



# Developer Satisfaction Survey 2021

## Diversity in the Game Industry Report LGBTQA2+

Prepared for the International Game Developers Association

| [igda.org](https://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/).

September 2022

## Authors

### **Vishal Sooknanan**

MSc student, Industrial/Organizational Psychology  
Western University, Ontario, Canada

### **Johanna Weststar**

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

### **Shruti Kumar**

PhD Candidate, Industrial/Organizational Psychology  
Western University, Ontario, Canada

### **Eva Kwan**

PhD Candidate, Industrial/Organizational Psychology  
Western University, Ontario, Canada

### **Ezgi Inceefe**

Honours Student, Department of Management and Organizational Studies  
Western University, Ontario, Canada

### **Trevor Coppins**

PhD Candidate, Industrial/Organizational Psychology  
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 contribution to the Developer Satisfaction Survey. From all the survey respondents to our many Chapter and Special Interest Group leaders who helped spread the word, as well as our studio affiliates and media partners and all those who worked on translation – 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 IGDA and Western University. The authors acknowledge the research assistance of John R. J. Thompson. This work was supported in part by Facebook Gaming, the Undergraduate Student Research Internship program at Western University and a Social Sciences and Humanities Insight Research Grant held by Marie-Josée Legault (Teluq) and Johanna Weststar (Western University).

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	4
Sample Overview .....	6
Comparisons by Sexual Orientation.....	8
Type of Work .....	8
Compensation.....	9
Diversity.....	11
Importance of Diversity.....	11
Equal Treatment, Opportunity and Equity .....	12
Pursuing Diverse Candidates.....	16
Support for Diversity Initiatives.....	16
Obstacles to Diversifying the Game Industry.....	18
Non-Binary and Transgender Comparisons.....	20
Type of Work .....	20
Compensation.....	21
Diversity.....	22
Importance of Diversity.....	22
Equal Treatment, Opportunity and Equity .....	24
Pursuing Diverse Candidates.....	27
Support for Diversity Initiatives.....	27
Qualifications Over Diversity .....	29
Obstacles in Diversifying the Game Industry .....	29
Conclusion .....	31
References .....	33

## Introduction

The International Game Developers Association (IGDA) supports and empowers game developers around the world in achieving fulfilling and sustainable careers. We strive for greater global diversity, inclusion, equity, and belongingness (DEIB) within the games industry, and we value the creation and dissemination of knowledge that informs these efforts.

Diversity and equity are central themes to the current discourse of the evolution and trajectory of the games industry. In partnership with Western University, the IGDA is proud to share the findings of this LGBTQA2+ Report that will steer critical conversations on DEIB topics and educate developers and studios on pathways toward a diverse and equitable industry for all.

While the 2021 Developer Satisfaction Survey showed improvements to several key indicators of diversity within the industry, such as an increase in women and developers of color compared to previous years, the findings in the LGBTQA2+ Report extend previous insights and implications by analyzing the data with a focus on the experiences and perceptions of LGBTQA2+ developers.

By digging deeper into the data, this report provides new insights into sexual minority, transgender, and non-binary developers. This is a distinct and important contribution to industry discourse as these populations are often combined into one category, thereby conflating experiences of all LGBTQA2+ developers together despite the vast amount of diversity within their respective communities.

For example, the report shows that sexual minorities rated diversity as very important in the industry (87%), the workplace (77%), and in game content (84%) in greater proportion compared to heterosexual respondents (65%, 57%, and 64%, respectively). Similarly, transgender and non-binary developers rated diversity as very important in greater proportion compared to the whole sample, especially for the workplace (83% and 90% respectively, compared to 64% of the whole sample). Yet, a substantial proportion of sexual minorities (87%) and transgender and non-binary respondents (88% each) indicated they do not feel there is equal treatment and opportunity for all in the game industry. This is further compounded by the fact that LGBTQA2+ developers are disproportionately represented in lower income brackets and are less likely to feel their compensation is fair considering their roles and responsibilities in game development.

A clear gap exists between the values of diversity held by LGBTQA2+ developers and the realities of an inequitable industry. The LGBTQA2+ Report highlights the need for actionable and measurable initiatives the industry must adopt to meet LGBTQA2+ developers' expectations and demands of more diverse and equitable recruitment opportunities, career progression, compensation, employment practices, workplace cultures, and team compositions across disciplines. Industry leaders, studio executives, managers, and all who are invested in improving the workplace for game developers will glean critical insights from this data that will support the identification of gaps in one's own work environment alongside opportunities for improvements.

As a global community, we must work together to ensure accessible and equitable opportunities for a fulfilling and sustainable career in the industry. The future of the industry depends on it.

If you would like to assist with translating this report into other languages or helping us reach a wider audience for our next survey in 2023, please reach out to us at [staff@igda.org](mailto:staff@igda.org).

Dr. Jakin Vela  
Executive Director, IGDA

## Sample Overview

The 2021 Developer Satisfaction Survey (DSS) was live from February to April 2021 and it accrued a valid sample of 803 responses. A [summary report on the DSS 2021](#) data was released on October 18, 2021. We also released the [DSS 2021 Diversity in the Game Industry Report](#) which examined survey responses related to diversity practices and experiences of inequity, focusing on gender and ethnicity/race.

This is a companion report, examining the 2021 DSS data through a socio-demographic lens focused on the experiences and opinions of LGBTQA2+ persons. Table 1 summarizes the sample composition.

In the first half of the report, we focus on sexual orientation, highlighting the results for heterosexual respondents and sexual minorities. This latter group consists of the 32% of respondents who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, demisexual, asexual, or queer. This percentage is high relative to the 4% of the Canadian population who identify as LGBTQ2+ and 7% of the United States population identifying as LGBT (Statistics Canada, 2021; Jones, 2022). We acknowledge that it is problematic to group all sexual minorities together, as they may face unique challenges in the game industry. However, the sample sizes were too small for meaningful comparisons between more specific groupings.

In the second half of the report, we highlight the results for non-binary and transgender individuals. Eight percent of respondents identified their gender as non-binary, gender fluid, genderqueer, or two-spirited. In a separate question, 5% of respondents identified as transgender. Note that there is overlap between the non-binary and transgender samples, as respondents could identify as both. Given this overlap, and to avoid redundant information, we make comparisons between the whole sample and non-binary and transgender samples individually.

**Table 1. Composition of sub-samples DSS 2021**

	Response	% of sample
<b>Sexual orientation</b> “Which of the categories below best describes your sexual orientation?”	Heterosexual	68
	Gay/Lesbian	6
	Bi/pan/demisexual	21
	Asexual	3
	Queer	2
<b>Gender</b> “How do you identify your gender?”	Non-binary, gender fluid, genderqueer, two-spirited	8
<b>Transgender Identity</b> “Do you identify as transgender?”	Yes	5

Source: IGDA DSS 2021

**Note:** The numbers may sum to over 100% due to rounding.

## Comparisons by Sexual Orientation

### Type of Work

Table 2 shows the primary roles held by sexual minority and heterosexual respondents who worked in a core or ancillary role to game development as employees, freelancers or as self-employed. Among sexual minorities, the most commonly identified roles were design (34%), management (24%), and programming (17%). The most common roles for heterosexual respondents were the same, but ordered differently: management (36%), programming (27%), and design (23%).

Managerial roles were defined as a senior, upper or middle manager, producer or project manager, or team lead. Heterosexual employees reported working in managerial roles (36%) more frequently than sexual minorities (24%). This may indicate a lack of opportunity for sexual minorities to rise to managerial roles compared to heterosexual workers. A lack of representation at higher organizational levels could present workers with fewer mentors and role models, perpetuating a cycle where sexual minorities do not see themselves advancing.

Heterosexual workers reported higher instances of working in programming roles (27%) compared to sexual minorities (17%). As programming roles more often require formalized education and skill training, this may indicate a difference in the pathways and training opportunities available to sexual minorities.

Sexual minorities were more likely to report working in design roles (34%) compared to heterosexual respondents (23%). They also identified working in art-based roles almost twice as frequently as heterosexual respondents (14% versus 8%). Sexual minorities may be drawn to artistic roles for self-expression or other intrinsically motivated pursuits within the game development space.

Development roles may be emotionally taxing for queer individuals given potentially hostile working conditions (Ruberg, 2019), keeping them out of certain jobs or the employment pipeline altogether. Queer indie game developers may engage in emotional labour that is unique to their lived experiences, such as having to deal with the negative response to the inclusion of queer characters in their games (Ruberg, 2019). A recent example would be the homophobic, transphobic, and racist responses to the inclusion of Abby, a transgender woman, in the Last of Us Part II (Kelleher et al., 2020).



**Table 2: Primary role. Identity comparison DSS 2021**

Primary Role	% of respondents	
	Sexual Minority	Heterosexual
Administration	4	2
Art	14	8
Audio	2	0
Design	34	23
Management	24	36
Programming	17	27
Quality assurance	5	3
Other	0	1

Source: IGDA DSS 2021

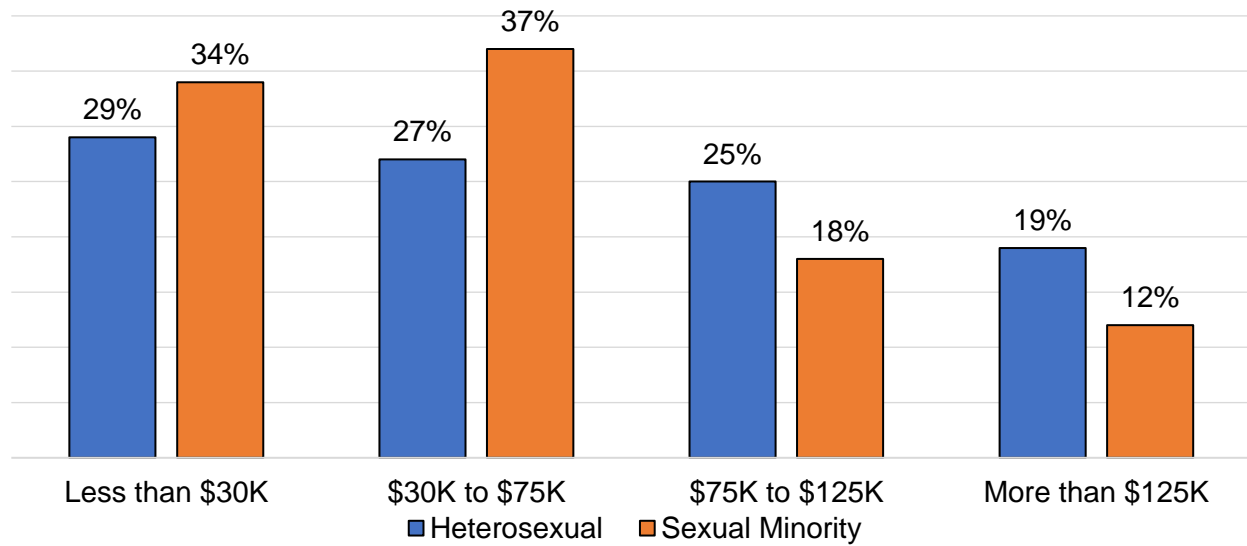
## Compensation

We asked respondents in core and ancillary roles to report their annual income. There are discrepancies in compensation between sexual minorities and heterosexual workers (Figure 1). More heterosexual workers reported income levels at \$150,000 USD or higher compared to sexual minorities (13% versus 6%). In contrast, sexual minorities reported income levels under \$15,000 USD more often than heterosexuals (22% versus 12%).

This disproportionate representation of sexual minorities at the lower end of the compensation spectrum may indicate fewer high-level positions or a lack of advancement opportunity. There are similar patterns of wage discrepancy and leadership representation in other industries as well. For instance, gay men generally earn 11% less than their heterosexual counterparts (Adrian, 2021). Among Fortune 500 board directors, only 0.3% outwardly identify as LGBTQIA+ (Out Leadership, 2020).

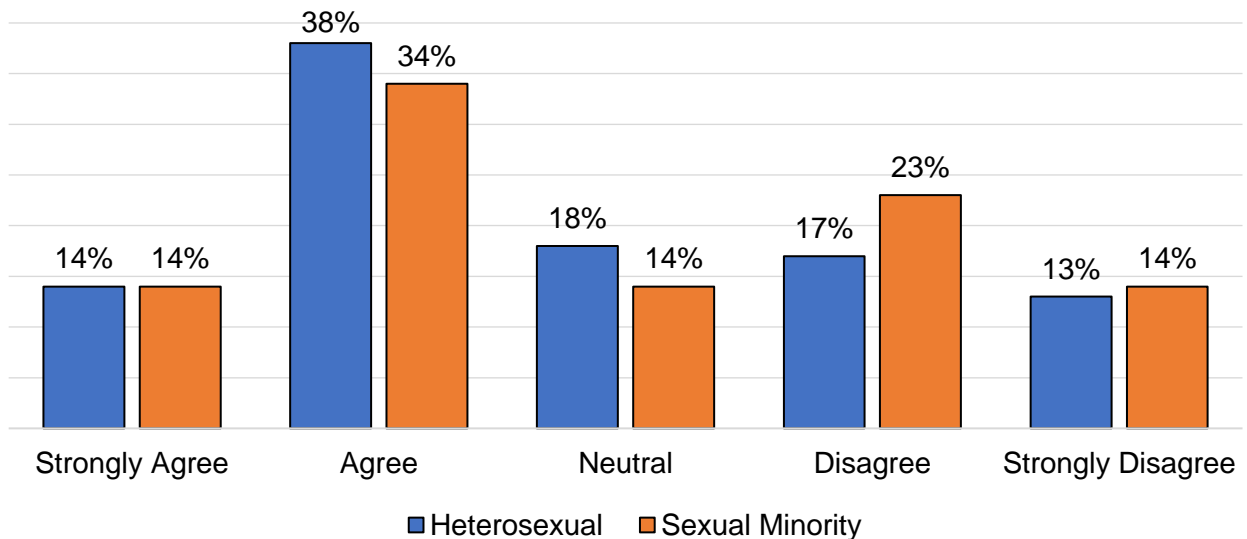
The DSS 2021 asked respondents to reflect on the fairness of their compensation given their role and experience (Figure 2). While around half agreed that their compensation was fair, this perception was stronger for heterosexual workers (56%) compared to sexual minorities (48%). More sexual minorities felt their pay was not fair (37%) compared to heterosexual workers (31%).

**Figure 1: Income. Comparison by sexual orientation DSS 2021**



Source: IGDA DSS 2021

**Figure 2: "I am compensated fairly for the amount of experience I have and the responsibility of my job title". Comparison by sexual orientation DSS 2021**



Source: IGDA DSS 2021

## Diversity

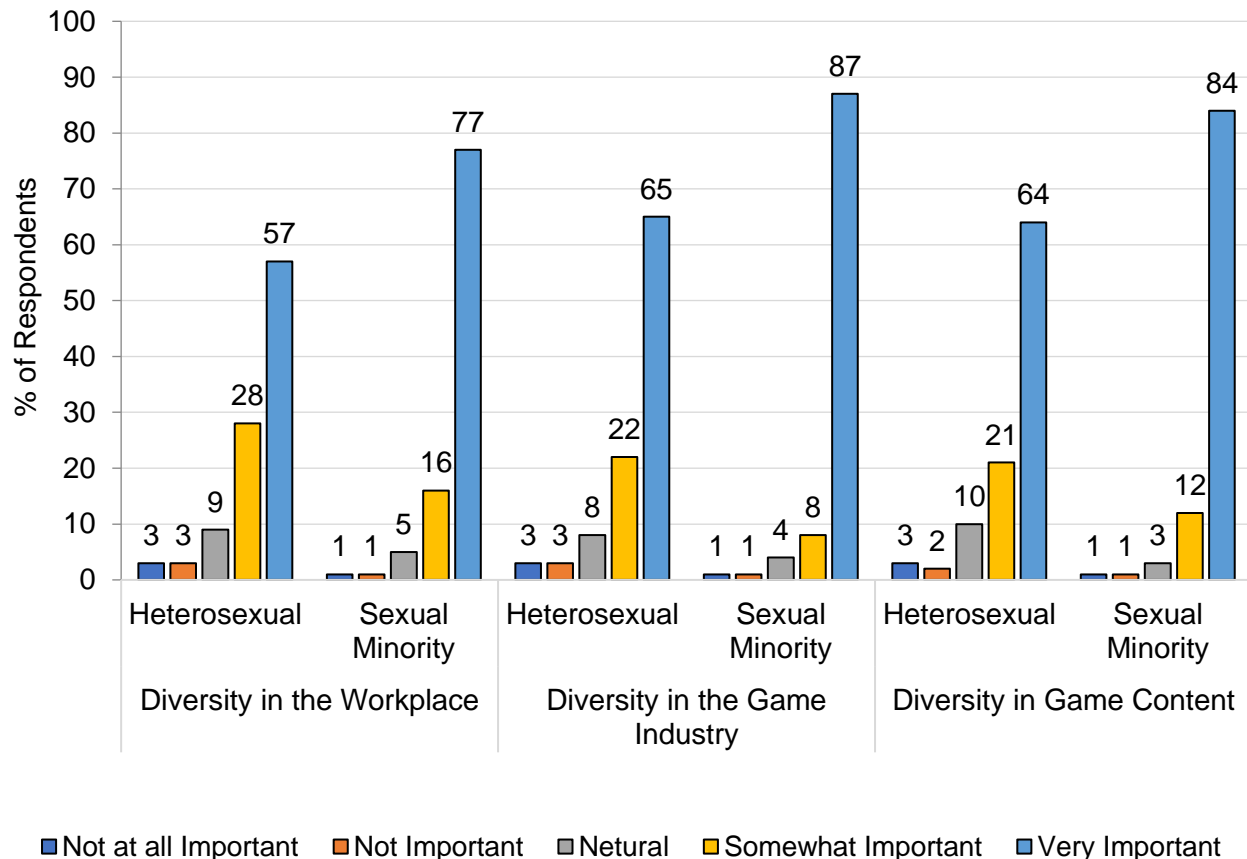
All the respondents to the DSS 2021 were asked questions about diversity. This included students, the currently unemployed, and those working in non-development roles (i.e., journalists, academics, event planners, eSports). To frame the survey questions about diversity, respondents were prompted to think of diversity in terms of demographic characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, ability, or sexual orientation. Certain characteristics may have been more or less salient to respondents based on their identities. For instance, sexual minority status may have been more salient as a diversity cue for members of that community. Respondents may have also considered diversity in terms of knowledge, skills, and experience.

### ***Importance of Diversity***

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of diversity within the industry at large, within their own workplace, and in the video game content they help to produce (Figure 3). While all respondents agreed that diversity is important, they placed greater importance on diversity in the industry and in game content than diversity in their workplace. A greater proportion of sexual minorities said that diversity is *very important* in each context (87% in the industry, 77% in the workplace, and 84% in game content) compared to heterosexual respondents (65%, 57%, and 64%, respectively). For workers from minority groups, diversity concerns are likely more salient and impact individuals regularly, making it more of a priority for them.

There has been a movement in modern games to ensure representation of the LGBTQIA+ community (Villemez, 2020) and this may reflect the importance given to diversity in game content among sexual minorities. Game mechanics such as those which allow players to opt-in to queer storylines are increasingly common – but they can also be considered as hollow or performative acts (Heritage, 2021).

**Figure 3: “How important is diversity in the workplace, the game industry and in game content?” Comparison by sexual orientation DSS 2021**

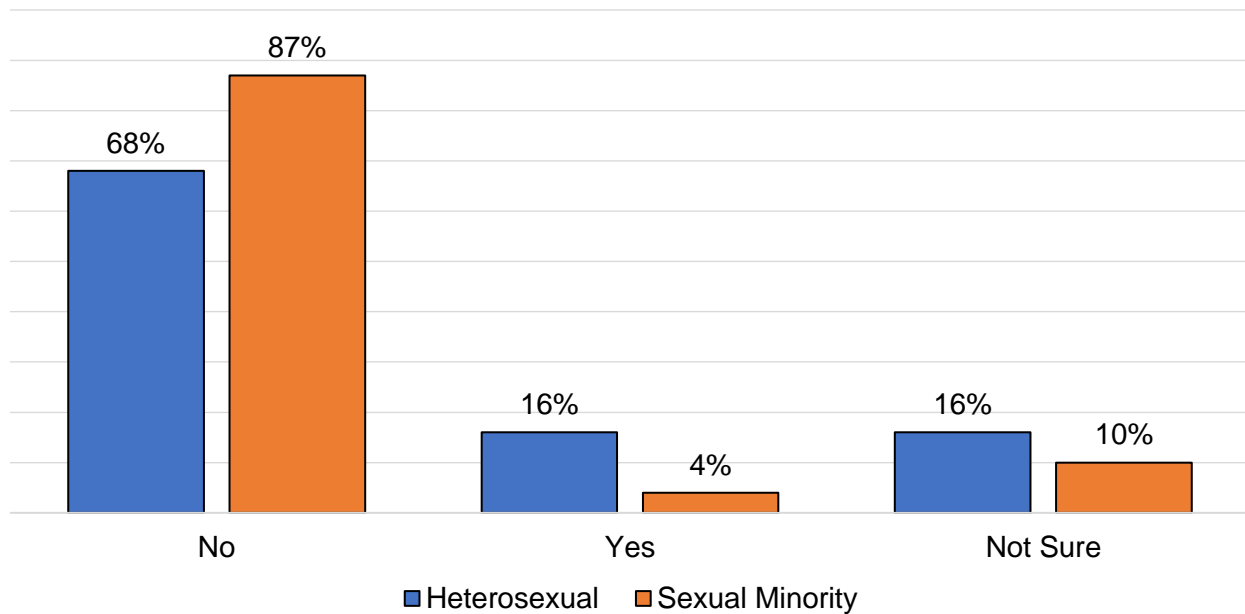


Source: IGDA DSS 2021

### ***Equal Treatment, Opportunity and Equity***

DSS 2021 respondents were asked if they believe there is equal opportunity and treatment for all in the game industry. Across both sexual minority and heterosexual workers, it seems that the majority do not think so (Figure 4). The perception of unequal opportunity and treatment was much more prevalent among sexual minorities (87%) compared to heterosexual respondents (68%).

**Figure 4: “Do you feel there is equal treatment and opportunity for all in the game industry?” Comparison by sexual orientation DSS 2021**



Source: IGDA DSS 2021

Respondents were asked if they had personally experienced inequity towards themselves and if they had witnessed inequity towards others based on their gender, age, ethnicity, ability, or sexual orientation. Respondents were invited to select multiple areas in which the inequity might have occurred. A startling 78% of sexual minorities said that they had personally experienced inequity in the workplace. In contrast, only 40% heterosexual workers said they had experienced inequity. It is important to note that the heterosexual sample is not homogenous and heterosexual workers may also experience inequity, perhaps based on other demographic characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, or age.

Sexual minorities also reported witnessing inequity towards others at higher rates (75%) than heterosexual respondents (51%). The lower number for heterosexual workers may indicate a blind spot or bias in perception related to inequity based on majority group status. Issues of diversity may not be as apparent in their daily interactions and go unnoticed when there is no direct impact.

Despite the difference in experienced and observed inequity overall, the types of inequity identified were largely similar across heterosexual respondents and sexual minorities (Figures 5 and 6). Microaggressions and social/interpersonal inequities were the most common personally experienced inequities for sexual minorities (55% and 50%, respectively) and heterosexual workers (23% and 19%, respectively). These were also the most common inequities witnessed toward others: 69% of sexual minorities and 45% of heterosexual workers witnessed microaggressions while 59% of sexual minorities and 38% of heterosexual workers witnessed social/interpersonal inequities.

The large gap in experienced microaggressions and social/interpersonal inequities among sexual minorities compared to heterosexual workers suggests that sexual minority groups may experience more frequent subtle discrimination in the workplace. This may manifest more in workplace relationships rather than in working conditions per se. Inequities related to working conditions, workload, promotion, and money were reported at lower rates. Entrenched culture can fuel systemic and tacit discrimination which is harder to identify than overt and structural discrimination, but nonetheless has lasting negative impact.

It is promising that some heterosexual workers are aware of the inequities experienced by others. Converting that awareness to allyship and advocacy is an important way for members of the majority to support marginalized workers.

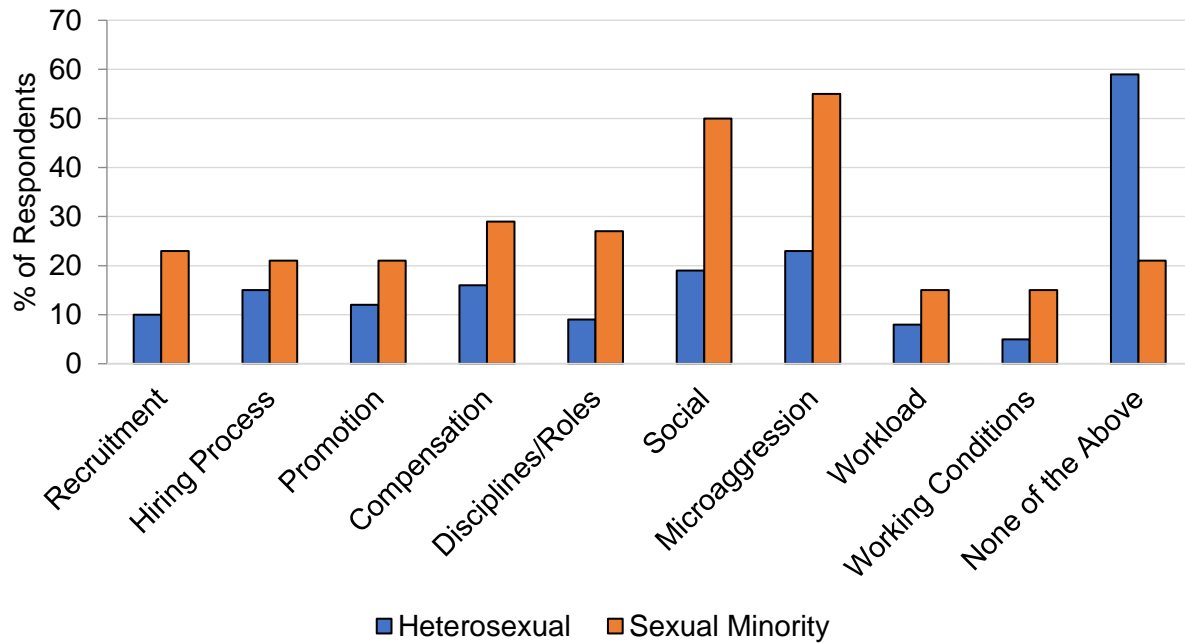
For the first time, the DSS 2021 also asked about online harassment at work.

Overall, 69% of respondents said that they had never experienced personal harassment online while carrying out their work, but that leaves 31% who had, and the distribution is not equal.

- Fewer heterosexual respondents (25%) reported experiencing online harassment at work than sexual minorities (48-50%)
- Sexual minorities reported more frequent occurrences of online harassment than heterosexuals; 8-14% experienced daily or weekly occurrences versus 4% for straight workers

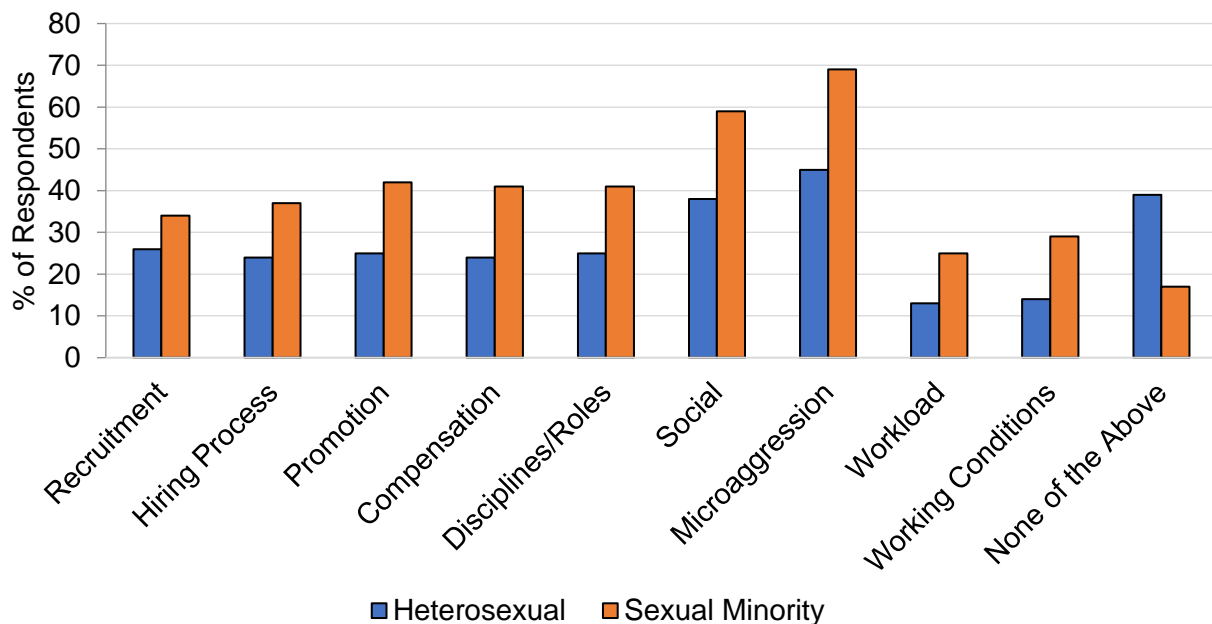
Sexual minority respondents were half as likely to say that their company had policies or procedures in place to address online harassment experiences by its workers compared to heterosexual respondents (20-25% versus 50%). Compared to heterosexual respondents. This may indicate that sexual orientation as an object of harassment is not well considered in existing policies.

**Figure 5: Experience of inequity toward oneself. Comparison by sexual orientation DSS 2021**



Source: IGDA DSS 2021

**Figure 6: Experience of inequity towards others. Comparison by sexual orientation DSS 2021**

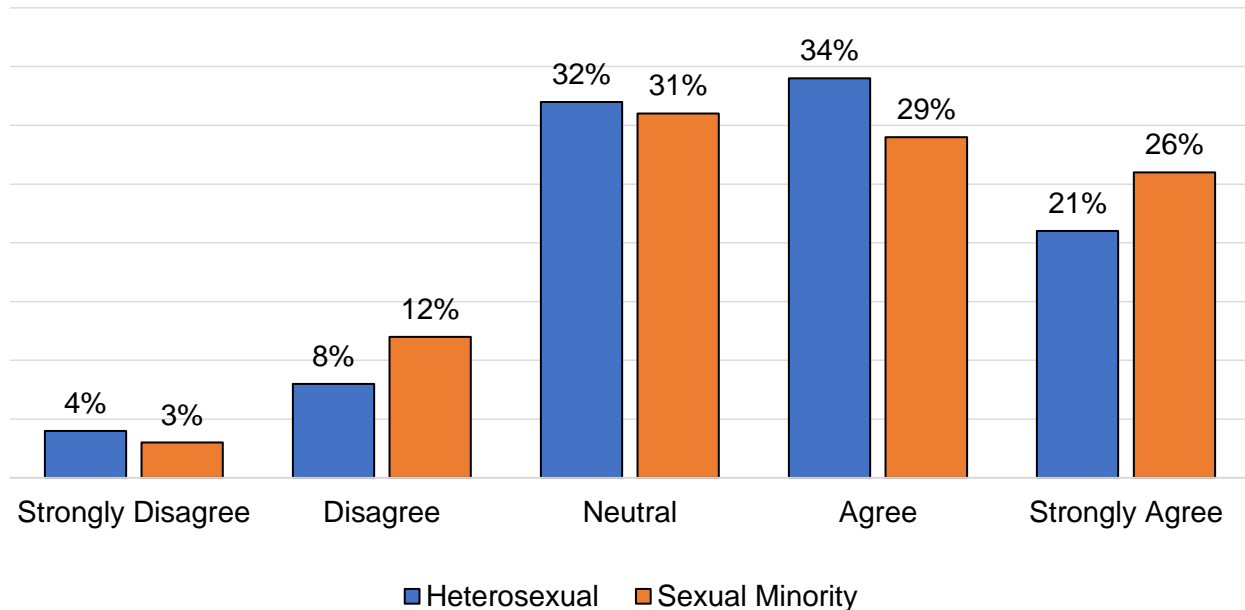


Source: IGDA DSS 2021

## Pursuing Diverse Candidates

It is promising that across both groups, many respondents agreed that their organizations were pursuing diverse candidates (Figure 7). However, the high level of neutral responses (slightly above 30% for both groups) shows a lack of confidence, or at best, a lack of awareness, in company efforts.

**Figure 7: “My company/the company where I work pursues diverse candidates.” Comparison by sexual orientation DSS 2021**



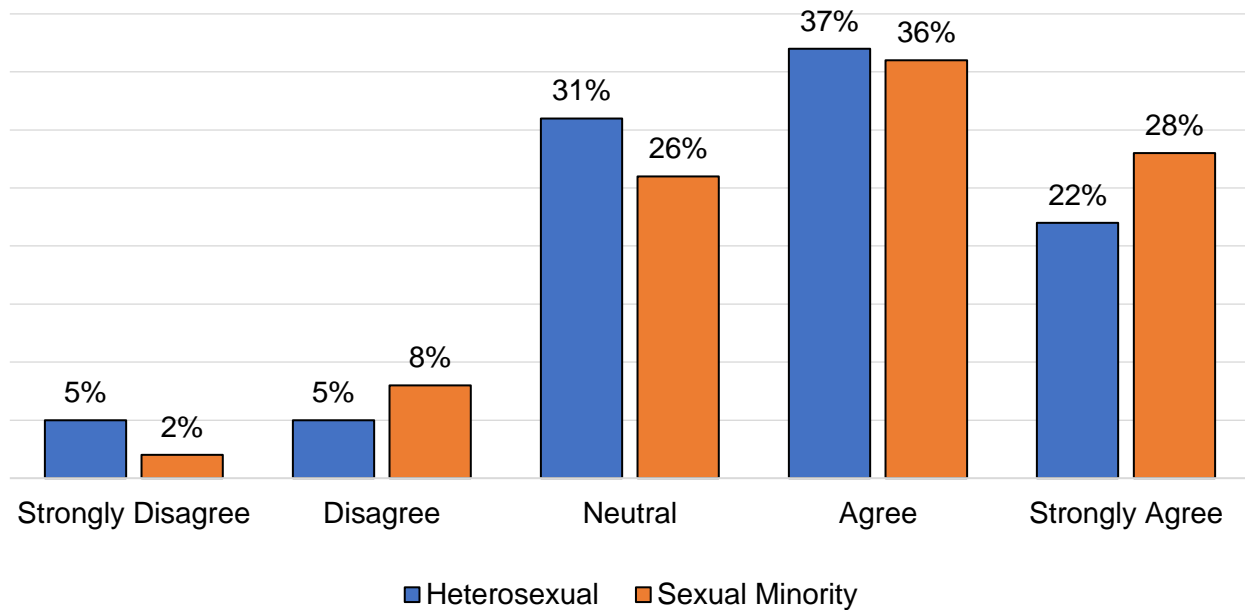
Source: IGDA DSS 2021

## Support for Diversity Initiatives

Respondents were asked their opinion about whether their company supports diversity initiatives. Most agreed or expressed neutral opinions (Figure 8). Sexual minorities indicated slightly more agreement (64% vs 59% for heterosexual respondents) whereas heterosexual respondents were more neutral (31% vs 26% of sexual minorities). Given that diversity initiatives may not target heterosexual workers directly, they may be less aware of or less interested in them.



**Figure 8: “My company or the company where I work supports diversity initiatives.” Comparison by sexual orientation DSS 2021**

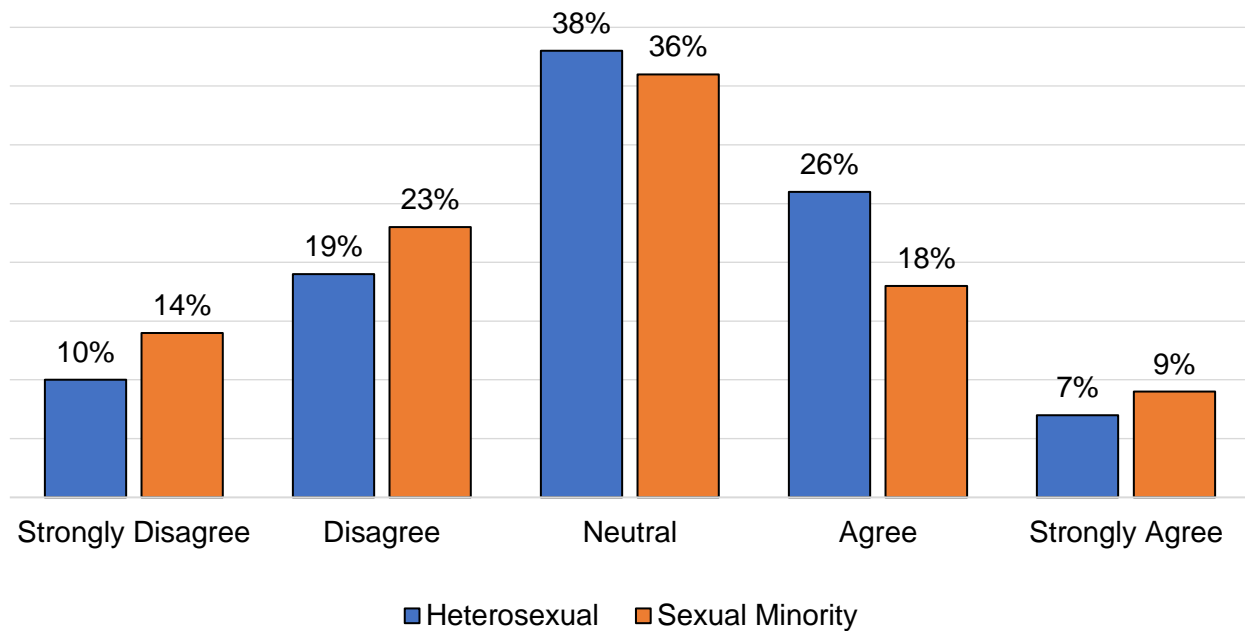


Source: IGDA DSS 2021

### ***Qualifications Over Diversity***

Respondents were asked about their company’s hiring criteria and whether consideration is given to diversity or just formal qualifications (Figure 9). Among both groups, a large portion of workers were neutral (36% of sexual minorities and 38% of heterosexual workers), suggesting that respondents were unsure or indifferent. Heterosexual respondents seemed more inclined to agree with the merit only statement: “we only look for qualified applicants”.

**Figure 9: “My company, client, or the company where I work does not consider diversity. We/they look for qualified applicants.” Comparison by sexual orientation DSS 2021**

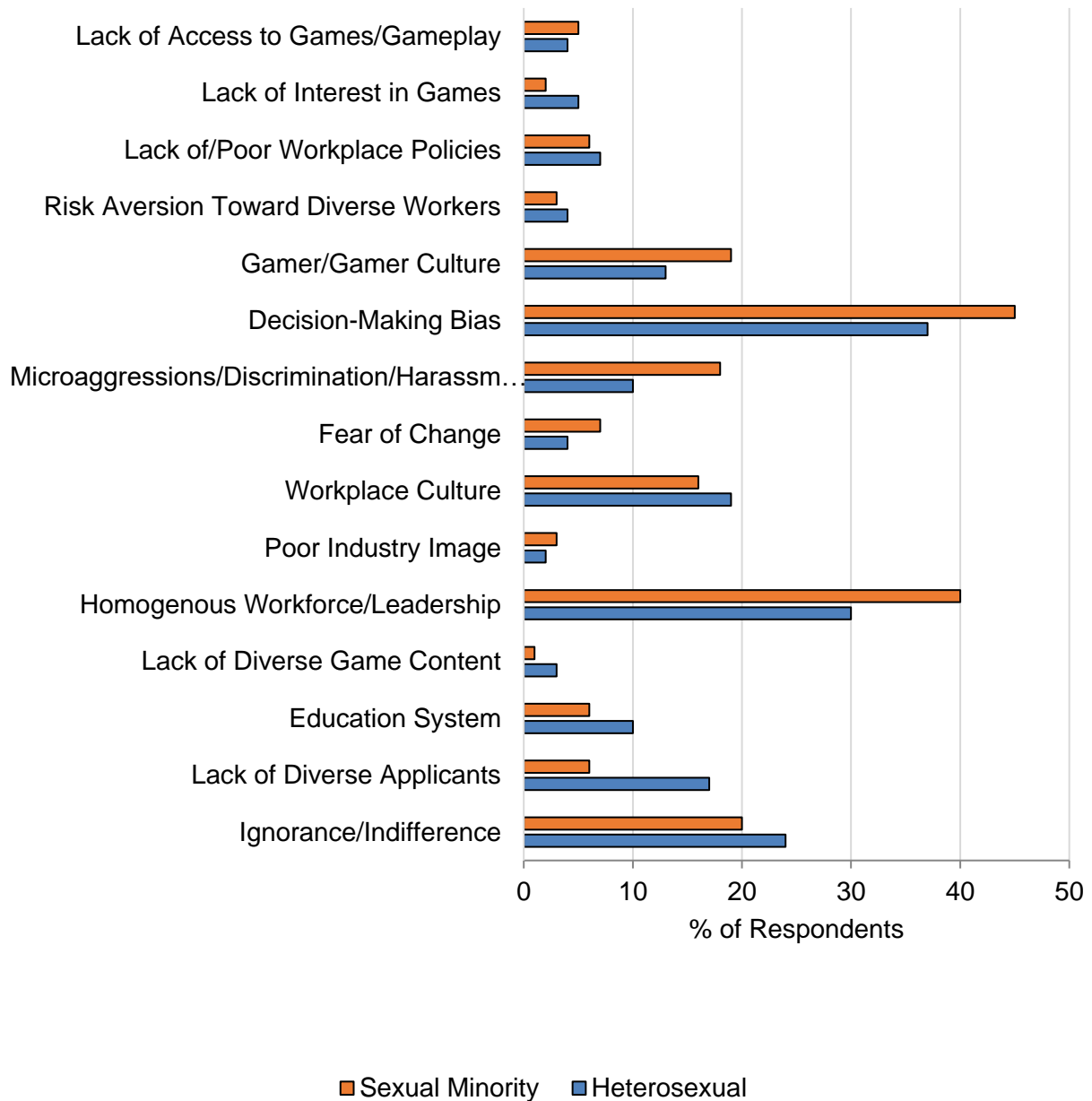


Source: IGDA DSS 2021

### ***Obstacles to Diversifying the Game Industry***

Respondents were asked to select the top two things that they felt were obstacles to diversifying the game industry from a provided list (Figure 9). Across both groups, systemic or unconscious bias in decision-making (e.g., recruitment, hiring, advancement) was the most common obstacle identified. The second was homogeneity in the workforce and in leadership roles. This reflects the tendency for ‘like to attract like’ and for organizations to seek candidates who ‘fit’ their existing culture.

**Figure 10: “What is the biggest obstacle to diversifying the gaming industry?” Comparison by sexual orientation DSS 2021**



Source: IGDA DSS 2021

## Non-Binary and Transgender Comparisons

### *Type of Work*

Transgender and non-binary respondents were most represented in artistic roles (Table 3). Design was the most common role held by both transgender (29%) and non-binary (37%) respondents, followed by art (24% and 30%, respectively). While responses across the whole sample differed only slightly for design roles (26%), they were markedly lower for art (10%).

Only 3% of non-binary respondents said they worked in a management role. This is much lower than the rates reported in the whole sample (33%). In contrast, transgender respondents held management roles at somewhat more similar rates (24%) to the whole sample.

A similar number of non-binary respondents (23%) worked in programming as the whole sample (24%). In contrast, only 12% of the transgender respondents selected programming as their primary role.

**Table 3: Primary role. Identity comparison DSS 2021**

Primary role	% of respondents		
	Non-binary*	Transgender*	Whole sample
Administration	3	6	3
Art	30	24	10
Audio	0	0	1
Design	37	29	26
Management	3	24	33
Other	0	6	1
Programming	23	12	24
Quality Assurance	3	0	3

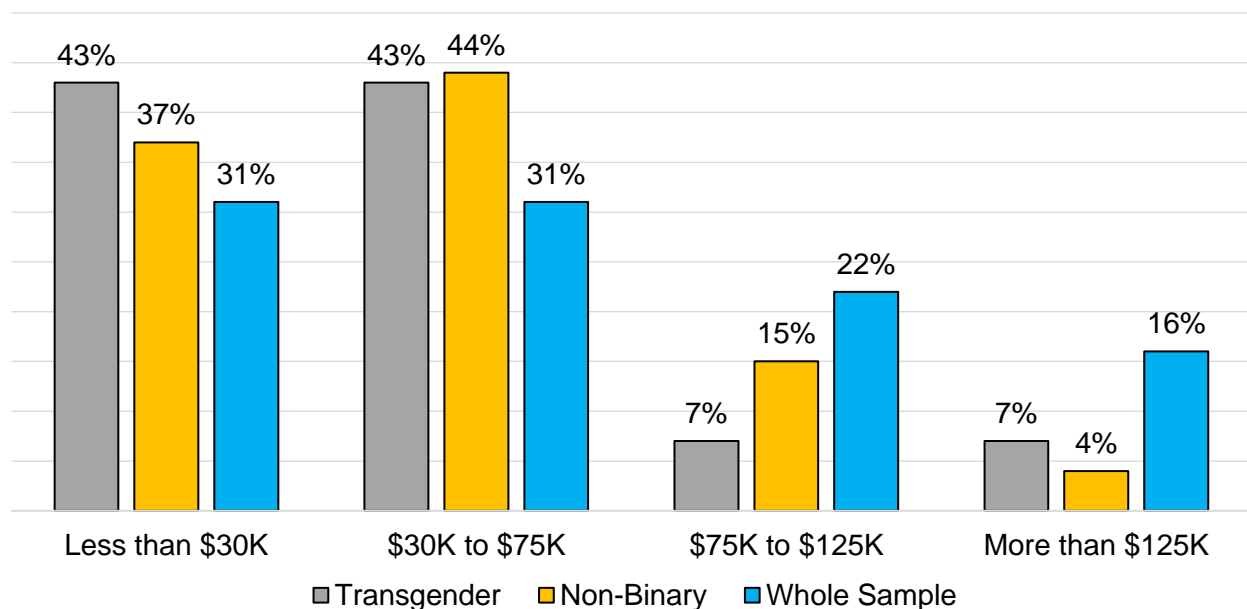
Source: IGDA DSS 2021; \* these categories are not mutually exclusive

## Compensation

There were some notable differences in reported annual income (Figure 11). Specifically, 29% of transgender respondents and 26% of non-binary respondents reported annual incomes of less than \$15,000 USD, and this was the most common reported income for non-binary respondents. In contrast, only 16% of the whole sample fell within this income bracket. An annual income between \$50,000-\$75,000 USD was the most common income for transgender respondents (36%). As noted above, similar patterns were identified among sexual minority respondents to the DSS 2021.

Disproportionate representation of transgender and non-binary respondents on the lower end of the income spectrum may point to fewer high-level positions or a lack of advancement opportunity. This may not be unique to the games industry. A study conducted for McKinsey found a disproportionate percentage of transgender and non-binary employees in entry level positions (Bailinson et al., 2020).

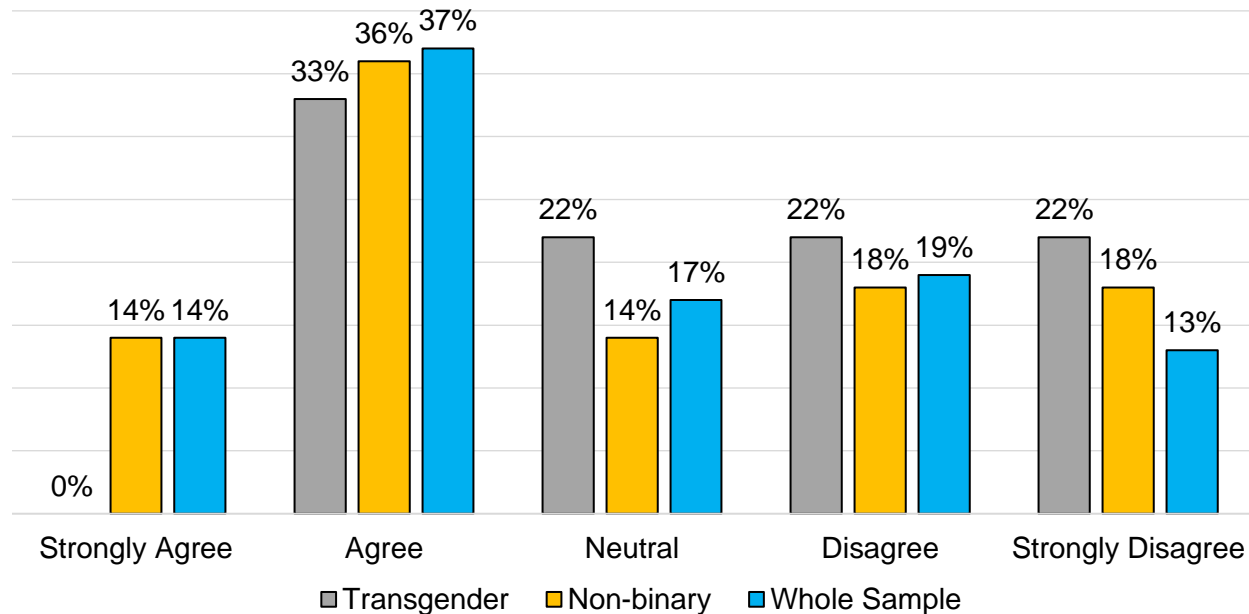
**Figure 11: Income. Comparison by Trans & Non-Binary 2021**



Source: IGDA DSS 2021

The DSS 2021 asked respondents to reflect on the fairness of their compensation given their experience and their specific role (Figure 12). Non-binary respondents expressed similar sentiments as the whole sample. Transgender respondents reported slightly more negative perceptions, with none expressing strong agreement that their pay was fair.

**Figure 12: Perception of Fair Compensation. Comparison by Trans & Non-Binary 2021**



Source: IGDA DSS 2021

## Diversity

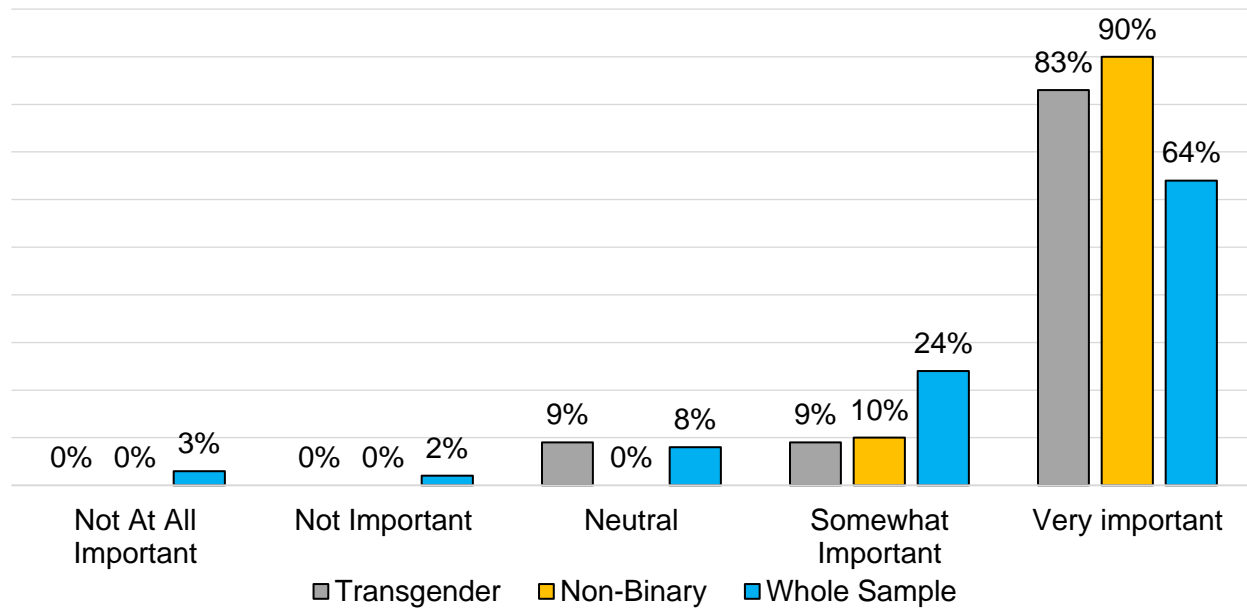
### Importance of Diversity

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of diversity within the industry at large, within their own workplace, and in the video game content they help to produce (Figures 13, 14, and 15). Both non-binary (90%) and transgender (83%) respondents indicated that diversity was very important in the workplace and very important in the game industry (93% non-binary and 83% transgender). The importance of diversity of game content was rated slightly lower.

Across all three questions, non-binary and transgender respondents said diversity was *very important* more frequently than the whole sample. In each case, a small proportion of the whole sample (less than 5%) said that diversity was *not important* or *not at all important*; non-binary and transgender respondents never selected these options.

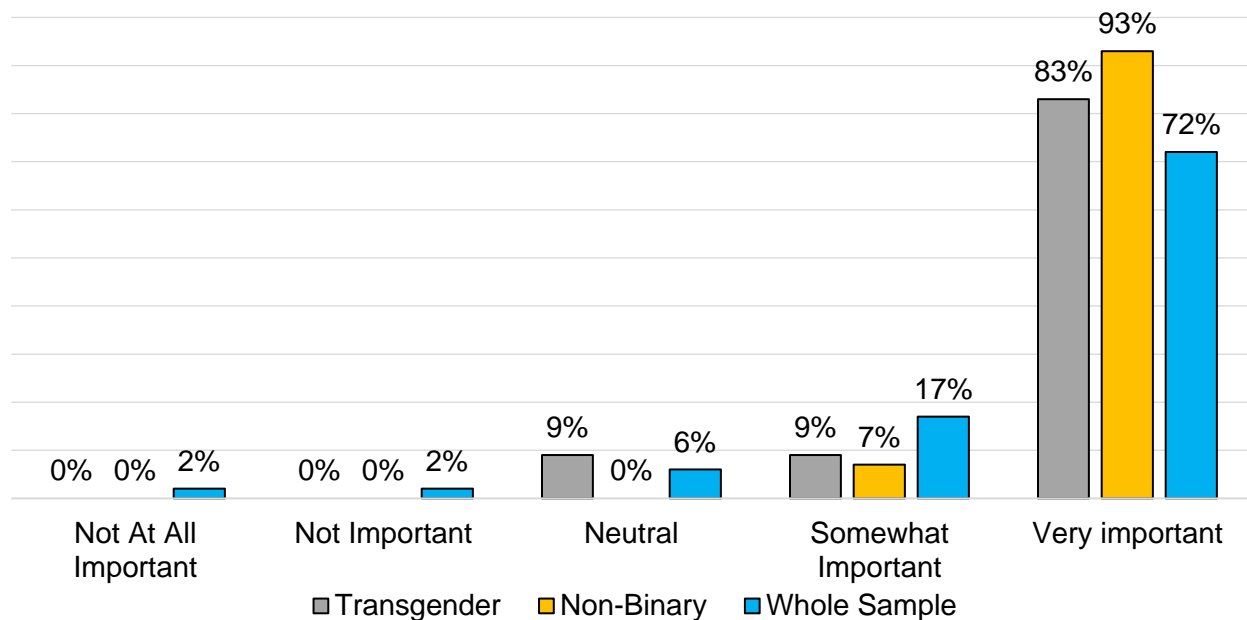
This could indicate a heightened sense of the importance placed on diversity among the transgender and non-binary communities given their marginalized status. It may also reflect the overall lack of authentic trans inclusion in games, despite a growing number of successful forays (Flint, 2021).

**Figure 13: Importance of Diversity in the Workplace. Comparison by Trans & Non-Binary 2021**



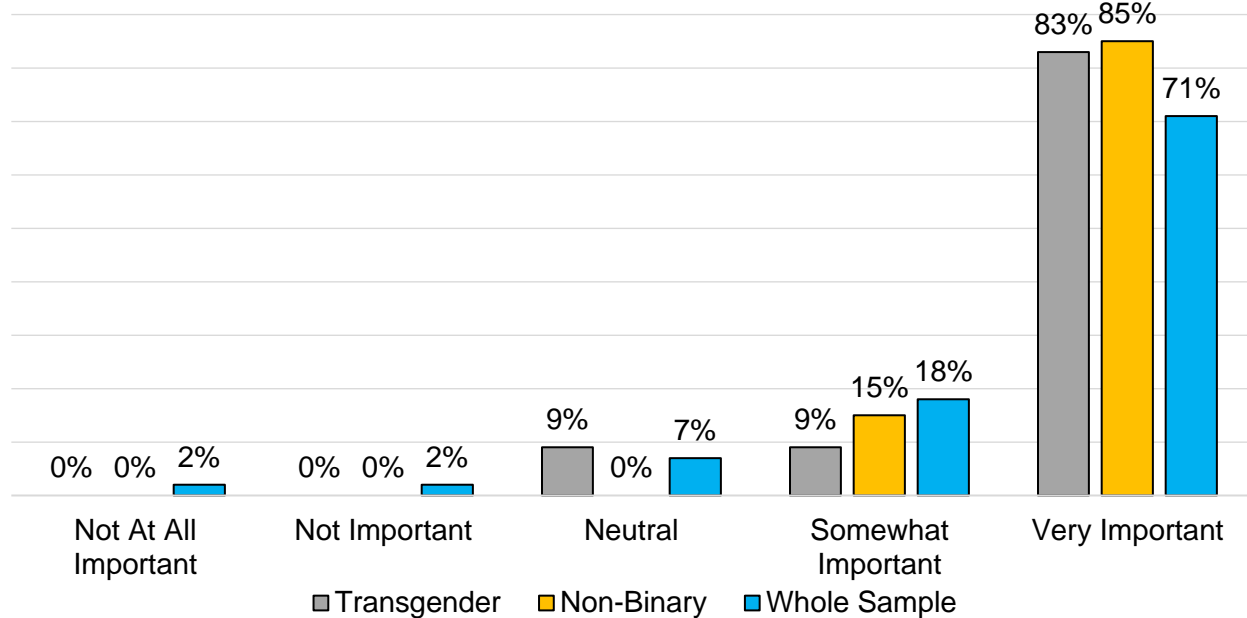
Source: IGDA DSS 2021

**Figure 14: Importance of Diversity in the Game Industry, Comparison by Trans & Non-Binary 2021**



Source: IGDA DSS 2021

**Figure 15: Importance of Diversity in Game Content. Comparison by Trans & Non-Binary 2021**



Source: IGDA DSS 2021

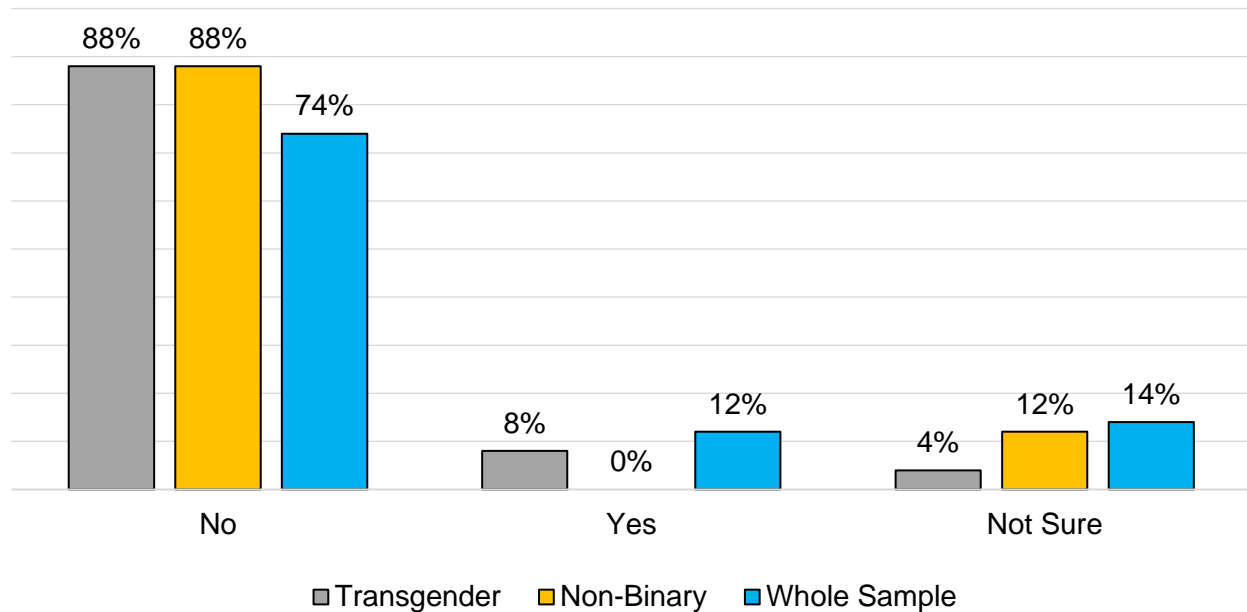
### ***Equal Treatment, Opportunity and Equity***

DSS 2021 respondents were asked if they believed there is equal opportunity and treatment for all in the game industry. The results suggest that the majority do not: 88% of both non-binary and transgender respondents said no (Figure 16). Though negative perceptions of equity are shared across the whole sample, these sentiments seem higher among gender minorities.

Respondents were asked if they had personally experienced inequity towards themselves and if they had witnessed inequity towards others based on their gender, age, ethnicity, ability, or sexual orientation. Respondents were invited to select multiple areas in which the inequity might have occurred. Most respondents reported personally experiencing inequity (80% non-binary and 72% transgender) as well as witnessing inequity towards others (79% non-binary and 77% transgender).



**Figure 16: Do you feel there is equal treatment and opportunity for all in the game industry? Comparison by Trans & Non-Binary 2021**



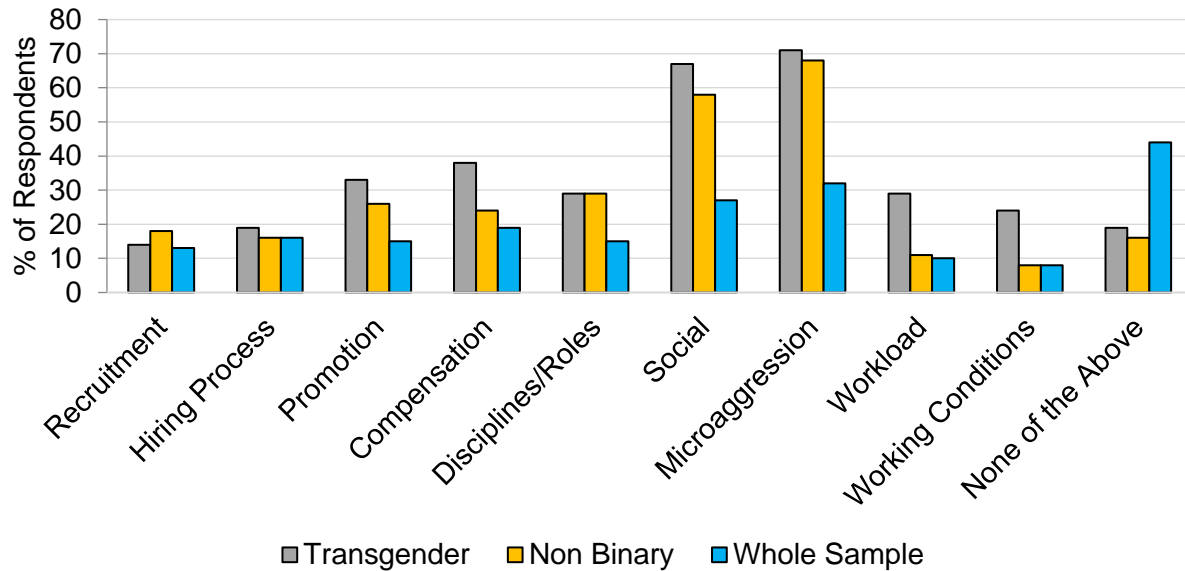
Source: IGDA DSS 2021

As with sexual minorities, non-binary and transgender respondents identified microaggressions and incidents within social/interpersonal interactions as the most common personally experienced inequities (Figures 17 and 18).

About two-thirds (68%) of non-binary respondents and 71% of transgender respondents experienced inequity in the form of microaggressions. Social/interpersonal inequity was reported by 67% of transgender and 58% of non-binary respondents. While the whole sample also identified microaggressions (32%) and interpersonal inequities (27%) as the most common forms of experienced inequity, the prevalence was markedly lower. Almost half of the whole sample said they had never experienced inequity (44%) compared to transgender (19%) and non-binary respondents (16%).

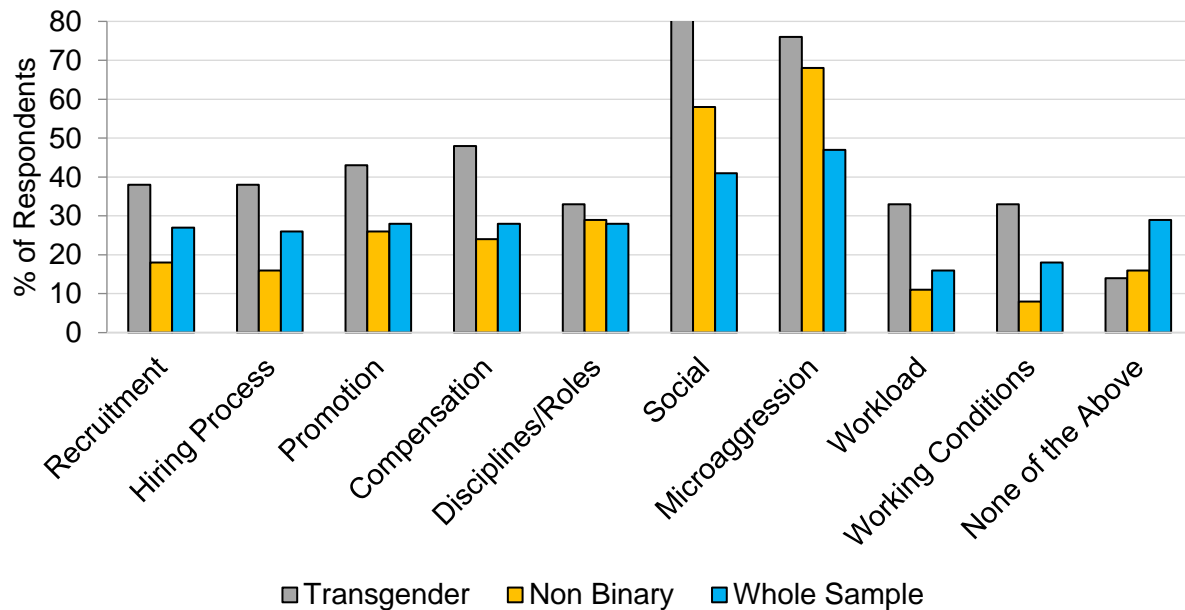
A similar pattern emerged when respondents were asked about witnessing inequities towards others. The most common form of inequity was microaggressions (76%) for transgender respondents and interpersonal inequity (81%) for non-binary respondents. These were also the most common inequities among the whole sample, but again at much smaller rates (47% microaggressions and 41% interpersonal inequities). More than one-quarter (29%) of the whole sample had never witnessed an inequity toward another compared to 14% of transgender respondents and 16% of non-binary respondents.

**Figure 17: Experiences of Inequity Towards Oneself. Comparison by Trans & Non-Binary 2021**



Source: IGDA DSS 2021

**Figure 18: Experiences of Witnessing Inequity Towards Others. Comparison by Trans & Non-Binary 2021**



Source: IGDA DSS 2021

For the first time, the DSS 2021 also asked about online harassment at work.

Overall, 69% of respondents said that they had never experienced personal harassment online while carrying out their work, but that leaves 31% who had, and the distribution is not equal.

- More non-binary respondents (35%) reported experiencing online harassment at work than men (25%), but slightly fewer than women (42%)
- Non-binary respondents reported more frequent occurrences of online harassment than men and more similarly to women; 6% reported daily or weekly occurrences and 21% reported monthly (compared to 4% and 5%, respectively for men)

Gender non-binary respondents were much less likely (26%) to say that their company had policies or procedures in place to address online harassment experiences by its workers compared to men (43%) or women (38%). This may indicate that non-binary gender identity as an object of harassment is not well considered in existing policies.

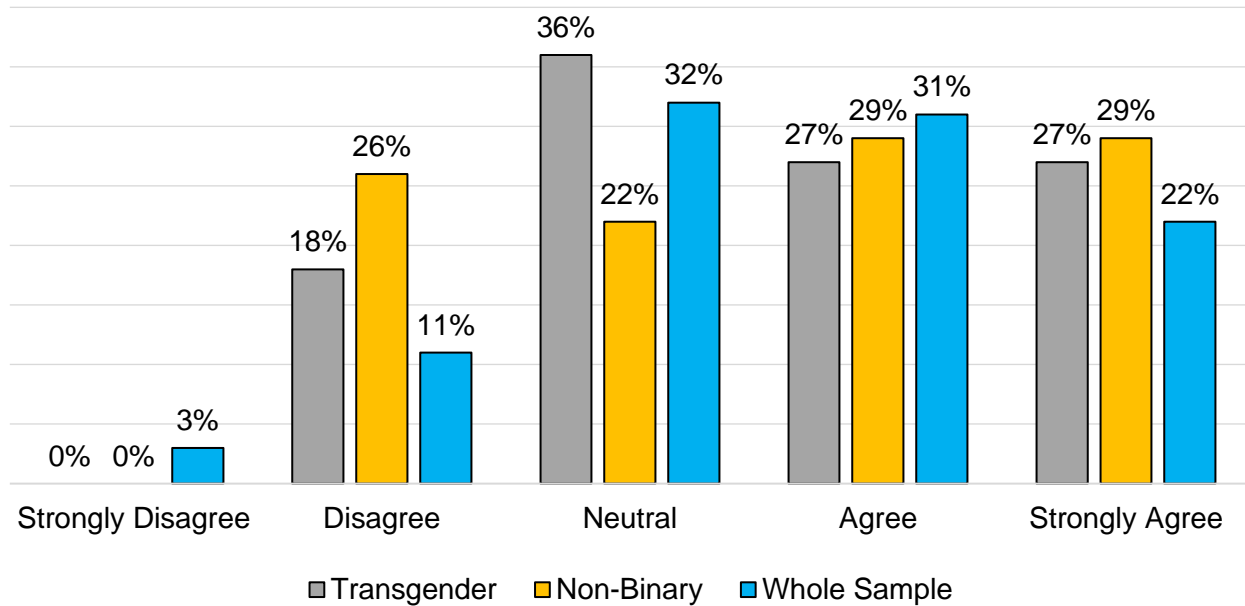
### ***Pursuing Diverse Candidates***

As reported above, most respondents in the whole sample felt that their company or client pursued diverse candidates. However, non-binary respondents expressed disagreement more frequently than the whole sample (Figure 19). Many transgender respondents had a neutral response.

### ***Support for Diversity Initiatives***

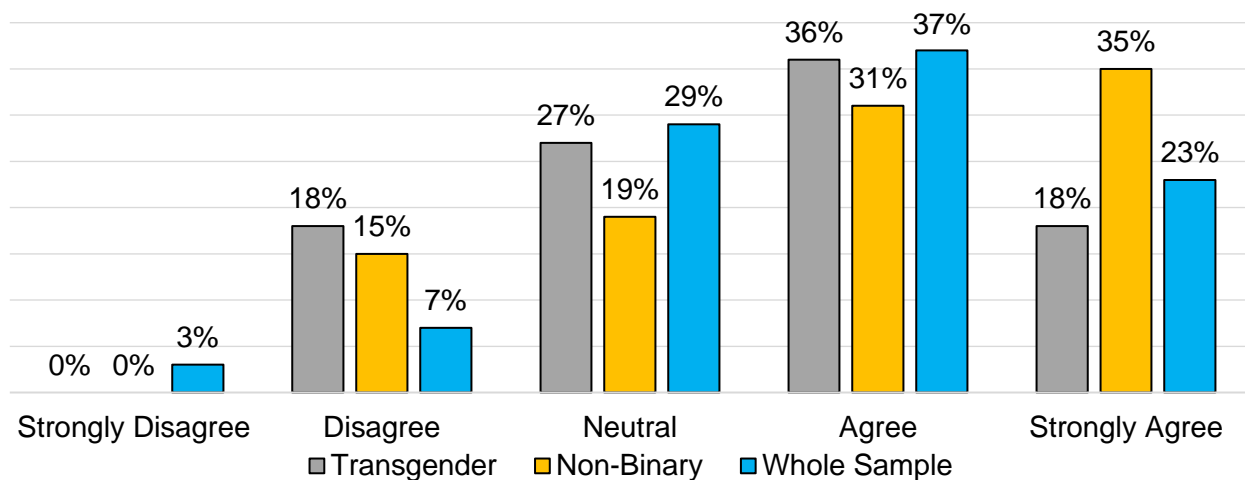
When asked whether their company supported diversity initiatives, most respondents were divided between agreement and neutral opinions (Figure 20). Specifically, 54% of transgender and 66% of non-binary respondents agreed or strongly agreed while 27% of transgender and 19% of non-binary respondents felt neutral. It may be that current diversity initiatives focus more on women or ethnicity/race and therefore are not as salient or useful for transgender or non-binary workers.

**Figure 19: My company/the company where I work pursues diverse candidates. Comparison by Trans & Non-Binary 2021**



Source: IGDA DSS 2021

**Figure 20: My company supports diversity initiatives. Comparison by Trans & Non-Binary 2021**

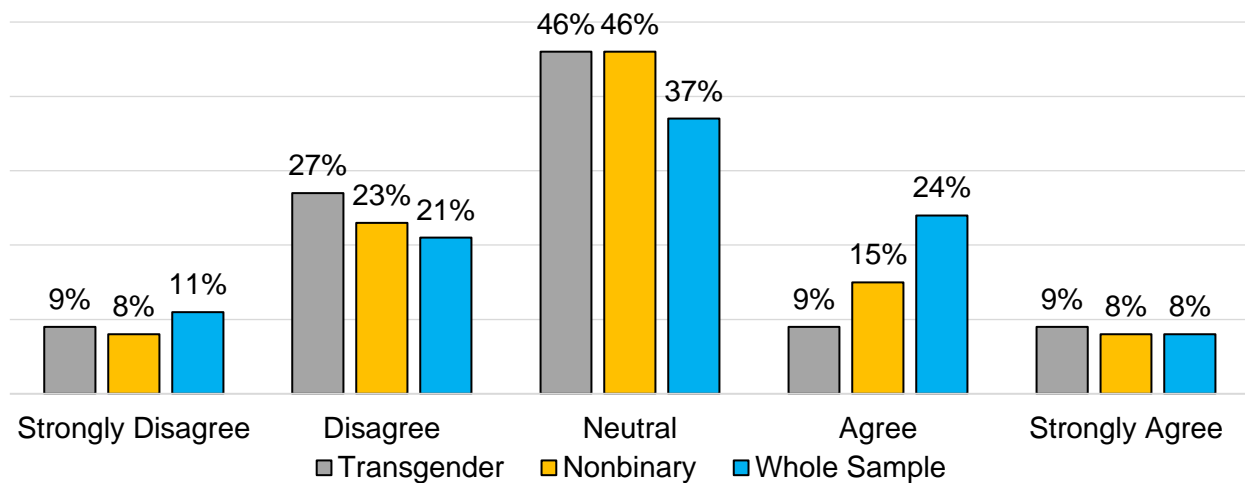


Source: IGDA DSS 2021

## Qualifications Over Diversity

Non-binary and transgender respondents seemed uncertain about their company's hiring criteria. Almost half of each group (46%) expressed neutrality toward the statement: "My company or the company where I work does not consider diversity. We/they only look for qualified applicants" (Figure 21). The remainder were divided between agreement and disagreement.

**Figure 21: My company does not consider diversity. We look for qualified applicants. Comparison by Trans & Non-Binary 2021**

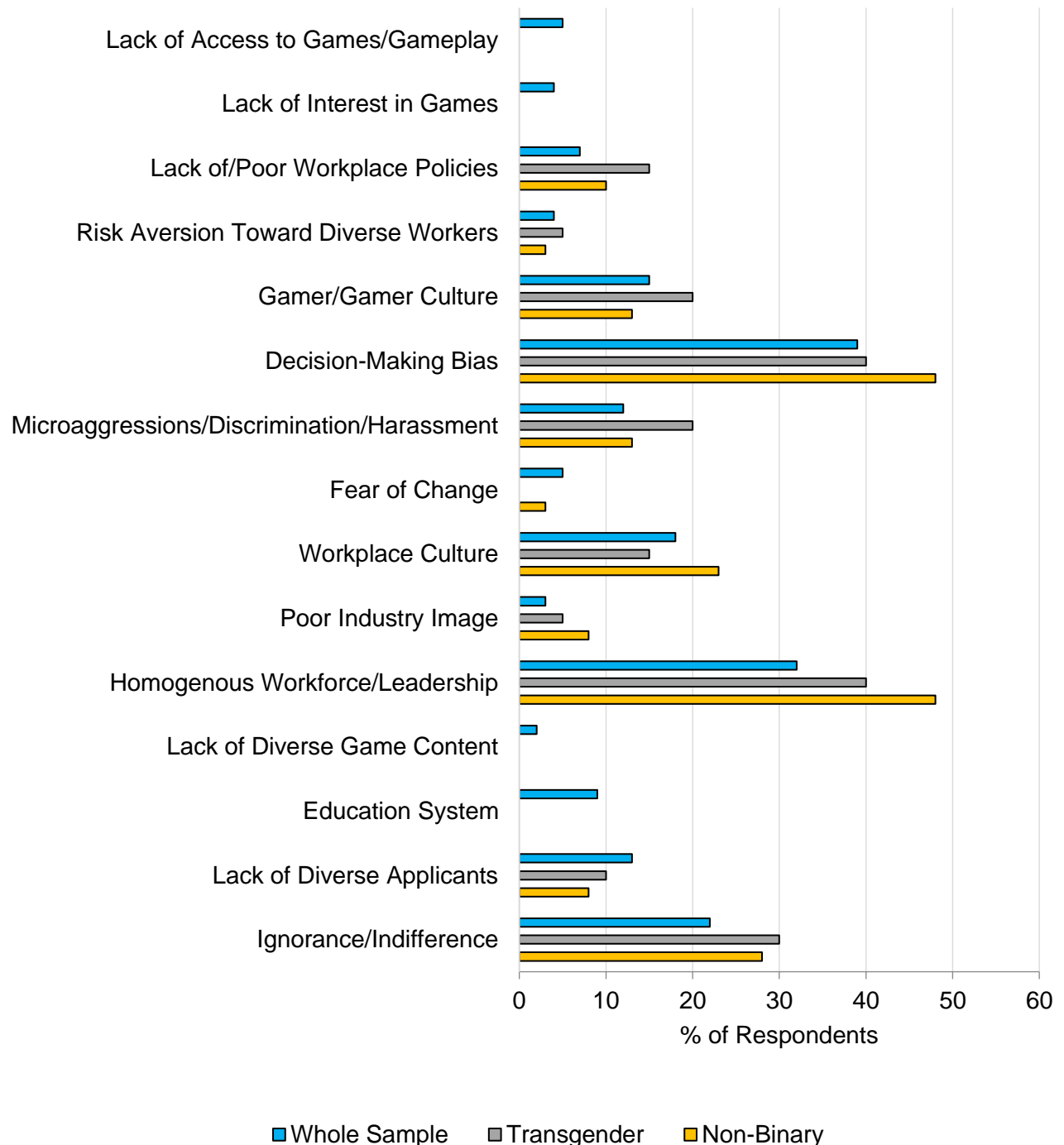


Source: IGDA DSS 2021

## Obstacles in Diversifying the Game Industry

Like the results among sexual minorities, non-binary and transgender respondents identified systemic or unconscious bias in decision-making (e.g., recruitment, hiring, advancement) and a homogenous workforce and leadership as the biggest obstacles to diversifying the industry (Figure 22). Other notable factors included ignorance or indifference and workplace culture. Most of these obstacles reflect the general underrepresentation of non-binary and transgender individuals in the game industry. These obstacles were also identified by the whole sample, but at lower rates.

**Figure 22: What is the biggest obstacle to diversifying the gaming industry? Comparison by Trans & Non-Binary 2021**



Source: IGDA DSS 2021

## Conclusion

This report presented data from the IGDA DSS 2021 with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion issues and the realities of sexual minority, transgender, and non-binary game industry workers.

First, we found differences in job role and compensation. Sexual minorities were less represented in managerial or technical positions, identifying design most often as their primary role. This pattern was consistent among transgender and non-binary respondents. Managerial roles seemed to be particularly elusive for non-binary respondents. These marginalized groups were also disproportionately represented at lower income brackets and were less likely to feel that their compensation was fair given their roles and responsibilities.

Second, we observed subtle differences in perceptions of diversity and opportunity. Most respondents said they considered diversity to be important, but this sentiment was strongest among sexual minority, non-binary, and transgender respondents. Similarly, while most respondents said that they do not believe there is equal opportunity within the gaming industry, this sentiment was strongest amongst the marginalized groups.

Third, we noted marked differences across groups in the degree of experienced and witnessed inequities. While heterosexual employees largely said that they had never experienced inequity, sexual minorities reported high levels of experienced inequity, namely microaggressions and social/interpersonal inequities. This pattern was consistent across transgender and non-binary respondents. Similarly, sexual minority, transgender, and non-binary employees witnessed inequities towards others more often than other respondents. Since marginalized employees are often subjected to inequity themselves, they may be more able to recognize inequity towards others. Sexual and gender minorities reported more online harassment at work than men and were less likely to report supportive policies to protect against online harassment than men or women. Again, this may reflect a lack of visibility or awareness of the problem.

This report was generated with the intention of capturing the unique experiences of marginalized groups within the LGBTQA2+ community. We recognize that experiences within the community are highly nuanced and may be further complicated by gender, race/ethnicity, and/or other elements of an individual's identity. We also advise caution in the interpretation and generalizability of these results due to the low sample sizes of each identity group. Nonetheless, we hope that this research sheds some light on the broad challenges faced by the LGBTQA2+ community within the game industry and opens the door for additional research. We also hope that this data can

highlight key areas for attention and improvement as the industry expands its equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts. Future research should consider the nuanced experiences of racial minorities and women within the LGBTQ+ community to better understand how they may face unique challenges when navigating within the game industry. Additionally, research with larger samples sizes directed at uniquely understanding the transgender and non-binary experiences in the game industry would be welcomed.

This report was one of a three-part series which used the DSS 2021 to analyze diversity. The general [Diversity in the Game Industry](#) report provides the most comprehensive account of the data while the [Regional Snapshots Report](#) compares data from the North American, European and Nordic regions.

Also visit the [IGDA DSS website](#) to find reports from past surveys, for the DSS 2021 Summary Report and Infographic and for the the DSS 2021 COVID Report.

The next Developer Satisfaction Survey will go live in 2023. If you would like to help with spreading the word or localizing the survey for your region, please contact the IGDA at: [info@igda.org](mailto:info@igda.org)

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



## References

- Adrian, P. (2021, April 30). *There's a gay wage gap – and it's linked to discrimination*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/theres-a-gay-wage-gap-and-its-linked-to-discrimination-159956>
- Bailinson, P., Decherd, W., Ellsworth, D., & Guttman, M. (2021, December 9). *LGBTQ voices: Learning from lived experiences*. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/lgbtq-plus-voices-learning-from-lived-experiences>
- Flint, E. (2021, December 2). *Why do games still struggle with Trans Inclusion?* Wired. <https://www.wired.com/story/trans-enby-representation-video-games/>
- Heritage, F. (2021, July 29). *The 'gay button' in gaming: LGBTQ+ representation in videogames is often hidden – it shouldn't be*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/the-gay-button-in-gaming-lgbtq-representation-in-videogames-is-often-hidden-it-shouldnt-be-156694>
- Humberg, B. K., Clair, J., & Rouse, E. (2020, January 24). *Employee demographics don't have to be at odds with employees' identities*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2020/01/employee-demographics-dont-have-to-be-at-odds-with-employees-identities>
- Jones, J. M. (2022, June 10). *LGBT identification in U.S. ticks up to 7.1%*. Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/389792/lgbt-identification-ticks-up.aspx>
- Kelleher, P., Baska, M., Hansford, A., Badham, R., & Wakefield, L. (2020, July 6). *The Last of Us Part II director sent 'transphobic, homophobic, anti-Semitic' abuse in response to controversial sequel*. PinkNews. <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2020/07/06/the-last-of-us-part-2-ii-director-neil-druckmann-abuse-abby-anti-semitic-transgender-transphobic/>
- Out Leadership. (2020, April 7). *Fair representation might lead to better outcomes in times of crisis*. Out Leadership. <https://outleadership.com/insights/fair-representation-better-outcomes/>

- Ruberg, B. (2019). The precarious labor of Queer indie game-making: Who benefits from making video games “better”? *Television & New Media*, 20(8), 778–788. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476419851090>
- Statistics Canada. (2021, June 15). *A statistical portrait of Canada's diverse LGBTQ2+ communities*. The Daily. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210615/dq210615a-eng.htm>
- Villemez, J. (2020, October 1). *Press A, be gay: LGBTQ representation in video games*. Philadelphia Gay News. <https://epgn.com/2020/09/30/press-a-be-gay-lgbtq-representation-in-video-games/>