

Research

Jump into Videogame Stardom: growth of the Indie Genre in recent years

The instrumental global growth behind Indie Productions
amidst the general AAA slump

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In 2025, it's no longer an overstatement to say the video game sector is not the realm of giants anymore.

From smaller titles with relatively cheap production values booming into global popularity due to their own merits, like *Stardew Valley* or *Hotline Miami*, to bigger productions coming from independent teams such as *Baldur's Gate 3* and *Black Myth Wukong*, the industry has opened to a **wide array of creators developing outside the bigger houses in the sector.**

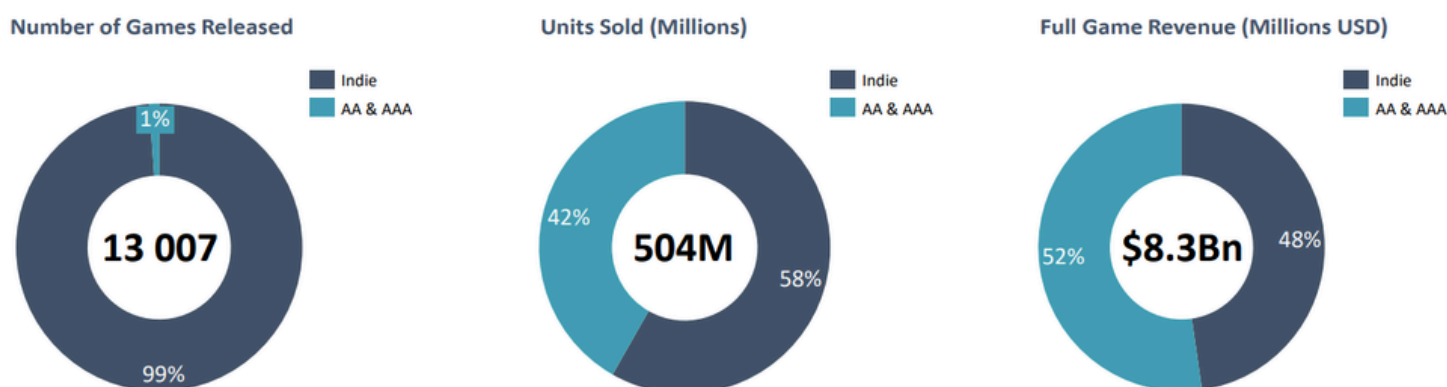
Over the last decade, these smaller productions have started to garner the attention of **both critics and consumers alike**, some of them becoming veritable classics.

The boom of the Indie Genre has not just been a matter of artistic recognition. **The numbers the sector continues to pull annually on a global scale have been rising with every passing year.**

According to the statistics for 2024 provided by Steam, by far the biggest platform in the market for PC gaming, **48% of the total revenue (US\$8.3 Billion) as of September 2024 has come from Independently developed titles.** When it comes to units sold (504 Million copies), 58% of total sales were taken over by Indie Titles.

The entire sector has been growing constantly in the past few years, with a considerable **82% growth in revenue since 2018.** While much of this growth stems from the boom of bigger titles in recent years, such as Black Myth Wukong and Palworld, the lower spectrum of productions (small teams of 1 to 5 creators and solo developers) has also seen a constant, exponential growth. About 40% of the market revenue comes from these smaller teams, the size of which by no means takes away from the quality of the games they develop.

Stardew Valley was developed by a solo creator (Eric Barone). As of 2024, the game has sold over **30 Million Copies Worldwide.** The creators of **Hades and Bastion, Supergiant Games,** have a total of little over 20 employees, and yet their independently developed and published games have taken over the world basically overnight. **Hades sold over a Million copies worldwide,** and now its sequel aims to overtake it both in scope and ambition.



Source: "State of Indie on Steam as of 30th September, 2024"- VGI Global Indie Games Market Report

Looking at these numbers, it's fair to say the **general view and preference of videogame fans has changed over the years.**

Instead of the traditional outlook of AAA and AA games taking over the market and leaving independent productions castaway in alternative markets (Such as the booming Doujin Scene in Japan during the late 90s/ early 2000's or the solo productions published freely on the internet during the same period all over the world), the **maturity and growth of the industry and its consumers** has led people to acquire a taste for the sort of unique, daring and inspired productions only a small team with free reign over their own creativity can design.

This newfound appreciation for the experimentality and craftsmanship of smaller developers is far from the only reason behind the rise in popularity of the Indie Genre.

There are **several factors at play which have contributed to the growth of the sector:**

- **Affordable Cost:** Barring outliers in the bigger production values, most Indies come into the market with a lower price on release than AAA and AA productions, making them a more affordable option for most consumers to pick up without prior knowledge. This also allows them to navigate the market without fearing an overlapped release with the biggest AAA productions of the same genre (For example, a AAA / AA RPG releasing in the same month as Elden Ring could perhaps suffer from its targeted audience turning it down to be able to afford the latter on release)
- **Higher Support:** Newer indie titles are finding a lot more support both in the public and private sectors, with several countries actively financing and helping independent productions as well as private companies and publishers leveraging most of the non-development-related tasks for them. Even in the console gaming sector, a lot of platforms are taking the Steam model as an example, making it easier for indie developers to create and release in their online shops (Nintendo with the Switch Store, Sony with the Playstation Store), as well as sending developer kits to smaller studios for their newer hardware releases.
- **General Growth of the Industry:** The videogame industry keeps growing exponentially with each year, further amplifying its general exposure and consumer base. Along with the growth of the traditional leaders in the sector, this also means indie games are being consistently more advertised to pools of customers who would have generally remained out of their reach in the past.
- **Bigger Talent Pool of Creators:** The growth of the industry as a whole has also meant an expansion in the number of professionals working in it, with many of them founding their studios to go their own way. The talent exchange between the strictly professional and indie sectors is much more common than one could think, with many indie creators having been developers for bigger studios at one point in their careers. On the other hand, lot of independent creators are also being recruited by bigger studios, as well as smaller teams bought by bigger publishers, thanks to their accomplishments as solo developers.
- **Jump in available technology and knowledge:** The technical know-how, availability of professional knowledge in video game development, and coding/modeling software available to the average independent producer have grown beyond measure in recent years. The advancement in technology, with free options for indie developers such as Unreal Engine 5 becoming mainstream in its use amongst creators, means small teams can now produce games of a scale and complexity comparable to bigger releases.
- **Solidifying Niche:** Indie games have found their increasing niche within the videogame market, and so have their studios. Performance in the latest releases shows most indie game studios grow exponentially through the development of newer titles, meaning both their mark value and visibility solidify more with each game they release into the market.

The indie game ecosystem grows and consolidates with each passing year.

With impeccable artisanship as its flag and overflowing creativity as its sigil, new releases keep captivating their audiences with proposals and concepts rarely found in most AAA productions.

With bigger numbers and more exposure than ever before, the time is now to **invest and trust in the newer and fresher talent of the videogame industry.**

For tailored research or specific consulting services, contact us at info@harringtonblue.co.uk

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