

GAMERS AND GEEK CULTURE: WHAT GAMERS SPEND ON AND WHY



BIG GAMES MACHINE

INTRODUCTION

We've always known there's a deep connection between gaming and what's known as 'geek culture' - shorthand for the blend of subcultures and special interests that overlap and intermingle that combined has become perhaps the biggest driver of consumer spending in the under-50s.

Video games, anime, science fiction, fantasy, cosplay, board games, comics, kawaii, D&D, technology and gadgets - these are all parts of geek culture.

Geek culture is also big business. According to IMDB, four of the ten highest-grossing movies in the past five years are based on superhero, sci-fi or video game brands. High street fashion is full of collaborations with anime, gaming and comic book characters. More than 135,000 fans attended San Diego Comic-Con this year.

We wanted to understand more about video gaming's place within geek culture, so we've surveyed over 1,000 US gamers on their passions and spending habits. The data we are sharing here peeks beyond the screen into the rich world of the modern geek.

Happy Reading!

The Big Games Machine Team

**THE MORE TIME THAT
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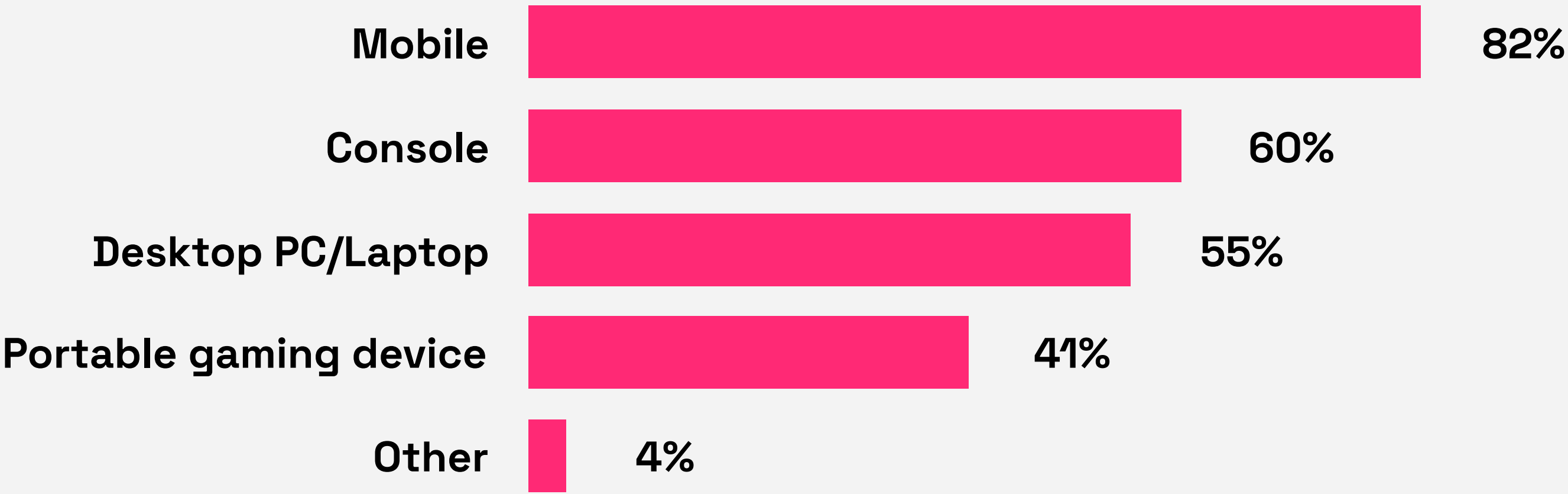
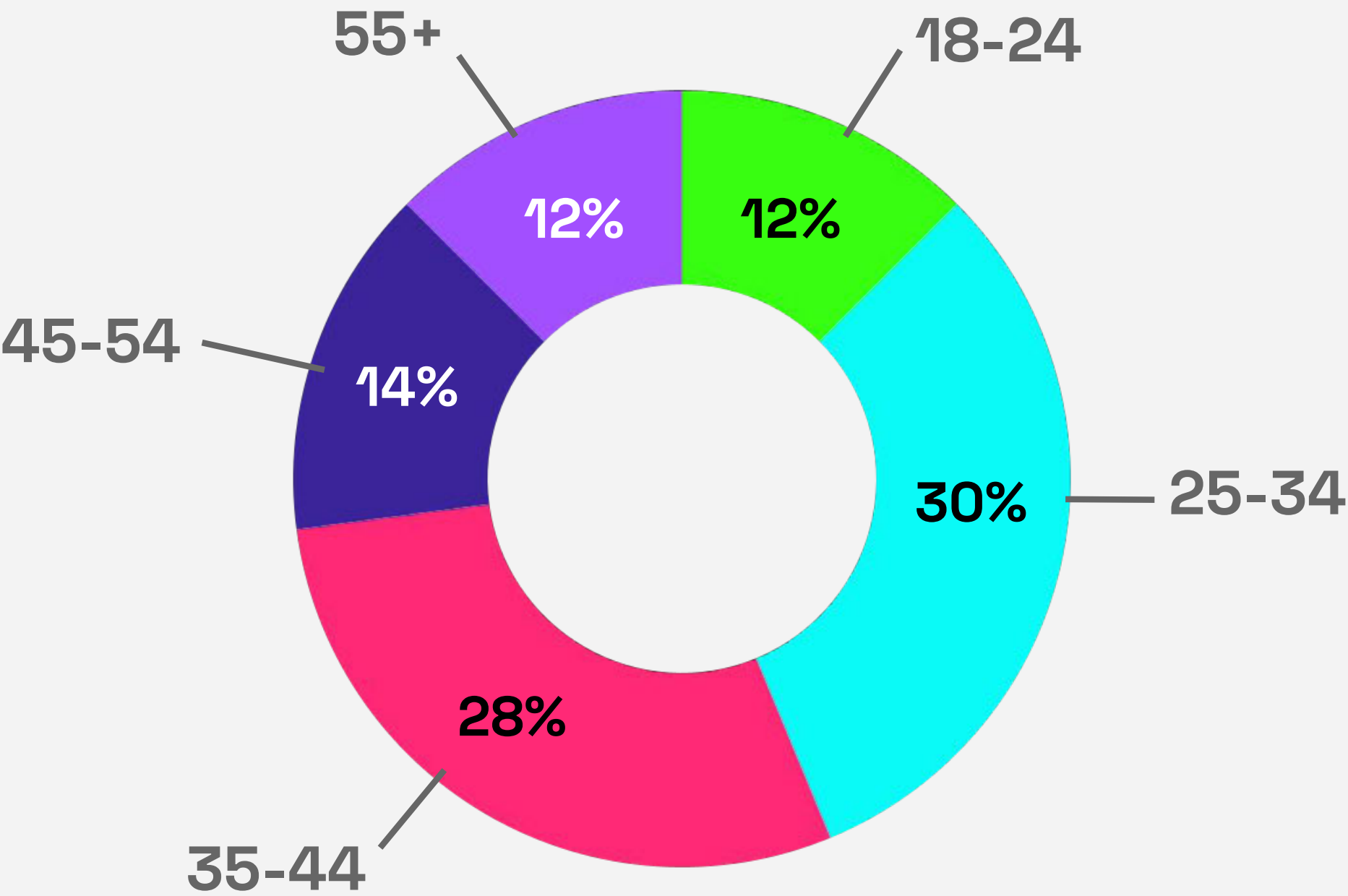
ABOUT THIS SURVEY

The data was collected across the US in June 2025. Big Games Machine worked with a specialist market research agency that has access to a global panel of gamers.

This report is based on a quantitative survey of 1,016 US-based gamers. Respondents were screened to ensure they actively play video games, and data on their demographics, platforms, and weekly gaming time was collected. This allows for a detailed analysis of how gaming habits connect to broader cultural engagement.

The survey captured a broad audience, with the largest age groups being 25-34 (30%) and 35-44 (28%). While we'd expect console and PC gaming to make up the bulk of gaming time, 82% of all respondents said they use a smartphone for gaming, making it the most ubiquitous gaming device.

Respondents' Age



What devices do you play games on?

GAMERS ARE INVOLVED IN A LOT OF OTHER GEEK CULTURE PURSUITS

It's no surprise that gamer interests in other aspects of geek culture are broad and multifaceted. After all, many of the same IP and brands exist in games as well as in other formats.

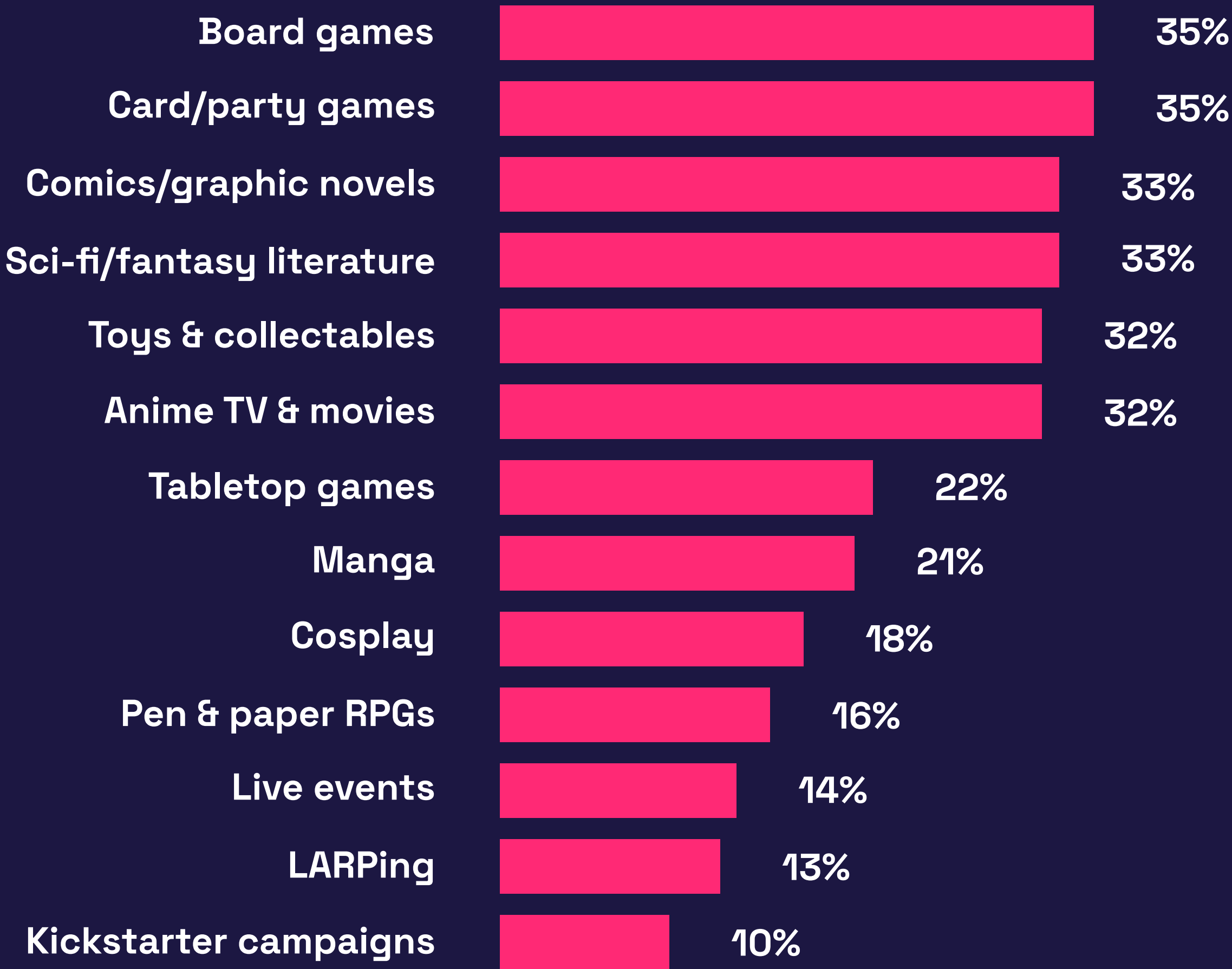
For example, a fan of One Piece can enjoy not only the original Japanese anime and manga, but also video games, toys, clothing, collectable card games and even LEGO sets.

While social and tabletop gaming is hugely popular—with Board Games (35%) and Card/Party Games (35%) leading the pack (no pun intended) —there's almost as much engagement with media like Comics (33%) and Sci-Fi/Fantasy Literature (33%).

More participatory hobbies like Cosplay (18%) and Pen-and-Paper RPGs (16%) have a smaller but dedicated following.

Key Demographic Insight: Platform choice is a strong indicator of taste. Steam Deck users show exceptional interest in Sci-Fi/Fantasy Literature (55%) and Anime (57%), far exceeding the median. On the gender front, men show significantly higher interest in Comics (39% vs 27% for women).

What geek culture and gaming-related areas are you interested in?

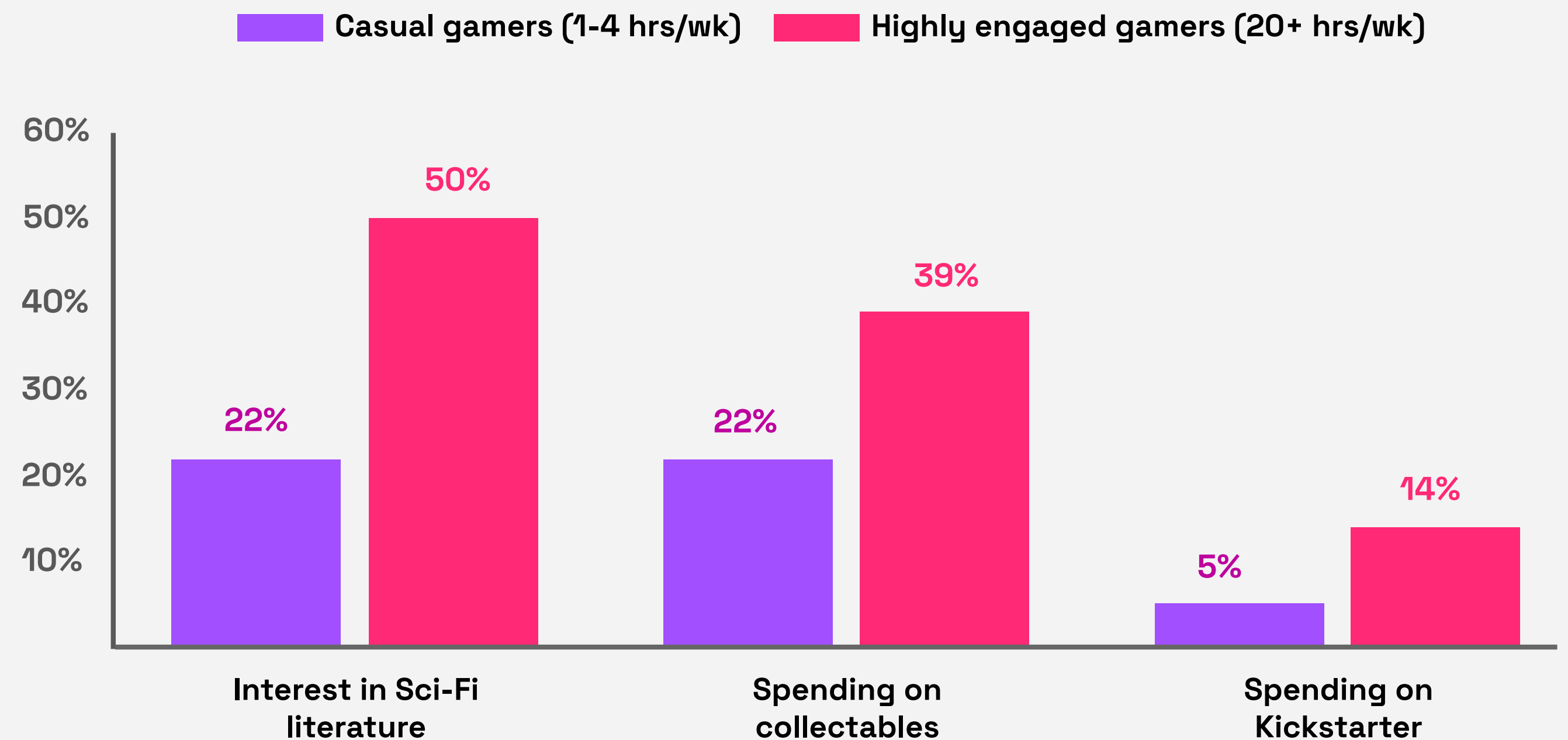


MORE TIME SPENT GAMING CORRELATES TO HIGHER SPENDING - AND VICE-VERSA

Our data shows a strong correlation between increased gaming and increased engagement with geek culture. This trend is consistent across both interest levels and actual spending habits.

- **Deeper Interest:** The connection is most apparent in media consumption. For instance, gamers who play 1-4 hours a week are nearly twice as interested in sci-fi/fantasy literature as those who play 20+ hours.
- **Increased Spending:** This heightened interest translates directly into purchases. Spending on Toys & Collectables rises from 22% among casual gamers to 31-39% for those playing 20+ hours a week.
- **High-Investment Hobbies:** Highly engaged gamers are more willing to back new ideas. Support for Kickstarter campaigns, a niche activity, leaps from 3-5% for low-hour gamers to 11-17% for those playing 20+ hours a week.

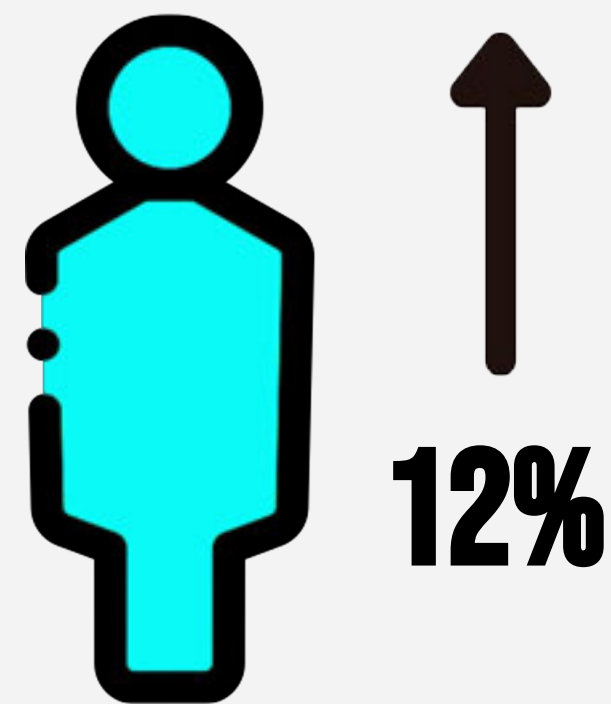
The amount of time spent gaming correlates with interest and spending in other geek culture areas



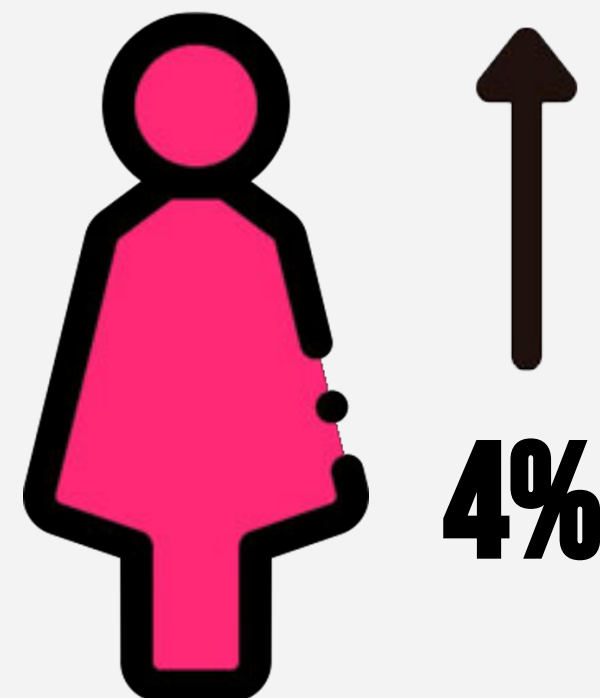
WHAT ARE THE SPENDING AND CONSUMPTION DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN?

Gamers are not a homogeneous group, so we'd expect to see differences in consumption and spending habits, depending on demographics and areas of interest. While some hobbies like board gaming show near-equal appeal, other categories have clear gender skews - although we didn't find any overly surprising differences.

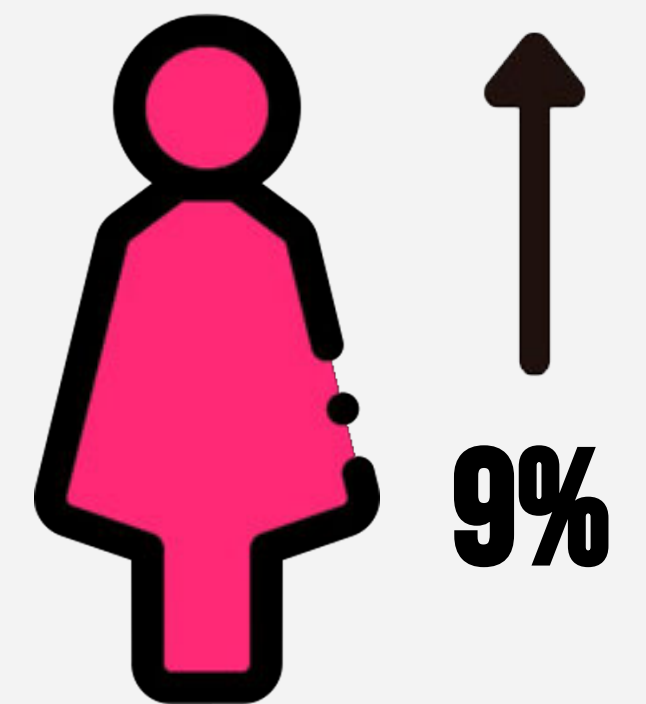
Men favour the printed word: The men in our survey were more interested in print media categories, with a 12% higher interest in comics and graphic novels than women (39% vs. 27%). A similar 10 percentage gap also exists between men and women who are interested in sci-fi/fantasy literature (38% vs. 28%).



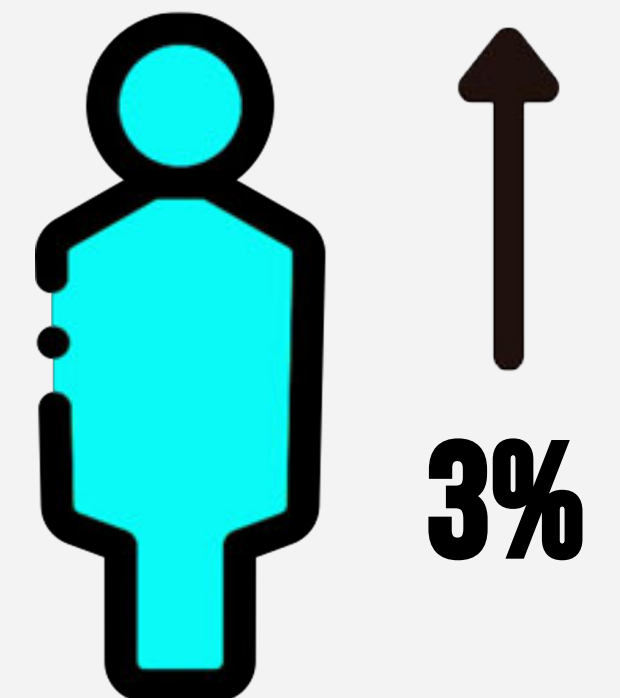
Women spend more on collectables: While overall interest in toys and collectables is almost identical between men and women, our survey found that women spend slightly more - 4% - on collectables.



Women spend more on social games: Women are the clear drivers in the social gaming space, with a higher level of interest in card/party games that translates directly to purchasing power. Women are 9% more likely to have spent money on this category (28% vs. 19%), and are more than twice as likely to name it their single highest spending category (12% vs. 6%).



Men gotta catch 'em all: Although interest in board games is shared equally between men and women, men are more likely to list collectable/trading card games as their highest spending area (10% vs. 7%).



TOYS AND COLLECTIBLES AND BOARD GAMES ARE THE MOST BOUGHT ITEMS

A big part of geek culture is its crossover into other formats and hobbies. In other words, fans of specific characters and brands can express their fandom through different media formats and collectables, and that’s a key driver of what geek culture is all about.

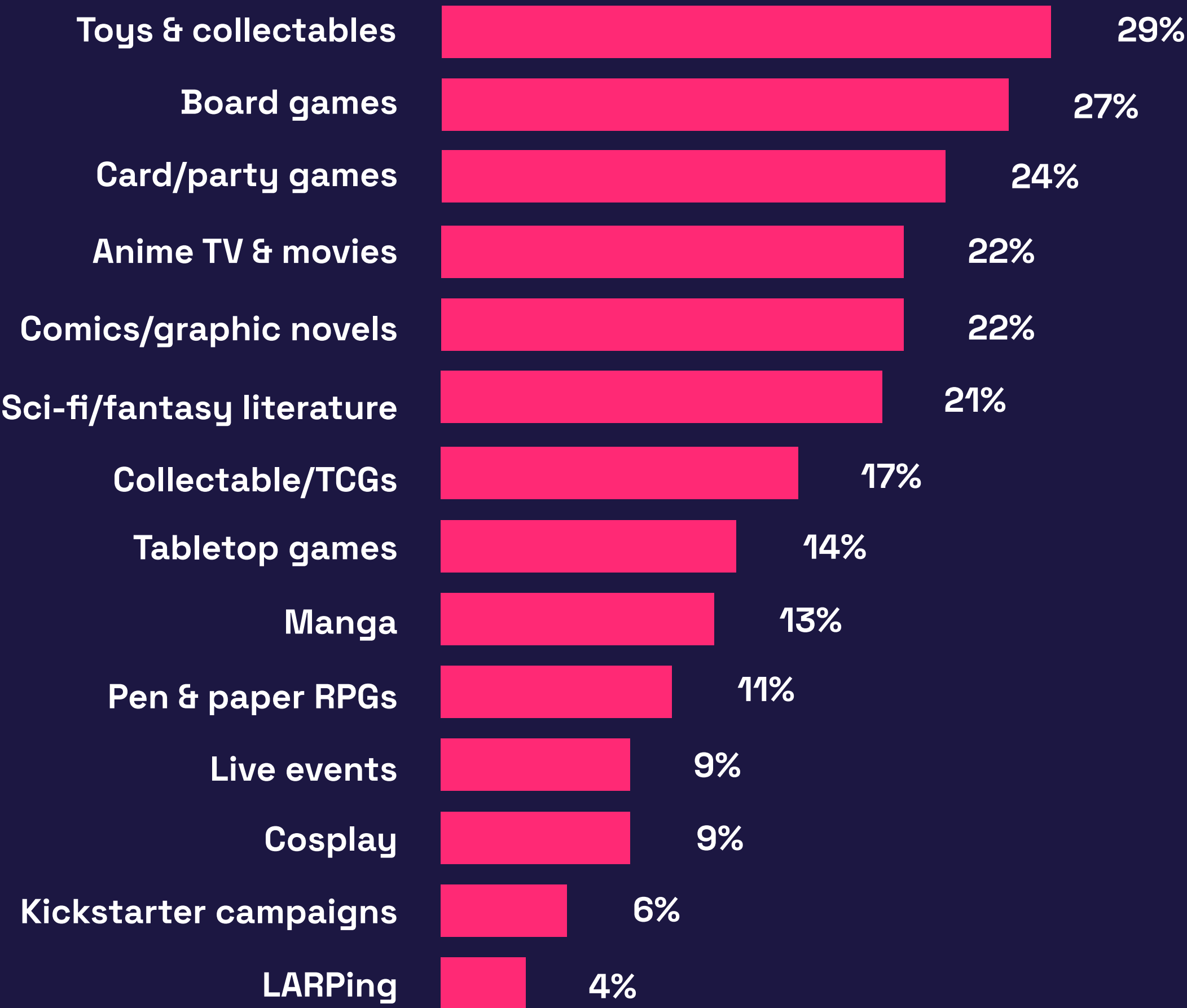
When we asked gamers about what aspects of geek culture they spent money on, toys and collectables emerged as the top spending category, with 29% of gamers purchasing in the last year.

This is notable as it outpaces spending on board games (27%) and card/party games (24%), despite our survey finding that these categories had a higher level of interest. This suggests that fans of collectables have a very high propensity to buy.

Key Demographic Insight: Gender plays a key role in spending habits in some categories. Women are significantly more likely to have spent money on Card/Party Games (28% vs 19% for men).

Meanwhile, Nintendo Switch owners are major consumers of Toys and collectables, with 44% spending in this category, well above the average.

Which of the following categories have you spent money on in the past 12 months?



GAMERS SPEND ON A DIVERSE MIX OF GEEK CULTURE HOBBIES

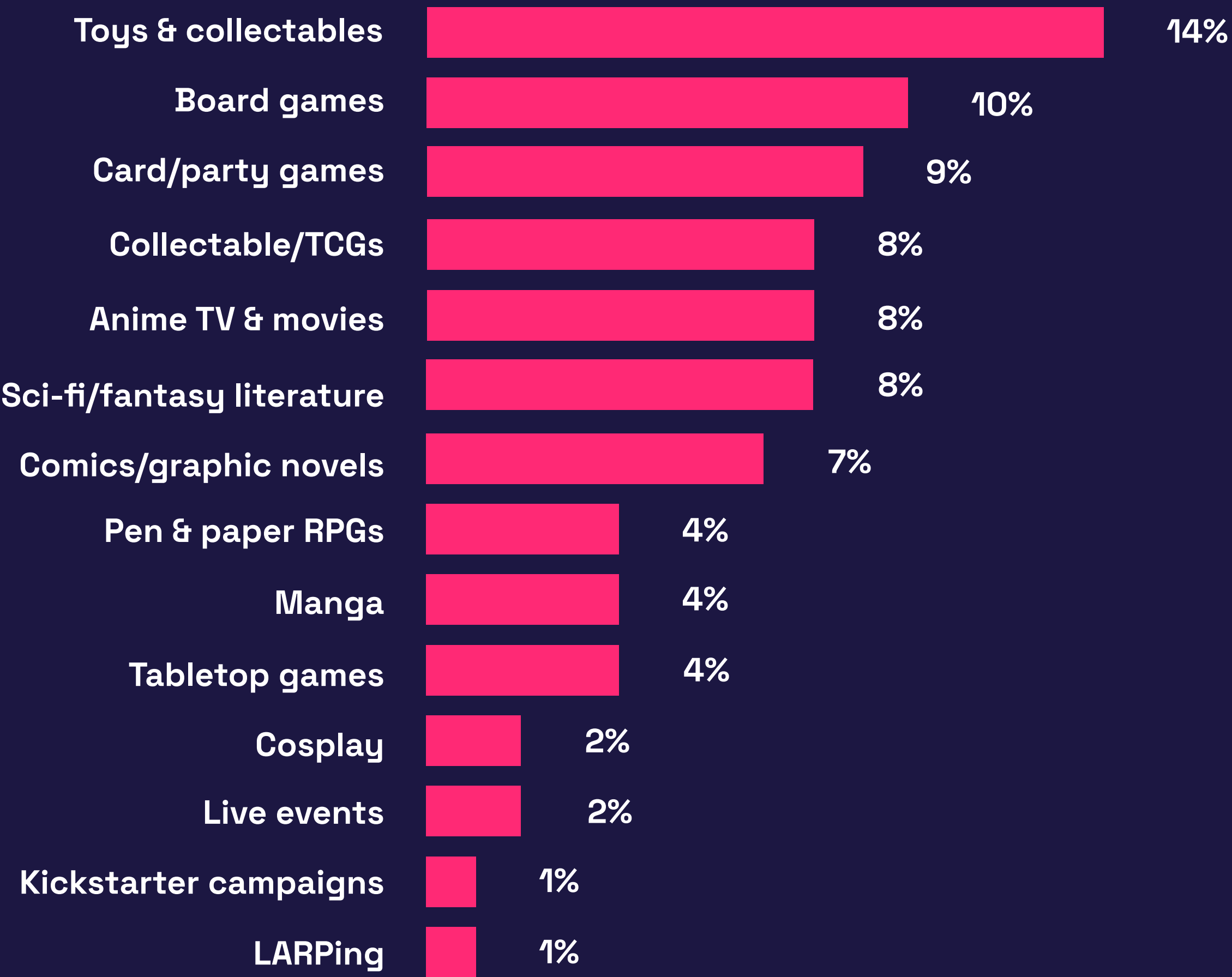
When it comes to where gamers are spending money beyond games, we see a diverse mixture of what that money is being spent on.

Our survey found that no single spending category dominates, but toys & collectables was cited as the area of biggest spend by 14% of respondents. This is followed by a variety of tabletop hobbies, including board games (10%), card/party games (9%), and collectible/trading card games (8%). Perhaps it's coincidence, but these are physical formats that scratch the collection itch that so many gamers have.

Key Demographic Insight: If we break our data down by the gaming platforms our respondents use the most, Steam Deck users stand out as being the most likely to list Kickstarter as their highest spending category (15% vs. a 1% average).

Men are more likely to list collectible card games as their top spending area compared to women (10% vs 7%), while Xbox users show an unusual focus on tabletop games, with 13% citing them as their highest spending, versus the overall average of 4%.

Which of the following categories have you spent the MOST money on?



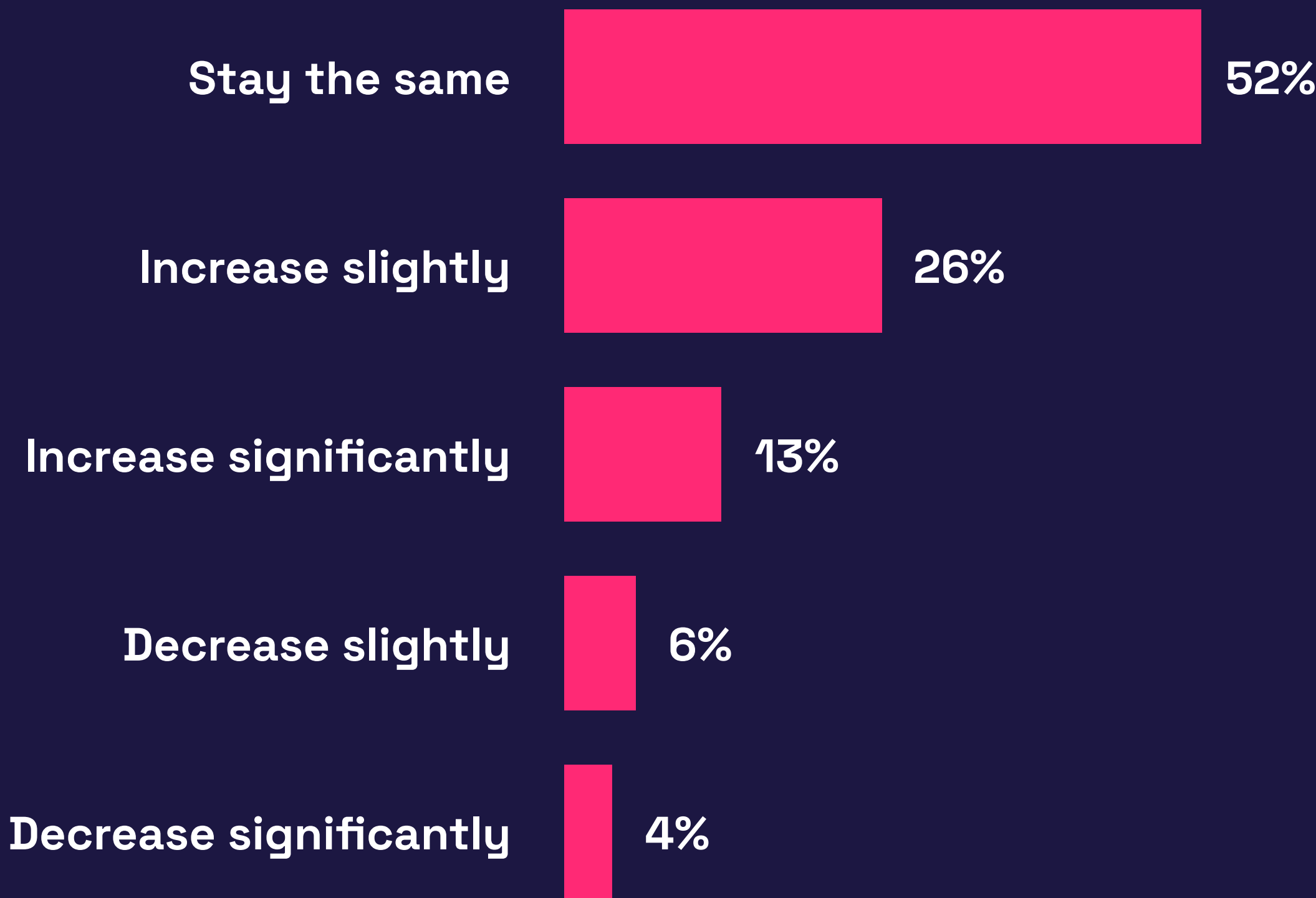
39% OF GAMERS PLAN TO SPEND MORE ON GEEK CULTURE OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Based on our survey audience, it appears that despite increases in the cost of living in many markets, spending on geek culture as a broad category remains buoyant - and shows strong potential for growth.

A combined 39% of gamers anticipate their spending will increase either slightly or significantly over the next year. This trend is even more pronounced among the most dedicated gamers; those who play more hours per week and use dedicated platforms like PC or consoles show a greater tendency to expect their spending to rise.

Key Demographic Insight: While future spending intent is positive across the board, men are slightly more inclined to anticipate a significant increase in their spending compared to women (14% vs 12%).

Over the next 12 months, how do you expect your spending on games-related culture to change?



THE MORE GAMERS PLAY, THE MORE THEY SPEND ON GEEK CULTURE

When we look at some of the more extreme behaviours in our sample group - those gamers that spend the most time playing on their devices - we can see a correlation with high levels of spending on other elements of geek culture. What we didn't expect to find was that the things gamers spent money on seems to depend on their primary gaming device. For example, who knew that a chunk of Steam Deck players are big fans of Kickstarter?



Nintendo Switch owners love collectables

44% of Nintendo Switch owners have spent money on toys and collectables in the past year. This is significantly higher than the average of 29% for all gamers, suggesting a strong link between Nintendo's IP and the desire for physical merchandise.



Steam Deck Users are Kickstarter Super-fans

Steam Deck users appear to be a hyper-engaged, high-spending niche. An incredible 15% of them listed Kickstarter as their highest spending category, compared to a mere 1% average for all gamers.



XBox gamers love tabletop games

Our survey found an unusually strong link between Xbox players and traditional tabletop gaming. 13% of Xbox Series X/S users cited "Tabletop games" (like Warhammer) as their single highest spending category. This is massively over-index compared to the overall average of just 4%.

PARTING THOUGHTS

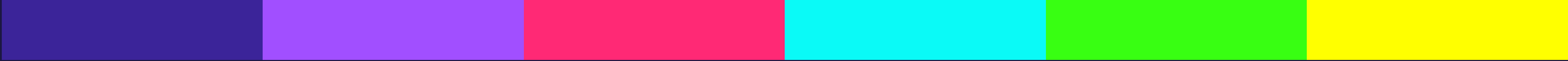
The modern gamer isn't an isolated consumer; they're a central participant in a large, interconnected ecosystem.

This study clearly shows that video game engagement is a powerful predictor of wider geek culture spending. The more a person plays—and the more dedicated their gaming hardware—the more likely they are to be a significant consumer of tabletop games, comics, collectibles, and more.

To succeed, marketers must look beyond the screen.

Bonus Insight: The choice of gaming platform acts as a powerful signifier for a consumer's broader interests and spending habits. From the social party-game focus of women to the hyper-investment of the Steam Deck community, understanding these nuances is key to effectively reaching the modern gamer.





ABOUT BIG GAMES MACHINE

Big Games Machine is a full-service PR and marketing agency specialising in strategic communications and consultancy for the global video games industry, covering both B2B and B2C audiences.

Founded by games industry veterans with decades of experience in PR and marketing, we support our clients with everything from media relations and outreach for new video games and product launches to global events management and content creation.

No two clients are the same. We'll work hard to understand what's unique about you and your business, to understand what needs to be done to get you noticed and the best channels to reach your audiences.

Whether it's a multi-platform game launch targeting consumer media and influencers or a B2B campaign that needs to build trust and drive inbound leads, our team of PR experts, comms professionals, creatives and ex-journalists have the skills and knowledge to deliver.

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