The Changing Face of Gaming

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In the nearly 50 years since the release of the [Magnavox Odyssey](#) in 1972, the cultural impact of the video game industry has grown in innumerable ways, with a significant effect on visual storytelling. Video games have spun off into blockbuster movies, and gameplay has turned from a leisure activity into an e-sport career, giving rise to new platforms and content streams. The coronavirus pandemic made gaming even more popular, as people turned to their screens for [entertainment](#), [information](#), and [social experiences](#). The gaming industry, valued at [over $170B](#) globally, saw nearly 20% growth during the pandemic, and it's expected to grow to $268B by 2025.

Demographics of the gaming industry are fast-changing, and visual culture can help normalize the reality of gaming today. There are [214 million video game players in the U.S.](#), and 75% of households have at least one gamer. While stereotypes might have us believe that these gamers are primarily teenagers, the average age of an American gamer is 35-44. [Mobile gaming](#) is the most popular form of gameplay, accounting for nearly half of the industry's revenue. And it's not only men who are driving this change—female gamers are the fastest growing group, making up [41%](#) of all players.

If images of the gaming industry don't reflect its reality, that's because media makers need to build new visions of gaming. Getty Images customer searches for "gamer" have increased +64% year over year. Marketers across industries need to recognize gaming as an important part of people's day to day lives, and account for the diverse experiences of gamers.

Highlight Female Gamers
Women comprise an increasingly large share of the gaming market but are still subject to [harassment](#). In fact, [77% of female gamers](#) experience gender-based discrimination in gaming spaces, causing 59% of women to mask their identities to avoid facing sexism. Getty Images searches for "female gamer" have doubled in the last year, while searches for "nerd" decreased by 17%, moving away from long-held assumptions about gamer archetypes. Brands like [Oculus](#) and [e.l.f.](#) are pioneering new visions of who gets included in gaming narratives through ads and influencer campaigns highlighting female gamers. By showing female gamers across all identities in a positive light, images can normalize and empower women in a male-dominated industry.

Heroize people of all identities

While gaming-related commercials have grown more inclusive, they still tend to heroize white, cis-gendered, able-bodied men. Advocates for inclusive gaming across race, disability status, age, and gender are arguing for greater representation of diverse gaming experiences. Organizations like AbleGamers are investing in a more equitable gaming space, and developer Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley is creating new games that center the experiences of Black trans people. The number of gamers over age 55 has grown over 30% since 2018, with many playing on their phones, or using gaming to connect with their families. Showcasing gamers of all ages, races, abilities, and body types tells a more accurate story of who gamers are, creating more inclusive visuals for a growing population.

Think outside the console

Gamers play on different platforms, from consoles to wearables to computers and smartphones. While the majority of video game imagery focuses on console and PC gaming, 2.6B gamers play on their mobile phones. As wearable technology—especially tech built to inspire fitness—grows more prevalent, make sure to select images that reflect the true mix of devices and interfaces.

Build a cooperative story

Today's most popular images of gamers feature young people pictured alone in the dark, enraptured by their screens, and cast in bisexual lighting. But 65% of American gamers play games with other people, proving that gaming is a social rather than solitary activity; 55% say that games help them connect with friends, and 50% say that video games help them spend time with family. Gamers interact and collaborate to create new worlds and build relationships—whether they're doing so in person, over chat, or via a Twitch stream.