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Female Gamers Study 2022:
Toxicity Report



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Methodology

Bryter's Annual Female Gamers Study has been running for five years, tracking gaming behaviours and experiences over time.

In this 2022 study, we surveyed 1,500 female gamers, spread evenly across the US, UK and China (where year on year comparison are made, the focus is only on UK & UK as China was a later addition).

Respondents were aged 16+ and had to play on console or gaming PC/laptop at least monthly. Fieldwork was conducted in March 2022.

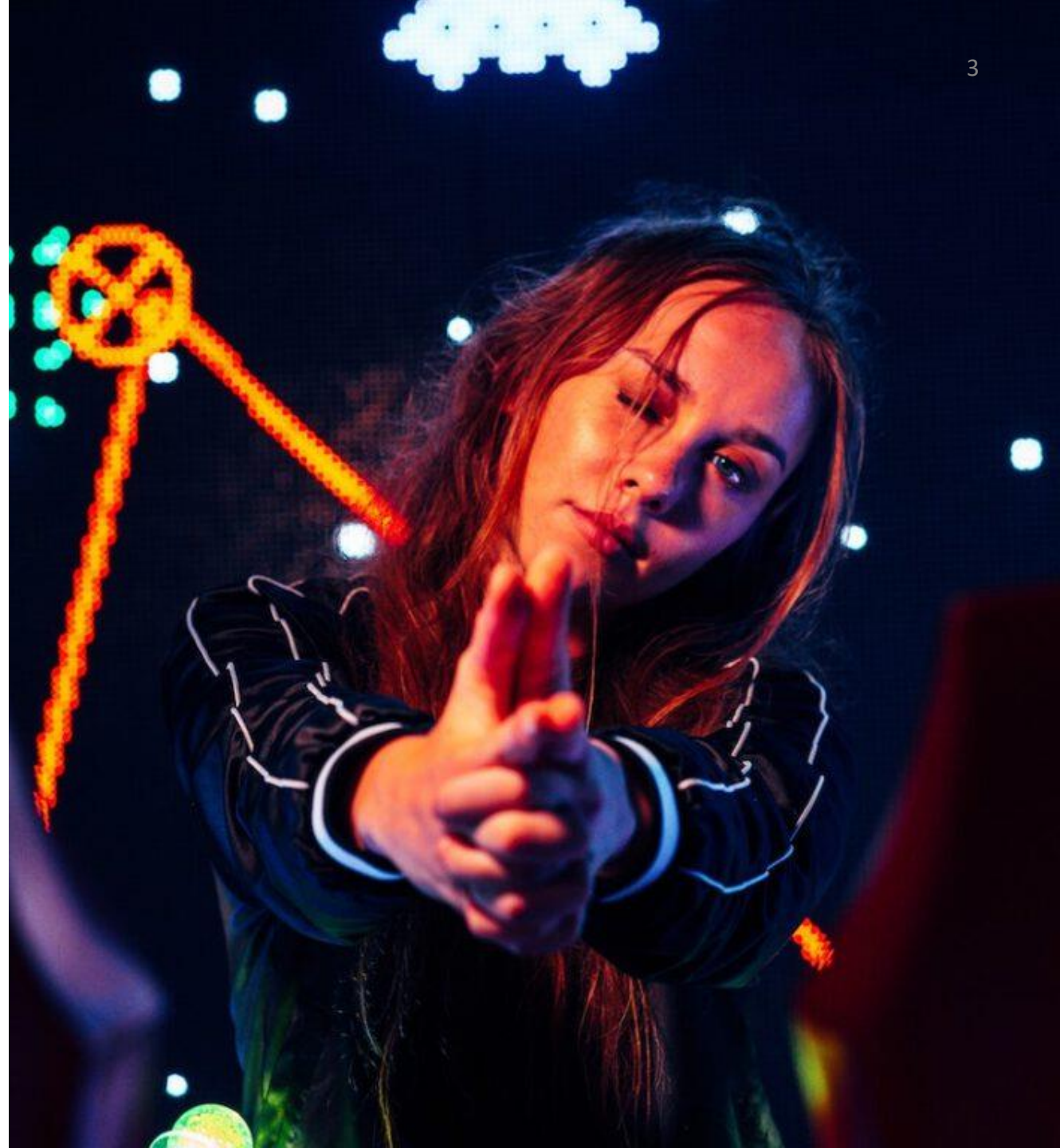
Intro

The number of female gamers has been increasing over recent years, with females now making up almost half of the gaming population.

Unfortunately, the rate of toxicity in gaming is also on the rise and is particularly prominent amongst female gamers. As a result, female gamers are often detracted from playing the games they love.

While many companies and organisations are working to improve representation across gaming, and to provide safe and encouraging environments for all players, it is no easy task.

In Bryter's 2022 Female Gamers Study, we explore the experiences of female gamers and how we can tackle toxicity.



Weekly gameplay

On PC / console – US & UK only

8.3

hours

2020

9.0

hours

2021

11.3

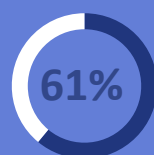
hours

2022

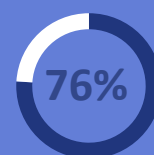
Online multiplayer



2020

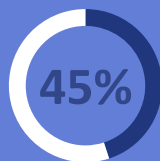


2021



2022

Identity



'Video games are an important part of my life'



'I wouldn't call myself a real gamer'

Disconnect between behaviours and gamer identity

Not only has the number of female gamers increased, but their engagement appears to have strengthened also. In 2020, the average number of hours played per week was 8.3, which rose to 11.3 in 2022. In China, gamers dedicate even more time per week, averaging 16.8 hours.

Perhaps this is in part due to the increase in popularity of online multiplayer, making gaming a more social experience. The proportion of female gamers playing online has increased significantly over the last 3 years, from 51% to 76%. Again, this is even stronger in China, with the vast majority (87%) playing online multiplayer.

However, despite the significant amount of hours female gamers dedicate to gaming each week and its importance in their lives, 1 in 4 are reluctant to identify as a 'real' gamer. Perhaps due to stigmas attached to previous stereotypes of gamers, or more likely – not feeling worthy of the title.

Increasing toxicity

In our 2020 study, which included male gamers, the levels of toxicity were similarly high across genders, reiterating the fact that toxicity is everywhere in gaming, not just amongst certain groups.

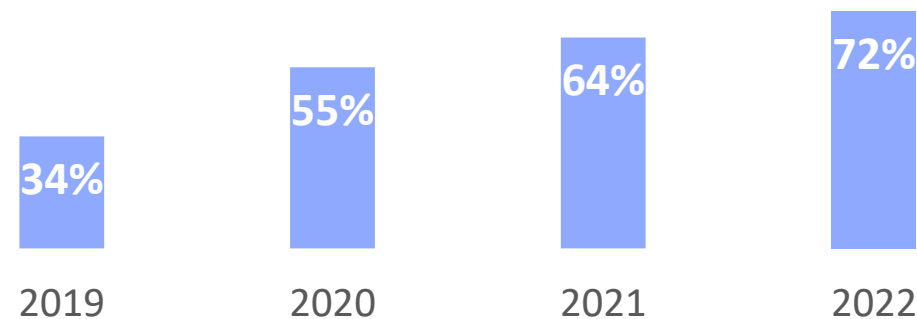
However, as further exploration showed, the experiences that females often encounter are much darker and threatening; beginning with sexist stereotypes and being aggressively quizzed about their gaming skills, to more violent verbal abuse and threats of stalking and rape.

Too many examples described persistent abuse and harassment, sometimes even leading to stalking on other platforms and threats of this transferring into real life.



72%
of female
gamers
experience
toxicity in
gaming

% who 'ever' experience discrimination/abuse – US & UK only



Types of experiences, amongst those who ever experience toxicity



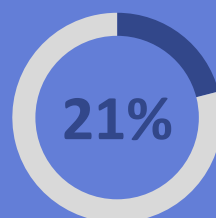


The impact: a limited gameplay experience

Such negative experiences are leading to 1 in 5 female gamers avoiding online multiplayer altogether, which is a significant finding, given the growing popularity of online multiplayers.

Of those who are playing online, 2 in 5 don't reveal their gender and 1 in 3 avoid speaking in fear of negative reactions. Having to adapt their gameplay in this way is restricting the experience for these players, not allowing them to communicate and rally with their teammates.

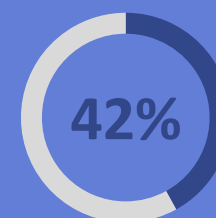
All females gamers



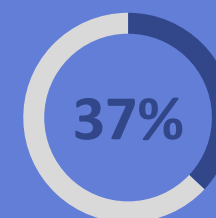
Avoid online multiplayers altogether, through fear of negative reactions from male players

Online players

US, UK & CN

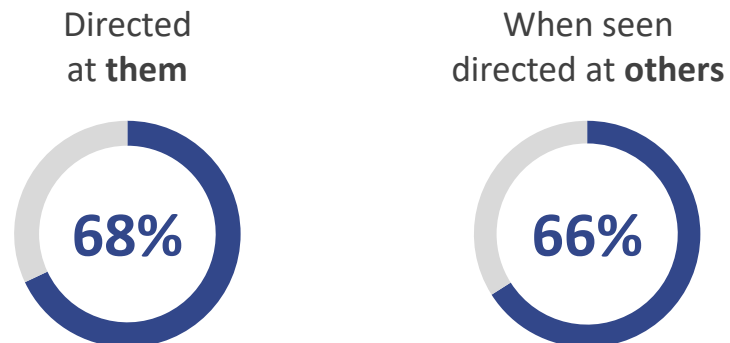


Often don't reveal that I'm female when playing online

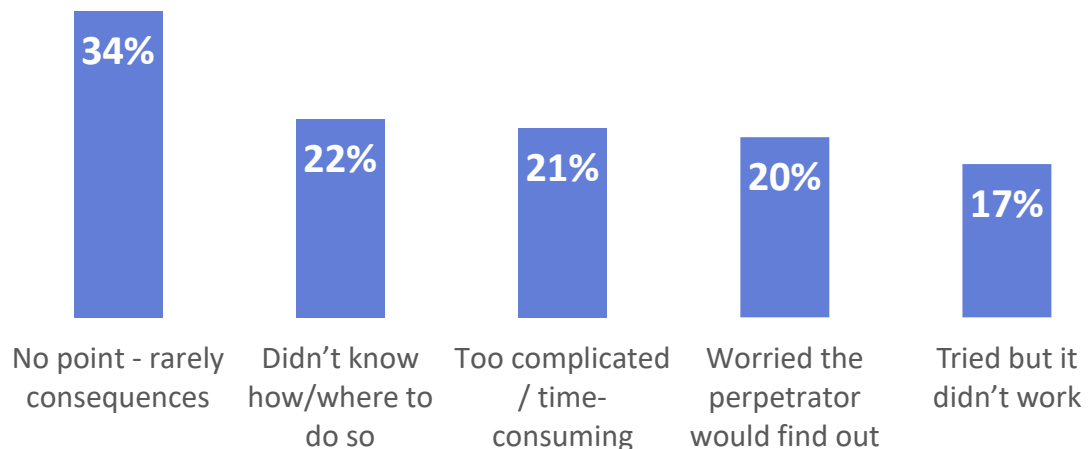


Avoid speaking in multiplayers, through fear of negative reactions from males

Reporting of negative behaviour...



Top 5 barriers to reporting



Fear and lack of clarity around reporting toxicity

On the positive side, the majority of female gamers do tend to report toxicity, whether it is directed at themselves or at others.

However, 1 in 3 female gamers are deterred from reporting toxic behavior due to the perception that there is often a lack of consequences against the perpetrator.

Another barrier seems to be the process itself, with 1 in 5 not knowing how or where to report such behaviours, or feeling it is too time-consuming. Tools against toxicity are only effective if they are visible and easy to use.

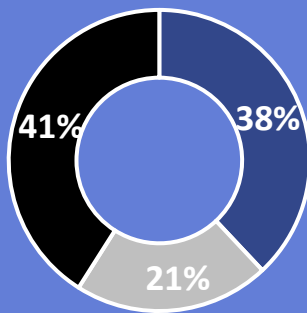
Ensuring players feel safe in reporting toxic behavior is also key, as 20% have felt worried that the perpetrator might find out it was them who reported them.

Current processes against toxicity

Just 38% of female gamers feel that there are adequate processes in place to deal with toxicity in gaming.

Although this has improved since 2021 (28%), the majority either feel there aren't adequate processes or don't know, suggesting education around these tools may also be needed.

Are there adequate processes in place to tackle toxicity?



- Yes
- Don't know
- No

When asked to give examples of where toxicity was dealt with effectively, most female gamers failed to think of a situation, instead mentioning the inadequate process or outcome.

Insufficient processes

*"Support is 99% of the time **not accessible** or easily located and even when someone goes through all the technical and emotional crap to report abusive behavior, **nothing** is done to **effectively deal** with it."*

*"I think an **easy report button** is always the better option but i've yet to see a game that does it efficiently."*

*"The mute and/or block functions are helpful but more often than not, that seems to **rile up that person** even more often causing them to reach out in other ways."*

Lack of consequences

"You report it and nothing happens. Report cheating/bots and you get the generic 'thank you we took action email'. Report rape threats and you get crickets."

*"**Not once** has me reporting someone **actually worked**. I still had to stay in the match with them or **sacrifice my points to leave** the lobby and find another match but sometimes ... leaving can actually give you a **penalty** and you have to wait a certain amount of time to join another match without the guy you reported in it."*

*"No idea, - even if reported, we are **not often informed** of the **result** of the complaint, especially if it relates to me complaining because of something someone has done to someone other than myself."*

Tackling toxicity

Many organisations and individuals have been researching into toxicity in gaming for several years, and while findings and improvements have been made, it is a long process. Unfortunately there is no single solution that will eradicate toxicity overnight; instead it will take many tools and methodologies to eventually help create a long-term cultural shift.

So what do players think?

Again, we see the pattern that no single solution stands out overall, suggesting a mix of different approaches. Players feel that bans are effective, however, often the offenders hit with bans often create new profiles and come back twice as angry.

Highly regulated games are one of the least popular solutions, as players are sometimes wary of games being too restricted and effecting their gameplay experience. Perhaps it is a case of giving players the tools to manage their own player experience and increasing the number of moderators and AI filtering systems to support them.

A key part of this player toolkit should be muting functions – the ability to mute other players and to see their overall mute time before the game could help prevent exposure to toxicity from the start of a game.

What players think are effective solutions

Muting other players yourself

44%

Permanent ban for perpetrator

43%

Short term ban for perpetrator

41%

Flagging to community manager

39%

Player rating systems

32%

Showing all players' mute time

31%

Player moderators

30%

Choice to play regular vs highly regulated

29%

Automatic in-game rewards for good behaviour

26%

Representation

Player experiences aren't just influenced by other players. To enable a diverse and accepting player environment, perhaps the industry needs to mirror that internally.

Although diversity in the gaming sector has been improving over recent years, it is still predominantly a male environment. The UKIE census 2022 found that 67% of the gaming industry workforce is male, 30% is female and 3% is non-binary.

The industry should encourage more young females to consider a career in gaming. Part of this is ensuring that their personal player experience is not tarnished by toxic experiences that can deter players from seeking a career in gaming.

'Women are very/quite well represented in the gaming industry'

2022

51%

2021

41%

2020

35%

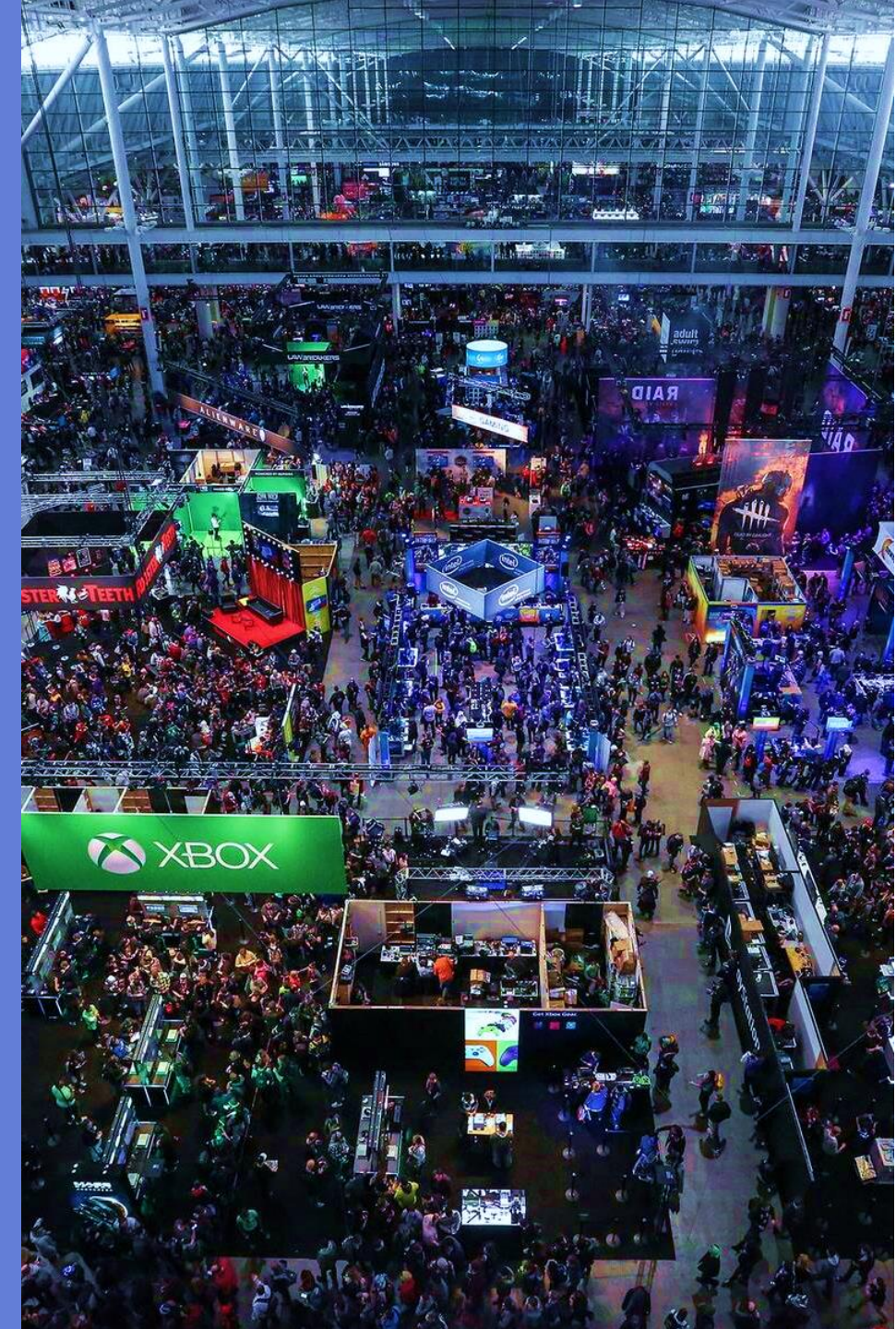
2019

27%

2018

22%

US & UK only



Characters

Diversifying the gaming industry can help drive the diversity within games, and in turn, create a more accepting environment for all.

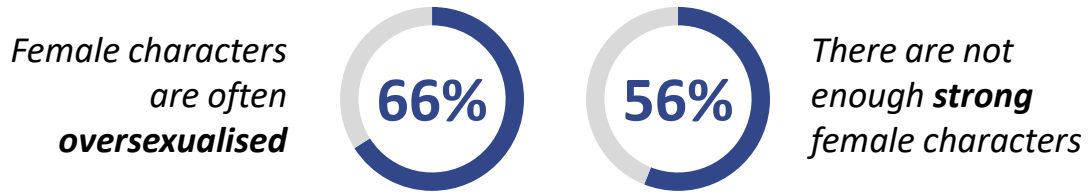
Although many female gamers feel that the representation of female characters in video games has slowly been improving over recent years, the majority still feel female characters are often oversexualised.

Players want to connect with the characters they play, and feel invested in their story and progress. Enabling this relationship with characters can increase long-term engagement with the game or franchise.

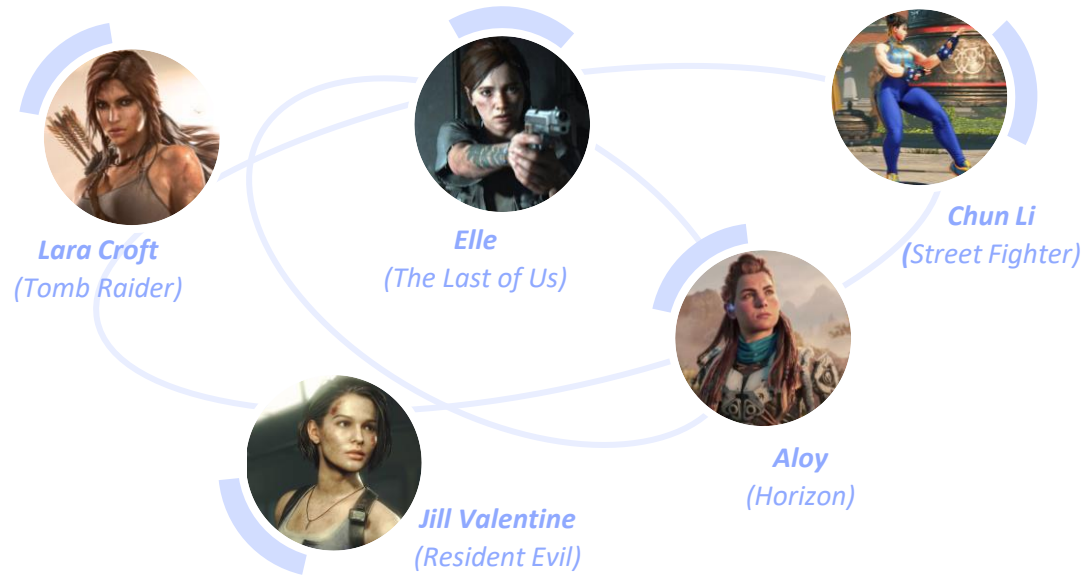
"I feel that developers have tried so hard to stop toxic behaviour towards females by adding more appealing characters to their games such as Mass Affect which has a female Shepard option. I thought that was really helpful in bringing more females into the gaming world."

"The gaming world needs more popular female role models and I think we can start to change this idea of it's only nerdy men who play"

Gamers want strong, relatable characters



Favourite female characters consist of strong, independent figures with meaningful roles





London,
New York
Established 2010

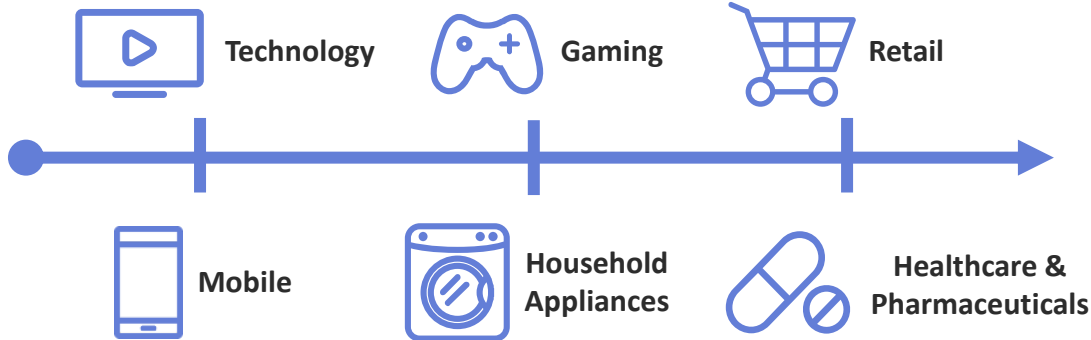


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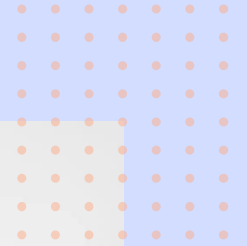
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