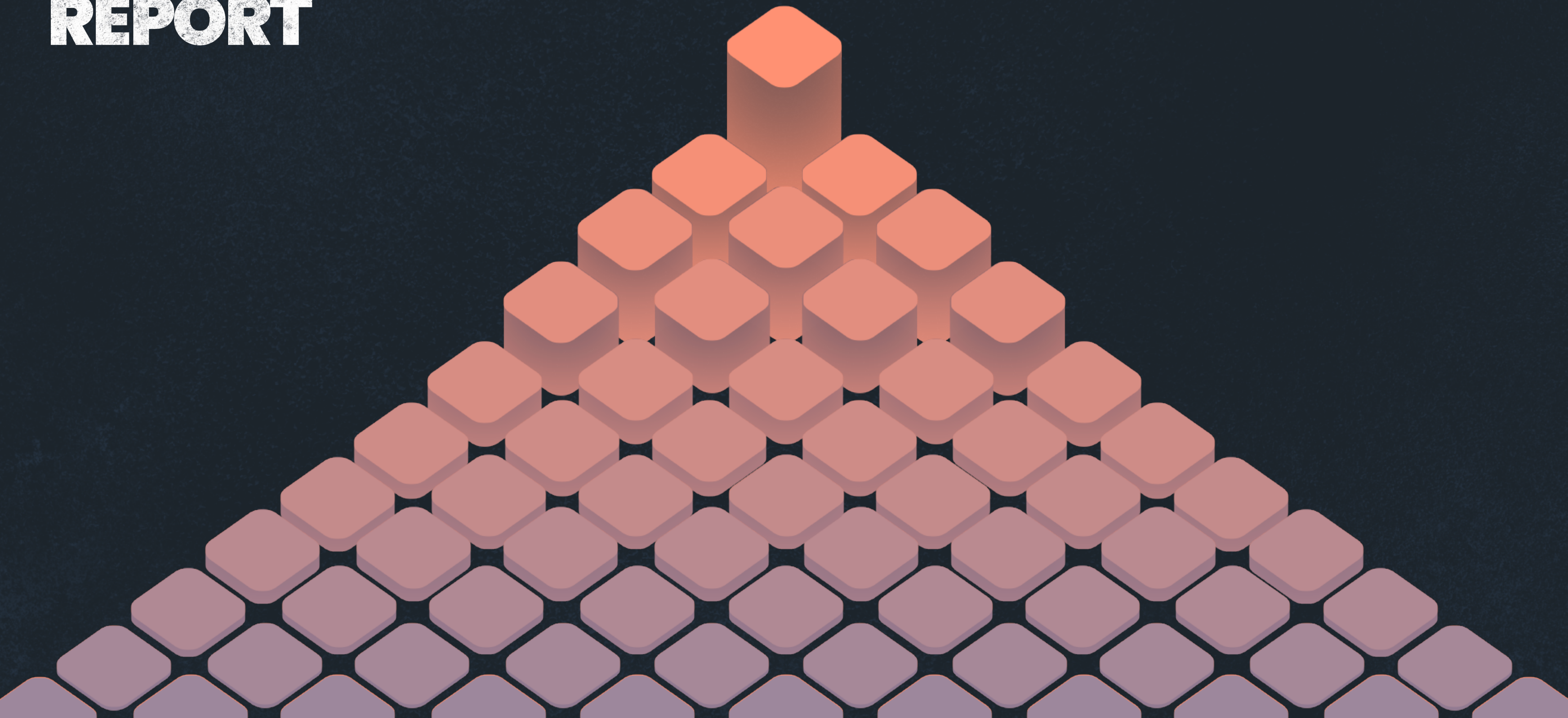



# 2022 IMPACT REPORT





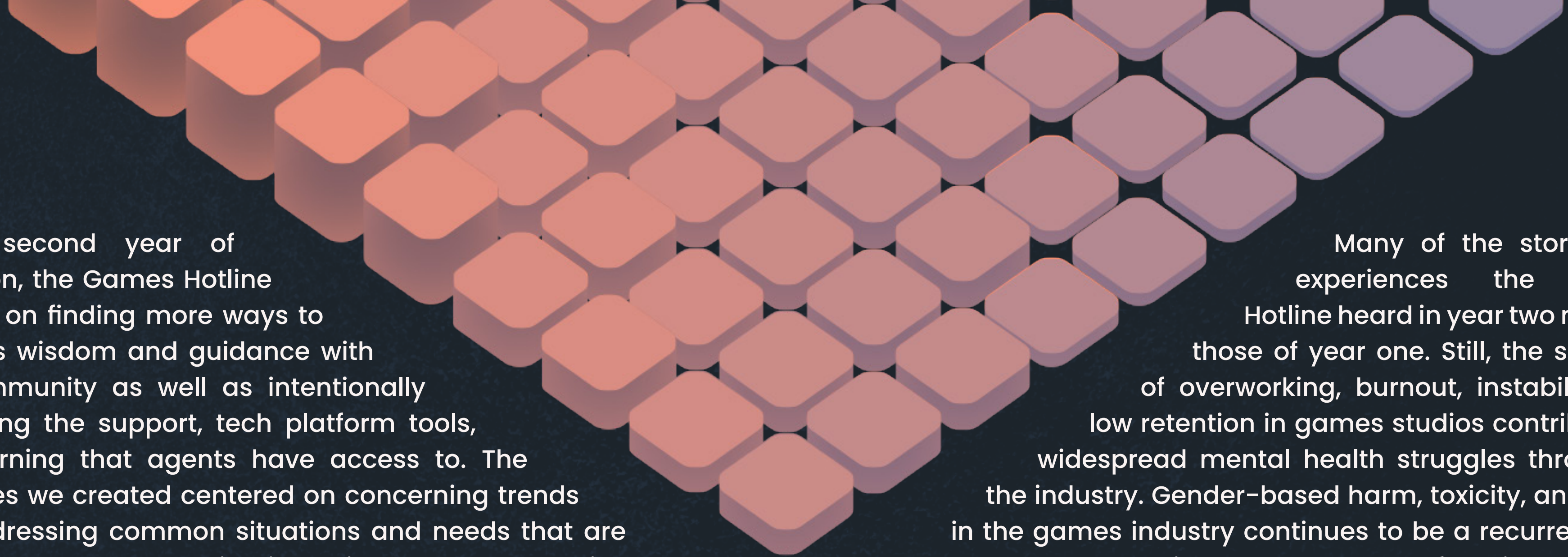


This report analyzes the impact and reach of the Games and Online Harassment Hotline (also referred to as “Games Hotline”) over the past year. The Games Hotline is a free, confidential emotional support line dedicated to serving the games community.

The Games Hotline was established by activist and advocate Anita Sarkeesian in 2019 in the wake of the gaming industry’s first #MeToo moment, when brave survivors shared their experiences of harassment and abuse. Sarkeesian teamed up with Christopher Vu Gandin Le and Jae Lin to design the Games Hotline. In its first year, the Games Hotline was accessed for help 157 times. In its second year of operation that number has nearly doubled.

Since its inception, the Games Hotline has steadily grown. It has always been a philosophy of the Hotline to listen to the needs of the community and respond directly. In its first year, when it became clear that people wanted to text in earlier in the day as well as during the weekends, the Games Hotline worked hard to nearly double its initial hours of service (4-7PT Monday-Friday) to what it is today (3-7PT everyday). The Hotline also tracked trends and issues surfacing on the line in real time in order to continuously improve agent training, referrals, and expert-informed guidance.





In its second year of operation, the Games Hotline focused on finding more ways to share its wisdom and guidance with the community as well as intentionally enhancing the support, tech platform tools, and learning that agents have access to. The resources we created centered on concerning trends and addressing common situations and needs that are relevant to the community, including a comprehensive and detailed guide for mitigating hate raids, which we've seen increasingly recurrent waves of in the past couple of years. The Games Hotline team felt eager to find more ways to share the knowledge and research they were doing with the public (and international community) beyond the one-on-one conversations on the Hotline.

The philosophy of providing for the needs of our community translates to providing for the needs of our agents. We are constantly striving to provide better guides, resources, information, research, expert guidance, training, and ongoing learning to support agents so they have as much available to them to pull on as they support texters of the Hotline. Additionally, we've stressed the importance of deliberate care (for each other and for self) and rest to stave off burnout and to put our full selves into supporting texters on the Games Hotline.

Many of the stories and experiences the Games Hotline heard in year two mirrored those of year one. Still, the standard of overworking, burnout, instability, and low retention in games studios contributes to widespread mental health struggles throughout the industry. Gender-based harm, toxicity, and abuse in the games industry continues to be a recurrent issue that pushes passionate workers out of the industry. And students in games-related fields are reporting similar issues with burnout and abuse from professors, mentors, and others, even before they enter the industry.

Within game-playing communities, we also continue to see players facing ongoing harassment campaigns, frequently with a sexist, racist, or homophobic tune, for months, even years on end. The harassment may happen in-game, but it also extends outside the game into online community spaces like Discord, Twitch, Facebook, or more broadly on social media. The exhaustion, distress, and hypervigilance that harassment brings onto a target fuels mental health struggles, isolation and loneliness, and a feeling of lost agency and worthiness.



Since its inception, the Games Hotline speaks not only to people targeted by harassment or abuse but also people who have perpetuated those types of harm. Many of these conversations revolve around intense isolation and hopelessness. Because of a dearth of resources to support people who have caused harm seeking to change their behavior and engage in accountability, the Games Hotline decided to pilot an accountability support group specifically for people who have caused harm in games spaces. This created an opportunity for folks to offer each other support, validation, and group accountability, honoring the human experience and pain of losing community and connection, while also holding each other to shared standards of survivor-centered accountability.

This report finds that people from all corners of the games community and industry have utilized the Games Hotline to seek and receive help for a wide swath of issues. We present our major findings below, followed by a more in-depth analysis in the full report.







# KEY FINDINGS



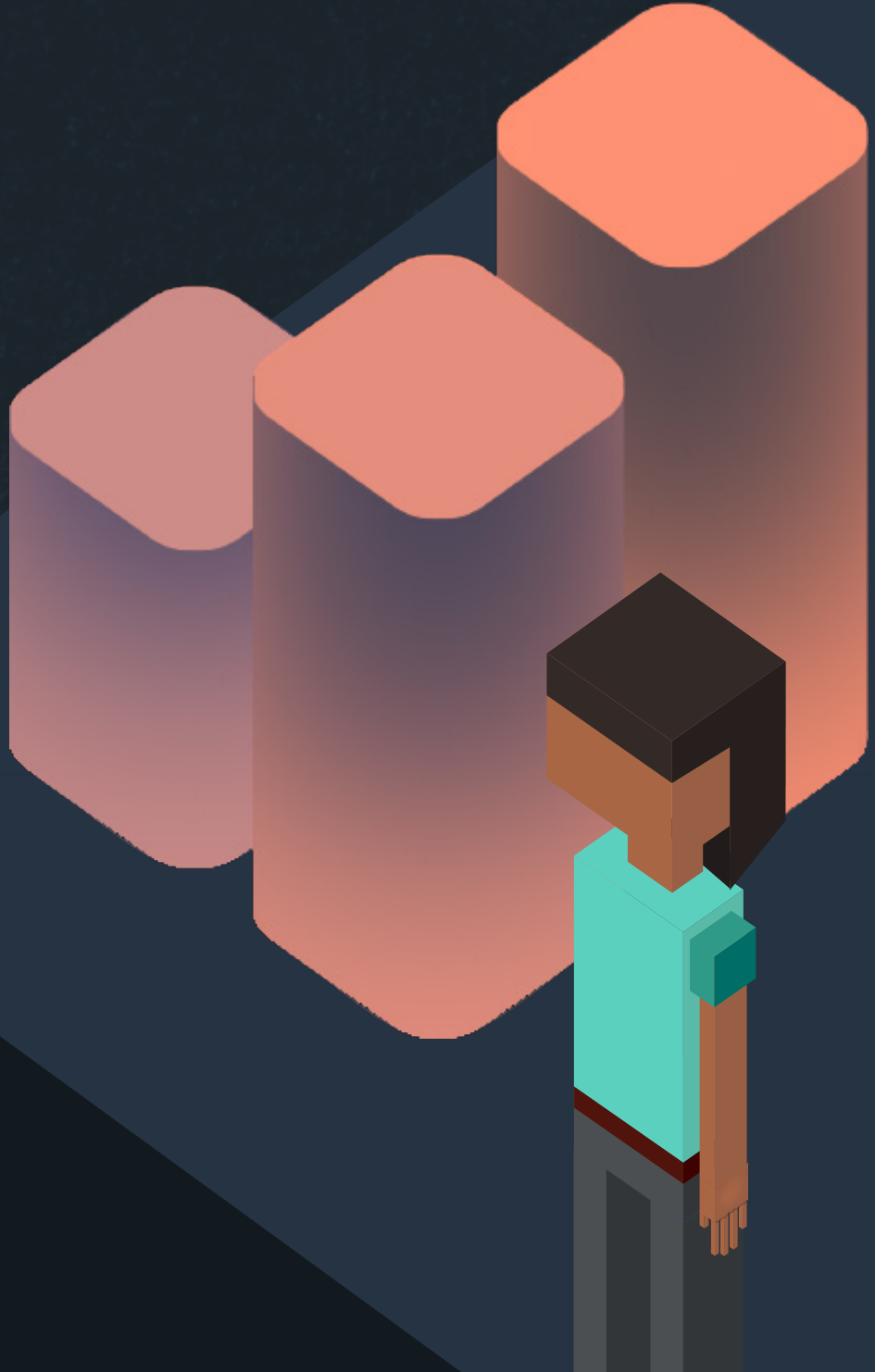
The most common types of harassment were interpersonal bullying (26%), hate speech (19.5%), and blackmail (16.9%).

Over half of all texters (52.2%) contact the Hotline because of harassment (online or in-game). The next most common reasons were mental health (17.1%), community or interpersonal relationships (12.3%), and workplace stress (5.7%).




Nearly two-in-three Hotline texters identified themselves as video game players (63.2%) while the remaining texters are games industry workers (27.2%), students (6.1%), or content creators (3.5%).

Among texters who experience identity-based harassment, the most common form is gender-based harassment (42.9%) followed by harassment based on race/ethnicity (37.1%), and sexuality (22.9%).







The primary method used in this study is data gathered from texts placed to the Games Hotline from August 2021 to August 2022.

The dataset includes all texts that came into the Games Hotline seeking help during that time period. This includes fully and partially completed texts. (We excluded fourteen conversations from people who contacted the Games Hotline but were not seeking help.) Our total dataset includes 265 unique conversations on the Games Hotline.

The Games Hotline is designed to ensure accessibility and comfort, and texter anonymity and confidentiality are our highest priorities. Given the values of the Games Hotline, texters are never required to disclose personal information, and they aren't screened for demographic or other identifiable information. Multiple research studies confirm that requiring names or other identifying information may discourage people from using the resource (Soltes, 2020). While this limits our ability to analyze Games Hotline users by background, it reflects our priority that the Games Hotline be as accessible as possible.







FIG. 2

# REASON FOR TEXTING BY GAMES AFFILIATION

In Figure 2, we present the top reason for texting the Games Hotline by the texter’s affiliation with gaming. Players overwhelmingly cite harassment, both in-game (50%) and online (13.2%) as their primary reason for contacting the Games Hotline. Issues concerning community or interpersonal relationships are the primary reason game developers text the Games Hotline (42.9%). Nearly one third (29.2%) of texters who work in the industry contact the Games Hotline because of workplace hostility and abuse. Students primarily text the Games Hotline because of mental health concerns (42.9%), while three-in-four content creators texted in about online harassment.



**PLAYERS**

- 50% In-game harassment
- 13.2% Online Harassment
- 11.8% Relationships



**OTHER GAMES INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS**

- 29.2% Workplace Hostility or Abuse
- 29.2% Workplace Stress
- 16.7% Online Harassment



**STREAMERS & CONTENT CREATORS**

- 75% Online Harassment
- 25% Sexual Assault/Interpersonal Violence



**GAME DEVELOPERS**

- 42.9% Community or Interpersonal Relationships
- 28.6% Workplace Stress



**STUDENTS**

- 42.9% Mental Health
- 28.6% School Stress



FIG. 3

# TYPES OF HARASSMENT EXPERIENCED

Hotline texters reported experiencing numerous types of harassment, from bullying to violence, identity-based discrimination, and sexual harassment. As shown in Figure 3, the most common type of harassment reported is interpersonal bullying (26%), followed by hate speech (19.5%), blackmail (16.9%), trash talking (15.6%), and flaming (13%).

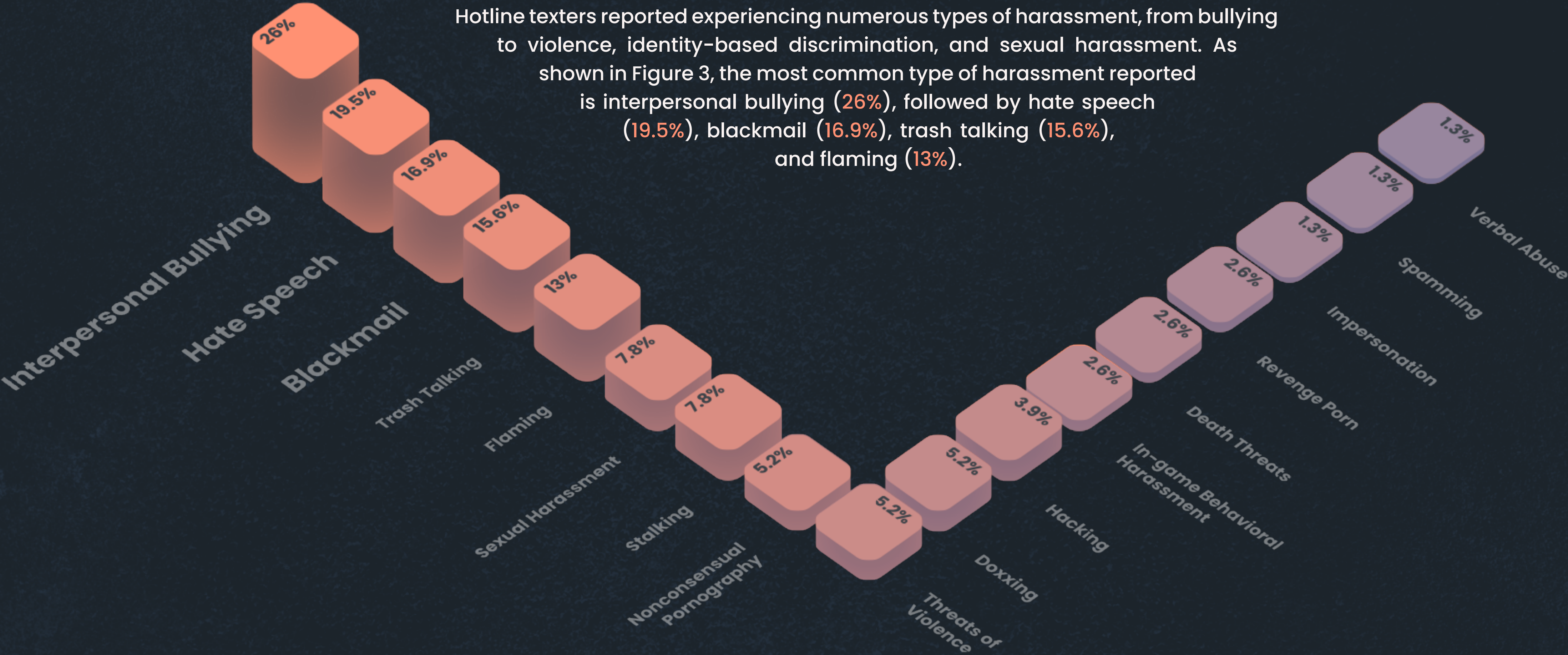




FIG. 4

# HARASSMENT TYPE BY GAMING INDUSTRY AFFILIATION





FIG. 5

# IDENTITY-BASED HARASSMENT

Figure 5 shows that texters report a variety of identity-based harassment—based on gender, race, sexuality, body size, and religion. Nearly half (42.9%) of texters who experience identity-based harassment report gender as the form of harassment they face. Over a third of reported identity-based harassment is racist in nature.





"This is actually really nice if you are a gamer or any of that sort! They are there to help you and listen. Any time you need an ear or advice, they are there."

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"I can vouch for how truly amazing this hotline is if anyone needs it. I just spoke to someone today and they were caring, genuine and helpful. Take this opportunity if you need it!"

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"The person who messaged me really heard me out. They gave me lots of hope for the future when I felt there was none."

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"I have used Games & Online Harassment Hotline and they were super supportive and their advice constructive!"

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"I was having issues with harassment in a game. They provided me with some helpful information that I was not aware of on how to handle my issues. I'm really glad I got in touch with them."

"Recently used GamesHotline. Someone helped me for the few minutes I needed. They listened to me and responded with compassion and patience. That's all I needed that day. It's normal to need somebody to listen to you after a bad day of online gaming."

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"Learned about this from the game, We Are OFK, and was in a funk so gave it a shot. The person I chatted with was really helpful! Keep in mind they aren't on 24-7 but got back to me the very next day during their business hours.

I have been feeling very unmotivated and non-creative and the chat with [the Hotline agent] spurred me to open my SoundCloud account after many months and found that my favorite artist on there and Apple Music had positively commented on one of my pieces and liked an album I created! That's always something to get creative motivation going. [They] also helped me talk over some other emotional issues.

I highly recommend giving it a shot. May be what you need."



Games and Online Harassment Hotline



FEMINIST FREQUENCY

**Feminist Frequency** is an award-winning nonprofit dedicated to ending toxicity and abuse in the games industry and gaming spaces at large. Founded in 2009 by Anita Sarkeesian, she challenged harmful media representations and advocated for a more inclusive media landscape. Today, the organization runs the Games and Online Harassment Hotline to provide free, confidential emotional support to people who make and play games. Feminist Frequency, in partnership with Take This, launched the Culture Shift Project, a robust training program to combat gender-based harm inside game studios. Based on a foundation of justice, accountability, and care, Feminist Frequency is making games a better place to work and play.



THE  
REPRESENTATION  
PROJECT

**The Representation Project** is a leading global gender justice non-profit organization. We use films, education, research, and activism to challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes. In 2011, Jennifer Siebel Newsom founded The Rep Project in response to the overwhelming public demand for ongoing education and social action in support of her first film, Miss Representation. Since then, Siebel Newsom has released two more acclaimed films, The Mask You Live In (2015) and The Great American Lie (2019). Her latest film, Fair Play, premiered earlier this year. The organization also runs a global youth filmmaker program to train the next generation of change agents. The Rep Project is also known for its impactful social activism campaigns, including #NotBuyingIt, #AskHerMore, and #RepresentHer.





**GAMES  
AND ONLINE  
HARASSMENT  
HOTLINE**