



Representations of Queer Identity in Games from 2013–2015

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REPRESENTATIONS OF QUEER IDENTITY IN GAMES FROM 2013–2015

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Queerly Represent Me

<http://QueerlyRepresent.Me>
@QueerlyRepMe



LGBTQ Game Archive

<https://lgbtqgamearchive.com/>
@LGBTQ_GA

REPRESENTATIONS OF SEXUALITY AND GENDER

Representation of minority groups in games has several impacts. In a recent survey via Queerly Represent Me (2017), 1,237 participants felt representation in games is important.

Of these, 371 primarily highlighted the importance of being able to **identify** with characters, for themselves (352) or for others (19).

154 primarily highlighted the ways representation helps people foster **empathy** (94) or has other widespread, unspecified, positive societal effects (60).

However, the highest priority was **narrative** (427), with people specifically highlighting representation's effects on interesting story (152), realism (150), and characterisation (41).

QUEERLY REPRESENT ME & LGBTQ VIDEO GAME ARCHIVE

Both of these databases collate information about queer representation in games.

Share resources and have cross-over in terms of goals. Different approaches and audiences.

LGBTQ Video Game Archive

A curated/researched collection of information of LGBTQ content in digital games from 1980s-present

HOME GAMES TYPES OF CONTENT RESOURCES QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

NEW GAME
→ LOAD GAME 75



Visual Database	Spreadsheet Database	Resources	About
The visual database is perfect for those wanting to read about queer content in their favourite games, or browse for new titles to explore.	The spreadsheet database is ideal for those seeking a 'big picture' view of the games we feature, and who want to filter entries by categories (such as specific types of representation).	Read articles about sexuality, gender, and relationships in games, as well as data collated from surveys conducted about representation.	Find out more about Queerly Represent Me.

Queerly Represent Me features 773* titles and categorises them in a number of ways, including...

Representation found in: Protagonist; Non-player-characters; Other references.

Representation of: Asexual / aromantic; Bisexual / plurisexual; Cross-dressing; Gay; Intersex; Lesbian; Nonbinary / non-conforming; Playersexual; Polyamory; Trans woman; Trans man; Other.

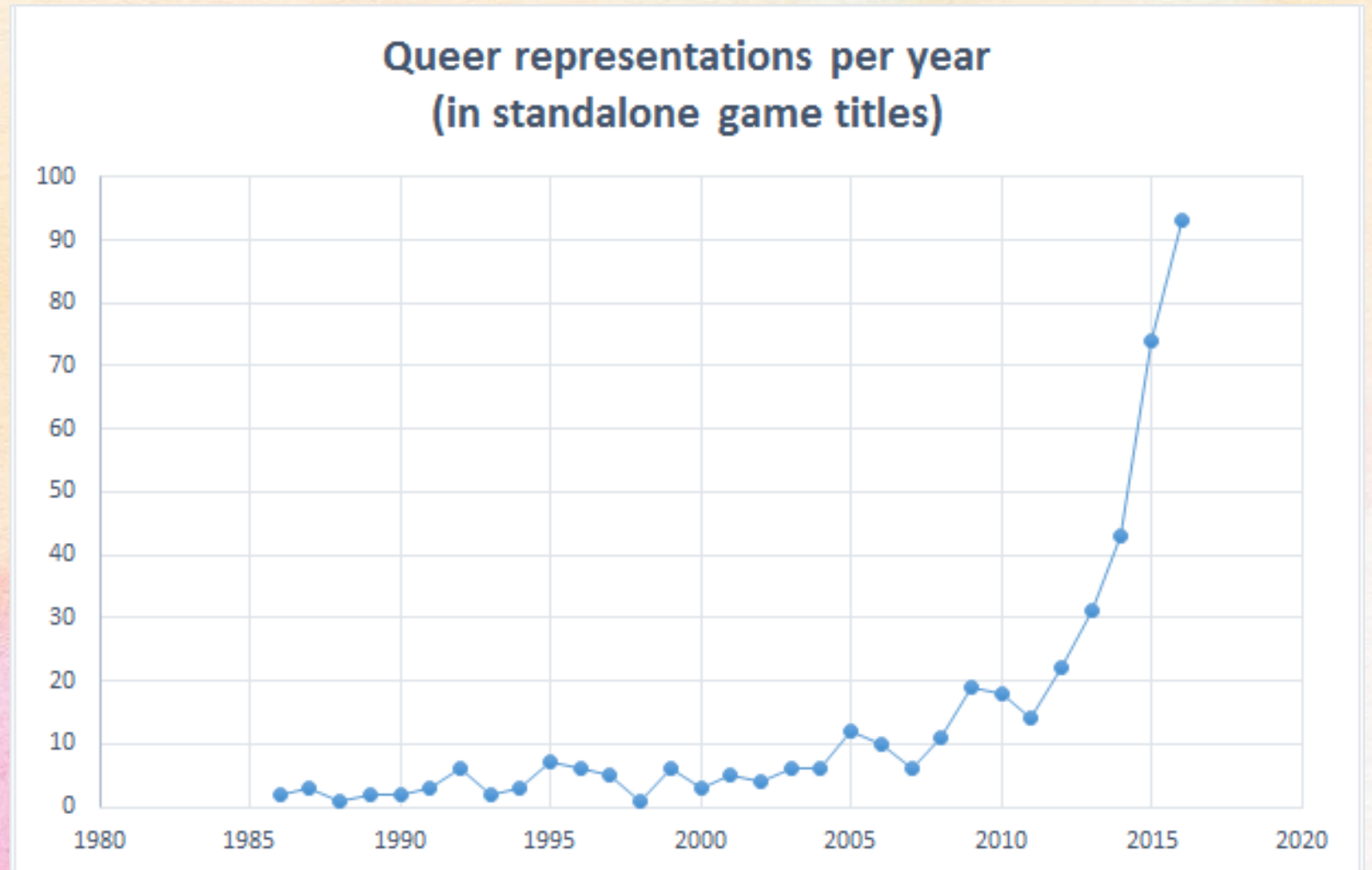
REPRESENTATIONS OF SEXUALITY AND GENDER

Queerly Represent Me database (N = 773*)

Standalone games released between 2013 – 2015 (N = 147) →

Games as part of a franchise released between 2013 – 2015 (N = 67)

* as of June 2017



PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

RQ1: Why did the number of games featuring queer content double from 2013-2015?

RQ2: Have the representations of specific diverse sexualities or genders increased at comparable rates?

RQ3: If some representations have increased at different rates to one another, why has this occurred?

H1: Representations of diverse sexuality are more common than representations of gender.

H2: Representations of monosexual identities (lesbian and gay) are more common than other sexualities.

H3: Most instances of monosexual representation are from the visual novel genre.

2013 AND BEYOND: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS TIME PERIOD

RQ1: Why did the number of games featuring queer content double from 2013-2015?

- Different Games conference (April) and Queerness and Games conference (Oct)
- 'Hyper-inclusive' #LostLevels 'unconference' at the Game Developers Conference
- GaymerX convention (Aug)

- Increase in coverage of 'queer game content, players, and design'
 - Queer gamer communities & inclusion of queer representation in mainstream games
- Increase in awareness of—and therefore research into—representations of queerness

(Shaw & Ruberg 2017)

2013 AND BEYOND: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS TIME PERIOD

RQ1: Why did the number of games featuring queer content double from 2013-2015?

- Increase in coverage of independent game designers who are pushing boundaries and 'queering' the development process
 - Anna Anthropy's *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters* (2012)
- Increase in accessibility to game development tools
- Increase in distribution options online allowing consumers to access independently developed games

(Shaw & Ruberg 2017)

2013 AND BEYOND: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS TIME PERIOD

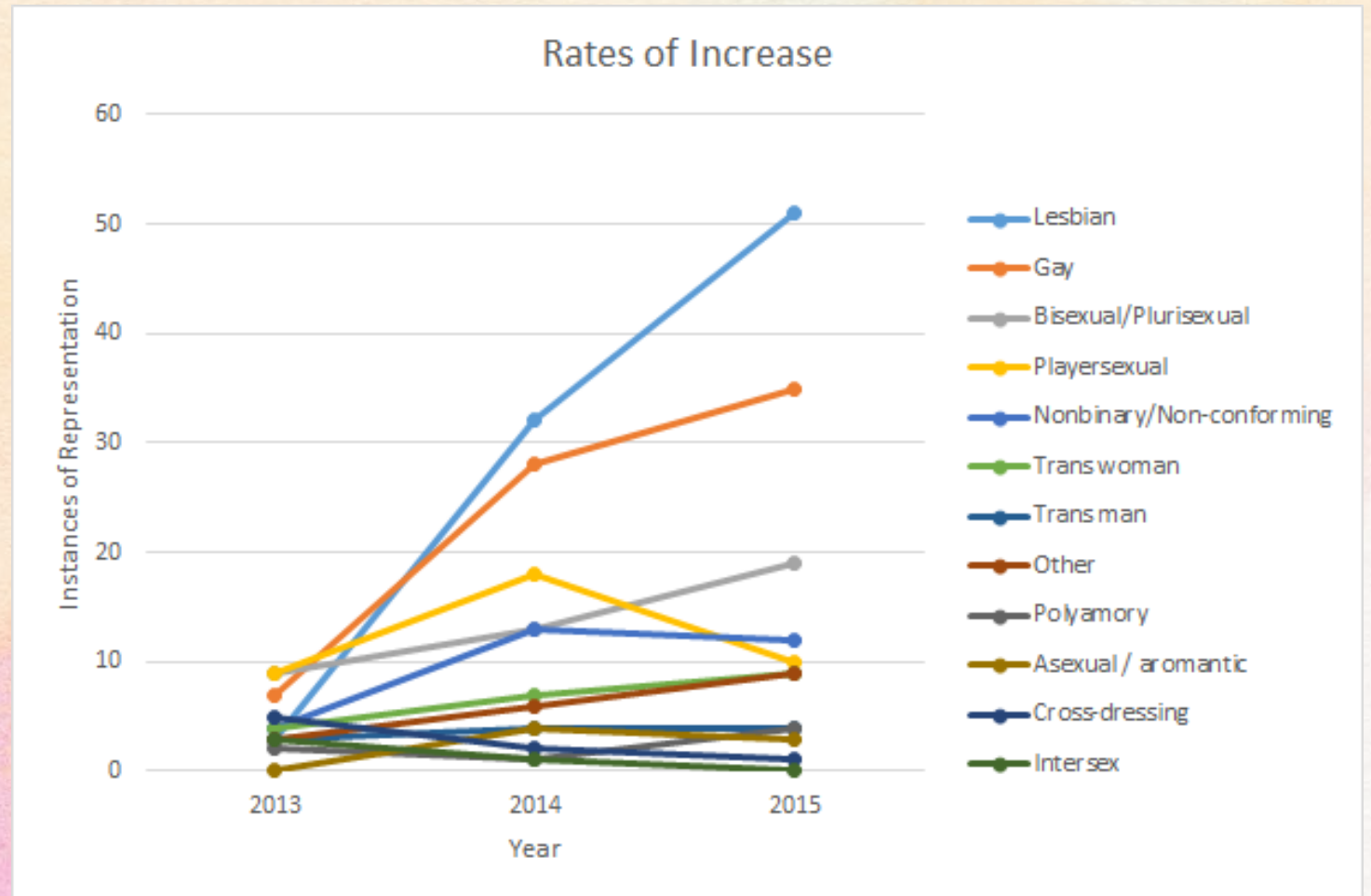
Can we expect this to continue?

'It feels as though there's a lot of pullback in the mainstream gaming world over the last year or two in terms of support, not just for our event, but other likeminded events. I'm not sure if the current political climate has had a cooling effect, or if game companies saw events like this as a one-time thing, or.. something else? If it was just us, I'd say we need to look inwards at how we're running the business, but over the last year or two **there's been a TOTAL shift in the climate of supporting diversity and inclusion-minded events, where it moved from being an obvious thing, to being seen as a "political" thing.'**

Matt Conn (personal communication, 2017)

2013 AND BEYOND: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS TIME PERIOD

RQ2: Have the representations of specific diverse sexualities or genders increased at comparable rates?



2013 AND BEYOND: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS TIME PERIOD

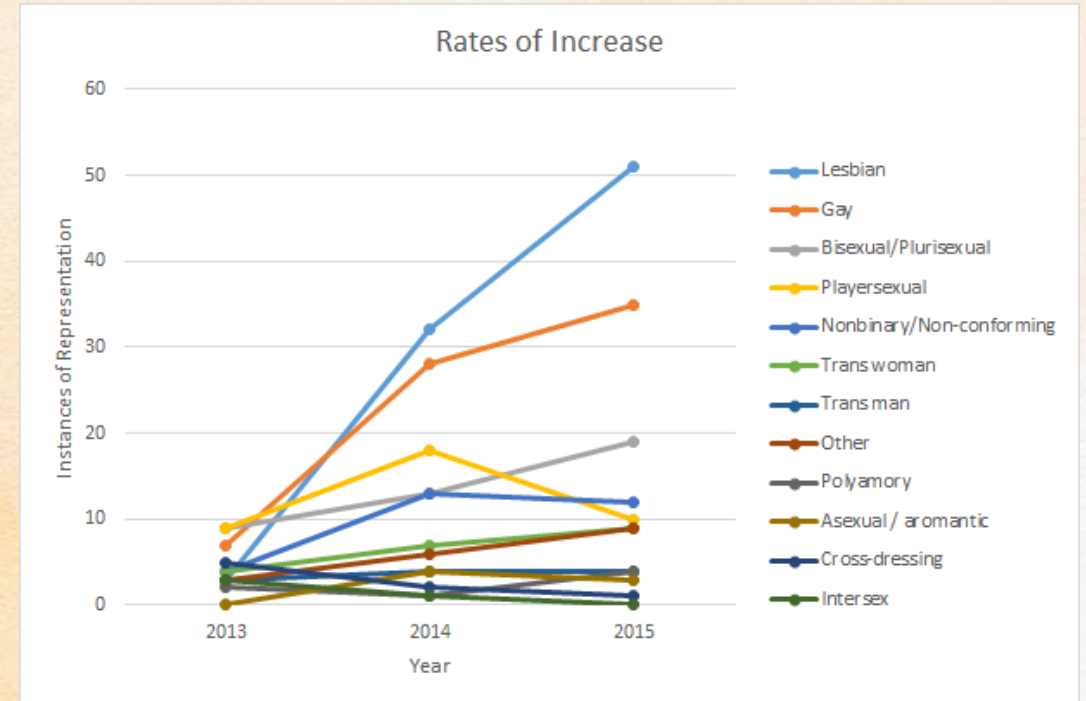
RQ3: If some representations have increased at different rates to one another, why has this occurred?

- Monosexual representation
- > Representation of other sexualities
- > Representation of genders

Cross-dressing decreasing
Playersexuality uncertain trajectory

Few instances of asexuality / aromanticism, and intersex representation

Further research required!



WHAT ELSE DOES THE DATA SAY?

H1: Representations of diverse sexuality are more common than representations of gender.

A paired-samples t-test was performed to compare the total number of representations of sexuality per game ($M = .92$, $SD = .91$) with the total number of representations of gender per game ($M = .30$, $SD = .62$).

The number of representations of sexuality was found to be significantly greater, $t(213) = 9.01$, $p < .001$

WHAT ELSE DOES THE DATA SAY?

H2: Representations of monosexual identities (lesbian and gay) are more common than other sexualities.

A chi-square test for goodness of fit was used and was statistically significant:

$$\chi^2 (10, N = 12) = 336.00, p < .001$$

This indicates that some diverse sexualities and genders are represented within the data more significantly than others.

Further examination reveals that the values for representation of gay men and lesbian women are higher than the expected average.

WHAT ELSE DOES THE DATA SAY?

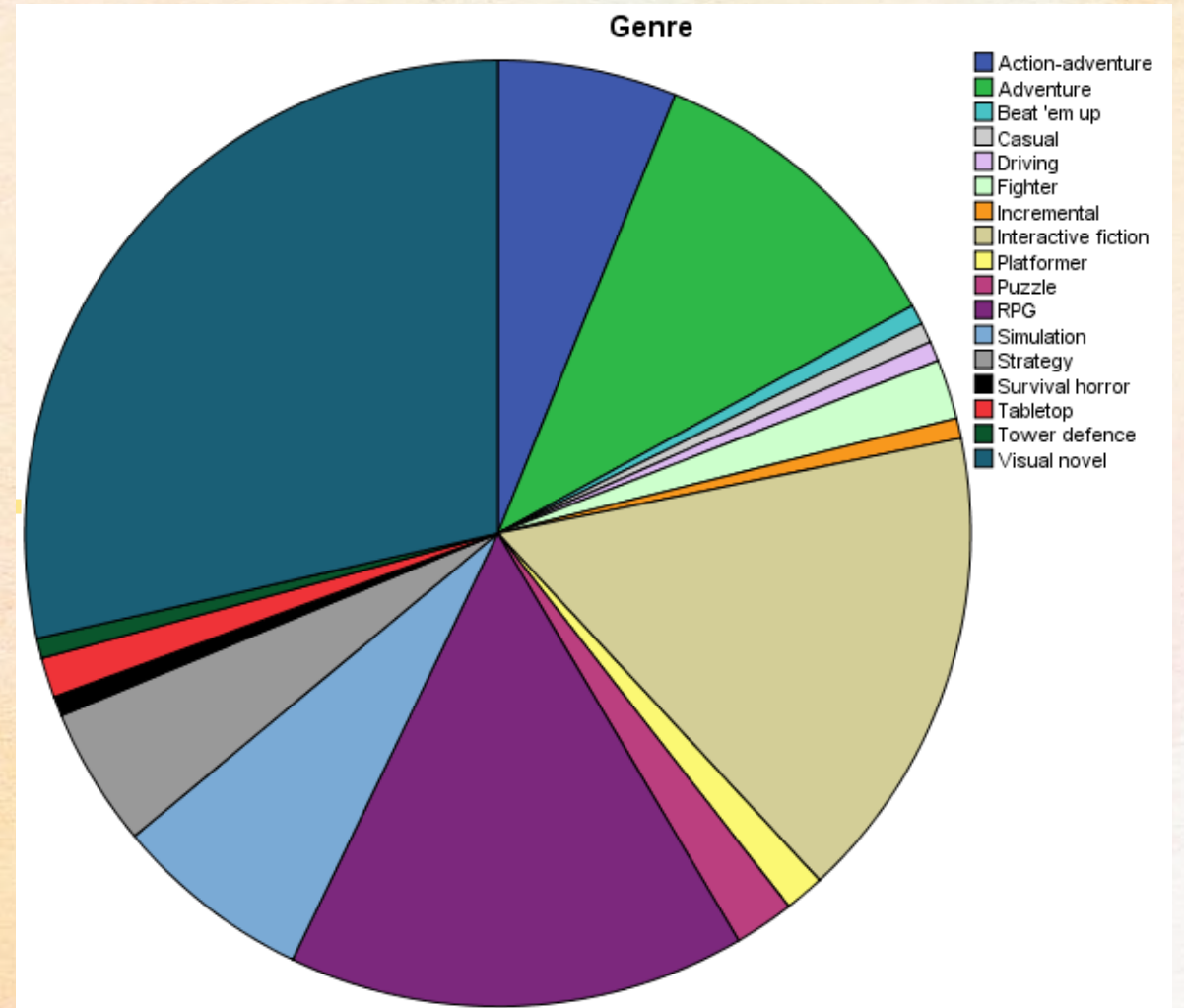
H3: Most instances of monosexual representation are from the visual novel genre.

28.57% – Visual novel

16.33% – Interactive narrative

15.65% – Role-playing game (RPG)

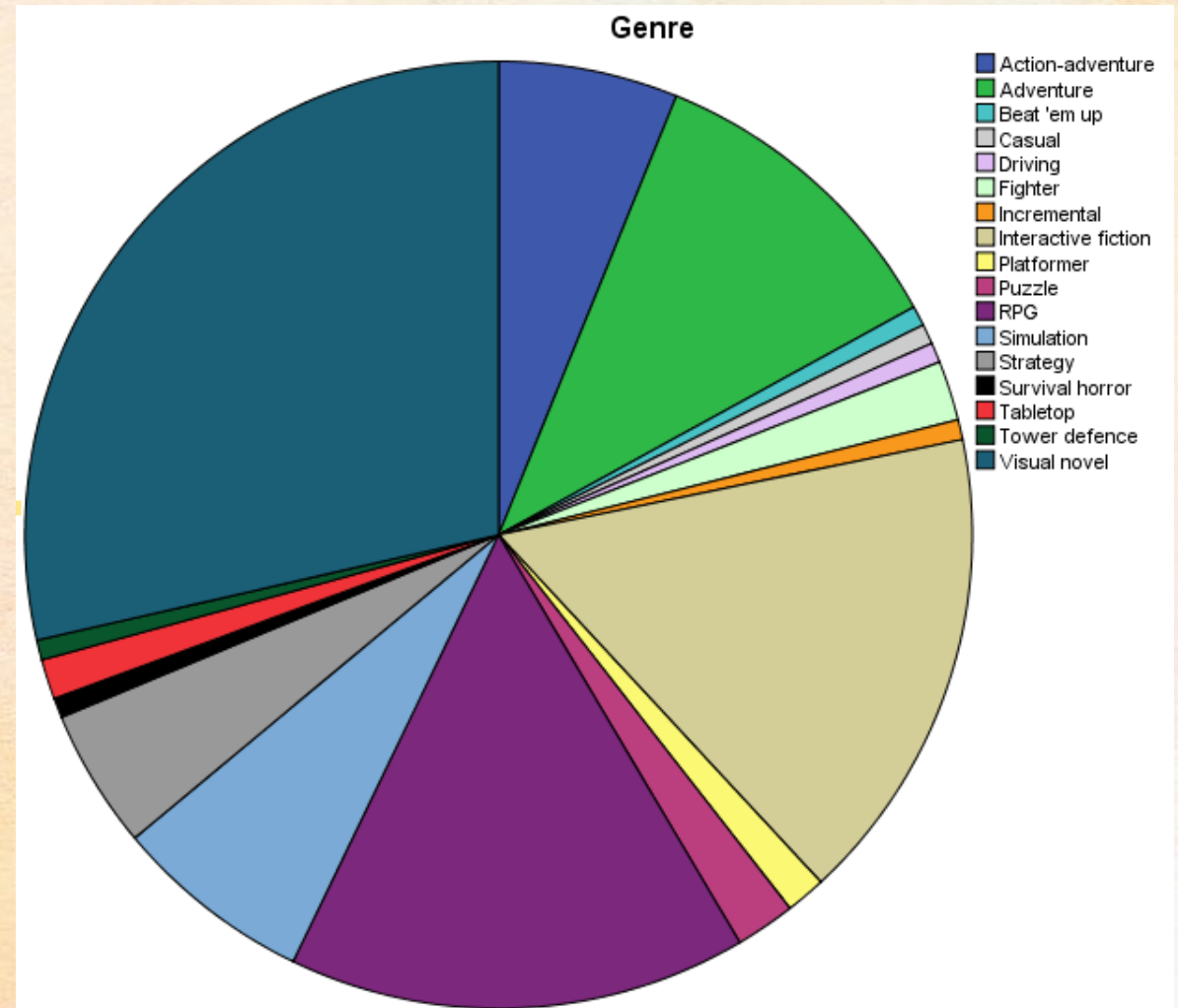
(Graph includes primary genres of games and does not factor in the secondary genres of 12 titles.)



WHAT ELSE DOES THE DATA SAY?

H3: Most instances of monosexual representation are from the visual novel genre.

A chi-square test for goodness of fit ($\alpha = .05$) was used to assess whether representation of monosexual identities was more common in one genre than others. The test was statistically significant $\chi^2(9, N = 147) = 87.218, p < .001$ indicating that **some genres were represented with greater frequency than others**. An effect size of 0.77 was calculated using Cohen's w , which indicates a large effect.

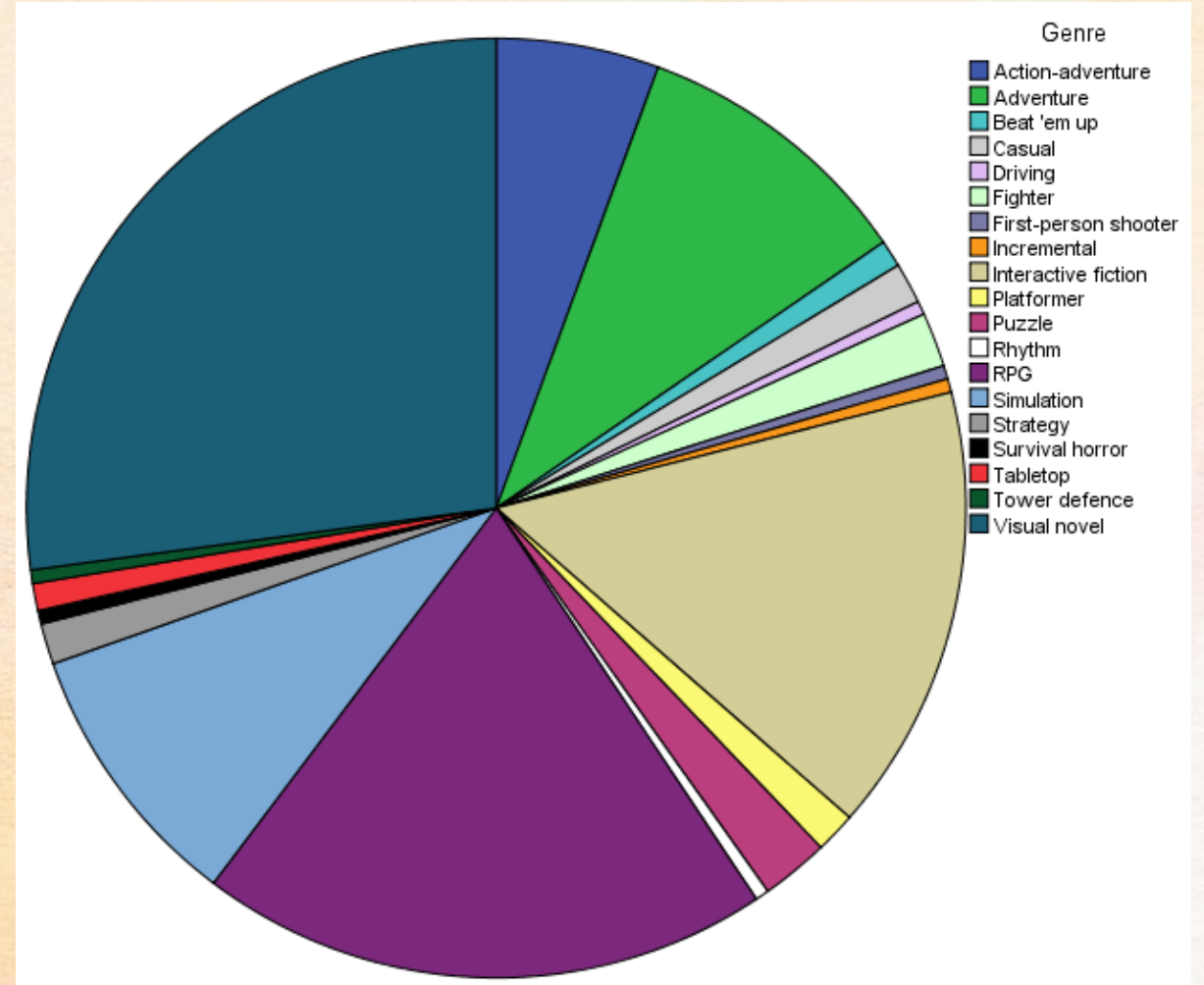


WHAT ELSE DOES THE DATA SAY?

How does this compare to other forms of queer representation?

27.10% – Visual novel ↓
15.42% – Interactive narrative ↓
19.63% – Role-playing game (RPG) ↑

(Graph includes primary genres of games and does not factor in the secondary genres of 17 titles.)



SO WHAT? & WHAT'S NEXT?

Representations of queerness in games increased significantly from 2013-2015.

This increase may not continue, as the culture shift that inspired this influx has been receiving less support recently. Further study examining 2016 and beyond will see if this trajectory continues.

Representations of queerness are not increasing consistently, with monosexual identities most commonly featured.

Genres that are supported by free, accessible tools have seen the most queer representation in 2013-2015 (visual novels, interactive fiction, and RPGs). Further study comparing these figures to genres in earlier time periods is required.

H4: Most instances of 'implied' representations are gay men.

- 2013-2015 data did not include a statistically significant number of implied representations to warrant this analysis
- Further study of implied vs. explicit representation of queerness in games

QUESTIONS?

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