

Producing Games, Reproducing Inequalities: gender and labour in the Argentine Video Game Market.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The video game industry is a particularly relevant field for analysing gender inequalities in contemporary digital labour. As an industry that sits at the intersection of cultural production and technological development, it offers a vantage point for examining how creative and technical labour is organised, valued, and distributed under historically masculinised and racialised conditions (Kerr, 2017; Didžgalvytė, 2025; Rodriguez, 2023; Mendez, 2017; Chess, 2017). Gender relations shape video games through both their content and representations, and the labour practices and professional cultures by which they are made.

Despite its sustained growth over the last two decades, the Argentine video game industry reproduces the structural gaps observed both globally and in the local software and IT services sector. The underrepresentation of women in technology has been documented by civil society organizations such as Chicas en Tecnología (2024) and Mujeres en Tecnología (2023), whose annual reports map access barriers and educational inequalities in Argentina. These patterns are further corroborated by the Observatorio Permanente de la Industria del Software y Servicios Informáticos (OPSSI, 2025), whose workforce surveys consistently register the minority participation of women in technical and leadership roles. Research on gender and labour in the Argentine technology industry (Yansen, 2020) has shown that career paths are shaped by gender stereotypes that affect the distribution of tasks, stability, security, and opportunities for professional development, dynamics that the local video game industry not only reproduces but in certain respects intensifies. Although women account for approximately 46% of the global gaming community, in 2021 they held only around 30% of employment positions in the video game industry. Moreover, more than half of them face harassment and online abuse, which affects their participation as recreational players as well as their performance and visibility in the professional sphere (UNESCO & Eight Goals One Foundation, 2024).

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A current problem shared with other countries in the region is the lack of official, systematized statistics providing reliable information on the size and dynamics of the Argentine video game industry (Gala, Krepki & Cattaneo, 2025). This prevalence of disaggregated data and estimates reflects a broader absence of official statistical frameworks. As Kerr (2017) notes, despite the industry's 40-year history, video games remain difficult to identify in industrial, employment, and occupational statistics, since most national classifications lack a dedicated category for the sector. In Argentina, video games lack a specific intellectual property category, and their components must therefore be registered in a fragmented manner. This has consequences for identifying the sector's contribution to national accounts: in the Culture Satellite Account, video games are subsumed under digital content; while from a technological perspective, they are classified alongside software and IT services.

As a result of this data gap and lack of transparency, in recent years various organizations linked to the local industry and representing diverse perspectives have undertaken noteworthy efforts to collect and organize data: the ADVA-University of Rafaela Observatory has published annual reports since 2017; Steamcito and Press Over conduct surveys on domestically developed games released on Steam; and Women in Games Argentina (WIGAr) has been conducting an annual survey on working conditions from a gender perspective since 2022, which includes the experiences of all individuals working in the video game industry who reside in Argentina and are over the age of 18.

This paper aims to analyze the current state of the Argentine video game sector, with a particular focus on gender gaps, through a mixed-methods approach integrating quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative component draws on three industry surveys: the two most recent editions conducted by Women in Games Argentina (WIGAr) in 2024 and 2025¹, and the 2025 survey by the Argentine Video Game Industry Observatory (Argentine Video Game Developers Association/National University of Rafaela). The qualitative component is based on ten semi-structured in-depth interviews carried out between June and December 2024 with women working across a range of roles in the sector (including production, development, design, specialized video game journalism, teaching, marketing in e-sports events, casting, and community management). Interviewees were selected through purposive sampling, prioritizing recognized professional trajectory and visibility within the local industry while ensuring diversity of roles and areas of practice.

The study adopts a technofeminist theoretical framework, chosen over alternative approaches —such as liberal feminist (Vazquez y Spataro, 2025) analyses focused on increasing women's representation— because of its capacity to interrogate how power and gender relations are embedded in the very design, development, and culture of technological artifacts. Unlike perspectives that treat technology as neutral, technofeminism conceives technology as a socio-technical framework constitutively shaped by the social inequalities of the contexts that produce it. From this standpoint, technologies reproduce the values, hierarchies, and exclusions present in the societies in which they are created. Judy Wajcman (2006) highlights that gender inequalities are embedded in the political and economic foundations of the networks that shape and develop technical systems (p. 182). Thus, all technological artifacts, including video

¹ It should be noted that those conducting this research are members of that community. The authors participate jointly in the Inquiry Commission, carrying out tasks related to the design of the questionnaire, its dissemination, analysis of results, and preparation of the final report.

games, are permeated by gender relations, their meanings, and their practices. This perspective is particularly well-suited to the object of study, as it enables an examination of the androcentric narratives that have historically dominated digital technologies and, more specifically, the video game field, where the figures of the programmer and the gamer have been constructed around a masculine, young, white, and technologically competent ideal (WIGAR, 2024), an imaginary that continues to structure both professional hierarchies and cultures of participation within the industry.

The quantitative data analyzed shows that gender inequalities persist in terms of roles held, salaries, and access to leadership positions. Underrepresentation in technical areas and informal employment contribute to the consolidation of more precarious career trajectories for women and sex-gender diverse groups. The interviews provide insight into how these inequalities manifest themselves in everyday practices and how women workers develop individual and collective strategies to address them, particularly through support networks, community spaces, and sectoral organizations. This paper aims to provide empirical evidence and critical analysis towards building a more inclusive, professionalised, and equitable local video game ecosystem.

Keywords

Work, gender inequalities, Argentina, video games sector, workers

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