



# ESSENTIAL FACTS

## DIVERSITY IN THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

### FOSTERING GREATER WORKFORCE DIVERSITY HAS BECOME A PRIORITY FOR TODAY'S LEADING TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES.

It is widely recognized that the independent perspectives of diverse teams help drive innovations and bolster performance. Still, women and minorities make up a small proportion of employees in the tech industry. A lack of diversity and respect for others can affect a business's bottom line and lead to harassment — an unfortunate reality made more complicated by the internet and the anonymity it provides.

**37**

IS THE AVERAGE AGE OF FEMALE  
VIDEO GAME PLAYERS

**41%**

OF US GAMERS ARE WOMEN

**31%**

OF THE GAME-PLAYING POPULATION  
IS WOMEN AGE 18 OR OLDER, A  
GREATER PROPORTION THAN BOYS  
UNDER 18

**37%**

OF THE MOST FREQUENT GAME  
PURCHASERS ARE WOMEN

As one of the most dynamic sectors of the tech industry, video game companies recognize the value of diversity: women and minorities play an important and growing role in the video game community, as both game creators and players. More than 40 percent of today's gamers are women, and the International Game Developer Association reports that women make up 22 percent of our industry's workforce — a number that has nearly doubled since 2009.

Data collected by the Higher Education Video Game Alliance (HEVGA) suggests these numbers will continue to grow. According to HEVGA's *Our State of Play* report, approximately 30 percent of students enrolled in college and university video game design programs are women — nearly twice the number of women enrolled in other computer science and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs. Video game design programs also have significantly higher retention rates, averaging a rate of more than 88 percent.

Our industry is doing its part to further encourage diversity through a variety of programs and partnerships.

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### ESA FOUNDATION

The ESA Foundation, our industry's philanthropic arm, awards \$90,000 in scholarships each year to women and minority students pursuing video game-related degrees at accredited US colleges and universities. Since 2007, the foundation has awarded, more than \$700,000 in scholarships to women and minorities.

"WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY'S SUPPORT THROUGH ESA FOUNDATION THAT ENABLED US TO ENGAGE, MOTIVATE, AND EMPOWER THE NEXT GENERATION OF FEMALE GAME MAKERS. GIRL SCOUTS HAS A STRONG HISTORY OF DEVELOPING PIONEERS IN THE FIELDS OF MATH, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY. THANKS TO ESA FOUNDATION'S GRANT, WE LAUNCHED A VIDEO GAMING PATCH, WHICH INSPIRED MORE THAN 700 GIRLS TO THINK ABOUT BECOME VIDEO GAME DEVELOPERS. WHEN GIRLS SUCCEED, SO DOES SOCIETY."

**GIRL SCOUTS OF GREATER LOS ANGELES**

The ESA Foundation also provides grants to organizations that leverage video games to create positive social impact for American youth. The ESA Foundation provided grant support to the Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles, which collaborated with Women in Gaming International and E-Line Media to create the Video Game Designer Patch Program. Through a series of workshops, fourth- and fifth-grade girls learn to design, develop, and program games. The initiative aims to help young girls develop critical thinking and problem solving skills, bolster their creativity, and introduce them to game design as a career path.

The ESA Foundation has also provided funding for ThanksUSA's scholarship program. ThanksUSA mobilizes Americans to thank and support the men and women of the US armed forces. It provides college, technical, and vocational school scholarships to the children and spouses of military personnel. To date, almost 90 scholarships have been awarded to young women and minorities.

Most recently, the ESA Foundation has supported a partnership between Drexel University and TechGirlz, a nonprofit dedicated to reducing the gender gap in technology occupations. The partners will offer two game development workshops for girls and create related, downloadable kits, which will be available to community organizations free of charge.

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### ESA LOFT VIDEO GAME INNOVATION FELLOWSHIP

ESA partners with the Hispanic Heritage Foundation (HHF) to host the Leaders on the Fast Track (LOFT) Video Game Innovation Fellowship program. Now in its fourth year, the program challenges minority youth ages 15-25 to design video games and apps that address social issues within their community. Twenty fellows receive grants of \$1,000 to develop their game ideas and meet with federal policymakers, industry representatives, and media in Washington, DC. The program also connects past fellows with new recipients to help create a network for mentorship and knowledge-sharing among young innovators. Additional program partners include the Will I. Am Foundation, Black Girls Code, Hack the Hood, and the Building Knowledge Foundation.



ESA and HHF also hosted a Video Game Symposium at East LA College for hundreds of Los Angeles-area youth. Participants learned about STEM career paths within the video game industry – and those related to video games – from a panel of experts. The symposium also included a competition in which groups of participants won prizes for an original video game idea.

“WE APPLAUD AND COMMEND THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY FOR THEIR LEADERSHIP ON ENGAGING MINORITY YOUTH – THROUGH VIDEO GAMES AND APPS – TO MAKE POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACTS. WE ALSO BELIEVE PLAYING VIDEO GAMES IS A GATEWAY TO CAREERS IN THE TECH FIELDS WHICH IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT FOR OUR COUNTRY. ENCOURAGING MINORITY YOUTH TO CREATE THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES AND WORK WITH TECHNOLOGY INSPIRES INNOVATION, BOLSTERS CONFIDENCE, AND IMPROVES THE SOCIETAL LANDSCAPE FOR ALL INVOLVED.”

**JOSE ANTONIO TIJERINO**  
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF HISPANIC HERITAGE FOUNDATION

### LGBT COMMUNITY

ESA and its member companies have worked with organizations, including the Human Rights Campaign and GLAAD, to raise awareness about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) diversity among gamers and in the video game development community. ESA’s work was noted at a seminal LGBT video game event hosted by the Ford Foundation in New York City.

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### VIDEO GAMES MAKING A DIFFERENCE

A variety of nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and public and private entities leverage video games and game technology to advance creative solutions to major social challenges. Pulitzer Prize-winning and husband-and-wife authors Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn created a Facebook game that raises awareness and promotes activism around the oppression of women worldwide. Based on their critically acclaimed, best-selling book *Half the Sky*, the game seeks to draw millions of players globally and transform their digital engagement into real-world actions and micro-donations.

Students from the Emergent Media Center at Champlain College in Vermont developed *Breakaway*, a game that educates young boys about violence, gender issues, and racial stereotypes. *Breakaway* is part of the UN Secretary General's UNiTE to End Violence Against Women campaign and is supported by the UN Population Fund and the Popular Media Center. The game has attracted users from 95 countries, including Ghana, Mali, Tunisia, Indonesia, and Azerbaijan, and continues to educate young boys about making positive and impactful choices.

*High School Story*, a mobile game developed by Pixelberry Studios, uses the innate drama of high school to raise awareness on issues affecting young people. Using sensitive, teen-focused messaging developed in collaboration with award-winning cyberbullying charity The Cybersmile Foundation, *High School Story* is a cyber-bullying-themed quest that helps real-life victims cope with and defend against abuse.

### MEMBER COMPANY COMMITMENTS

ESA members are leaders in adopting and enforcing anti-discrimination and harassment policies in the workplace. Many have diversity committees that develop initiatives to foster more inclusive workplaces, including:

- Screenings and discussions of documentaries on gender and ethnic sensitivity;
- Recruiting at LGBT professional youth events;
- Multicultural potlucks;
- Mentoring and networking opportunities specifically for underrepresented communities; and
- A series of book discussions reflecting on the advancement of gender equality.