



# Developer Satisfaction Survey 2014 & 2015

## Diversity in the Game Industry Report

12 June 2016

Prepared for the

International Game Developers Association | [igda.org](http://igda.org)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

## Authors

### **Johanna Weststar**

Associate Professor, Department of Management and Organizational Studies  
University of Western Ontario, Ontario, Canada

### **Marie-Josée Legault**

Professor, École des sciences de l'administration  
TÉLUQ, Québec, Canada

### **Chandell Gosse**

PhD Candidate, Media Studies  
Faculty of Information and Media Studies  
Western University, Ontario, Canada

### **Vicki O'Meara**

PhD Candidate, Media Studies  
Faculty of Information and Media Studies  
Western University, Ontario, Canada

## Acknowledgements

The International Game Developers Association (IGDA) would like to thank the tremendous support of our actively engaged volunteer community for their many contributions to this report. From all the survey respondents to our many Chapter and Special Interest Group leaders who helped disseminate the survey, as well as our studio affiliates and media partners – we appreciate your help in making this research possible.

The data used for this report was collected through an industry and university partnership between the International Game Developers Association (IGDA), M2 Research, Western University, TÉLUQ, and the Georgia Institute of Technology. The authors gratefully acknowledge the contributions of Kate Edwards, Wanda Meloni, and Celia Pearce in helping to create and administer the 2014 survey. The authors also acknowledge the research assistance of Maria Andrei-Gedja, Indranil Chakraborty, Alyssa MacDougall, and Sarah Medeiros. This work was supported in part through a Social Sciences and Humanities Insight Research Grant held by Marie-Josée Legault and Johanna Weststar and a grant from the IGDA Foundation.

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Survey Background and Sample Overview.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Demographics.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Age, Location, Immigration, and Ethnicity.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Family Life.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Disability.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Education and Training.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Type of Work.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Primary Role.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Technical Roles.....	13
Managerial Roles.....	13
Artistic Roles.....	13
<b>Compensation and Benefits.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Compensation and Gender.....</b>	<b>14</b>
Employees.....	15
Freelance.....	16
Self-Employed.....	17
<b>Compensation and Ethnicity.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Employees.....	18
Freelance.....	19
Self-Employed.....	19
<b>Perception of compensation rate.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Benefits.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Diversity.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Importance of Diversity in the Industry, Workplace, and Content.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Treatment, Opportunity, &amp; Equity.....</b>	<b>24</b>
Changes from 2014.....	25
Experiences with Inequity.....	28
Witnessing Inequity toward Others.....	28
Types of Inequity.....	28
<b>Diversity Related Programs and Policies.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Pursuing Diverse Candidates.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Support for Diversity Initiatives.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Obtaining Diverse Candidates.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Qualifications over Diversity.....</b>	<b>35</b>
Changing Indifference.....	36
<b>Change Over Time.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>38</b>

## Introduction

As the largest professional association for game developers worldwide, the International Game Developers Association has been in a unique position to know and understand individual game developers on a level that most companies and organizations cannot. While we've always had a very good pulse on how developers anecdotally feel about their work and their industry, we haven't always been consistent in capturing and conveying that insight.

To that end, we launched this annual research survey called the Developer Satisfaction Survey (DSS) in 2014. The Developer Satisfaction Survey, open to anyone involved in the video game industry in a professional or academic capacity, is the evolution of our previous survey efforts.

The 2014 DSS was a great success for an inaugural effort, yielding over 2,000 responses worldwide. Besides my own presentations of the results at numerous events worldwide, the data from the DSS was quoted in many media sources, including the New York Times and Washington Post, and referenced by many in the academic community. The efforts also resulted in two follow-up reports on industry trends and employment, both of which dove deeper into the data and revealed more insights about the current state of our industry. The results also provided an impetus for new initiatives, such as the IGDA's declared goal to double the number of women working in the industry by 2025.

For the 2015 DSS, we aimed to expand our reach and succeeded with nearly 3,000 respondents. Part of this success was due to the availability of localized versions of the DSS in the following languages beyond English: Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish. The IGDA thanks Keywords International as well as volunteers from IGDA Japan for their valuable contribution of the localized language versions.

We're thankful for the strongly positive reception for this research and moving forward, the DSS will serve as the IGDA's core method by which we inform ourselves and the industry about the critical questions around developers' satisfaction. For the sake of the long-term health of our industry, we will continue to strive to discern the demographic composition of game developers worldwide and tap into their knowledge, experiences and opinions on their well-being and on the state of the industry.

Thank you,



Kate Edwards  
Executive Director  
International Game Developers Association (IGDA)

## Survey Background and Sample Overview

The IGDA administered the Developer Satisfaction Survey (DSS) through March and April in both 2014 and 2015. The DSS 2014 survey accrued a valid sample of 2,198 responses and the DSS 2015 accrued 2,928 valid responses. A [summary report on the DSS 2014](#) data was released on June 24, 2014 and a [summary report on the DSS 2015](#) data was released on September 2, 2015.

What follows in this report is an examination of 2014 & 2015 DSS data seen through a socio-demographic lens. Much of this comes from a specific section of the surveys that collected information about diversity policies and practices as well as experiences of inequity.

When reading this report it is important to keep in mind that the inclusion criteria for completing the surveys were quite broad. As a result, the responses reflected in the following pages represent the experiences and perceptions of those in core development roles as well as roles that are auxiliary to the making of games or part of the larger game industry community. In the 2014 data, just under 40% of the respondents held non-managerial roles in core development functions (including quality assurance and testing), 40% held managerial roles (including producers and team leads), 18% held roles in supportive functions to game making (such as administrative, human resources, legal, marketing, etc.) and a final 3% worked in academia or journalism. Respondents were allowed to select multiple roles and approximately 11% identified as full- or part-time students.

In 2015, most (51%) reported that their primary work was to make games in a core creation or development role (including QA). A further 9% reported that a portion of their primary work was to make games, 6% said they made games for commercialization in their off-time, 3% were academics who made games as a core part of their job and 8% supported the development of games in administrative or ancillary roles. Of the dominant game development group 39% held managerial, project manager or team lead roles, 54% held core development roles (programming, art, audio, design, QA, etc.) and the remaining 7% held administrative or ancillary support roles (HR, marketing, community management, technical support, etc.)

Throughout the report we separated the data so that we could isolate salient demographic groups from the whole sample. This is particularly meaningful and relevant for a report on diversity. We labelled these sub-groups: **whole sample**, **male sub-sample**, **female sub-sample**, **white workers sub-sample**, and **workers of colour sub-sample**. Table 1 defines each group for quick reference.

**Table 1: Survey sub-samples used in report**

	<b>Includes</b>
Whole Sample	Those in roles <b>both central and peripheral</b> to game development (e.g., programmers as well as game journalists), including: Those in <b>managerial roles</b> including founders, owners, project managers, producers and team leads Those in <b>roles peripheral</b> to game development such as administrative support, customer support, technical support, journalists and academics Those in <b>quality assurance and testing</b> roles Those <b>employed</b> on a full-time or part-time basis, either in self-employment, as an independent contractor or freelance, or as salaried employees Those currently <b>unemployed</b> in any role but who responded thinking about their last job <b>Students</b> studying games or to work in the game industry
Male Sub-Sample	In 2014 and 2015, those from the whole sample who responded “male” when asked “How do you identify your gender”
Female Sub-Sample	In 2015, those from the whole sample who responded “female”, “male to female transgender”, “female to male transgender”, or “other” when asked “How do you identify your gender” In 2014, those who responded “androgynous” were also included (this option was not included in 2015)
White Workers Sub-Sample	In 2014, those from the whole sample who <b>only</b> selected “Caucasian” when asked “Which of the following designations best describes your race or ethnicity?” In 2015, those from the whole sample who <b>only</b> selected “white/Caucasian or European” when asked “Which of the following best describes your race/ethnicity/ancestry?”
Workers of Colour Sub-Sample	In 2014, those from the whole sample who selected <b>any of</b> “Arab or West Asian”, “East/South-East Asian”, “South Asian”, “Black/African American or African”, “Hispanic or Latino”, “Indigenous”, “Pacific Islander” or “Other” or those who selected any of the above <b>in combination with</b> “Caucasian” when asked “Which of the following designations best describes your race or ethnicity?” In 2015, those from the whole sample who selected <b>any of</b> “Arabian or West Asian”, “East/South-East Asian”, “South Asian”, “Black/African American or African”, “Hispanic or Latino”, “Aboriginal or Indigenous”, “Pacific Islander” or “Other” or those who selected any of the above <b>in combination with</b> “white/Caucasian or European” when asked “Which of the following best describes your race/ethnicity/ancestry?”

Note: The majority of the questions dealt with in this report were asked of the whole sample at the end of the survey (Diversity and Demographics sections). However, some of the questions in the report were asked only of respondents primarily working in a job directly related to core development (either as employees, freelancers or self-employed). Therefore, in addition to **hobbyists, journalists, academics**, etc., the small number of respondents who had **left the industry with no intent to return**, who were **students** not simultaneously working in the industry and who were **looking for their first job** were excluded from survey sections related to type of work and compensation and benefits.

Regarding gender categorizations in the DSS 2015, it is important to note that 1.5% of respondents identified their gender as “transgender” and 1% as “other.” This 2.5% has been included in the female sub-sample to recognize a shared minority status. Moving forward, this report uses the term ‘women’ to refer to participants who did not identify as ‘male.’ We would

first like to point out our hesitation in relying on language that reinforces a traditional gender binary. The authors of this report embrace and celebrate gender plurality and recognize the importance of giving voice to transgender and non-gender binary workers, particularly in a report aiming to address issues of diversity within the industry. However, because the survey sample of those workers is so small it is difficult to draw substantive conclusions about their experiences without assuming a great deal and overstating the generalizability of these experiences. Where possible and relevant we have made an effort to explicitly address the 1.5% of respondents who identify as transgender or the 1% who selected ‘other’.

Regarding ethnicity categorizations, it is also important to note that grouping all workers of colour together is problematic. Workers of different racial/ethnic groups fare differently in the workplace. However, as with transgender individuals, the sample sizes were often too small for meaningful assessment of more precise groupings. Respondents who identified as bi- or multi-racial/ethnic with white/Caucasian/European were included in the workers of colour sub-sample. In the DSS 2015, 76% of respondents to the survey identified as white to some degree; however, 67% of respondents identified as only white.

When isolating respondents for these sub-samples, 75% identified as male, 24.5% identified as female, transgender or other, 67% identified as white and 33% identified as a worker of colour.

In this report our primary focus is to account for the data collected in the DSS 2015 with comparisons to the DSS 2014 where noteworthy.

## Demographics

Knowing the demography of a survey sample is helpful for two reasons: First, it allows us to gauge whether there are any patterns of experience among groups of people, and second, it provides the necessary information to track change over time. Demographics are important *especially* through the lens of diversity. As social and cultural shifts take place outside the industry, demographics are a valuable way to determine what impact they have on and within the industry. For example, as more women enter science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) related fields at the university level, many people are curious if and how this affects the predominately male video game industry. For the purpose of this research, demographic statistics are only used as aggregate data—no one individual has been singled out.

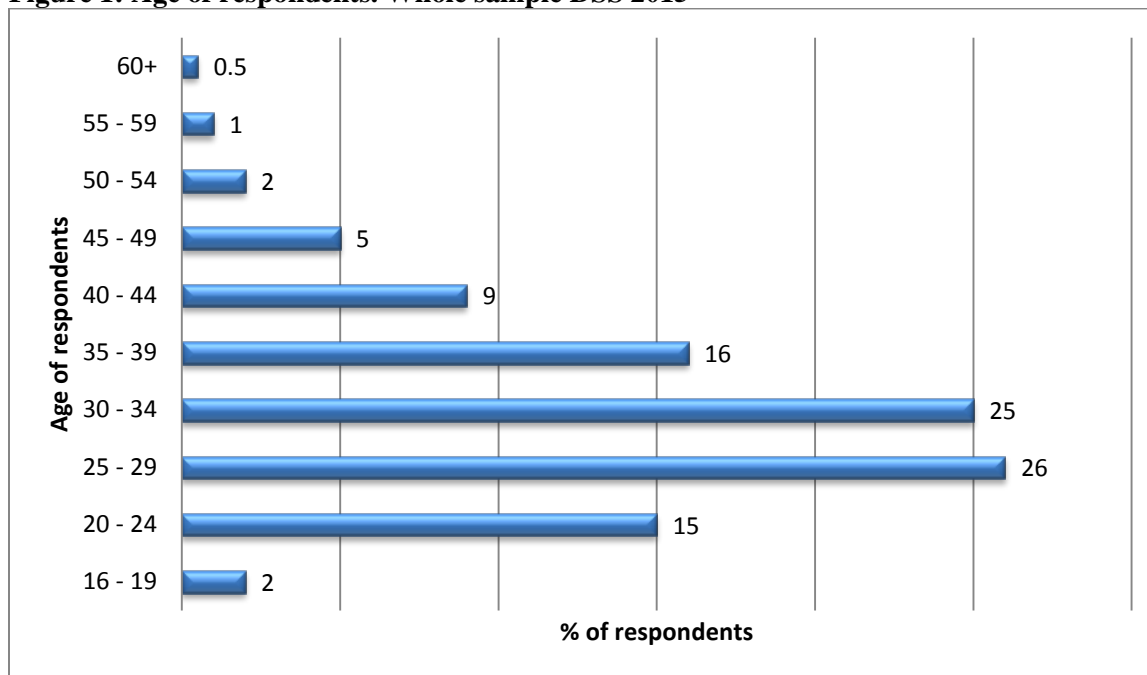
More specifically, an analysis of demographics helps us paint a picture of the issues inhibiting diversity within video game workspaces and the content produced therein. In an article about gaming author Elsa Henry wrote, “There’s little space for disabled characters because games are most frequently written and played by white, cis-gender, heterosexual, able-bodied men. Their experiences are frequently limited to the stories they can access, and the stories that they themselves want to play out” (Henry, 2015). Although this article referred to analog games and disability specifically, we can easily attribute this sentiment to other marginal or minoritized bodies in both video games and the video game industry. For this reason, the expansion of diversity within the industry can have an important influence on the nature of games and the work-life of game developers.

### Age, Location, Immigration, and Ethnicity

A career in video games requires an interest in video games in general and an ability to keep up with rapidly changing technical and artistic trends. It is therefore associated with a youthful work force. The data collected from the 2015 DSS echo these associations; the mean age for the sample was 32 with a response range of 16-81 years. Two-thirds of respondents were between 20 and 34 years of age while only 8% were 45 years of age or older.

The average age of workers in the video game industry is much lower than in the general workforce. In 2014, the average American worker was 42.4 years old (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014) and in 2015 the average Canadian worker was between 45 and 54 years old (Statistics Canada, 2015).

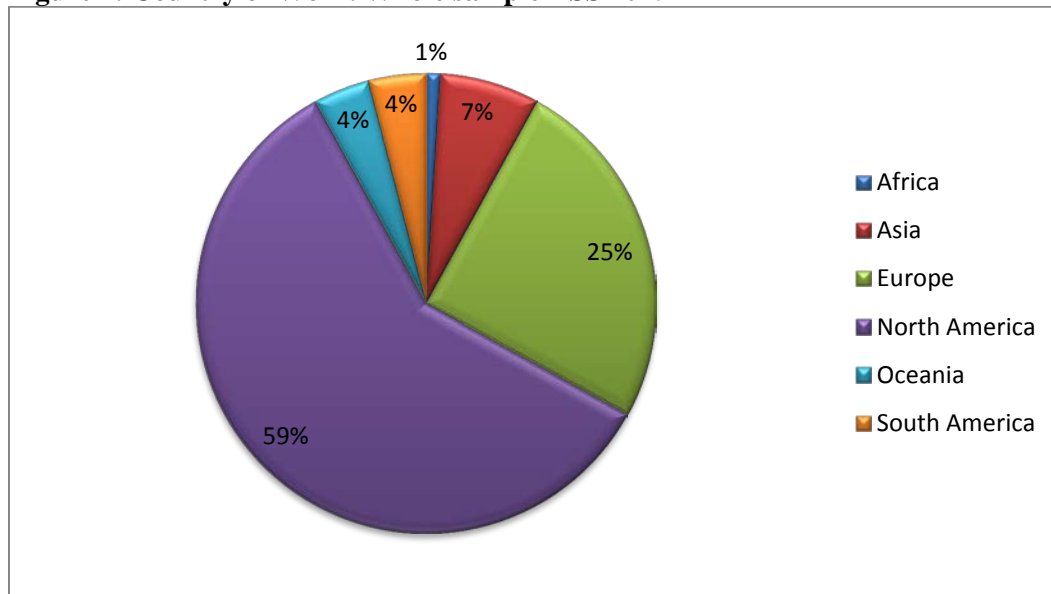
**Figure 1: Age of respondents. Whole sample DSS 2015**



The labour forces of the US and Canada are appropriate comparison groups because the majority of survey respondents in both the 2014 and 2015 DSS were from the US and Canada. In the 2015 survey, people working in North America made up 59% of the sample, followed by Europe at 25%. Only 13% identified as immigrants. There was little to no difference in the 2014 DSS data.

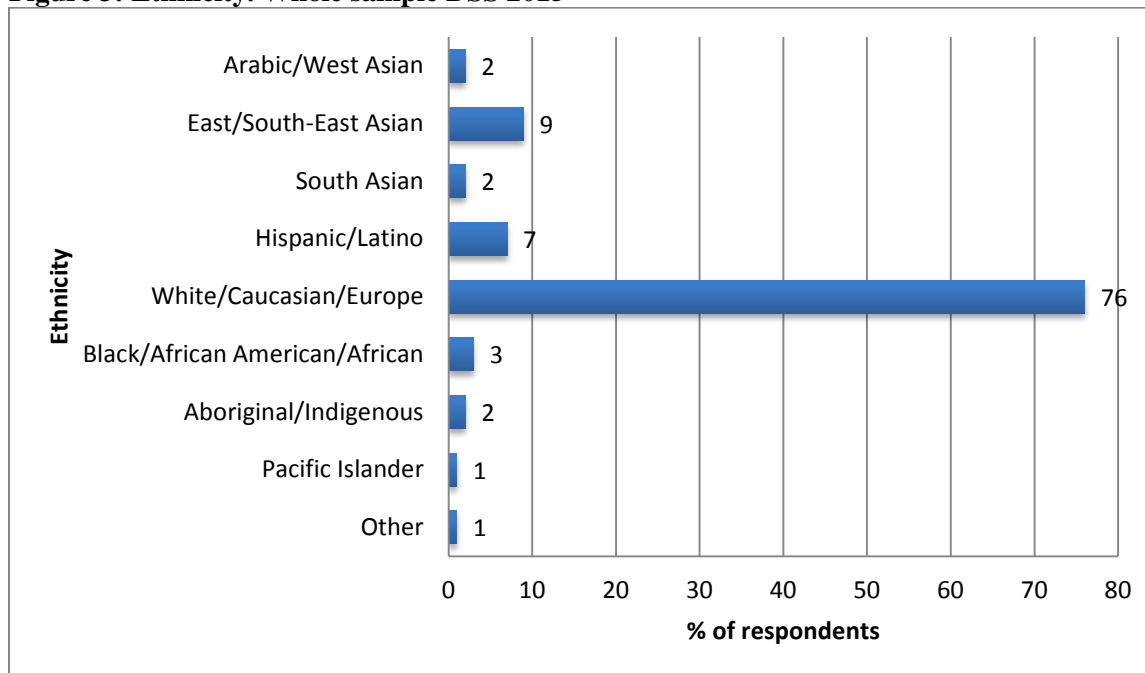


**Figure 2: Country of Work. Whole sample DSS 2015**



In keeping with results of the 2014 DSS survey, the 2015 data show that an overwhelming majority (76%) of participants identified as white (or bi-/multi-racial with white). The second and third most represented ethnicities were East Asia at 9% and Hispanic or Latino at 7%. All other categories together comprised the remaining 16%. Respondents were given the opportunity to choose up to three options for ethnicity, this means that the total represented in the chart below exceeds 100%.

**Figure 3: Ethnicity. Whole sample DSS 2015**



## *Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Family Life*

As shown in Table 2, the majority of respondents to the DSS 2015 were heterosexual males. Though about half the sample were married or partnered, the majority did not have children and they did not care for elderly parents or relatives. This is consistent with the 2014 survey data.

The lack of dependent responsibilities (children or elders) can largely be explained by the relatively young age of respondents; however, there are characteristics of the working environment – such as long and unpredictable hours and employment insecurity – that impact domestic choices. The data further suggest that the domestic choices of workers may be gendered. At 36%, white men were the most likely to report having children living at home. By contrast, only 17% of women reported having children living at home. Women within the sample are, on average, no younger than their male colleagues and should therefore be no less likely to report having children. Research on the project-based work environment of the IT sector suggests that work demands are difficult to balance against the responsibilities of being the primary caregiver at home (Legault & Chasserio, 2003; 2012).

Further investigation is needed on this issue in the game industry to understand why such a small percentage of women in the industry have children relative to men.

The data also suggest differences in elder care responsibilities across respondent groups. Overall, 11% percent of respondents reported caring for an elderly parent, but male and female respondents of colour were most likely to report having to care for an elderly parent or relative, at 17%. Given that respondents of colour were also the group most frequently reporting an income under \$40,000, further investigation should examine the relationship between familial responsibilities and earning potential, as well as potentially disproportionate stresses felt by workers of colour as a result of these factors.

Also of note is that 21% of the respondents of colour chose not to disclose their sexual orientation in this survey. Comparatively, only 4% of white respondents refused to disclose this information. Nineteen percent of respondents of colour also declined to answer whether or not they were open about their sexual orientation at work, compared to only 6% of white respondents. The conditions that affect a person's decision about whether or not to disclose their sexual orientation are difficult to assess in a survey. However, given the demographic breakdown of those who chose not to answer in this survey and those who indicated hesitation in disclosing such information at their job (i.e., predominately workers of colour), it seems worth considering whether the perceived threat of harassment or marginalization on the basis of sexual orientation is disproportionately felt by video game workers of colour.

Table 2: Gender, Sexual Orientation and Family Life. Whole sample DSS 2015

		<b>% of respondents</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	75%
	Female	22%
	Transgender	1.5%
	Other	1%
	Declined	6%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>		
	Heterosexual	81%
	Homosexual	4%
	Bisexual	13%
	Other	3%
	Declined	9%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
	Single	46%
	Married/partnered	45%
<b>Dependents</b>		
	No children	78%
	Pre-school children	9%
	School-age children	12%
	Adult children	4%
	Responsible for an elderly parent/relative	11%

Note: percentages will not add to 100% within categories due to rounding, multiple response allowances and removal of missing values for some calculations

### ***Disability***

In the DSS 2015, 31% of respondents reported having some form of disability. This percentage is somewhat high when compared against that of the total populations in the United States and Canada (the countries most represented by workers in the 2014 and 2015 surveys). According to census data, 19% of Americans identified as having a disability (United States Census Bureau,

2012) and in Canada, 14% of the population reported having a disability that “limited their daily activities” (Statistics Canada, 2012). However, the DSS did not interrogate the relationship between workers' disabilities and their work. As such, this high percentage could be interpreted in two potential ways. It is possible that the video game industry, and the type of work done there, accommodates the needs of those with a disability more effectively than other industries. This means that workers who identify as having a disability may gravitate to these spaces. Alternatively, and particularly in the case of mental health and disabilities developed as a result of repetitive strain injuries, it is worth investigating if the working environments of the video game industry contribute to or exacerbate the negative effects of particular disabilities. In either case, the comparatively high percentage warrants additional research into the mental and physical well-being of developers on and off the job.

Within the whole sample, the largest reported disability was ‘psychiatric or a mental illness’ (9%). In descending order of prominence, other reported disabilities included visual impairment (7%), physical, neurological, and intellectual (4% each), and hearing impairments (3%). Overall, the differences in percentages across identity categories were negligible, although some stood out as worthy of note. For example, female respondents reported psychiatric disabilities or mental illness at a rate twice as high as males (14% compared to 7%). Some reporting bias may exist in this data, but follow-up inquiry should seek to understand if the unique experiences of women on the job differentially influence their mental health.

Similarly to the patterns of response to the questions about sexual orientation, more workers of colour declined to comment on disability than white workers by a margin of 10%. The social stigma attached to disability may have been a factor in respondents’ willingness to discuss this. Once again, we should seek to understand if the perceived threat of marginalization in the event of disclosure is felt more strongly amongst workers of colour and the implications this may have for their personal well-being.

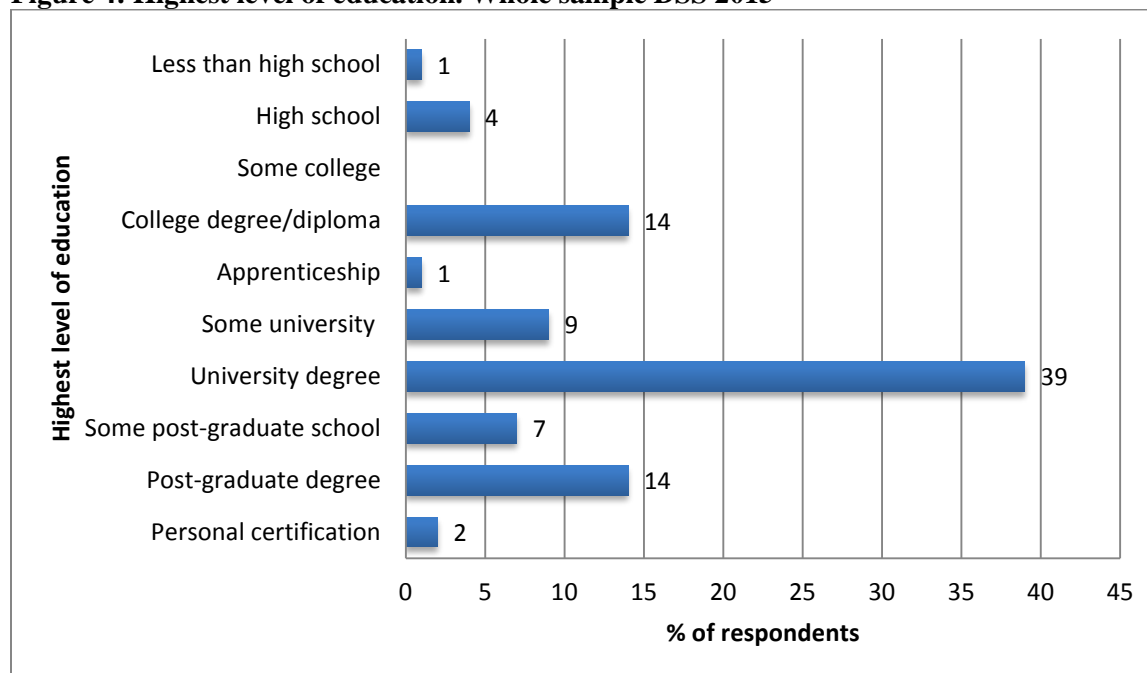
### ***Education and Training***

The most common path to working in the video game industry is through formal schooling or training. In the 2015 DSS nearly three quarters (74%) of participants reported having received a college or university degree or diploma. Of these, 66% said that the credential was at least somewhat relevant to the video game industry in particular

Participants who identified as white workers reported slightly higher levels of university or postgraduate education (71%), compared to workers of colour (64%), whereas little difference existed between men and women (69% and 72%, respectively).

Of those seeking or holding a university degree, 77% of men reported that their degree was directly or somewhat related to the video game industry compared to 72% of women. Programmers and software engineers were very likely to state that their education is related to their job and game programmers are predominately men (see below). However, specific game-related programs in art and design have proliferated. These jobs represent an important component of the game development workforce and women occupy these jobs in slightly higher numbers.

**Figure 4: Highest level of education. Whole sample DSS 2015**



## Type of Work

It is important to recall that only the respondents who were primarily working in a job that was directly related to core development (as employees, freelancers or self-employed) were asked the questions in the following two sections about type of work, compensation, and benefits.

Respondents to the 2014 and 2015 surveys included both full-time and part-time workers, who variously identified as permanent employees, temporary employees, freelance or independent contractors, or as self-employed. There were only small variances in employment type and status across identity categories. Most notably, workers of colour reported being permanent employees less frequently than white workers (61% versus 68%), and reported part-time employment more frequently than white workers (17% versus 12%). Across gender, women reported working as freelancers, independent contractors or temporary employees more frequently than men by a margin of 5%. Such findings may suggest that white males dominate the most stable and permanent employment in the video game industry.

### *Primary Role*

According to the 2015 DSS, the most common role of respondents was that of a programmer, software engineer, or technical designer (26%). The second and third most common positions were game designer (15%) and producer or project manager (12%). Each of the other occupations claimed less than 10% of the whole sample, respectively.

### *Technical Roles*

Most strikingly, men reported working in technical roles such as programmer, software engineer, technical designer or technical support at more than twice the rate that women did (28% to 11%).

Workers of colour and white workers reported working in technical roles at similar rates; 19% of workers of colour and 23% of white workers reported working as programmers, software engineers or technical designers. This was the most commonly reported role by workers of colour.

### *Managerial Roles*

Relative to their representation in the 2015 sample as a whole (22% women plus 2.5% transgender or other), women respondents most frequently reported working in management positions (37%), whether that be as a senior manager (19%), upper or middle management (2%), project manager (14%), or team lead (2%). Comparatively, 38% of men reported working in a management position of some kind; 23% of male respondents held senior management positions, 3% held upper or middle management positions, 8% held project manager positions and 4% were team leads.

While we can and should be pleased with the approximate gender parity of women to men in management roles this distribution of women in managerial roles may be an artefact of the data in that more women managers chose to answer the survey than male managers. Within the survey women are also seen in higher numbers in administrative support roles within game studios (i.e., HR, legal, PR, marketing) where they may also hold managerial titles.

More work needs to be done to understand the specific nature of the roles held and their location in the organizational hierarchy and power structure. While our sample suggests women are employed in management roles at rates comparable to men, we should be careful not to hastily equate that with obvious power or influence in development and the industry more broadly.

What is immediately more concerning, however, is that workers of colour were particularly underrepresented in senior management roles, at only 3%. In contrast, 23% of white respondents reported occupying this role. The disproportionate presence of white workers in senior management positions is of significant concern because it has implications for workplace culture, video game content, and the shape of the industry at large. Having a diverse set of voices at the table is a powerful means by which we can strengthen equality in the industry. As such, these findings further emphasize the importance of continuing to combat the educational and workplace barriers that may be inhibiting entry for this group into powerful positions within the industry.

### *Artistic Roles*

Almost 30% of women respondents reported working as either a game designer (10%), visual artist (16%) or in UX/UI design (3%). This means that women were much more represented in art and design roles over roles like programming (11%) and even slightly more represented in art and design relative to percentage of women in the whole sample (24.5%). Women were

marginally more represented in these roles than men; 24% of male respondents report working as game designers, visual artists or in UX/UI.

**Table 3: Primary role. Identity comparison DSS 2015**

	Women	Men	Workers of Color	White Workers
Whole sample	24.5%	75%	33%	67%
<b>Technical Roles</b>				
Programmer/Software Engineer/Technical Designer	11%	27%	19%	23%
Technical Support	>1%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Managerial Roles</b>				
Senior Manager	19%	23%	3%	23%
Upper or Middle Manager	2%	3%	3%	3%
Project Manager	14%	8%	17%	9%
Team Lead	2%	4%	4%	4%
<b>Artistic Roles</b>				
Game Designer	10%	14%	17%	14%
Visual Artist	16%	8%	12%	10%
UX and UI Research and Design	3%	2%	1%	2%

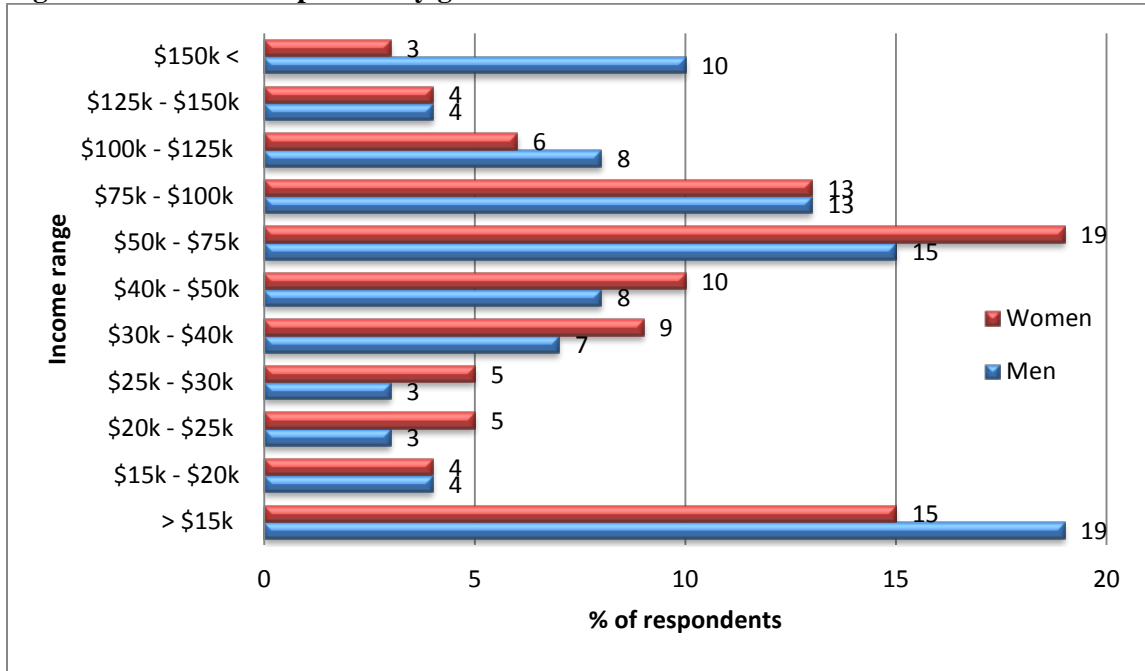
## Compensation and Benefits

### *Compensation and Gender*

When we compile the data for all employed, self-employed, currently unemployed and freelance video game workers, the rate of compensation across gender is reasonably balanced. The largest gender discrepancy in earnings emerges at the highest and lowest income brackets. Men occupy both the highest and lowest income brackets for their work in video game development while women are more clustered around the middle income brackets. The largest discrepancy is at the highest income bracket where 10% of men report earning \$150,000 or more, and only 3% of women do. When controlling for the impact of job tenure and occupational role on

compensation, the difference in earnings between men and women in the highest and lowest income brackets are significant (see Figure 5), while there are no statistically significant differences between the distributions of men and women in the middle brackets.

**Figure 5: Income. Comparison by gender DSS 2015**

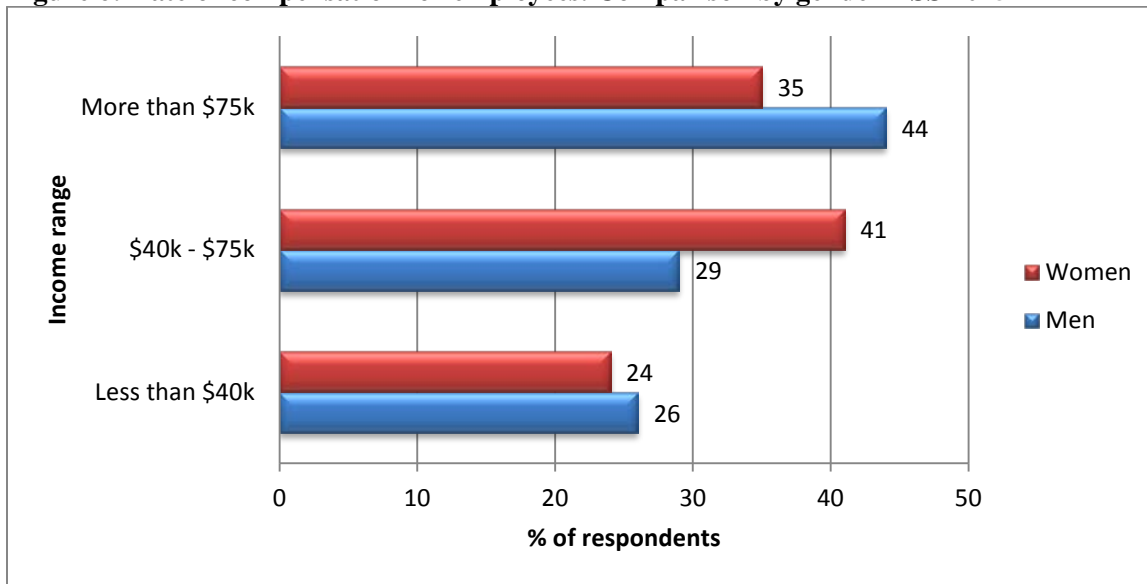


*Employees*

Among people working as hourly or salaried employees, the rate of compensation for male and female employees is fairly well balanced at the low end; 24% of women and 26% of men reported earning less than \$40,000. However, discrepancies arise in the mid and high income brackets. A larger percentage of women employees reported earnings in the mid-range income bracket than men. Forty-one percent of women reported earning between \$40,000 and \$75,000, whereas 29% of men reported this income. This trend is reversed in the high-income bracket where a larger percentage of male employees reported earning over \$75,000 a year. Forty-four percent of men reported this compared to 35% of women. Male employees continued to outpace female employees at the highest earnings range at a rate of 3 to 1. Where 13% of male employees reported earning \$150,000 or more, only 4% of female employees did.



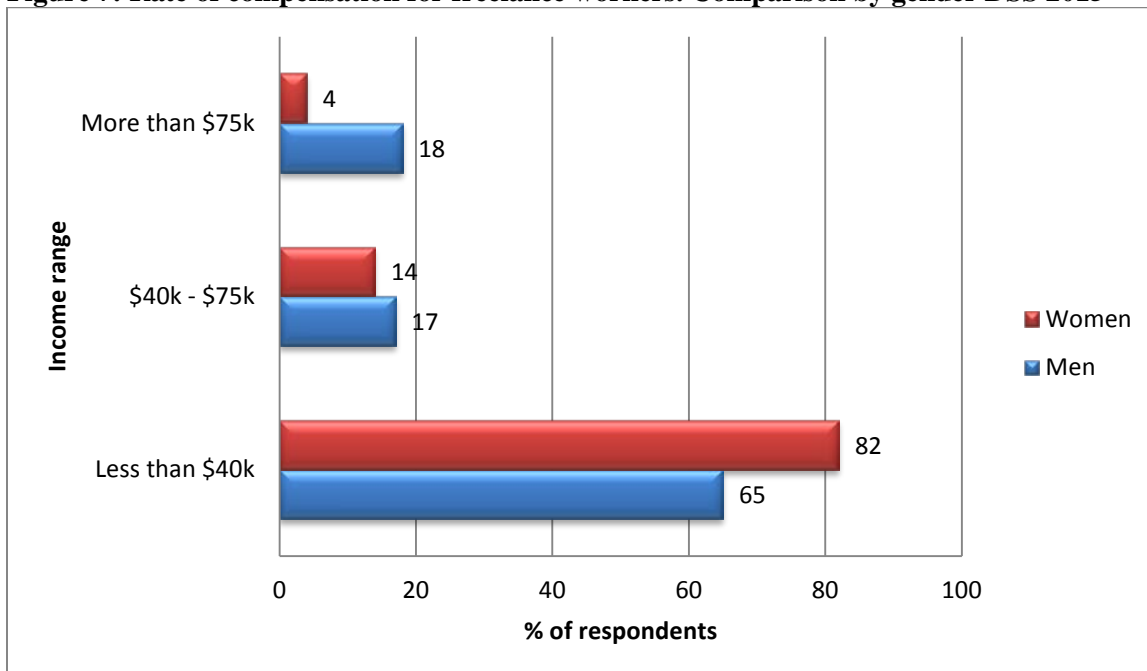
**Figure 6: Rate of compensation for employees. Comparison by gender DSS 2015**



*Freelance*

Overall, the majority of freelance workers earned much less than their employee counterparts in the DSS 2015. Even so, male freelancers reported earning more than female freelance workers. Within the low-income bracket, 82% of women freelancers earned less than \$40,000 compared to 65% of men. Furthermore, 18% of male freelancers made more than \$75,000 a year, whereas only 4% of female freelancers earn above this amount.

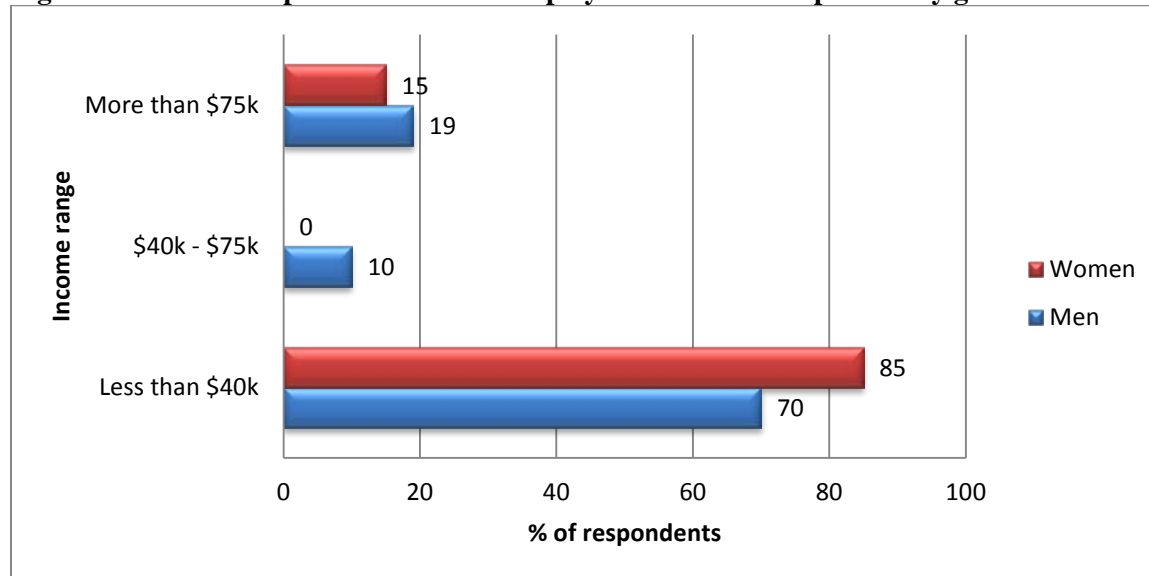
**Figure 7: Rate of compensation for freelance workers. Comparison by gender DSS 2015**



*Self-Employed*

Overall self-employed workers also earned significantly less than employees. Over half (53%) earned less than \$15,000 from their work in the game industry over the course of 2014 (as reported in the DSS 2015). Across gender, self-employed game developers reported similar income discrepancies to freelancers at the low end. Eighty-five percent of female self-employed game developers made less than \$40,000 a year, whereas 70% of male self-employed game developers earned this amount. Interestingly, no women reported earning in the mid-range income bracket of \$40,000 to \$75,000 a year, while 10% of male self-employed workers did. However, women and men were much more evenly matched in the higher income bracket, where 15% of women and 19% of men earned over \$75,000.

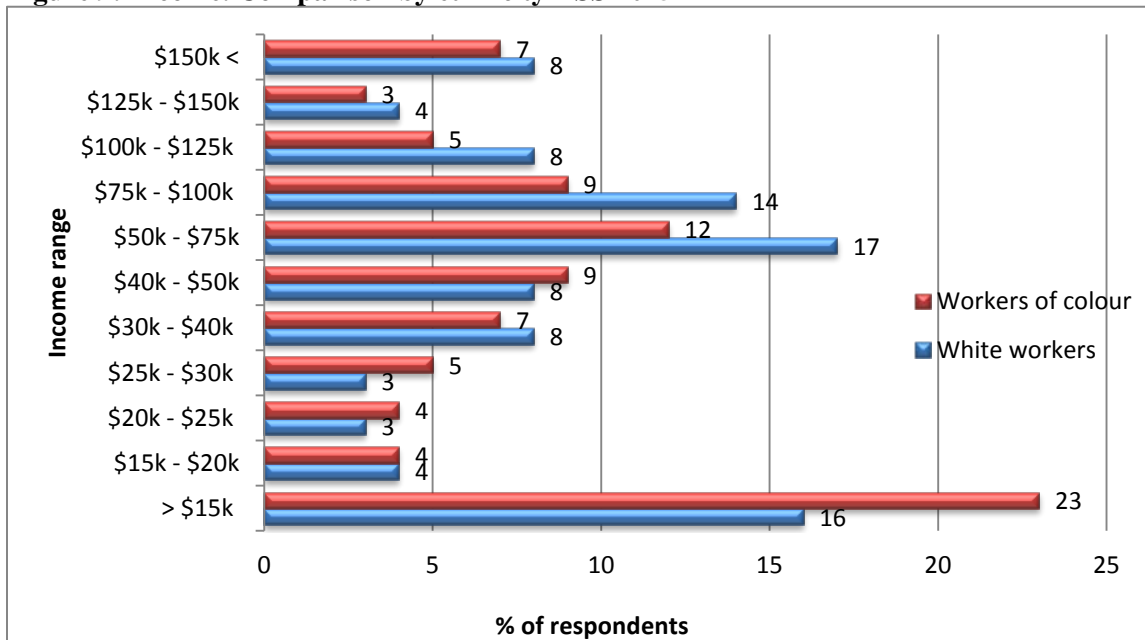
**Figure 8: Rate of compensation for self-employed workers. Comparison by gender DSS 2015**



***Compensation and Ethnicity***

Workers of colour reported earnings in the lowest income bracket at higher percentages than white workers. While 26% of workers of colour reported earning less than \$15,000, only 17% of white workers reported earning this. The compensation for both identity groups was more evenly matched in the mid-range earning brackets; 25% of white workers and 21% of workers of colour earned between \$40,000 and \$75,000. In the higher-income brackets, more white workers reported earning over \$75,000 than workers of colour (34% to 24%, respectively). This is likely attributable, in part, to the disproportionate amount of white workers in senior management positions compared to workers of colour. That said, these identity groups are most evenly matched at the highest-income level; 7% of respondents of colour and 8% of white respondents reported earning more than \$150,000.

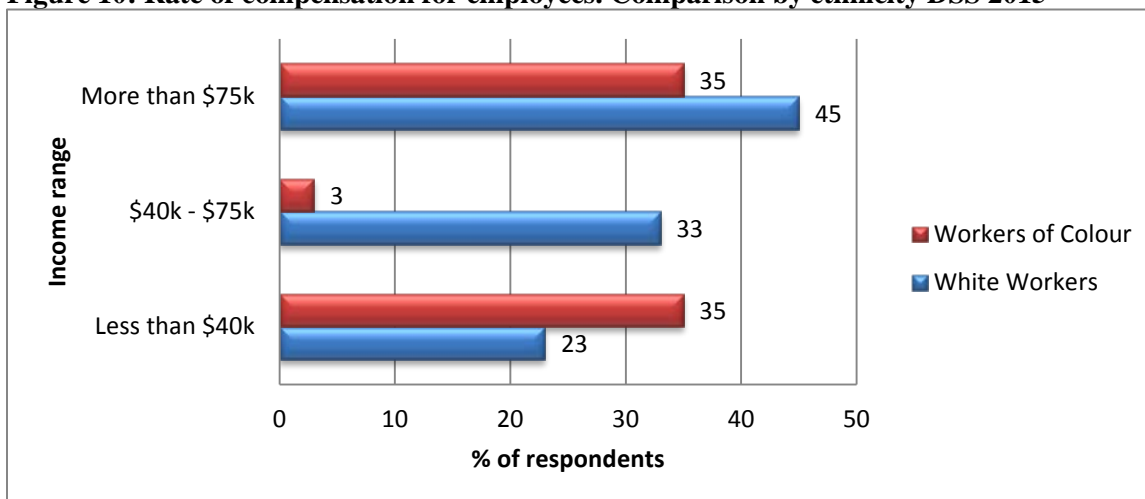
**Figure 9: Income. Comparison by ethnicity DSS 2015**



*Employees*

Among those working as hourly and salaried permanent employees, 35% of the workers of colour sub-sample reported earning less than \$40,000 compared to 23% of white employees. The difference lessened in the mid-range income levels; 33% of white employees and 30% of workers of colour reported earning between \$40,000 and \$75,000. At the high income bracket discrepancies emerge once again. Where 45% of white employees reported earning more than \$75,000, only 35% of the employees in the workers of colour sub-sample reported this.

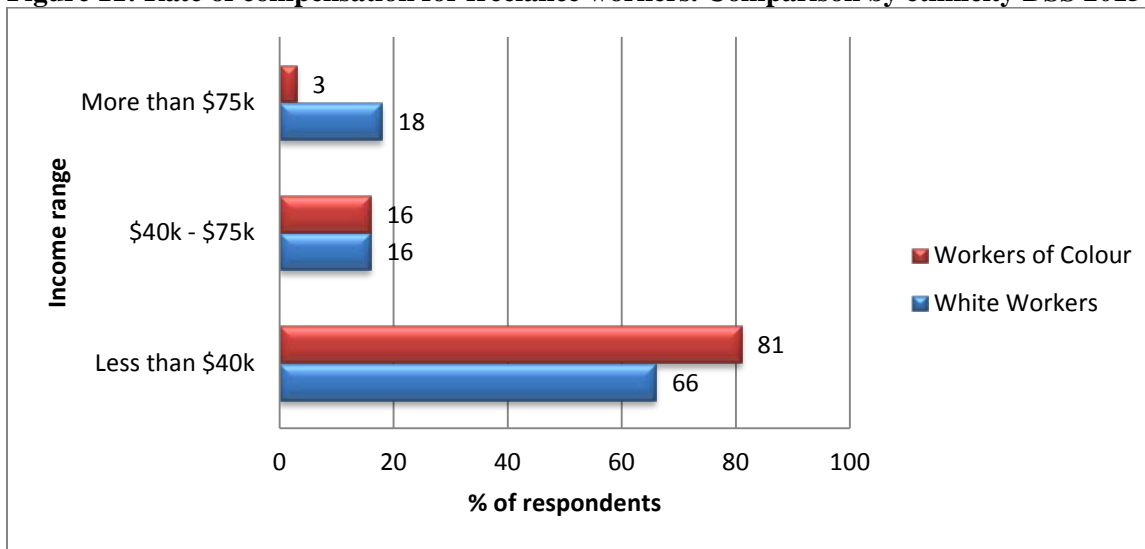
**Figure 10: Rate of compensation for employees. Comparison by ethnicity DSS 2015**



*Freelance*

There were notable discrepancies between the earnings of freelance workers of colour and white freelance workers. Among freelance workers of colour, 81% reported earning less than \$40,000. This is 15% more than white freelancers, 66% of whom reported earning this amount. Furthermore, while 18% of white freelancers made over \$75,000, only 3% of freelancers in the workers of colour sub-sample earned this much.

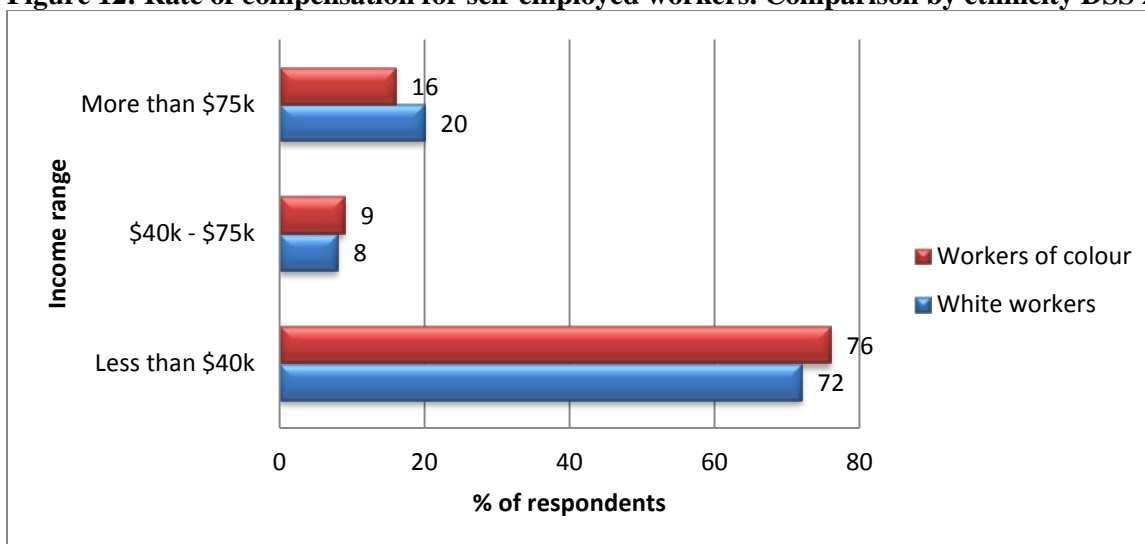
**Figure 11: Rate of compensation for freelance workers. Comparison by ethnicity DSS 2015**



*Self-Employed*

Among the self-employed, there were few differences in reported income between the white sub-sample and the workers of colour sub-sample.

**Figure 12: Rate of compensation for self-employed workers. Comparison by ethnicity DSS 2015**



### *Perception of compensation rate*

Respondents were asked whether they felt they were compensated fairly for the work that they do. As shown in Table 4 for the DSS 2015 data, employees responded the most favourably (56% strongly agree or agree), followed by freelancers (47%) and self-employed workers (34%).

Overall, employees and freelance respondents provided similar answers across all identity categories when asked whether they felt they were fairly compensated for the work that they do. When this same question was asked to self-employed workers, however, fewer women felt they were fairly compensated for the work that they do than men (13% versus 36%). Forty percent of the women respondents did not feel fairly compensated, compared to 25% of men. Across race, 40% of self-employed workers of colour and 31% of self-employed white workers felt fairly compensated compared to 21% of workers of colour and 29% of white workers who did not feel fairly compensated.

**Table 4: “I am fairly compensated for the work I do” by employment type. Whole sample DSS 2015**

	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Self-Employed</b>	<b>Freelance</b>
Strongly Agree	16%	15%	9%
Agree	40%	19%	38%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	15%	40%	20%
Disagree	18%	12%	23%
Strongly Disagree	9%	13%	7%

### *Benefits*

As a result of intense work demands of the video game industry such as high mobility and long or unpredictable working hours, the familial and domestic responsibilities of employees can be viewed and experienced as detrimental to career growth. This is sometimes referred to as a ‘drag-coefficient’ (Dyer-Witthford, 1999) and feminist research has long highlighted the discriminatory practices that privilege non-parents or non-primary caregivers in the workplace. Though women now comprise nearly half of the work force (Department of Labor, 2016; Status of Women Canada, 2015) they still take on more of the domestic and caregiving work in the home. This is to say that while the duties of familial and domestic care have shifted in recent decades, many women still shoulder the majority of these responsibilities (Holland, 2015; Kolhatkar, 2015; Yapp, 2016). With this context in mind, the DSS inquired about child-care provisions provided by employers. Understanding the prevalence of family-care provision within the workplace allows us to develop a clearer picture of the potential roadblocks that inhibit gender parity and the potential for diversity within the industry overall. The availability of such services is quite low, with only 5% of respondents indicating that their company provides on or off-site day care.

The DSS also asked about the availability of maternity and paternity benefits. There was a small increase in 2015 compared to 2014. In 2014 25% of all respondents reported maternity or pregnancy leave paid for by their employer and only 17% of all respondents reported having maternity or pregnancy leave paid for through a government program or a combination of their employer and a government program. In 2015 among employed respondents alone, these figures were 31% and 23%, respectively (Table 5). There was no change in the answers about paternity and parental leave from 2014 to 2015.

Familial support within and outside of the work environment is incredibly important, especially when anti-maternity/motherhood discourses permeate accounts of discrepancies between men and women who occupy senior management or C suite positions (e.g., CEO or CFO) (Fairchild, 2014; Branson, 2010).

**Table 5: Maternity/pregnancy and paternity/paternal benefits. Employees and unemployed sample DSS 2015**

	Employees		Unemployed	
	Maternity	Paternity	Maternity	Paternity
Yes, unpaid	4%	5%	3%	9%
Yes, paid for by employer	31%	28%	17%	13%
Yes, paid by government program	8%	7%	13%	9%
Yes, paid by employer and government program	15%	12%	13%	6%
No	5%	10%	17%	22%

These numbers are still low and a higher frequency of these services amongst employers could facilitate greater gender equity within the industry. However, as noted above, only 21% of respondents reported having a child or children who lived at home in 2015. This leads to a chicken and egg or ‘field of dreams’ sort of debate around family-friendly policies. The data on maternity and parental leave also highlight the relative invisibility of parenthood in this industry. Approximately 37% of the 2015 DSS respondents were unsure whether their company offered maternity, paternity, pregnancy, or parental leave. Though some would argue that this means it is a non-issue, lack of awareness and discussion about these topics does little to change the culture of the industry.

## Diversity

In answering the survey questions that correspond to the following sections of this report, participants were prompted to think of diversity in terms of demographic characteristics such as sex, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, but participants may have also considered diversity in terms of knowledge, skills, abilities and experience.

It is important to note that only 40% of all the people who began the DSS 2015 completed the questions about diversity. It is quite possible that in some cases this was a matter of survey fatigue as these questions were located at the end. However, it could indicate a lack of interest in this topic, a lack of awareness about some of the topics covered, or a lack certainty about the applicability of diversity conversations to their own workplaces. There is much to be gained from engaging workers in conversations about perceptions of diversity and what companies can do to facilitate healthy change in the industry. The lack of response may indicate that more could be done to open this dialogue.

### *Importance of Diversity in the Industry, Workplace, and Content*

In 2014 and 2015, survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of diversity within the industry at large, their own workplace, and the video game content they help to produce. Overall, the majority of respondents saw diversity as important in all three categories. In 2015, 62% of the whole sample said diversity was somewhat or very important to the workplace, 66% said it was somewhat or very important to the game industry, and 72% said it was somewhat or very important to video game content (Figure 13).

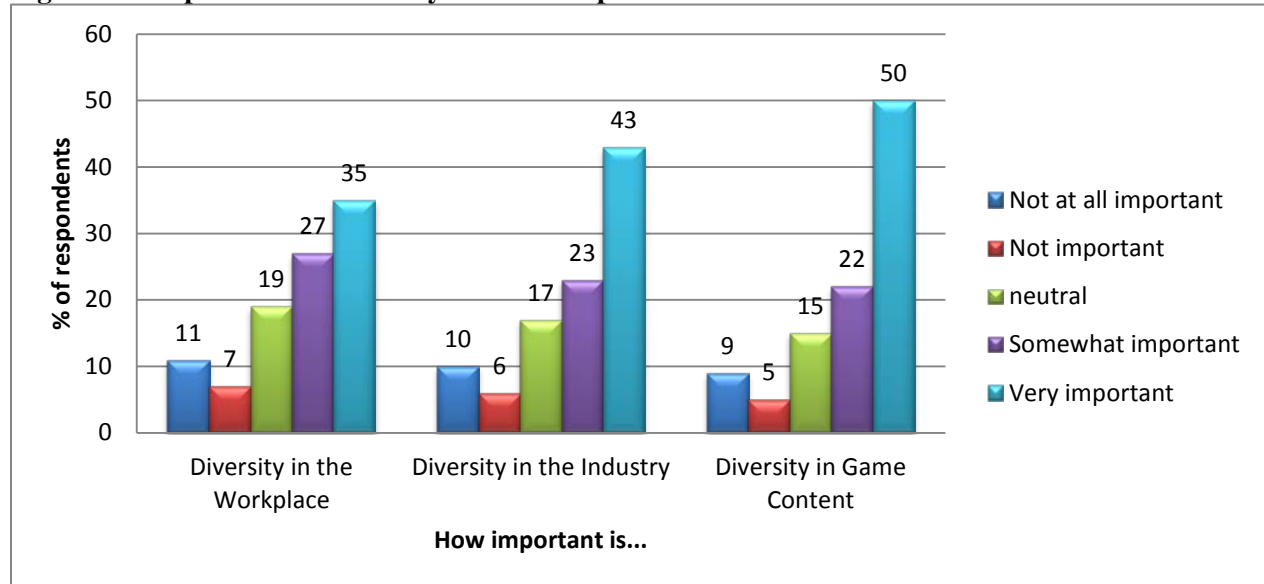
It is interesting to note that diversity in the workplace was the category deemed important least often compared to diversity in the industry and diversity in game content. This may suggest that in an abstract sense, video game developers recognize the need for diversity in the industry and the cultural texts that circulate as a result of their work (e.g., games and related commentary). However, they seem less likely to perceive negative implications - to themselves or their products, for instance the cultural content of games - as a result of a homogenous team in their own workplaces.

We have also examined how responses varied across gender and race. Throughout the following section, we include ‘white male’ as a category of inquiry. This allows us to compare the responses of those individuals who belong to both the dominant gender and race in the industry to responses from those who occupy only one or neither of those subject positions. According to our sample, the video game workforce is predominately white and male. This has implications for the work culture that may be less perceptible to those who occupy the dominant subject position. Therefore, we can reasonably expect that those who find themselves underrepresented (i.e. women and persons of colour) would perceive the importance of diversity in all three categories more strongly.

When we examine women’s responses to these questions it appears that this is the case. On average, women reported that diversity was important in these areas 14% more frequently than men (Tables 6, 7, and 8). This is perhaps not surprising. In addition to being underrepresented in the videogame industry, women have long experienced derogatory representations of their

gender in videogame content as well as a general invisibility within the wider videogame culture. This has the likely result of making them acutely aware of the value in diverse participation and representations.

**Figure 13: Importance of diversity. Whole sample DSS 2015**



Surprisingly, respondents of colour were the least likely to report that diversity is important across all three categories (Tables 6, 7, and 8). As an underrepresented group, this is particularly interesting. One possible explanation might be found in the fact that these workers have made a career for themselves in an industry in which they find themselves in the minority. As such, they may recognize a lack of diversity, but have not experienced it as an obstacle to pursuing their own career.

It also appears that the relatively low percentage of workers of colour who view diversity as important in these sectors is driven down by the lack of *women of colour* respondents among them (116 women of colour respondents in total and 424 men of colour). When we isolate the responses from women of colour to these questions we find higher percentages; 69% said diversity was important in the workplace, 70% said it was important in the industry, and 72% said it was important in game content. This suggests that this issue of diversity is much more salient in terms of gender than it is of race/ethnicity.

**Table 6: How important is diversity in the game industry? Identity comparison DSS 2015**

	White Men	Workers of Colour	White Workers	Women	Men
Important	69%	56%	73%	81%	66%
Neutral	16%	22%	14%	9%	18%
Not Important	14%	22%	13%	10%	15%



**Table 7: How important is diversity in the workplace? Identity comparison DSS 2015**

	White Men	Workers of Colour	White Workers	Women	Men
Important	66%	52%	69%	80%	63%
Neutral	18%	24%	16%	9%	19%
Not Important	17%	24%	15%	10%	18%

**Table 8: How important is diversity in game content? Identity comparison DSS 2015**

	White Men	Workers of Colour	White Workers	Women	Men
Important	75%	61%	78%	83%	73%
Neutral	14%	19%	13%	8%	15%
Not Important	11%	20%	10%	9%	12%

### ***Treatment, Opportunity, & Equity***

DSS 2015 survey respondents were asked if they believe there is equal opportunity and treatment for all in the game industry. The results suggest that the majority do not. Forty-nine percent responded ‘no’ there is not equal treatment and opportunity in the game industry, 39% responded ‘yes’ there is equal treatment, and 13% were ‘unsure’.

The 2015 data suggests that the perception of unequal opportunity and treatment is most widely held among women (Table 9; Figure 14). Sixty-seven percent of women reported that there is not equal treatment, 21% more than men.

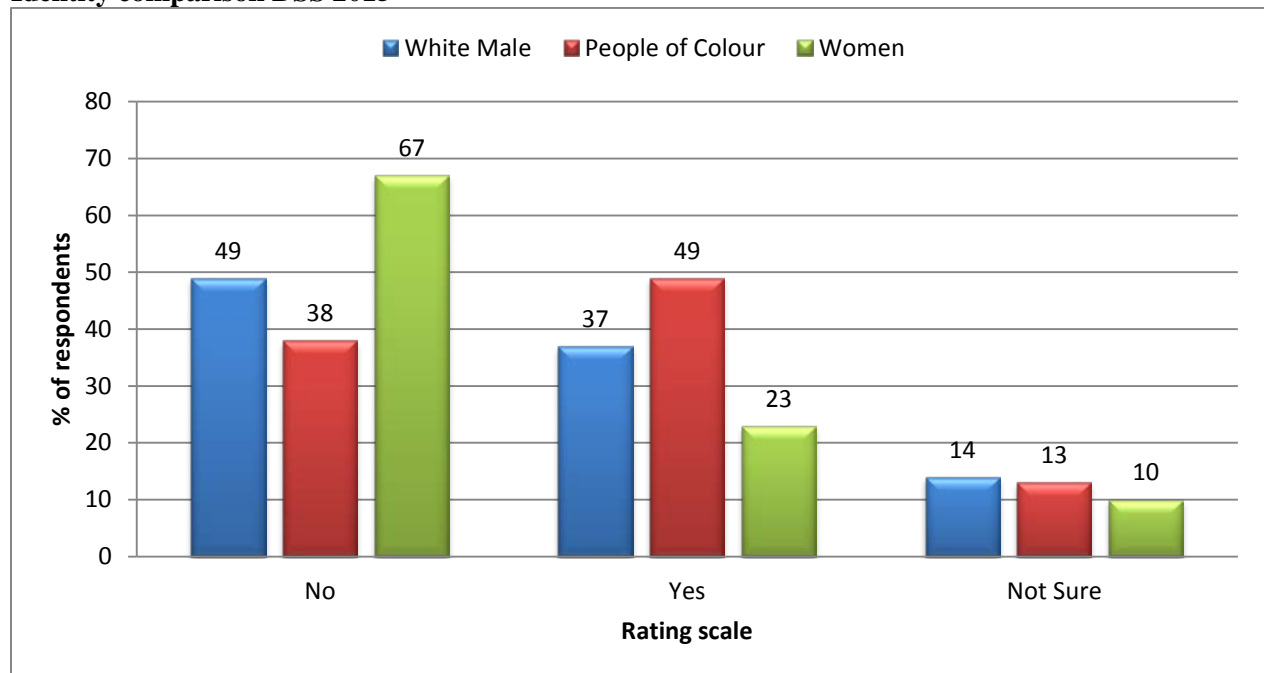
Interestingly, workers of colour were the most likely to perceive the industry as equal for all; 49% of whom responded positively (Table 9; Figure 14). However, as with the questions about the perceived importance of diversity, the lack of women among the workers of colour respondents may play a role in this. When responses from female workers of colour are isolated we see a 19% jump in the frequency of those who reported that there is not equal treatment and opportunity; 57% of female workers of colour responded that there is not equal treatment, 31% responded that there is and 12% were unsure.

Overall this data suggests that different perceptions of unequal treatment are driven primarily by gender rather than race/ethnic origin.

**Table 9: Do you feel there is equal treatment and opportunity for all in the game industry? Identity comparison DSS 2015**

	White Men	Workers of Colour	White Workers	Women	Men
Yes	37%	49%	33%	23%	40%
No	49%	38%	54%	67%	46%
Not sure	14%	14%	13%	10%	14%

**Figure 14: Do you feel there is equal treatment and opportunity for all in the game industry? Identity comparison DSS 2015**



#### *Changes from 2014*

Across the whole sample in the DSS 2014, 23% of respondents felt unsure and 29% responded that they felt that there was equal treatment. This suggests that in 2015 compared to 2014 more respondents had a definitive view on this issue and more respondents had a positive view. Additional years of data are needed to indicate whether this is a feature of the sample or whether this is a positive trend.

Across gender, the results from the 2014 and 2015 data are somewhat similar. However, in 2015 there were fewer men and women who reported being ‘unsure’ about the level of equality in the industry (10% and 8%, respectively). As above, this suggests that workers have begun to develop opinions on the matter, whether positive or negative. This may be attributed to the cultural commentary that circulated about equity in the game industry as a result of the Gamergate controversy that was quite live at the time of this survey’s circulation. Between 2014 and 2015 there was a 6% increase in women and 8% increase in men who agreed that there was equal treatment for all, and a 2% increase in women and 2% increase in men who felt there was not.

Across workers of colour, the difference from 2014 to 2015 was more evident. There was a 26% increase in the percentage of workers of colour who reported that there was equal treatment for all in the game industry. Among the respondents to the 2014 survey, only 23% of workers of colour said there was equal treatment, while in the 2015 sample 49% felt this way. Without diminishing the positive experiences reported by workers of colour in the DSS 2015, and without reducing the impact of those experiences on the video game industry at large, we must also remember that the sample size of video game workers of colour was quite small for both years (347 in 2014 and 540 in 2015). This jump is therefore indicative of the positive responses of 185 people. Furthermore, a one-year longitudinal analysis is less likely representative of macro-level changes to the industry, than it is of the varying personal experiences of different respondents in the sample. That being said, this is an interesting change worthy of continued monitoring over a longer period of time.

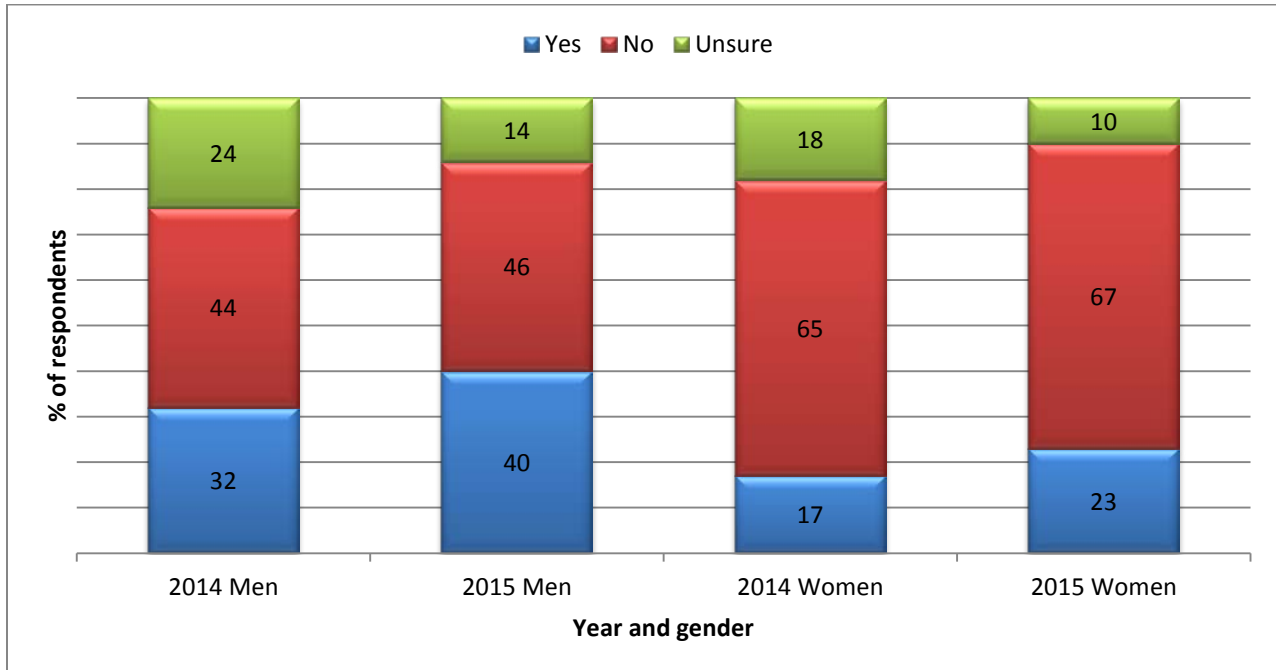
### #Gamergate

The [Gamergate controversy](#) began in August 2014 over a perceived lack of journalistic integrity amongst videogame journalists and rumours of preferential treatment for particular video game developers. The allegations quickly escalated to online harassment, doxxing, and the release of private information. The hashtag #Gamergate was often accompanied by vitriolic speech and threats toward media critics and prominent women in the industry. This became a defining feature of GamerGate, and the locus from which a subsequent debate about gender equality in the industry and game content emerged.

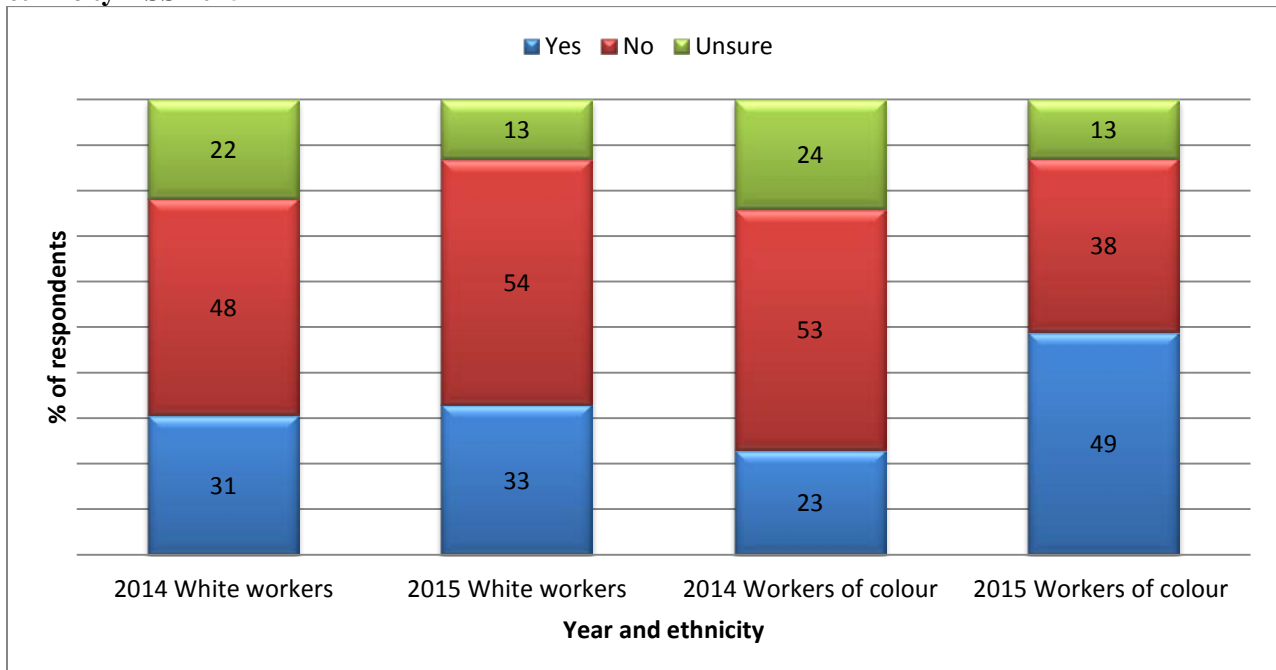
#Gamergate became the hashtag used by people on both sides of the issue to participate in the discussion around ethics in video game journalism, and perhaps more accurately, the need for inclusion, visibility, and respect for women in videogames. In an opinion piece about gamergate, journalist Caitlin Dewey (2014) wrote:

The issues that Gamergate struggles over are also issues of great conflict, and importance, to American culture as a whole. In fact, in many respects, Gamergate is just a proxy war for a greater cultural battle over space and visibility and inclusion, a battle over who belongs to the mainstream.

**Figure 15: Is there equal opportunity and treatment for all in the industry? Comparison by gender DSS 2015**



**Figure 16: Is there equal opportunity and treatment for all in the industry? Comparison by ethnicity DSS 2015**



### *Experiences with Inequity*

Respondents were asked if they had personally experienced inequity towards themselves. In the DSS 2015, white men were the least likely to report experiencing any form of inequity; 26% of men of all racial categories reported personally experiencing inequity and 24% of white men reported experiencing inequity. In contrast two-thirds (67%) of the female respondents reported experiencing some form of inequity and just over one-third (38%) of men and women of colour reported experiencing inequity in some form.

In the DSS 2014, more women (71%) and more workers of colour (48%) reported experiencing inequity than in 2015. Once again, more data is needed to understand if this is a qualitative shift in the industry at large, or whether it is due to the unique composition of each year's sample of respondents. As there are fewer women and workers of colour in the sample as a whole, each respondent has a greater impact on the total percentages for that sub-group.

### *Witnessing Inequity toward Others*

In addition to asking respondents about any inequity that they experienced themselves, the 2014 and 2015 surveys asked whether respondents had witnessed inequities toward others. Male workers were more likely to report witnessing inequity towards others than experiencing it directly (39% versus 26%). Conversely, women were more likely to report experiencing inequity than witnessing it toward others (59% versus 67%).

Workers of colour reported experiencing and witnessing inequity at similar rates; 37% of respondents of colour reported witnessing inequity toward others in some form. Once again, there has been a notable decrease in respondents of colour who reported witnessing inequity. In 2014, 52% responded that they had witnessed inequity towards others.

### *Types of Inequity*

Respondents were asked to identify the type of inequity they had experienced or witnessed (Table 9). Across all identity categories people experienced or witnessed the most inequity in social and interpersonal interactions and in the form of microaggressions. In the whole sample, 20% of respondents answered that they had experienced social inequity towards themselves and 19% answered that they had experienced microaggressions towards themselves; 28% of respondents answered that they had witnessed social inequity toward others, and 26% said they had witnessed microaggressions toward others.

While these were the most common forms of inequity reported by all, women and workers of colour reported experiencing them in far higher percentages than their white male colleagues. As Table 9 shows, 9% of white males reported experiencing social inequity and 9% reported experiencing microaggressions, whereas 22% of workers of colour reported experiencing social inequity and 18% reported experiencing microaggressions. What is more staggering is that nearly half of women reported experiencing social inequity and/or some form of microaggression. These findings suggest that inequity across gender and race is perpetuated, in large part, through workplace culture and everyday communicative practice. Such results demand that we pay particular attention to the experiences of women of colour in the video game industry, whom, by virtue of their gender and race, may experience social inequity or

microaggressions at disproportionate levels. This group reported experiencing social inequity and microaggressions at rates of 42% and 41% respectively.

**Table 9: Experience of inequity toward oneself. Identity comparison DSS 2015**

	White Men	Women	Men	Workers of Colour	White Workers
Recruitment	9%	15%	9%	11%	10%
Hiring	9%	18%	9%	12%	11%
Promotions	5%	18%	6%	8%	9%
Discipline/Role	5%	24%	5%	9%	8%
Monetary	4%	19%	6%	8%	10%
Social/ Interpersonal	9%	44%	11%	22%	18%
Micro-aggressions (verbal, behavioural, & environmental indignities)	9%	44%	9%	18%	18%
Workload	5%	8%	6%	9%	5%
Working conditions	3%	8%	4%	5%	5%
Other	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%
None of the above	76%	33%	74%	62%	65%

Note: Columns do not total to 100% due to multiple response allowances

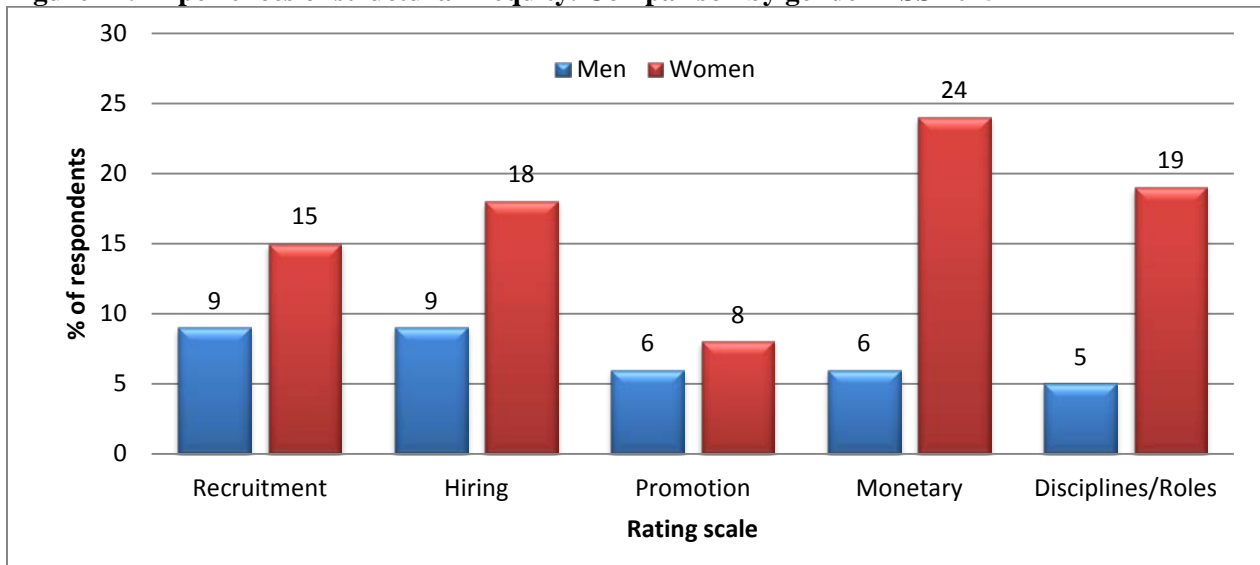
There were also important quantitative differences across gender in terms of perceived inequity in the operational or business practices of the workplace. These differences, while they exist, are reported less frequently across race (see Table 9). Across the board, more women than men reported experiencing inequity with a 12% difference on average across all survey categories. The largest difference across gender in this area was that of monetary inequity where four times as many women than men reported experiencing inequity (24% versus 6%). Women also reported more inequity on the basis of workplace roles and disciplines than did men (24% versus 5%). As noted above, women are clustered more in managerial and artistic roles. These figures raise questions as to potential informal workplace hierarchies that may privilege certain male-dominated roles over those that include more women, or inversely, marginalize and undervalue women who work in male-dominated positions. Many female respondents shared professional

experiences of being overlooked on the basis of their gender in the open-ended comments in the DSS 2015. For example, one female respondent explained:

Business partners often refer to my co-founders for decision-making or assume they are the leads, I believe because they are male and I am female, despite the fact that I am much more experienced. I quickly corrected their error and moved on with the meeting. Similarly, journalists or consumers will sometimes assume I am the marketer or PR person when I represent the game at conferences and conventions, and ask to speak to a developer on the team, or to speak to the game designer. I correct their error and try to continue the conversation.

While some women indeed reported strong and equal support networks at their company, instances of structural barriers and cultures of sexism were quite commonly reported.

**Figure 17: Experiences of structural inequity. Comparison by gender DSS 2015**

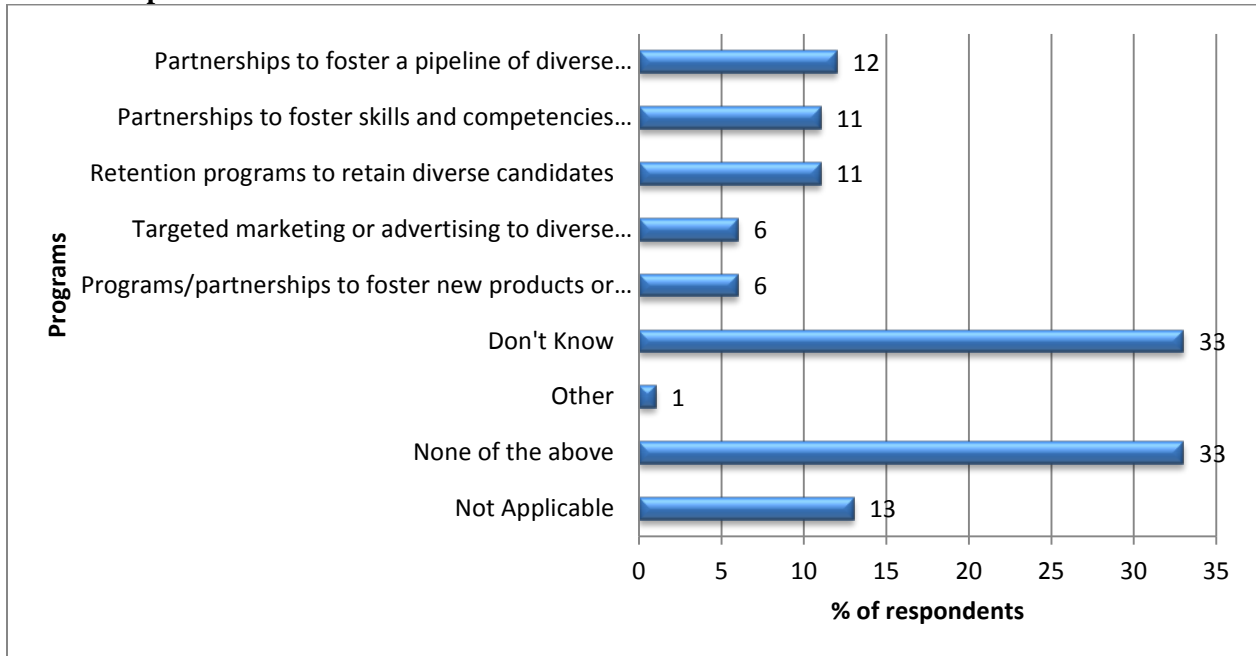


### *Diversity Related Programs and Policies*

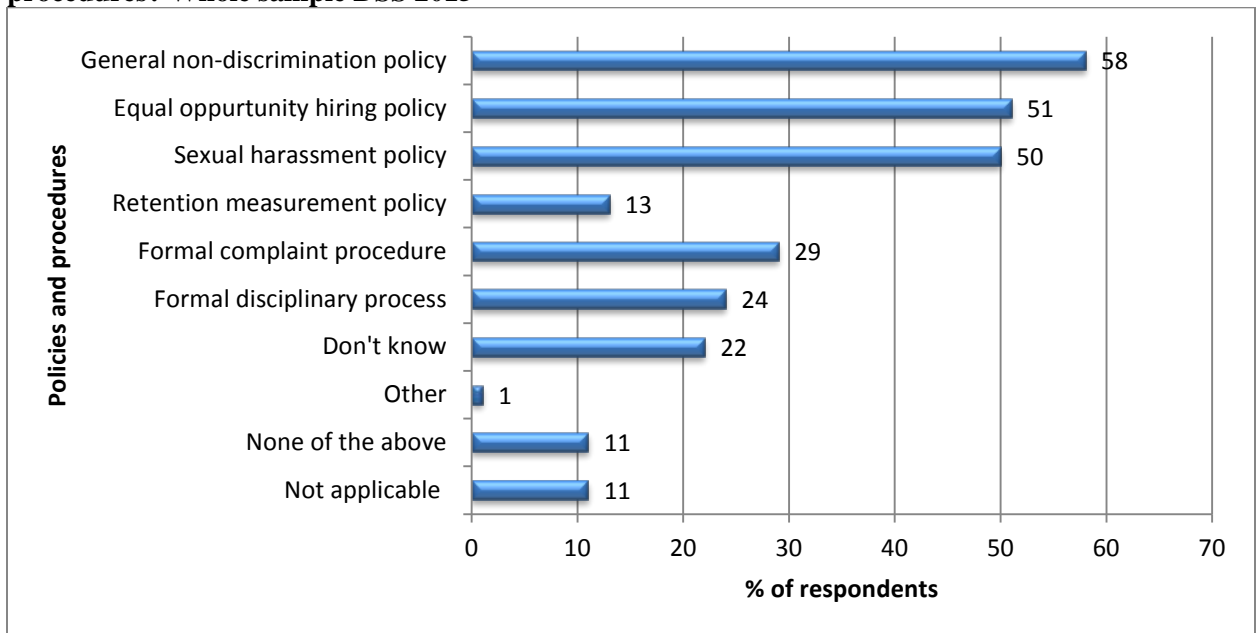
In light of clear differences in the experience of inequity across gender and race, the importance of institutional programs and policies to bring about a more diverse workforce and more equitable environments cannot be overstated. These company specific initiatives can act as a powerful resource for workers who find themselves marginalized and can also help to cultivate a measure of heterogeneity that make possible an innovative and vibrant industry. The DSS asked respondents to indicate whether or not their company provides any form of equality and diversity related programs or policies.

A large number of respondents did not know whether or not their company offered these programs (33%) or policies (22%). This suggests that there is an opportunity to better inform employees and prospective employees about the resources available to them. Additionally, 33% of respondents reported that their company did not have any of the listed diversity related programs and 11% reported that their company did not have any of the diversity related policies.

**Figure 18: Does your company have any of the following equality and diversity related programs? Whole sample DSS 2015**



**Figure 19: Does your company have any of the following equality and diversity related policies and procedures? Whole sample DSS 2015**

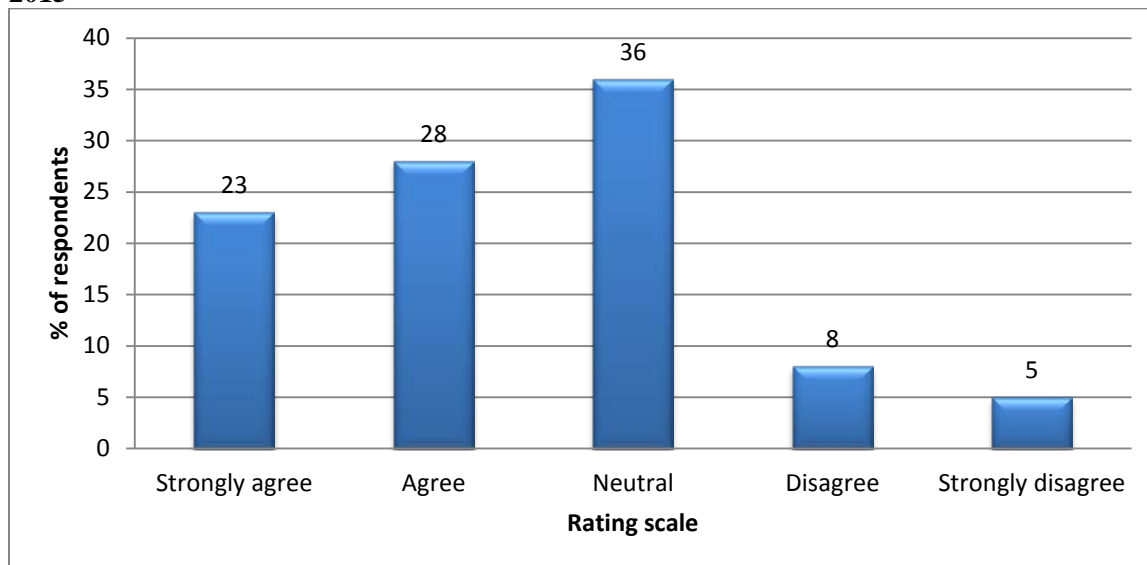




### Pursuing Diverse Candidates

Keeping in mind that white male respondents constituted a substantially larger portion of the sample, we can see that people from all identity categories responded similarly when asked about their company's efforts to pursue diverse candidates (see Figure 20). Across the whole sample, half of the respondents (51%) in 2015 agreed that their company pursued diverse candidates. This is up slightly from 2014, where 45% agreed that their company pursued diverse candidates. However, the data reflect some polarization as the number of respondents who disagreed also increased slightly in 2015 (11% versus 13%) The largest shift between the two years was among women. In 2014, 48% of women agreed that their company pursued diverse candidates compared to 57% in 2015. Men, white workers, and workers of colour also showed a slight increase from 2014 of between 6–8%. Across both years, there is a high proportion of ‘neutral’ responses that could indicate indifference or a general lack of awareness. This seems to be highest among male respondents and white respondents.

**Figure 20: My company/the company where I work pursues diverse candidates. Whole sample DSS 2015**



**Table 10: My company/the company where I work pursues diverse candidates. DSS 2014, 2015**

	Men		Women		Workers of Color		White Workers	
	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2016
Agree	43%	49%	48%	57%	44%	50%	42%	54%
Neutral	47%	38%	39%	29%	45%	39%	46%	31%
Disagree	10%	13%	12%	13%	11%	12%	12%	15%

## Support for Diversity Initiatives

Participants were also asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “My company or the company where I work supports diversity initiatives. In the 2015 DSS nearly half (45%) of all respondents agreed that their company supports diversity initiatives while only 13% disagreed. These numbers remain similar if we account for various demographic identities.

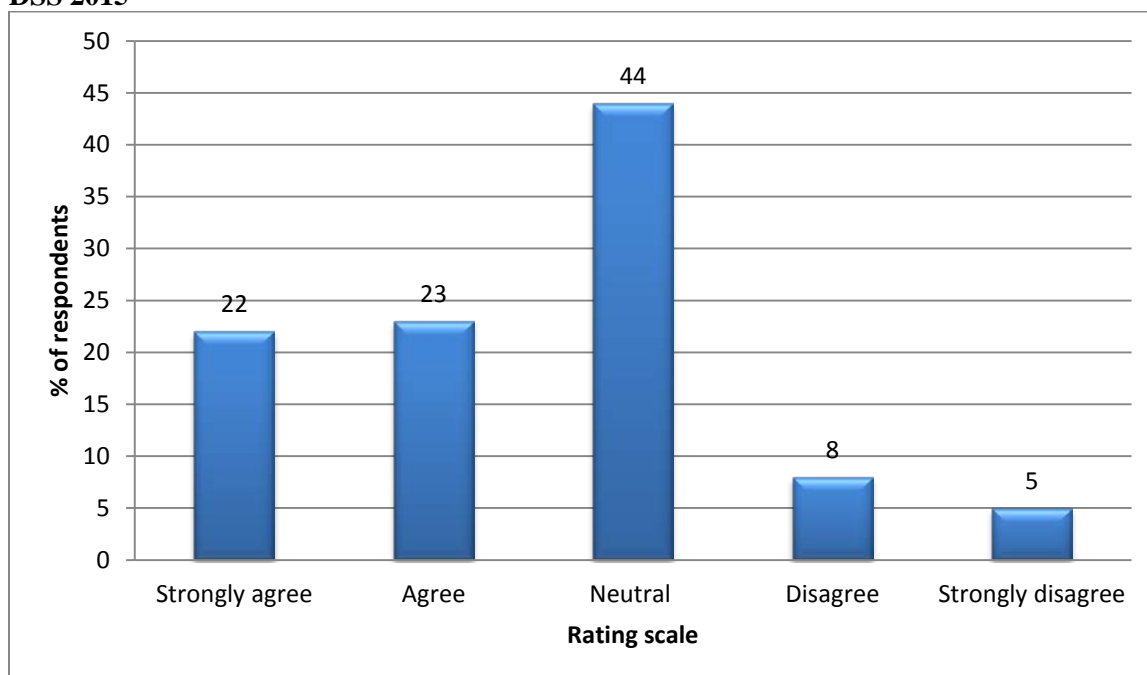
There were a few slight differences between the 2014 and 2015 data. In 2014, 50% of women agreed or strongly agreed that their company supported diversity initiatives. In 2015, 53% of women felt this way. The difference lies in the percentage within each of the agree categories. In 2015, 22% of women agreed that their company supported diversity initiatives; this represents a fall from 31% in 2014, but is balanced by a corresponding growth in women who strongly agreed (up from 19% in 2014 to 33% in 2015).

Although there is little quantitative difference between agree and strongly agree, this might suggest a stronger enthusiasm (qualitative difference) for existing diversity initiatives among underrepresented demographics.

Similar small changes were noted amongst workers of colour. In 2014, 24% agreed that their company supported diversity initiatives, but in 2015 this fell to 22%. This is partially accounted for by a slight increase in workers of colour who chose strongly agree, up from 18% in 2014 to 24% in 2015, but also reflects an increase in strongly disagree which rose from 5% in 2014 to 8% in 2015. No other substantial differences exist among other demographic groups.

It is worth noting, however, that in both 2014 and 2015 nearly half (45% and 44%, respectively) of all respondents reported feeling neutral toward their company’s support for diversity initiatives. This is important as it suggests a high level of indifference amongst employees.

**Figure 21: My company or the company where I work supports diversity initiatives. Whole sample DSS 2015**

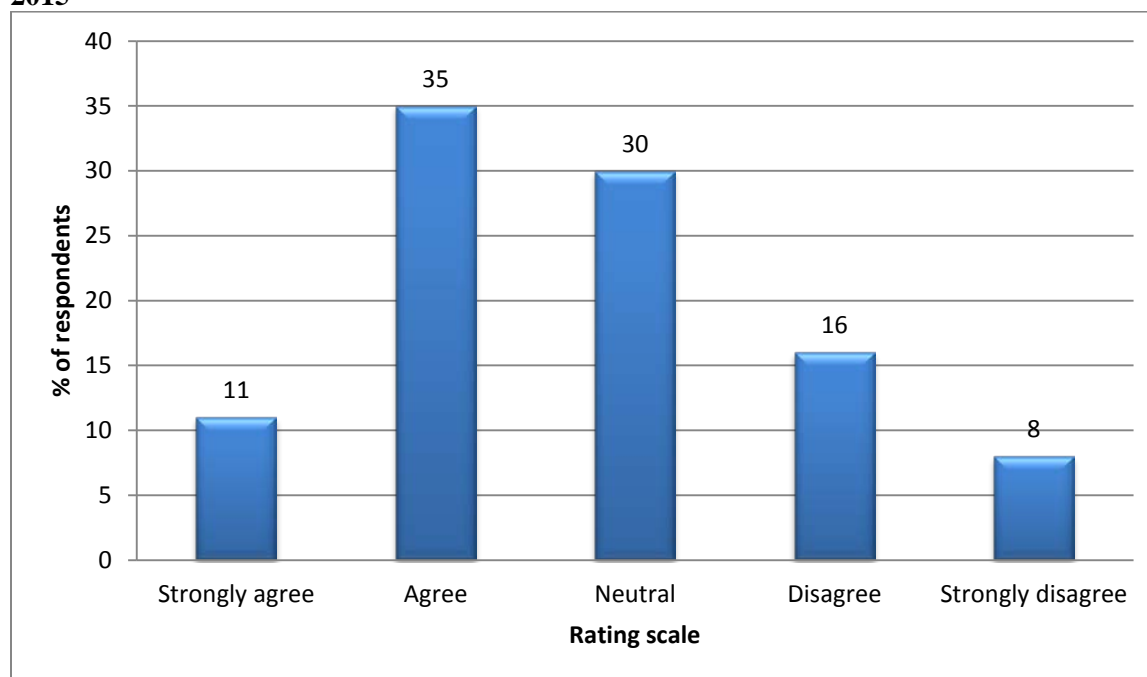


**Table 11: My company or the company where I work supports diversity initiatives. DSS 2014, 2015**

	Men		Women		Workers of Color		White Workers	
Year	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2016
Agree	44%	43%	50%	55%	46%	44%	42%	46%
Neutral	47%	45%	39%	31%	45%	44%	46%	38%
Disagree	9%	13%	11%	14%	9%	12%	12%	15%

### *Obtaining Diverse Candidates*

Although half of the respondents in 2015 suggested that their company pursued diverse candidates, 46% of them also reported that obtaining diverse candidates to game-related roles is challenging. This sentiment increased slightly from 39% in 2014. In the 2015 data, two interesting variations occurred. First, more white workers felt that obtaining diverse candidates was a challenge than workers of colour (51% versus 36%). Second, 80% of men compared to only 64% of women agreed that obtaining diverse candidates is challenging. This data suggests that the perpetuation of homogeneous hiring practices centered around white men might at least be partially rooted in the rationalization among these white men that it is difficult to locate other candidates and their inability to seek candidates in alternative spaces or places.

**Figure 22: Obtaining diverse applicants to game-related roles is challenging. Whole sample DSS 2015**


**Table 12: Obtaining diverse applicants to game-related roles is challenging. Identity comparison DSS 2014, 2015**

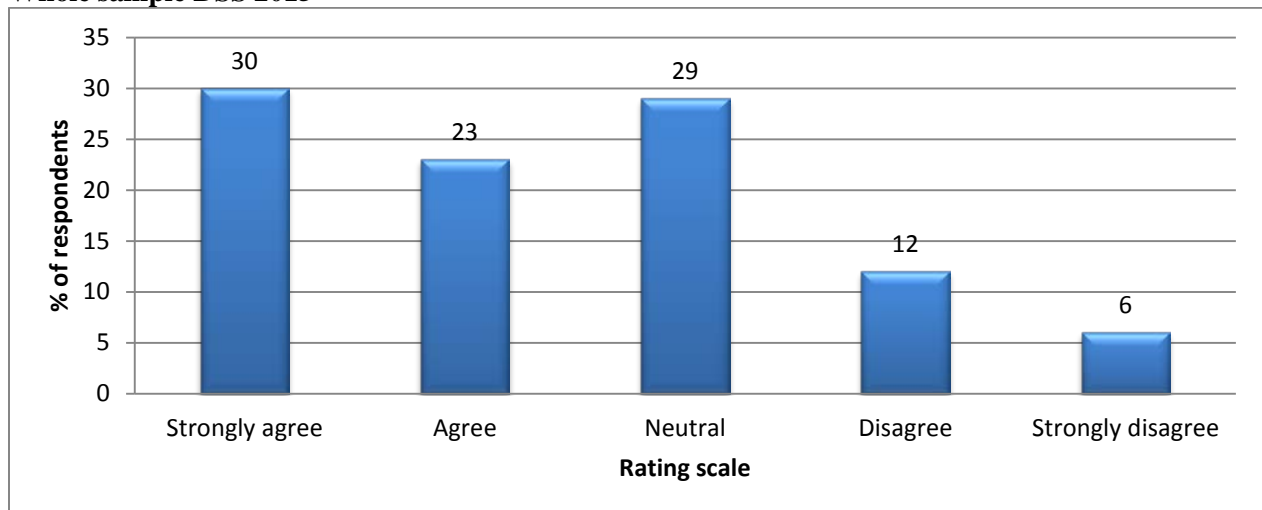
	Men		Women		Workers of Color		White Workers	
Year	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2016
Agree	39%	20%	39%	47%	41%	51%	35%	32%
Neutral	44%	32%	39%	18%	43%	27%	46%	34%
Disagree	17%	48%	21%	36%	12%	22%	19%	32%

### *Qualifications over Diversity*

Respondents were asked whether they agreed, felt neutral, or disagreed to the statement that their company does not consider diversity, but instead only looks for qualified applicants. In 2015 53% of respondents agreed that the company where they work considers qualified candidates and not diversity, and only 18% disagreed. In 2014, 42% agreed and 19% disagreed. Specifically, between 2014 and 2015 the number of respondents who disagreed remained the same, but the neutral responses decreased and the percent of respondents who agreed increased. The largest increases were amongst men, from 37% in 2014 to 54% in 2015, and workers of colour, from 41% in 2014 to 55% in 2015. Among men and workers of colour, there is an upward trend in the belief that employers exclusively consider qualification criteria in hiring decisions.

These numbers confirm the normative pressures of meritocracy which exist in the game industry and which act as countervailing forces to suggestions of affirmative action or employment equity. Indeed, a common understanding of affirmative action policies in hiring tends to overlook the very important fact that these policies are based on the principle that “at equal competence”, “if the qualifications of candidates are equal”, it is recommended to hire a member of a minority group until a pre-set target proportion of employees is achieved.

**Figure 23: My company does not consider diversity, we/they only look for qualified candidates. Whole sample DSS 2015**



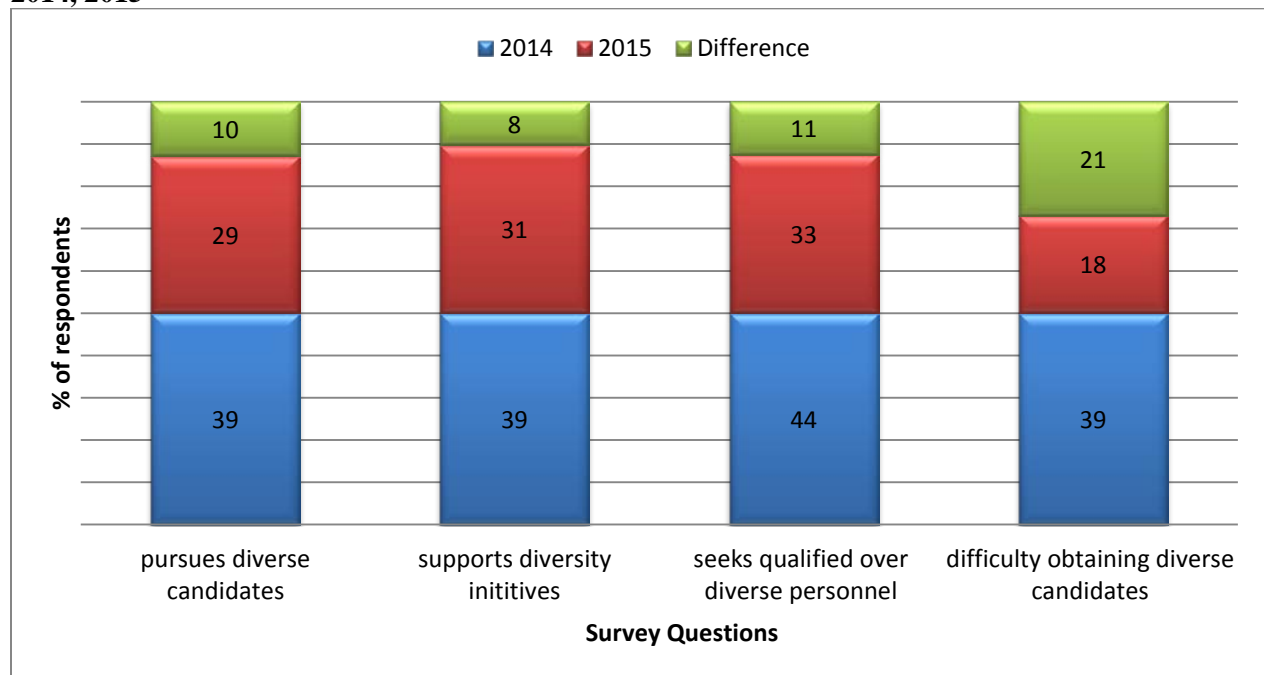
**Table 13: My company does not consider diversity, we/they only look for qualified candidates. Identity comparison DSS 2014, 2015**

	Men		Women		Workers of Color		White Workers	
Year	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2016
Agree	37%	54%	38%	46%	42%	52%	41%	55%
Neutral	38%	29%	44%	33%	40%	31%	38%	28%
Disagree	19%	17%	19%	21%	18%	18%	21%	17%

*Changing Indifference*

The number of respondents who reported feeling neutral to questions about diversity remained very high across 2014 and 2015; however, these neutral response rates did decrease across all identity categories. In Figures 20, 21, and 22 we see a decrease in neutral responses. In particular, women and workers of colour showed the most substantial decreases (see Figure 24). These numbers were instead distributed between agree and disagree. Within the past year issues of diversity have been high profile in the game community. A decrease in neutral responses and an increase in both agree and disagree responses might indicate that people within the industry are developing a stronger opinion or interest in questions of diversity. In other words, this data suggests that opinions about pursuing, supporting, and obtaining diverse candidates by companies may have become more polarized from 2014 to 2015.

**Figure 24: Comparisons of neutral responses to diversity-related questions. Whole sample DSS 2014, 2015**



**Figure 14: Comparison of neutral responses to diversity-related questions. Identity comparison DSS 2014, 2015**

	Men		Women		Workers of Color		White Workers	
Year	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2016
Pursue <sup>1</sup>	47%	38%	39%	29%	45%	39%	46%	31%
Support <sup>2</sup>	47%	45%	39%	31%	45%	44%	46%	38%
Obtain <sup>3</sup>	44%	32%	39%	18%	43%	27%	46%	34%

<sup>1</sup>My company or the company where I work pursues diverse candidates.

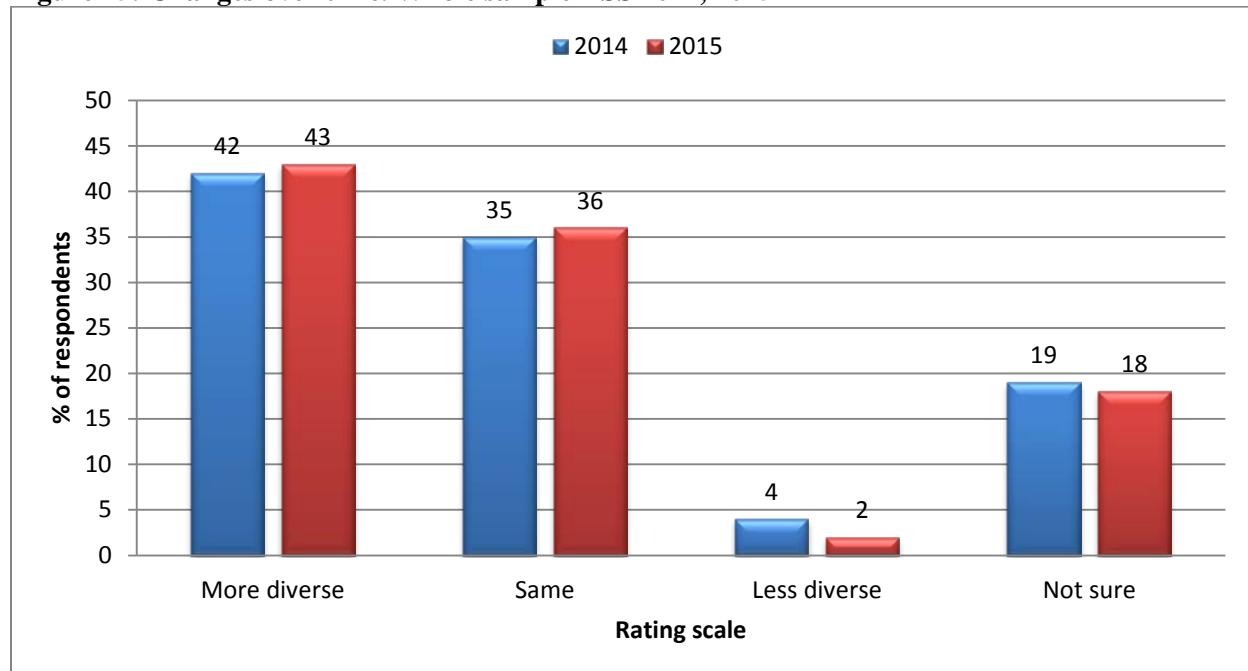
<sup>2</sup>My company or the company where I work supports diversity initiatives.

<sup>3</sup>My company or the company where I work does not consider diversity: we/they only look for qualified applicants.

### Change Over Time

Despite the fact that the majority of respondents suggest that finding diverse candidates is a challenge, many respondents also perceive improvements in the level of diversity in the industry, or at the very least, they do not make note of a decline in diversity. This may be a result of acknowledged corporate efforts to support diversity initiatives and not necessarily reflect a larger cultural or industry shift. When asked if they had witnessed any changes in diversity over the past two years or longer, 43% of respondents from the 2015 DSS said that the industry was more diverse. Only 2% said that it was less diverse, and 36% thought it had remained the same. These percentages were consistent across identity categories of gender and race and had not changed from 2014 (see Figure 25).

**Figure 25: Changes over time. Whole sample DSS 2014, 2015**



## Conclusion

This report on diversity in the game industry relied on the data collected in two Developer Satisfaction Surveys (DSS) administered by the IGDA in partnership with the authors in March-April of 2014 and again in March-April of 2015. The DSS is a compilation survey of prior IGDA survey efforts in the areas of demographics, diversity and quality of life. The data presented in this report represent the questions specifically related to demographic diversity.

The demographic data reinforce our understanding of videogame development workers as predominately young, white, male, heterosexual and without dependents (children or elders). However, the data uncover some interesting additional details that warrant further analysis and research.

First, even though the average age does not differ among them, women are much less likely to report having children than men. This may suggest that features of the work of videogame development differentially affect the domestic choices of women.

Second, one-third of respondents reported having a form of disability. Disability categories included mental health, neurological, intellectual, visual, hearing and physical disabilities. This figure is significantly higher than the average of comparable American and Canadian populations and requires additional documentation and specification before strong conclusions can be made. For instance, it is not clear whether the industry is particularly accommodating of people with disabilities, whether features of the industry/work contribute to disability, some form of both, or whether this is a unique artefact of the data.

Last, workers of colour seemed less inclined than white respondents to disclose details about sexual orientation and disability. The conditions that affect a person's decision about whether or not to disclose their sexual orientation or disability are difficult to assess in a survey. However, given the demographic breakdown of those who chose not to disclose in this survey, it seems worth considering whether the perceived threat of harassment or marginalization on the basis of these factors is disproportionately felt by videogame workers of colour.

The data about job type and compensation point to further differences by demographic identity group. For one, the data point to occupational segregation by gender as well as the underrepresentation of women as a whole. Women are highly underrepresented in programming and software engineering. They are much more represented in art and design, but are still a minority overall. The data suggest increased gender parity in managerial roles and, comparatively to other roles, show particularly high representation of women in producer/project manager roles. While this latter finding may be a good news story for women, workers of colour remain highly underrepresented in management roles, particularly senior management.

Secondly, the data suggest some differences in compensation by gender and race/ethnic origin. The [2014 Gamasutra Salary Survey](#) identified gender pay gaps using the average wage of each job category. The DSS data indicates that pay disparities may occur at certain points of income. There were few differences by identity group across all income categories once accounting for occupational role and tenure in the industry. Overall, men, women and workers of colour are normally distributed around the middle income bracket (50-75,000 USD). However, there were significant differences at the highest and lowest ends. Women are particularly absent compared



to men at the highest income levels (150,000 USD) and workers of colour are disproportionately represented at the lowest income levels (15,000 USD) relative to white respondents. Men occupy both the highest and lowest income brackets for their work in video game development. Of the four identity groups, women were least likely to feel that they are fairly compensated for the work that they do.

Finally, this report highlighted a number of important findings directly related to perceptions of diversity in the game industry. First it is striking that the majority of respondents to the DSS surveys do not believe that there is equal opportunity and treatment for all in the game industry. More importantly, the perception of unequal opportunity and treatment is most widely held among women. Further to this, at first glance, the data indicate that workers of colour are the most likely to report that the industry is equal for all. However, when the responses from workers of colour are separated by gender, women of colour overwhelmingly report feelings of unequal treatment. Their views just do not influence the whole workers of colour sample because women of colour are such a small minority. This is important because it indicates that the different perceptions of unequal treatment are driven by gender rather than race/ethnic origin. This also then indicates that the lack of equity experienced is gender-based.

Second, there seemed to be more polarization in responses across the diversity-related questions – that is to say that fewer people chose the middle ground “neutral” response to these questions in 2015 than in 2014. The Gamergate affair is likely connected to some of this polarization and in sparking people to have definitive views. Numerous respondents invoked pro- and anti-Gamergate themes in their open-ended responses. Increased assertiveness in respondent answers regarding diversity, positive or negative, could be a beneficial long-term outcome for the industry insofar as it forwards a diversity agenda and/or moves individuals or companies to positive action. Still, we must be cautious with these results, particularly knowing that respondents may have been moved by Gamergate (pro or anti) to take the survey. A one-year longitudinal analysis is less likely representative of macro-level changes to the industry, than it is of the varying personal experiences of different respondents in the sample. That being said, this is an interesting change worthy of continued monitoring over a longer period of time.

Third, regarding that macro-level or institutional change, there was limited evidence that employers have policies and/or programs in place to bring about a more diverse workforce and more equitable environments. Many respondents said their company did not have such policies or programs, a greater number had no idea, and many did not answer these questions at all (though this could be due to survey fatigue drop-out and not disinterest in the diversity section per se). At the very least, the data presented in this report suggest that there is a large opportunity to better inform employers, employees and prospective employees about diversity initiatives and supports.

One key example of narrow thinking about diversity initiatives and supports is regarding the ability to obtain diverse candidates for game development jobs. Half of the 2015 survey respondents reported that obtaining diverse candidates to game-related roles is challenging and this number was higher among white male workers. This data suggests that the perpetuation of homogeneous hiring practices centered around white males might at least be partially rooted in the rationalization among these white males that it is difficult to locate other candidates and their inability to seek candidates in alternative spaces or places. It is a convenient self-fulfilling



prophecy that diverse workers are not hired because they do not apply and they do not apply because they do not exist.

Lastly, and with all of this said, when survey respondents were asked whether diversity had increased, decreased or stayed the same over the past two years, many perceived improvements in the level of diversity in the industry, or at the very least, they did not make note of a decline. It may be too early to suggest that this reflects a larger cultural or industry shift, and a survey is a rather blunt tool to draw such conclusions on complex issues, but these reports may reflect changing individual attitudes and perhaps some corporate efforts to support diversity initiatives.

Keep watch for additional reports from the DSS 2015 data as well as reports from the new DSS 2016.

If you wish to sign up for the mailing list for future surveys please visit: <http://gameqol.org>.

## References

- Branson, D.M. (2010). *Work-Life Issues and the Price of Motherhood*. In *The Last Male Bastion: Gender and the CEO Suite in America's Public Companies* (140-154). New York, United States.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2016). *Media Age of the labor force, by gender race and ethnicity*. United States Department of Labor. Retrieved from [http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_table\\_306.htm](http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_306.htm) 03 February 2016.
- Department of Labor. (2016). *Facts Over Time: Women in the Labour Force*. United States Department of Labor. Retrieved from [http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/facts\\_over\\_time.htm](http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/facts_over_time.htm) 23 March 2016.
- Dewey, C. (14 October 2014). The only guide to Gamergate you will ever need to read. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2014/10/14/the-only-guide-to-gamergate-you-will-ever-need-to-read/> 11 June 2016.
- Fairchild, C. (20 August 2014). *Want More Women in the C-suite? Start with the Supply Chain*. *Fortune*. Retrieved from <http://fortune.com/2014/08/20/want-more-women-in-the-c-suite-start-with-the-supply-chain/> 23 March 2014.
- Henry, E. (2015). *Reimagining Disability in Role-Playing Games*. Retrieved from <http://analoggamestudies.org/2015/02/reimagining-disability-in-role-playing-games/>
- Holland, K. (2015, April 28). *Working Moms Still Take On Bulk of Household Chores*. CNBC. Retrieved from <http://www.cnbc.com/2015/04/28/me-is-like-leave-it-to-beaver.html> 23 March 2016.
- Kolhatkar, S. (2016, June 26). *Women in the U.S. Still Do Way More Housework Than Men*. Bloomberg Business. Retrieved from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-06-26/women-in-the-u-s-still-do-way-more-housework-than-men> 23 March 2016.
- Legault, M.-J. & Chasserio, S. (2012). Professionalization, risk transfer, and the effect on gender gap in project management. *International Journal of Project Management*, 30(6), 697-  
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0263786311001505>
- Legault, M. J. & Chasserio, S. (2003). Family Obligations or Cultural Constraints: Obstacles in the Path of Professional Women. *Journal of International Women's Studies*. 4(3), 107-125.
- Statistics Canada. (2012). *Disability in Canada: Initial findings from the Canadian Survey on Disability*. Retrieved April 1, 2016 from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2013002-eng.htm>.

Statistics Canada. (2015). *Labour Force Characteristics by Age and Sex*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/101/cst01/labor20a-eng.htm> 23 March 2016.

Status of Women Canada. (2015). *Fact Sheet: Economic Security*. Government of Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/initiatives/wesp-sepf/fs-fi/es-se-eng.html> 23 March 2016.

United States Census Bureau. (2012). *Nearly 1 in 5 People Have a Disability in the U.S., Census Bureau Report Released to Coincide with 22nd Anniversary of the ADA*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/miscellaneous/cb12-134.html> 1 April 2016.

Yapp, R. (23 March 2016). *Working Women 'still do housework.'* Daily Mail. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-206381/Working-women-housework.html> 24 March 2016.