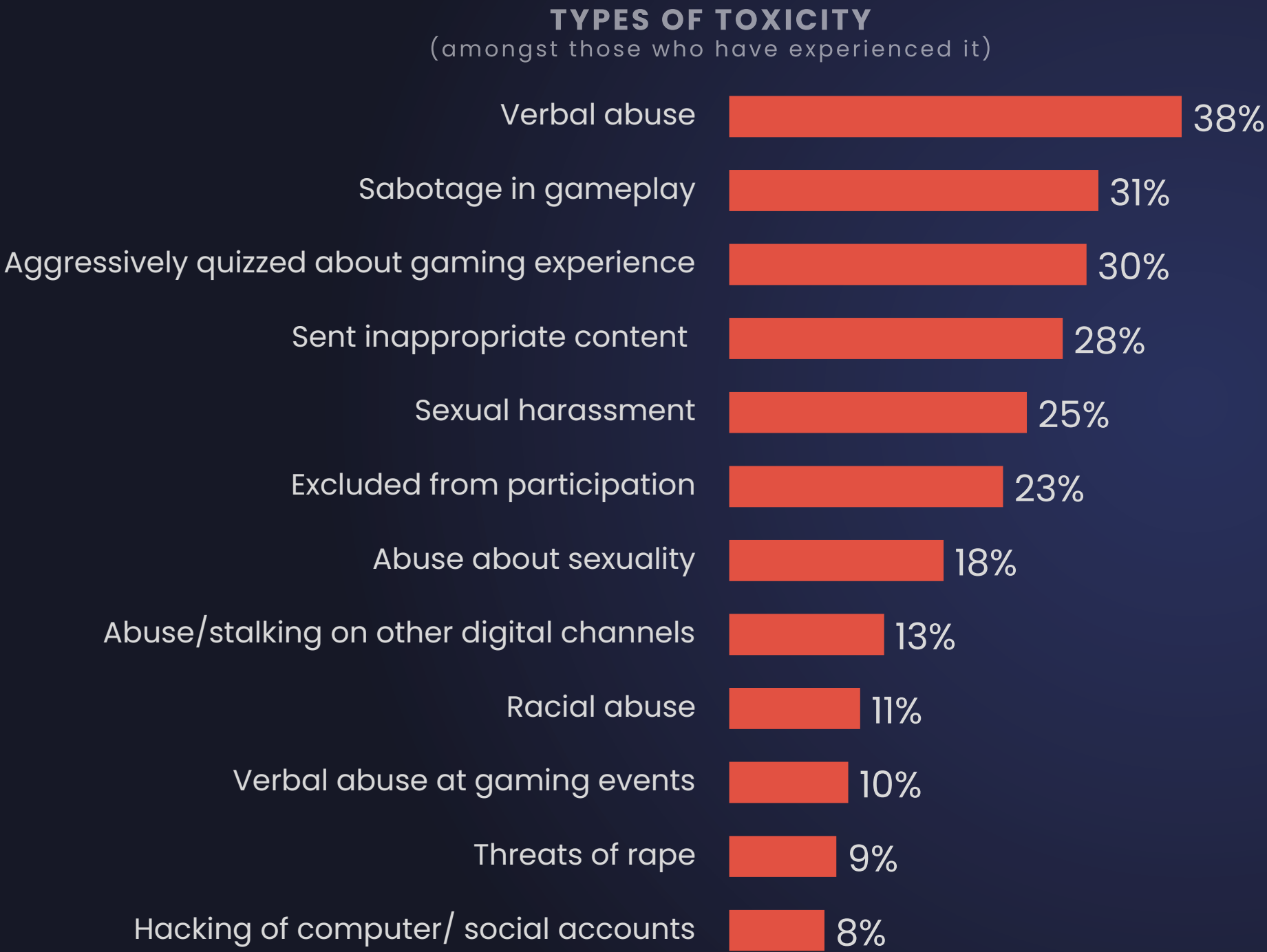
51%

of women gamers have experienced toxicity in gaming spaces



The decline is encouraging, but toxicity is still a significant barrier for women players, and a retention risk. Despite the gradual decline in recent years, 38% of women gamers actually feel that toxicity has gotten worse. For those actually playing online multiplayer, the improvements have been less noticeable.

Types of toxicity



Most toxicity happens while playing online – from verbal abuse and sabotaging gameplay, to sexual harassment and threats of rape.

More worryingly, in some instances, this can carry over to stalking on other platforms and even real life.

Games most cited for toxicity:

- Call of Duty
- Fortnite
- GTA
- Roblox
- League of Legends
- Overwatch
- Minecraft

In women gamers' own words...

"I got told 'I'll kill you bitch and fuck your dead body. I already have all your information online in detail, try me.' That's when I *logged off and purchased myself a firearm for my protection.*" **Age 36, US**

"One time I was playing League of Legends and a guy told me that I *deserved to get raped because I was a woman.* And that I should be in the kitchen cooking instead of playing a video game." **Age 39, US**

"I was told all woman should be looking after men and if they don't, *men can do whatever they want to them,* and the girls need to shut up and let them." **Age 50, US**

"A *cashier* using his power while I was buying a video game to keep me there, *belittle me,* and give me his information unsolicited so I could *"learn" from him.*" **Age 29, US**

"I've had more than a few male gamers tell me to *commit suicide* because of my gender/gender identity. That, along with *threats of rape* and other hateful statements, are *why I game online a lot less than I used to.*" **Age 50, US**

"Being *coerced into sending nude pictures* of myself, then when I refused, the gamer hurling abuse, like *threatening to rape me.*" **Age 24, UK**

Hundreds of women shared personal experiences of toxicity – many mentioning graphic and violent language, but also threats of real-world violence. This year, trends suggest an increase in **incel language** – male players claiming that women don't belong in gaming, they exist to serve men.

Gen Z are most exposed to toxicity

79%

of Gen Z women gamers (16–24) have experienced toxicity — a staggering share, with some reporting rape threats and grooming from as young as 12.

Protecting young gamers and educating all gamers on the impact of toxicity is vital.

"I remember when I first started playing online multiplayer, I was 13 or 14. I was talking in game chat, and I can remember being asked my age. I asked their age – he was in his 30s, then they asked about my sexual experience, and tried to get my private socials."

Age 25, US

*"I was called a 'F***** D**e' for mentioning my girlfriend as a female gamer. I was also called 'fat' and 'ugly' for simply speaking into the microphone in a male dominated game."*

Age 18, UK

"Some male gamer used to hit on me and make sexual advances in Roblox."

Age 17, US

"I was halfway through a ranked match, when I heard this guy over voice chat on my team muttering things regarding my gender and how I don't know how to play. I asked him to chill, and he proceeded to bother me the rest of the match. No one else on the team defended me, they stayed quiet."

Age 16, UK

"I've been called a bitch countless times by teenage boys. Also, I've been harassed by male gamers making me feel uncomfortable whilst playing."

Age 21, US

"I should go kill my self I deserved to be raped."

Age 17, UK

Women gamers feel under-supported

34%

Feel there are adequate processes in place to deal with abuse and discrimination in gaming

42%

Of women who experience toxicity rarely or never report it

42%

Of those who did report toxicity were satisfied with the outcome

TOP BARRIERS TO REPORTING TOXICITY

- 1 Sense that nothing will happen
- 2 Attempted, but it didn't work
- 3 Support is difficult to find

Only a minority of women gamers feel there are adequate processes to deal with toxicity. Players are put off reporting toxicity due to lack of consequences. Many that do report toxicity are still unsatisfied with outcomes. Clearer routes to support, visible consequences and better feedback are needed to rebuild trust.

The cost: women limit how they play

31%

only play with people they know or in closed communities

24%

often don't reveal their gender when playing online

22%

avoid speaking in online multiplayer due to fear of negative reactions from male gamers

21%

feel the online gaming space is still dominated by toxic players

13%

avoid online multiplayer altogether, due to fear of toxicity

33%

Feel the industry need to do more to minimise toxicity

Women gamers are a powerful and valuable audience, and yet they are being driven away by toxic behaviour. Those that do stay are limiting their gameplay experience in order to protect themselves. Choosing to ignore toxicity will lead to revenue loss and lower community engagement.

Conclusion

What nine years of data tells us

THE BOTTOM LINE

Women gamers are a large, valuable and highly varied audience – not a niche demographic.

The opportunity lies in delivering choice, immersion, credible value and safe forms of connection, while removing the gatekeeping that prevents women from participating fully.

“Women gamers” are not one homogeneous group. Preferences and motivations vary considerably. Age and life stage are more useful targeting lenses than gender alone.

Genre stereotypes are outdated. Women play around six genres on average. Marketing and game design should reflect women’s broad interests, beyond casual or cosy games.

PC/console play has fallen from its 2024 peak; with 45% of Gen Z reporting playing less. Games must earn engagement against social media and streaming, not merely other games.

While multiplayer remains popular, the preference for solo play is returning. Offer safe, optional social features rather than making multiplayer participation compulsory.

Discovery depends on social proof. Friends, gameplay videos and creators strongly influence game choice. Relatable creators, authentic gameplay and positive communities may outperform conventional advertising.

Spending is becoming more considered as annual gaming spend has declined. Women still buy games, but increasingly expect transparent pricing and DLC that provides genuine added value.

Toxicity is the greatest threat to participation and retention. Many women feel the need to conceal their gender, avoid voice chat or withdraw completely. Effective moderation, simple reporting and visible consequences are essential.

Further exploring the gamer audience

A short introduction to Bryter's new Gamer Segmentation...

Bryter's Segments across the women gamer audience



The Aficionado

9%

Gaming is life. A priority hobby to be fully explored.

The Aficionado is a hardcore gamer. Gaming is essential in their day-to-day life, when not gaming, they'll watch or read content around it.



The Competitor

15%

Games are a way to challenge others, prove you're best.

Gaming is essential to the Fighters social life. If the game is single player, they are not interested – they need the opportunity to prove their skill.



The Narrator

28%

Games are about getting lost in the story.

The story of a game is paramount for the Narrator. They play games which are heavily immersive - getting lost in them the same way they would in a movie or a book.



The Artisan

23%

Games are a relaxing outlet for expression and creativity.

There is no strict preference for platform for the Artisan. They enjoy freedom and self-expression in their games, and play to switch off and relax.



The Dabbler

25%

Games are a quick burst of entertainment.

Gaming is a casual pastime, and something to do to socialise with friends or family. The Dabbler does not play many games outside of what is currently popular and trending.

Size

With the gamer audience more diverse than ever, it's vital to build a deeper understanding of your audience – to help design more tailored experiences and maximise engagement.

Bryter's segmentation focuses on *why* players engage, rather than just how they play.

Get in touch to find out more about how Bryter's Segmentation can help you to better understand your player base or future audience...

LET'S TALK

Put real players at the heart of your game

Bryter are an award-winning agency specialising in gaming for over 15 years. Supporting studios and publishers from early concept to launch and beyond.

15+

years in gaming

Global

reach & expertise

End-to-end

across the lifecycle

- Market sizing

Concept testing

UX/ Playtesting

Asset development
- Audience segmentation

Brand engagement

Pre-launch refinement

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Notes on methodology: An online survey with n=1,004 women gamers aged 16–65 across the US and UK, split evenly by market, with age quotas to be representative of each market’s gaming audience. A gamer here is defined as playing on PC or 8th/9th-gen console at least monthly.