

Paint-by-Gender

How to add 'pink' gameplay to your
'blue' title
(and still keep all the boys happy)

My Info

● Jennifer Canada

- > Designer at Insomniac Games, NC Studio
- > Past Positions:
 - Associate Game Designer and Level Designer at Vicious Cycle Software
 - Intern at Gearbox Software
- > Education:
 - Master's of Interactive Technology from SMU Guildhall
 - B.A. from Rice University

A dark blue space background featuring a large, curved horizon of the Earth on the right side, showing some cloud detail. In the upper left, there is a bright star with a four-pointed diffraction pattern. Numerous smaller, distant stars are scattered across the dark field.

© How can the video game industry attract more female players?

Thesis on Women's Gameplay Preferences

- ◎ Gender-Related Gaming Considerations: A Practical Exploration



Thesis on Women's Gameplay Preferences

- Design strategies for attracting female players
 - > Detailed backstory
 - > Non-stereotypical female characters
 - > In-game relationships
 - > Emotional stimuli
 - > Moral complexity
 - > Non-violent action
 - > Flexibility and choices
 - > Meaningful victory

Thesis on Women's Gameplay Preferences

- ◎ 'Mirei of Estrel'
 - > Oblivion editor
 - > 30 min – 1.5 hrs
 - > 7 quests
 - > 30 characters
 - > 7000+ words



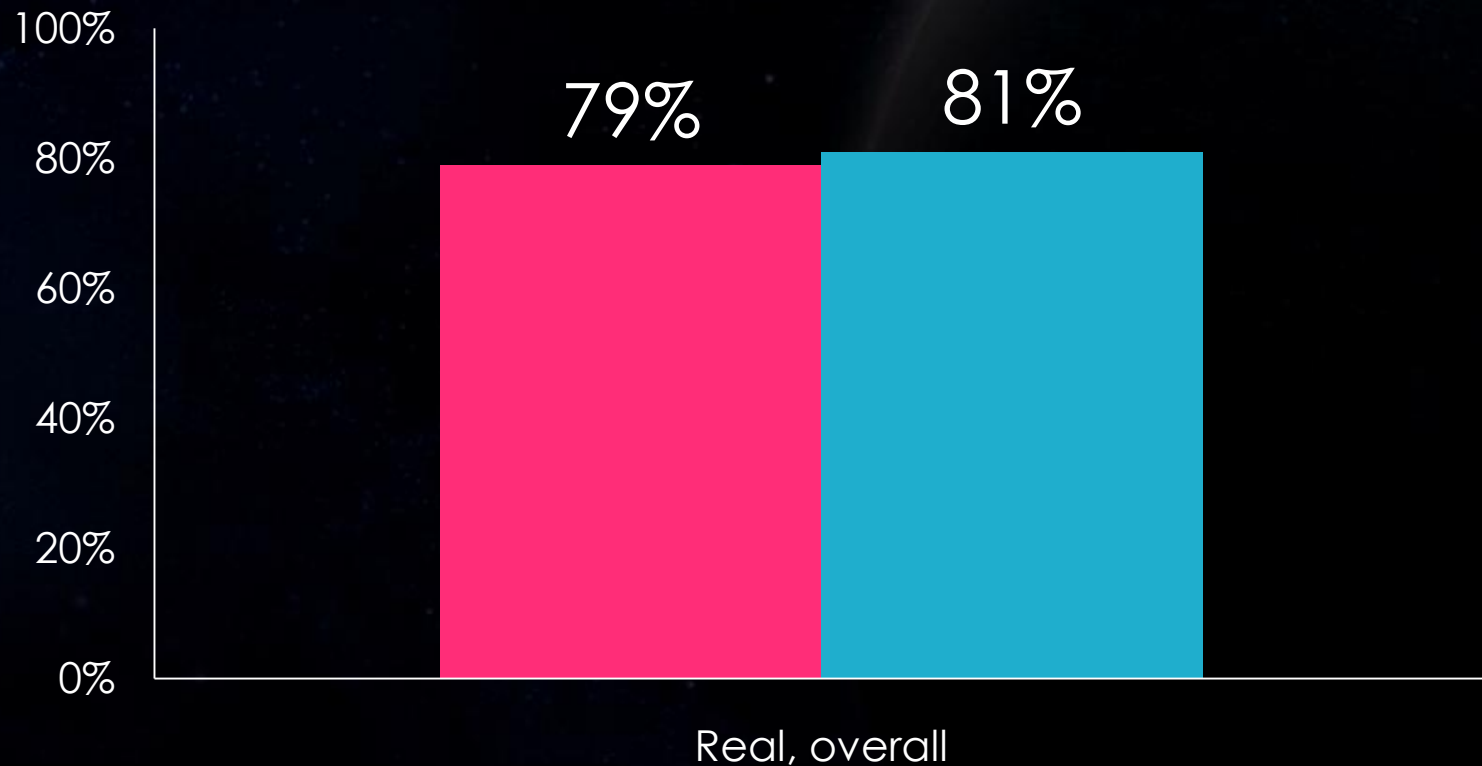
Detailed backstory <the theory>

- ◉ Informs the world behind the scenes
- ◉ Increases player's emotional ties
 - > To the characters
 - > To the world they live in



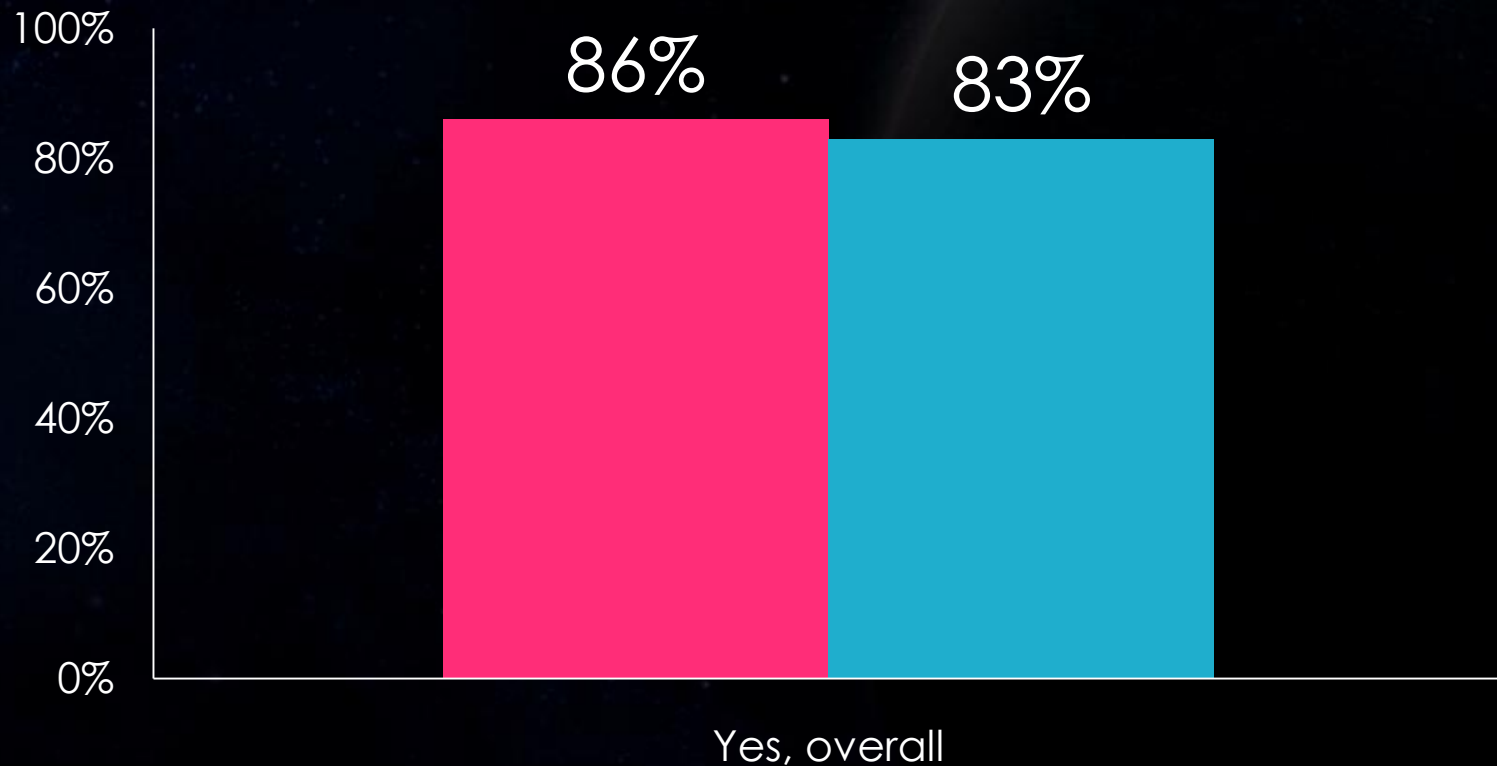
Detailed backstory <the results>

**How real did the world of Estrel and the
characters within it feel to you?**



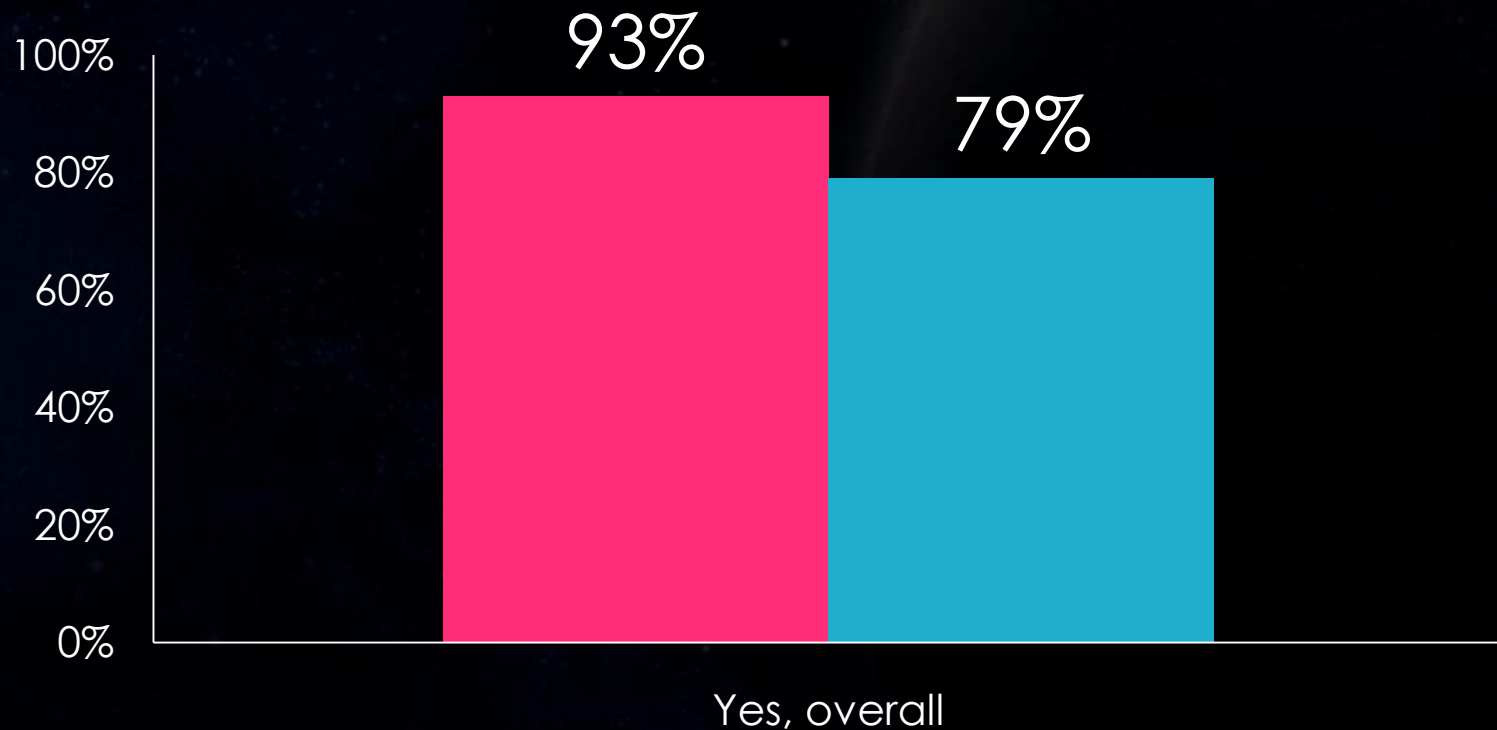
Detailed backstory <the results>

Did the level of reality increase your enjoyment?



Detailed backstory <the results>

Did the level of story development increase your enjoyment?



Detailed backstory <the takeaway>



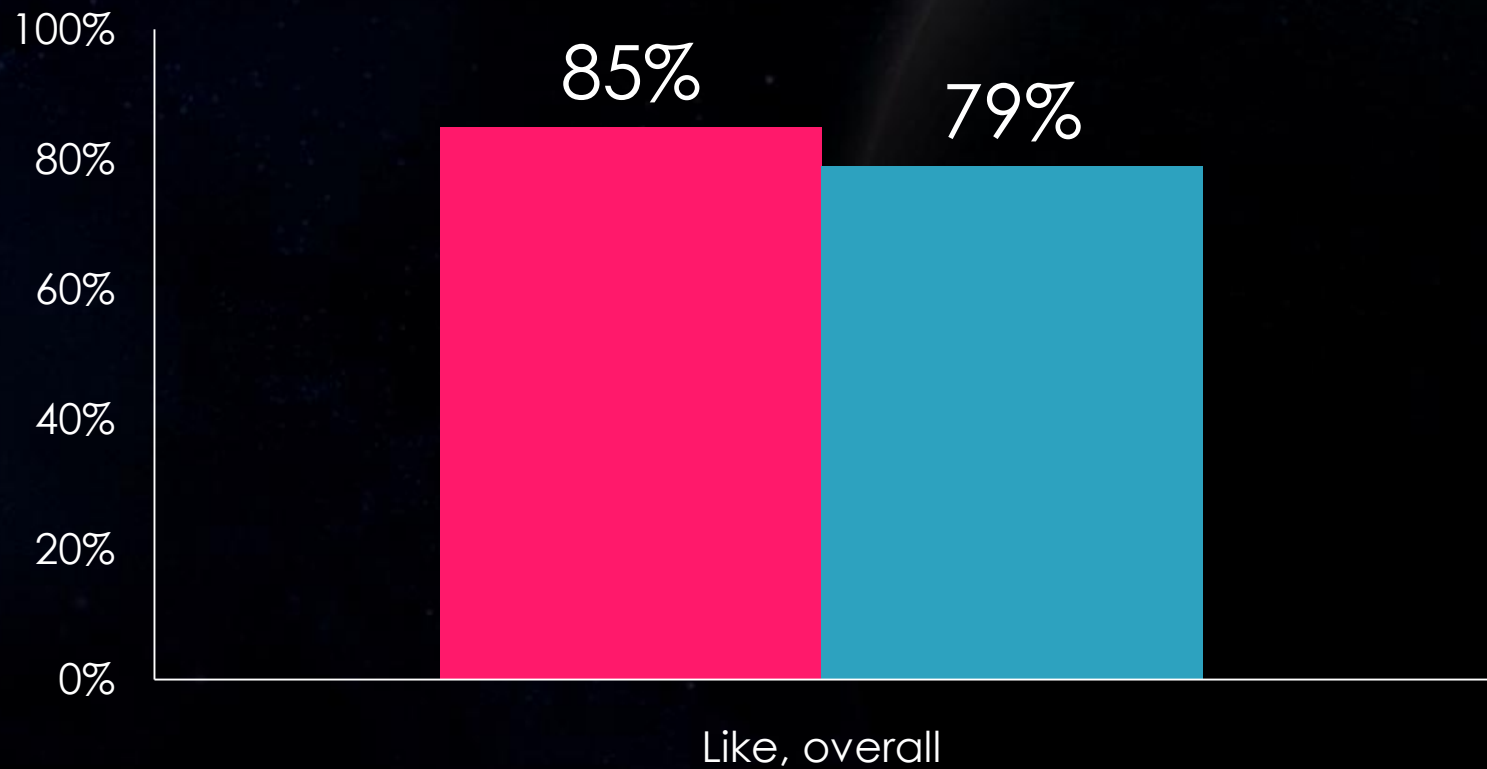
Non-stereotypical female characters <the theory>

- Important role
- Character motivation
- Strong abilities
- More than just eye candy



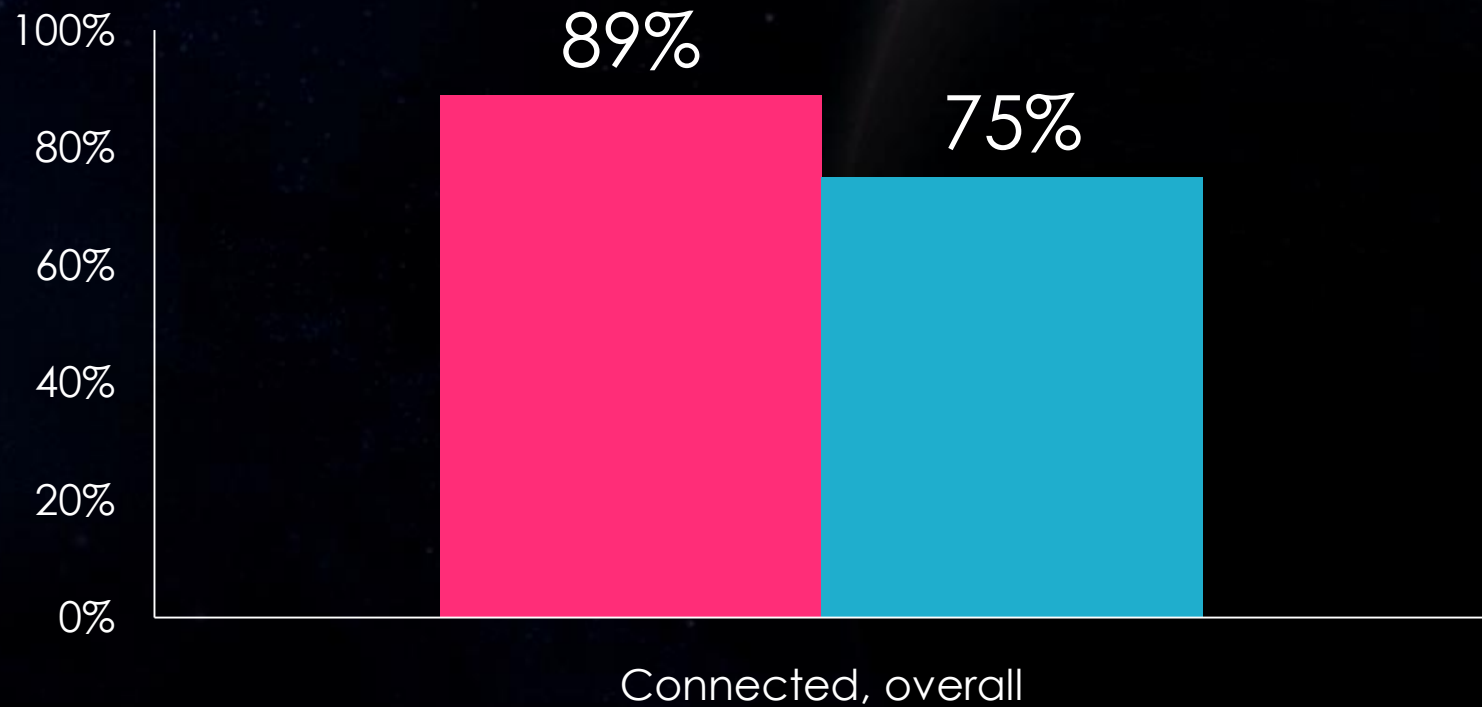
Non-stereotypical female characters <the results>

Do you like the character of Mirei?



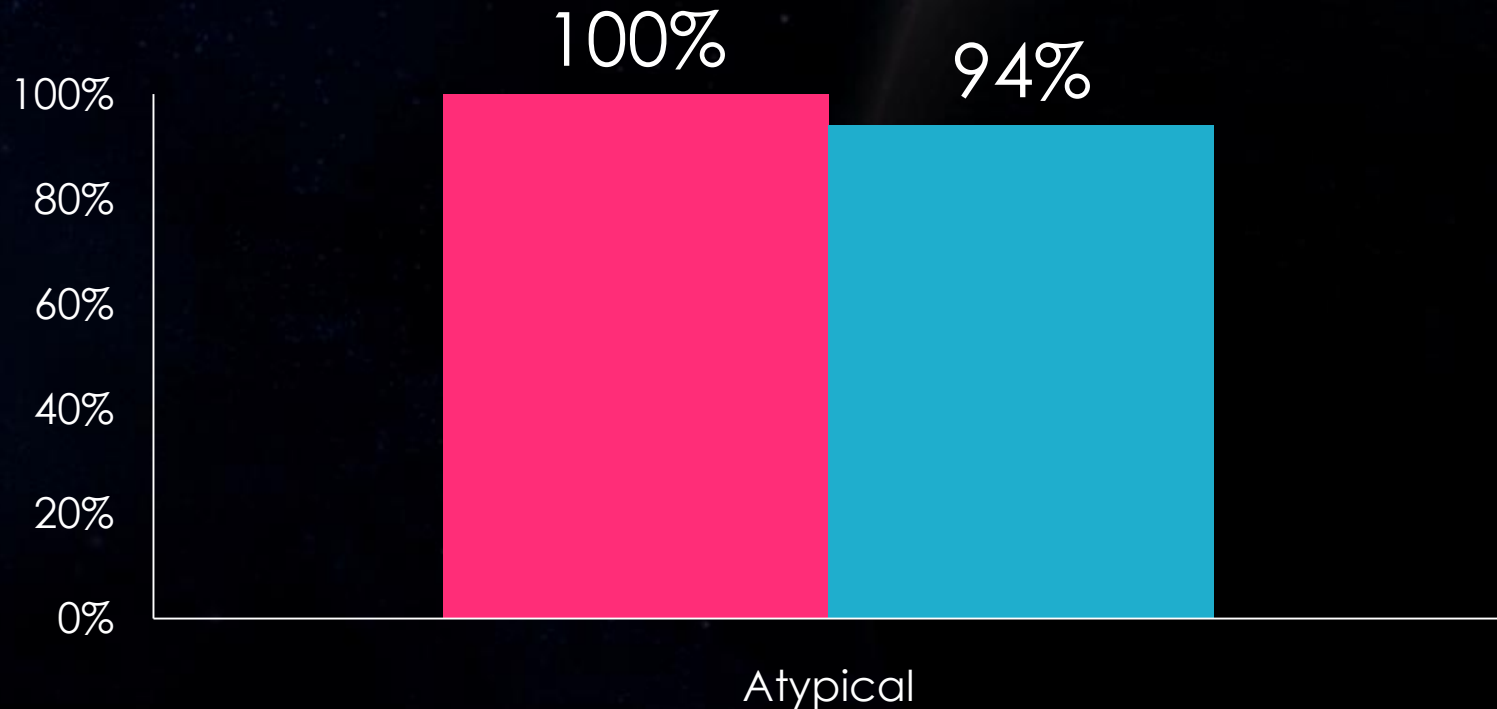
Non-stereotypical female characters <the results>

**How connected did you feel to the character of
Mirei?**



Non-stereotypical female characters <the results>

**Generally, do you prefer typical or atypical
video game characters?**



Non-stereotypical female characters <the takeaway>



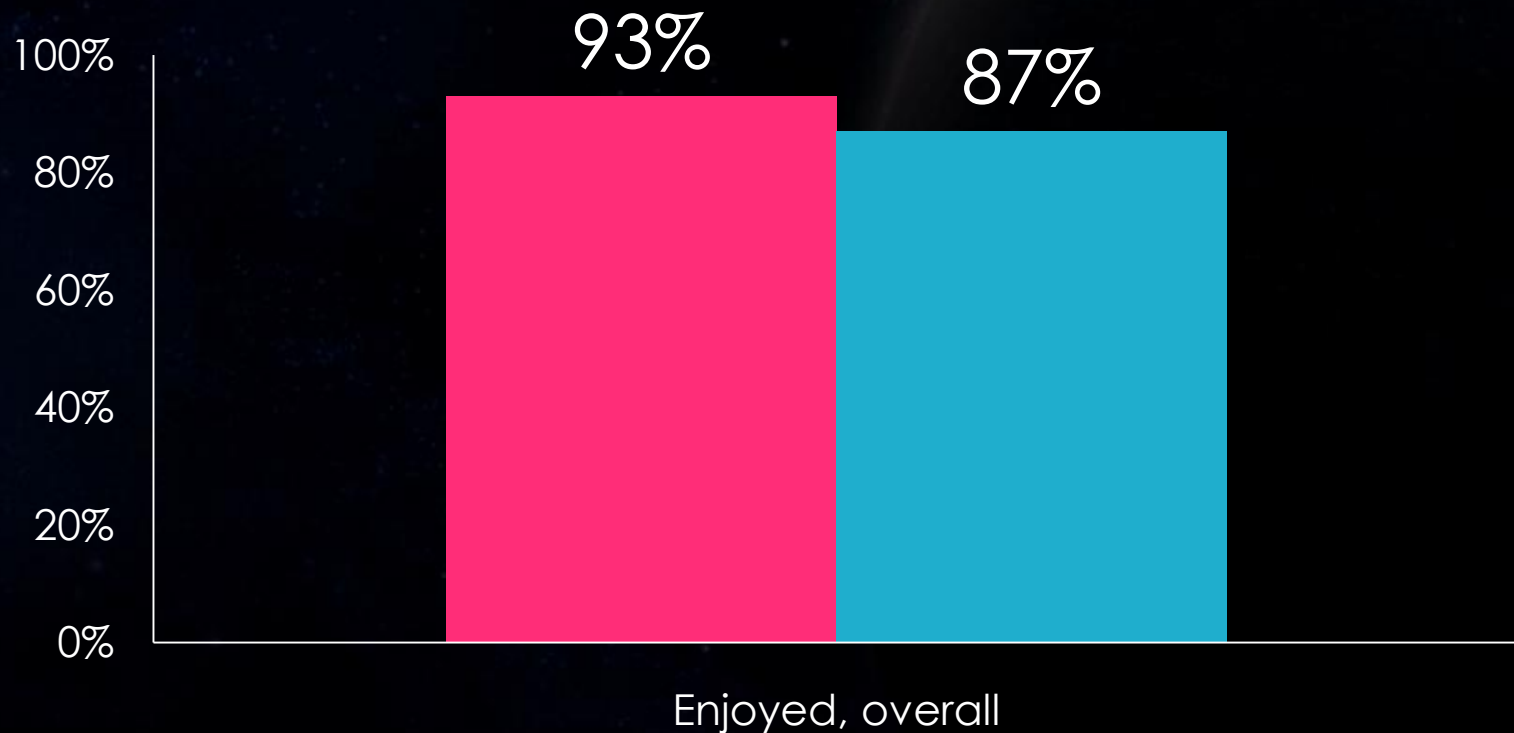
In-game relationships <the theory>

- Friendship
- Romance
- Family ties
- Nemesis



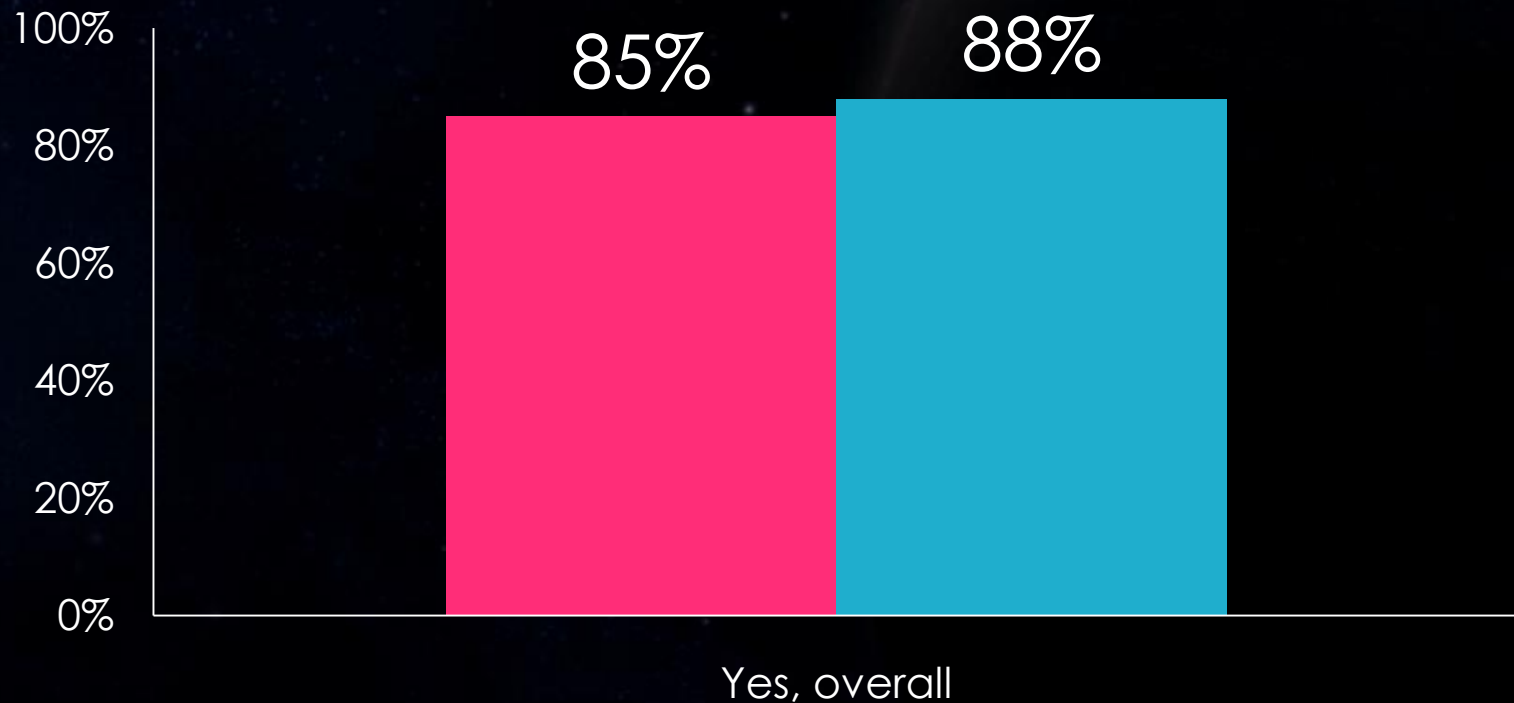
In-game relationships <the results>

**Did you enjoy learning about Mirei's relationships
with villagers?**



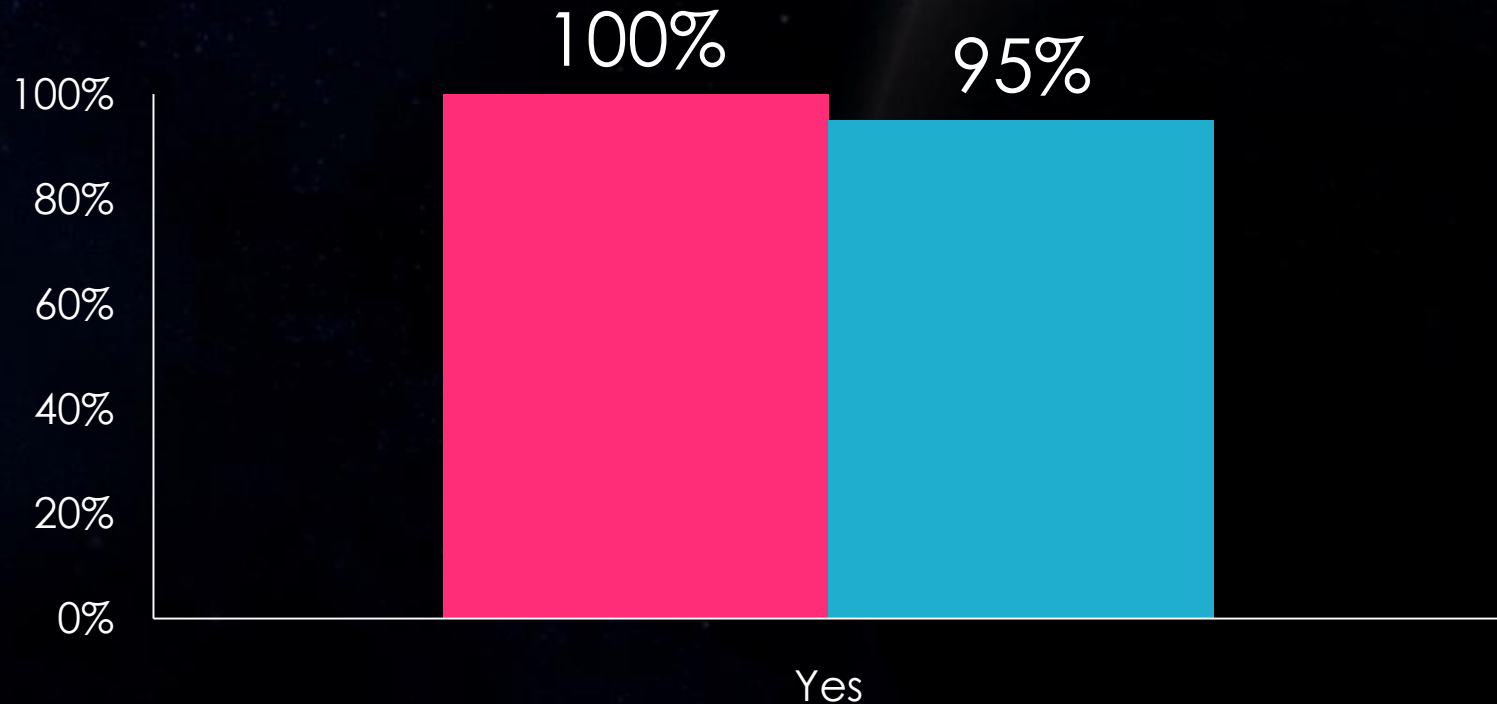
In-game relationships <the results>

**Did the option of repairing troubled relationships
increase your enjoyment?**



In-game relationships <the results>

**Did you try to repair Mirei's relationship with her
ex-husband?**



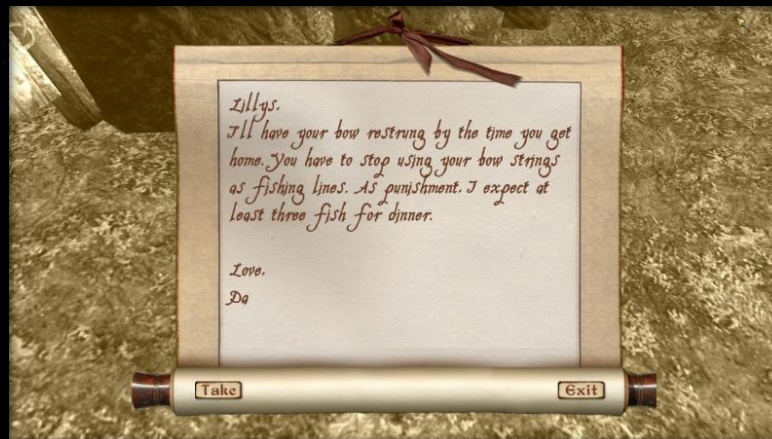
In-game relationships <the takeaway>



Emotional stimuli <the theory>

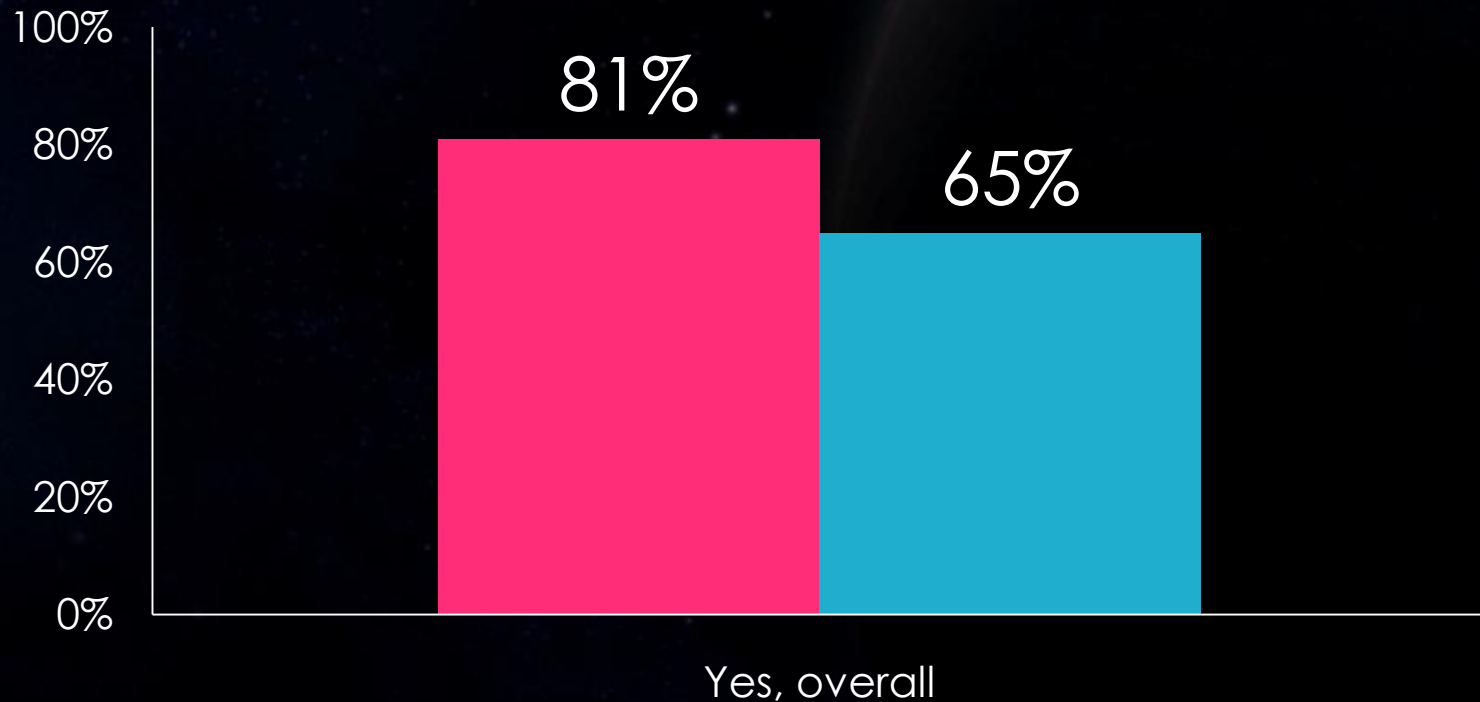
● Surprise!

- > Someone's in danger!
- > You've been betrayed!
- > Everything's changed! (new info)



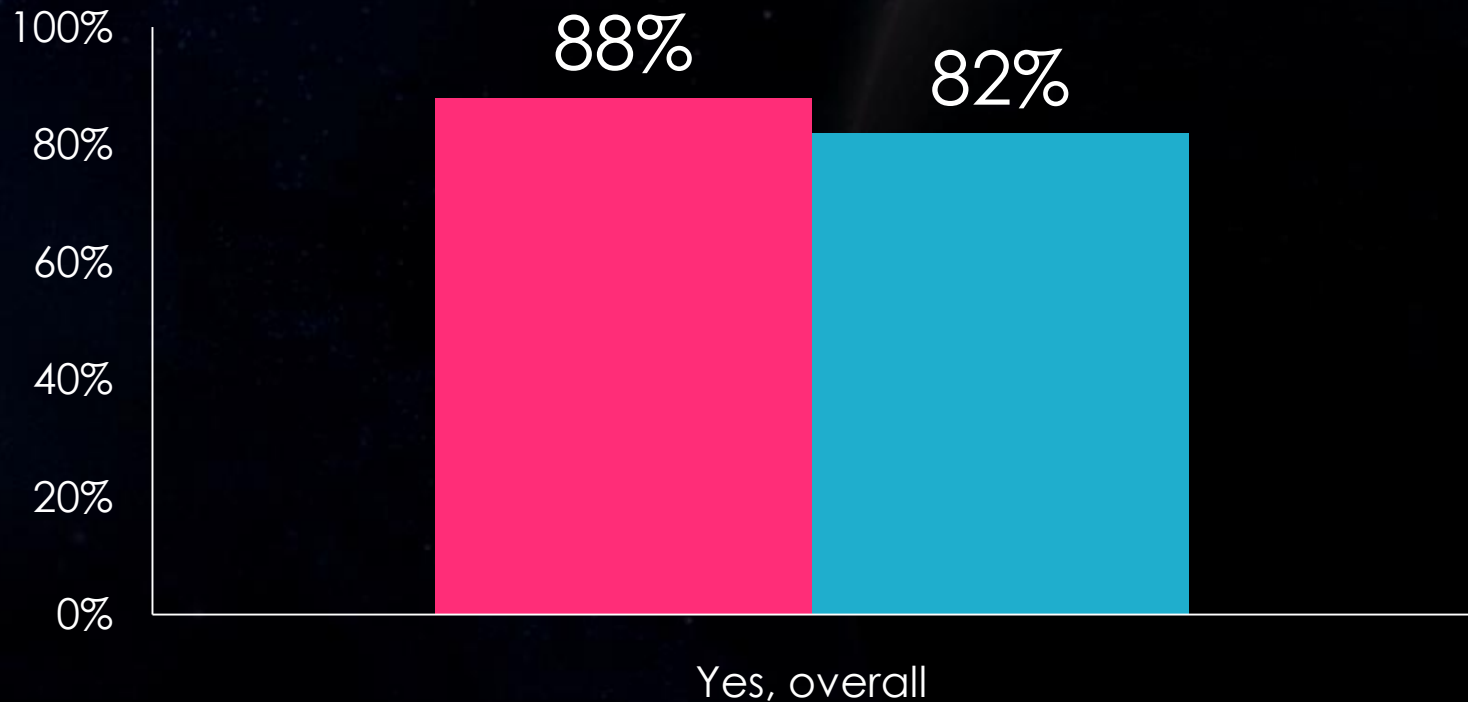
Emotional stimuli <the results>

Did you find it emotionally affective when you learned that Mirei's daughter Lillys was among the missing children?



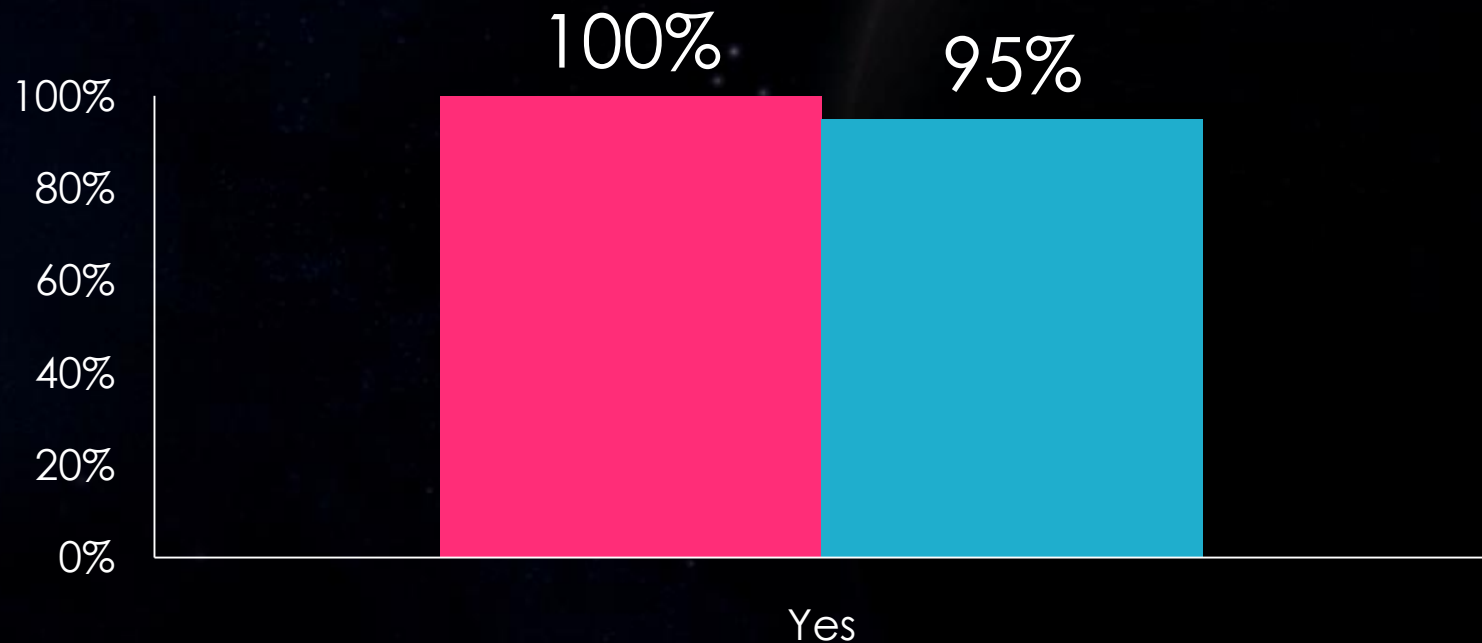
Emotional stimuli <the results>

Did you find it emotionally affective when you found the crumpled note written to Lillys by her father?



Emotional stimuli <the results>

When you found the repentant note, did it make you wonder about the kidnappers and their motivations?



Emotional stimuli <the takeaway>



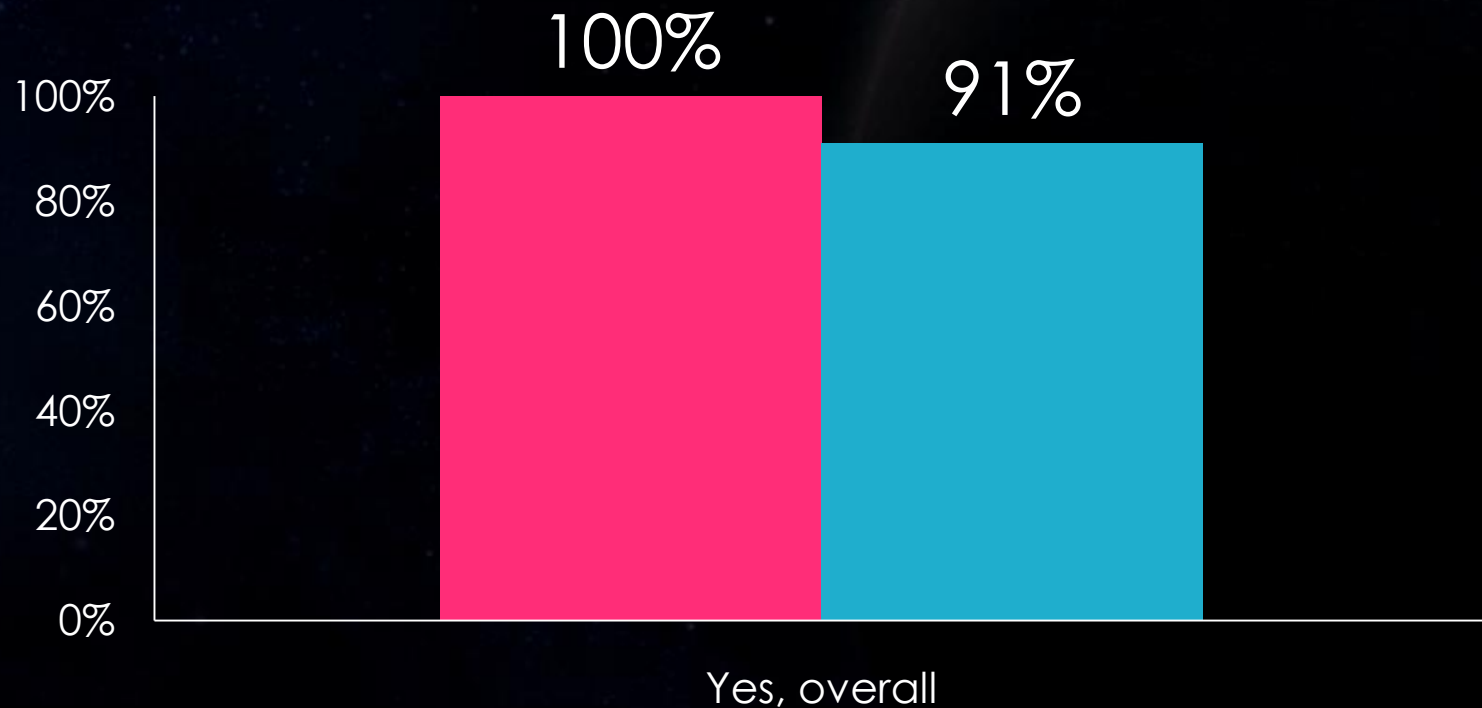
Moral complexity <the theory>

- De-Emphasis on Conflicts Featuring Good vs. Evil
 - > Shades of gray
 - > Complex motivations
 - > Different viewpoints or info



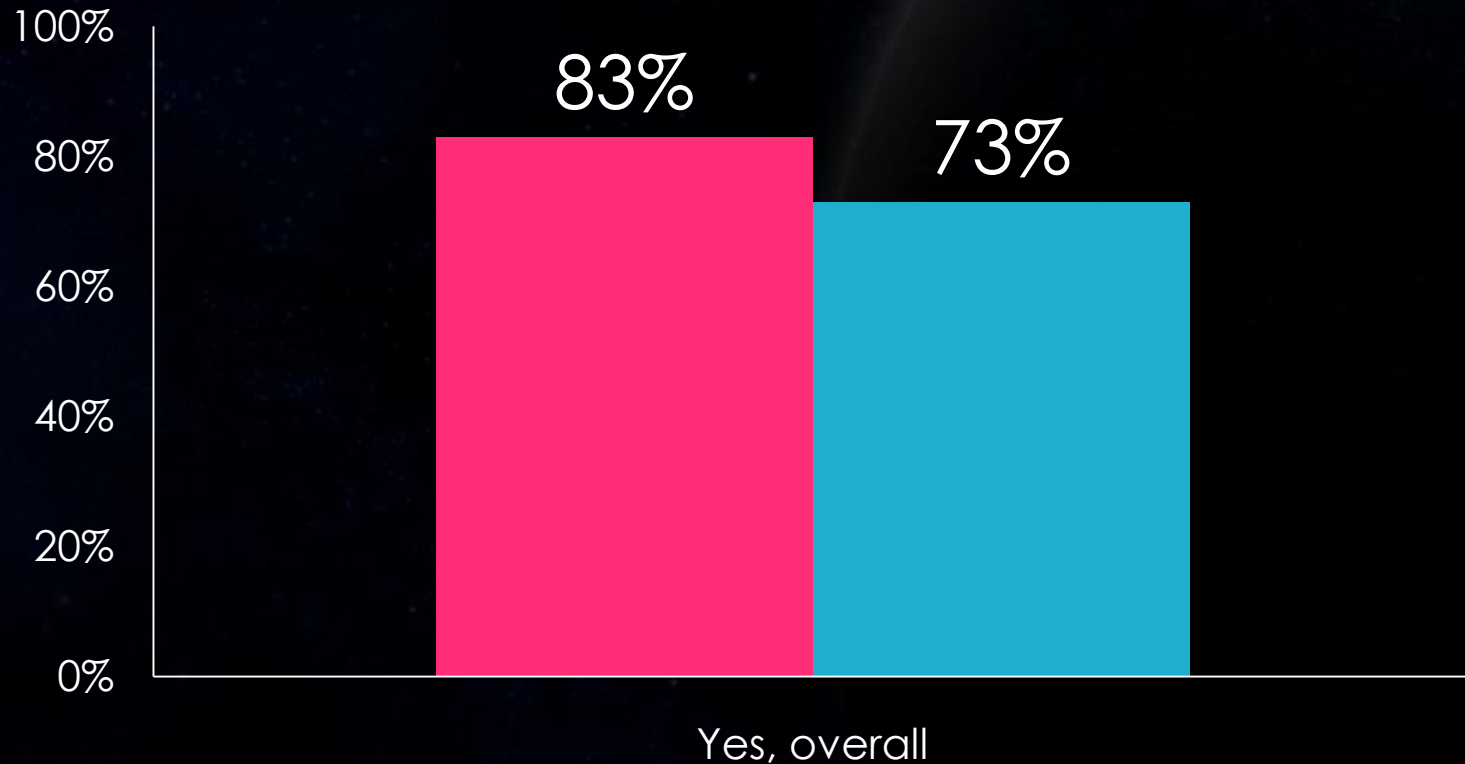
Moral complexity <the results>

Did you enjoy the kidnappers as video game adversaries?



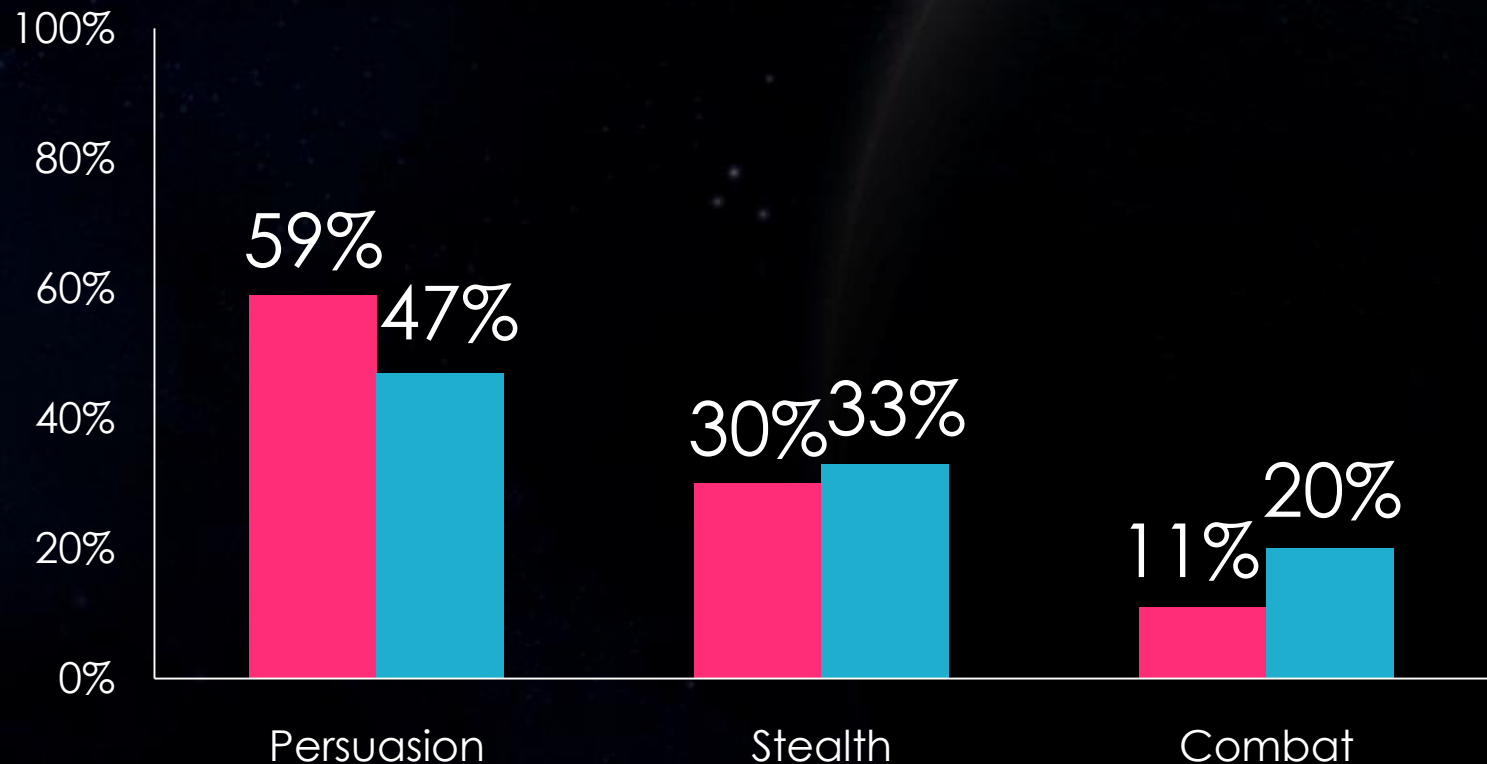
Moral complexity <the results>

**Did knowing the kidnapper's reason influence
your strategy for getting the girls back?**



Moral complexity <the results>

What was your main strategy for dealing with the kidnappers?



Moral complexity <the takeaway>



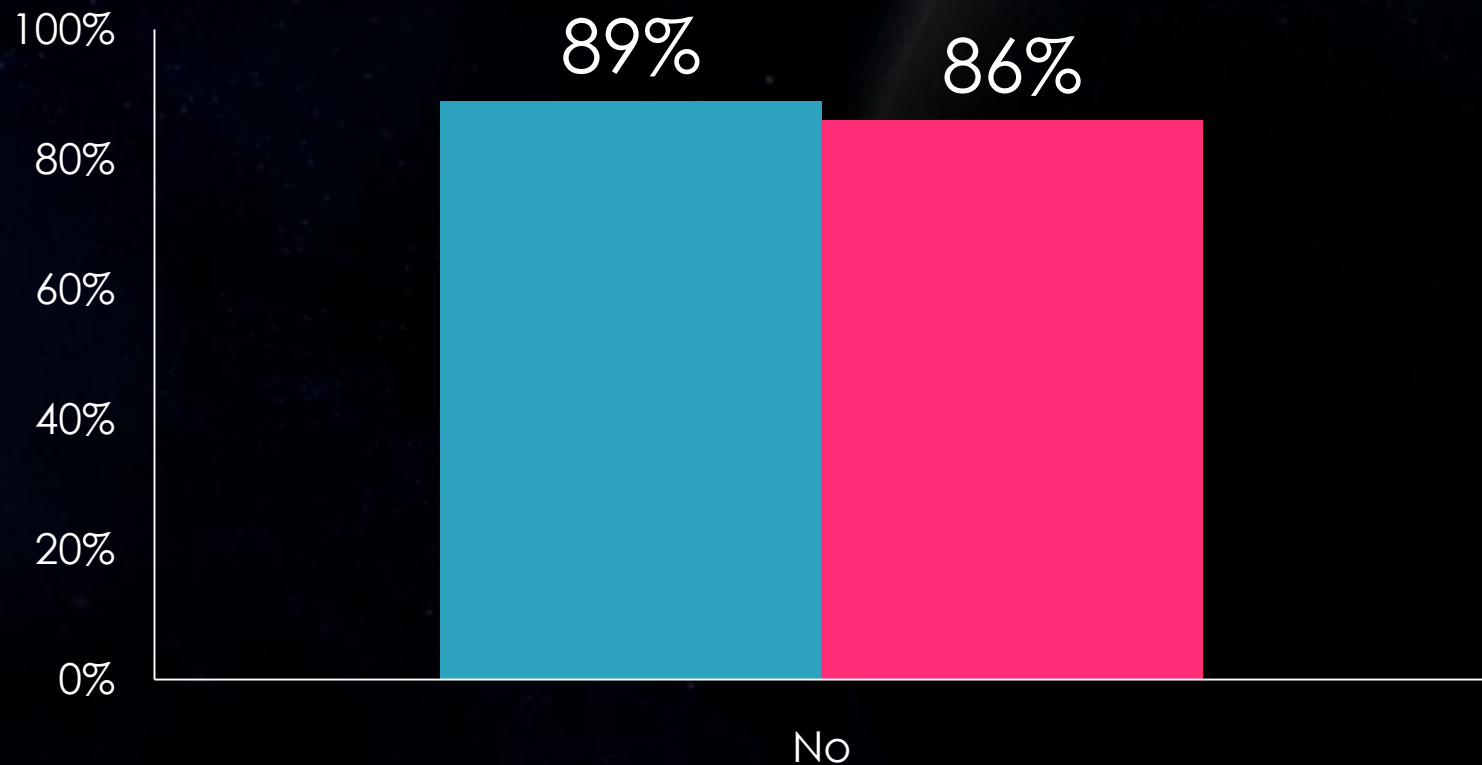
Non-violent action <the theory>

- Item gathering and crafting
- Exploration
- Sneaking
- Platforming
- Puzzle solving



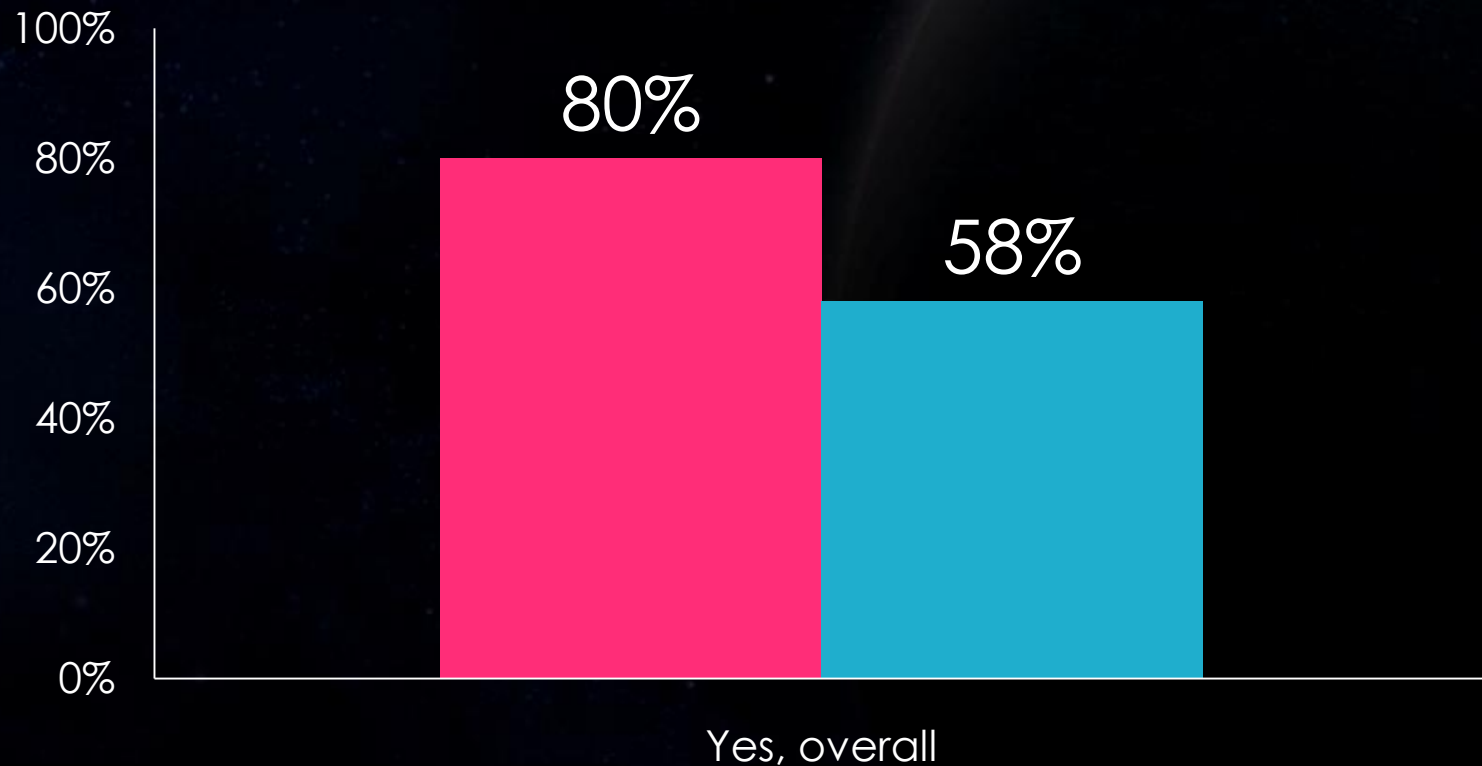
Non-violent action <the results>

Did you try to attack the Estrel villagers?



Non-violent action <the results>

**Did you talk kidnapper's leader into letting you
free the girls?**



Non-violent action <the takeaway>



Non-violent action <the takeaway>



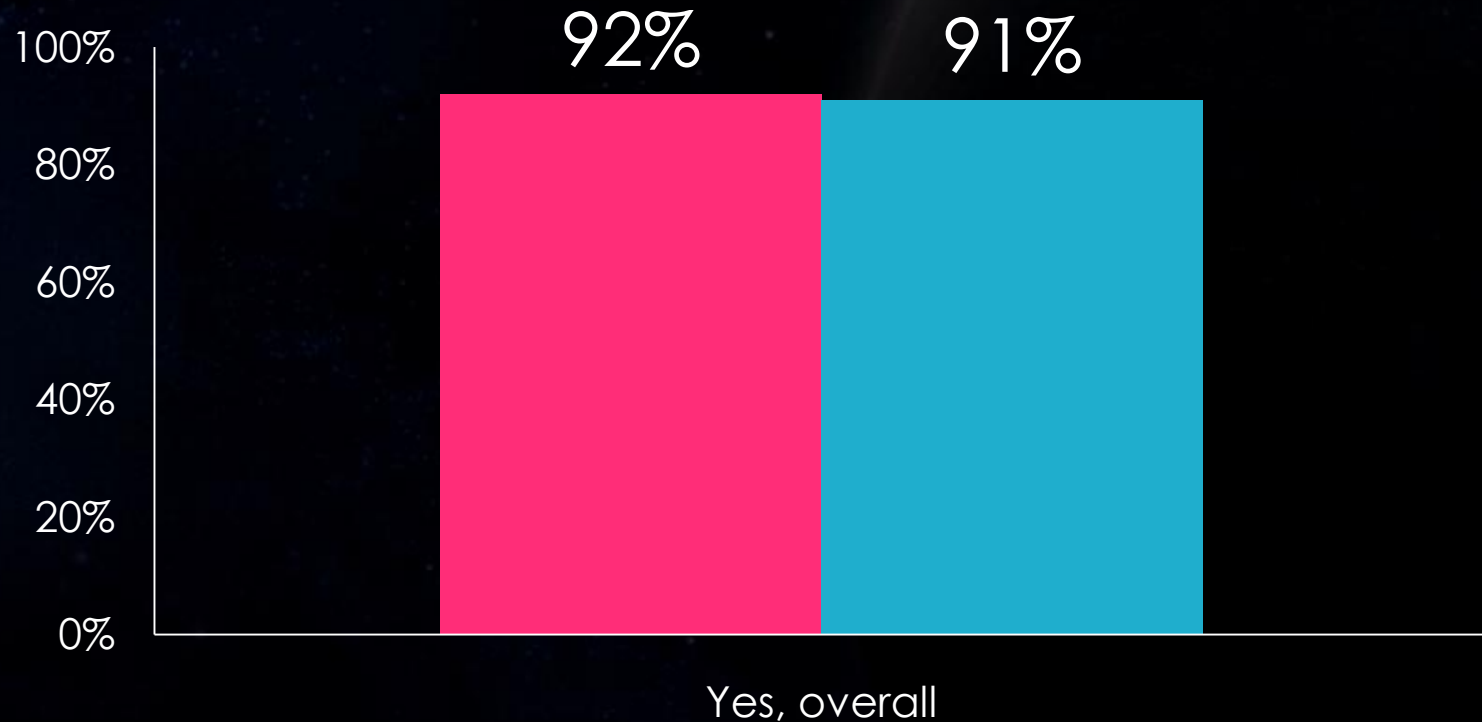
Flexibility and choices <the in-game tests>

- Different gameplay strategies
- Alternate Solutions



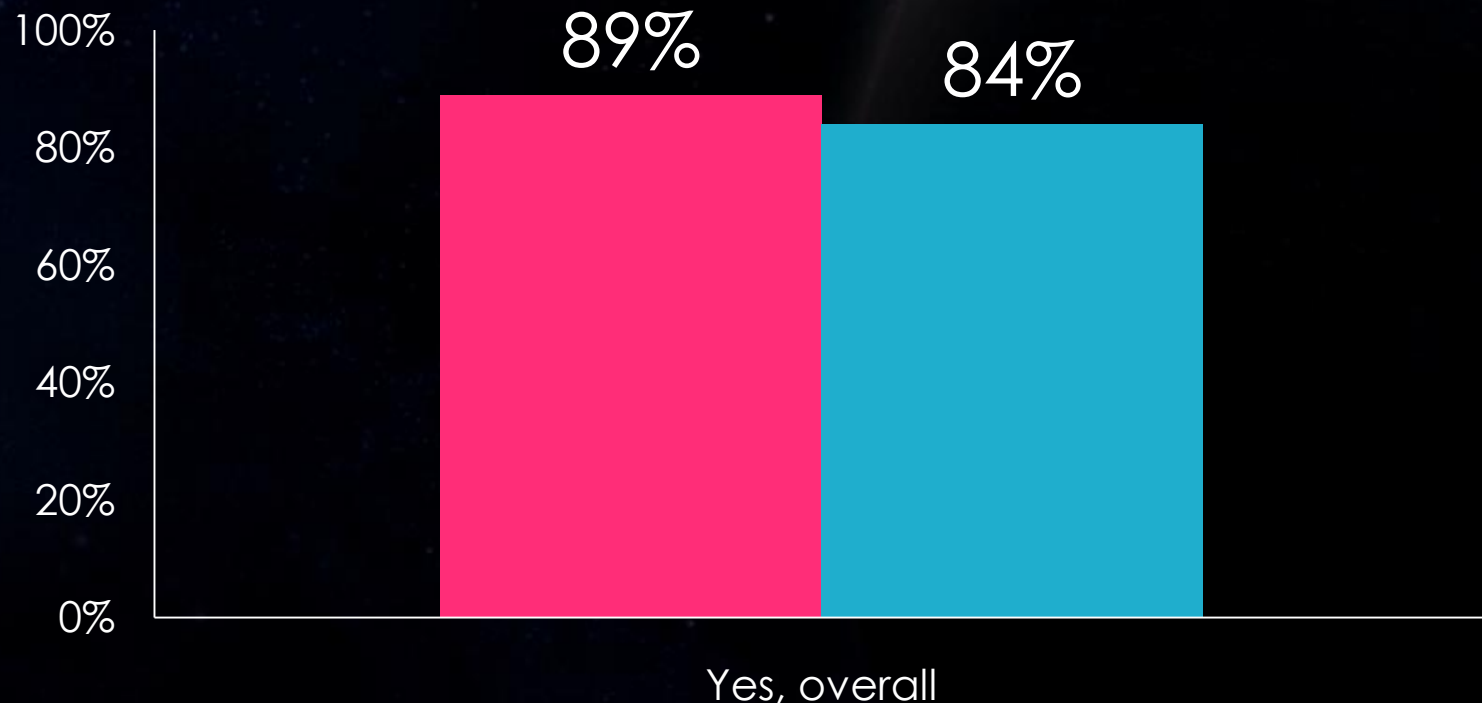
Flexibility and choices <the results>

**Did the presence of gameplay choices increase
your enjoyment?**



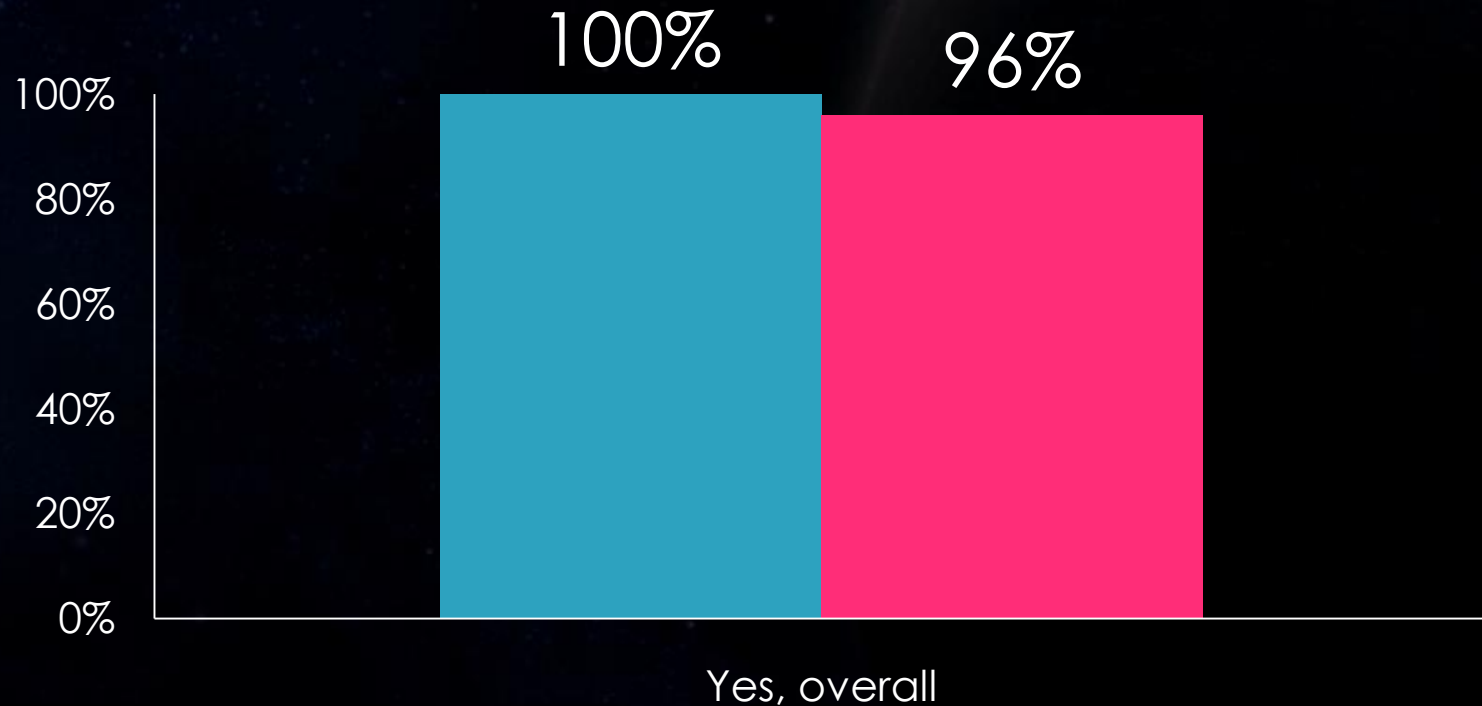
Flexibility and choices <the results>

Did the branching dialogue paths and the ability to choose responses increase your enjoyment?



Flexibility and choices <the results>

**Do you feel like this level let you play the way
you wanted to play?**



Flexibility and choices <the takeaway>



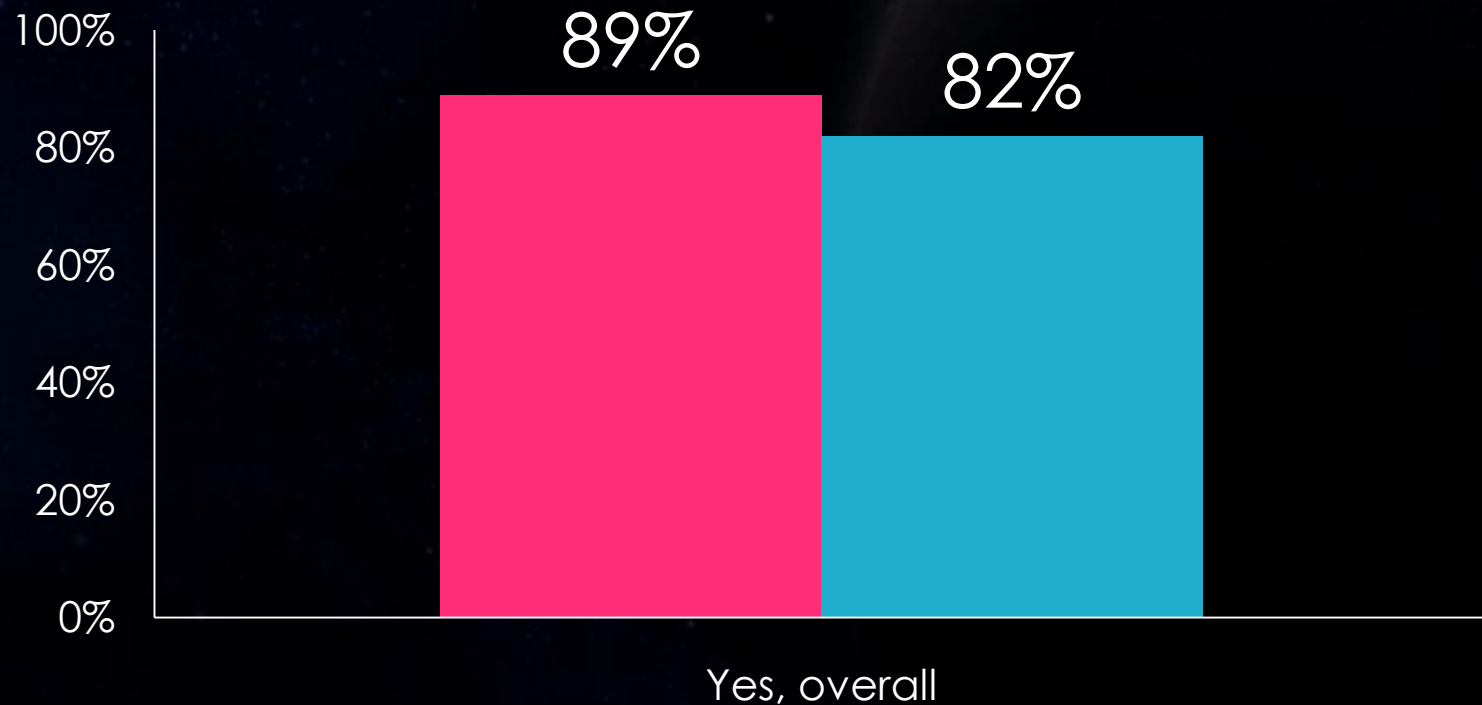
Meaningful victory <the theory>

- Rescuing someone
- Solving a crisis
- Saving the world



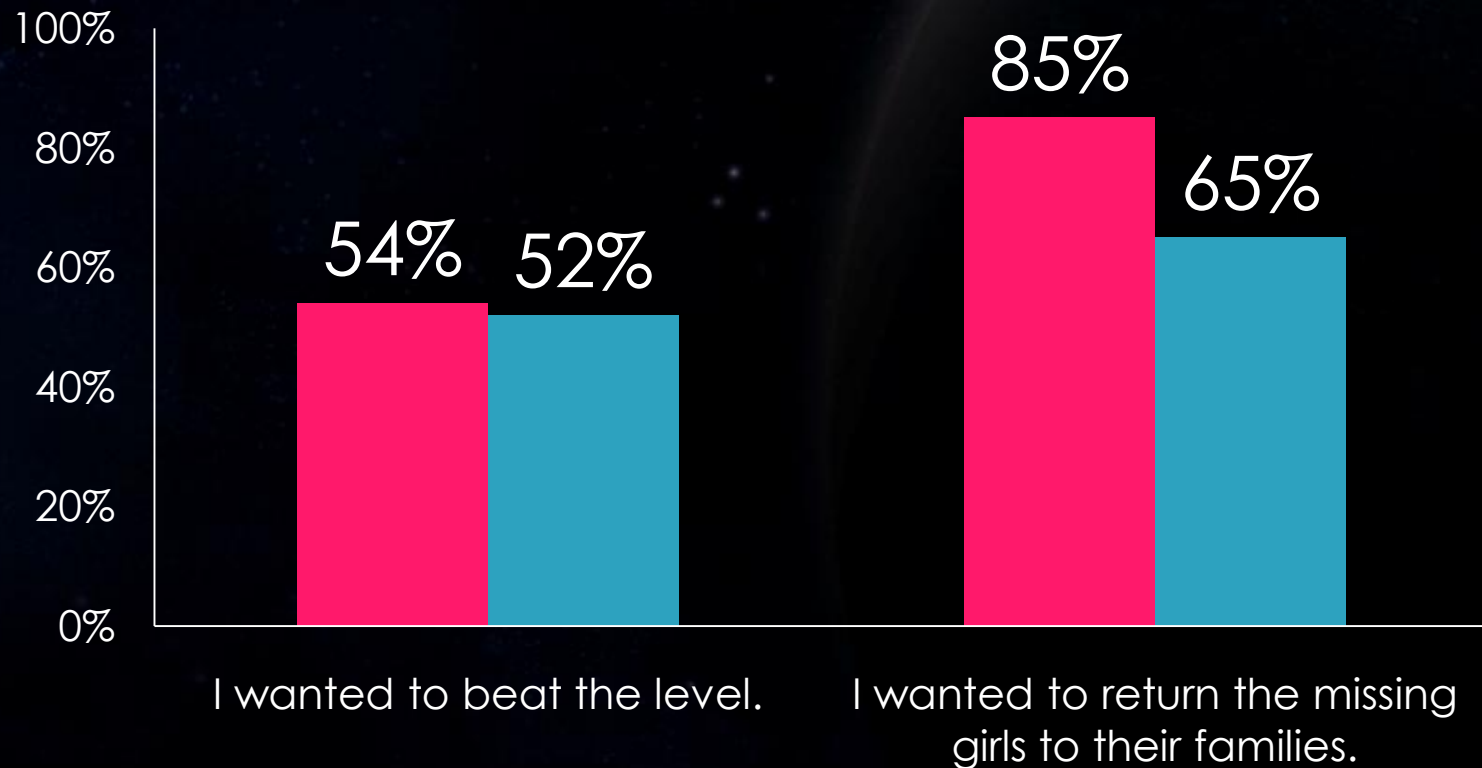
Meaningful victory <the results>

**Did you care whether Mirei recovered her
daughter safely?**



Meaningful victory <the results>

Please choose the statements that match your motivations for rescuing the girls:

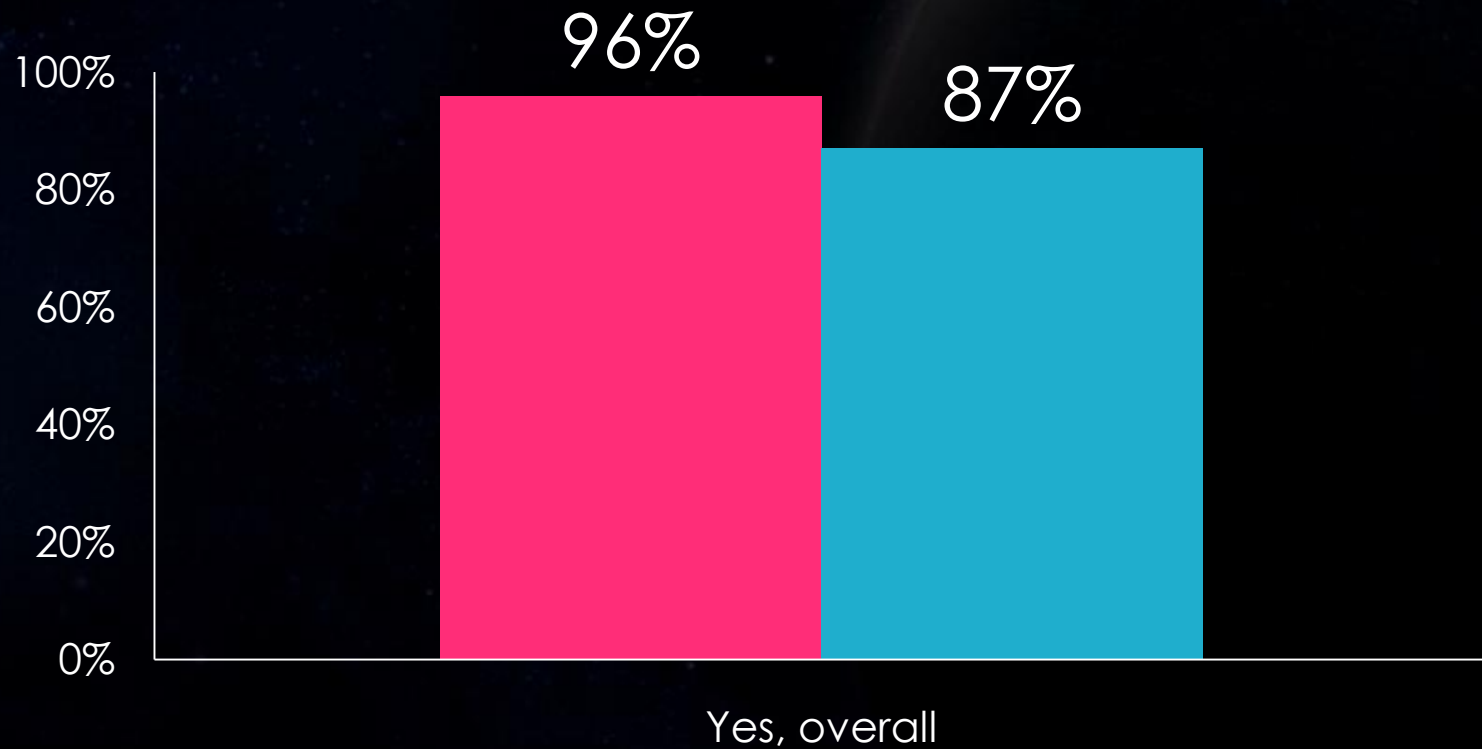


Meaningful victory <the takeaway>



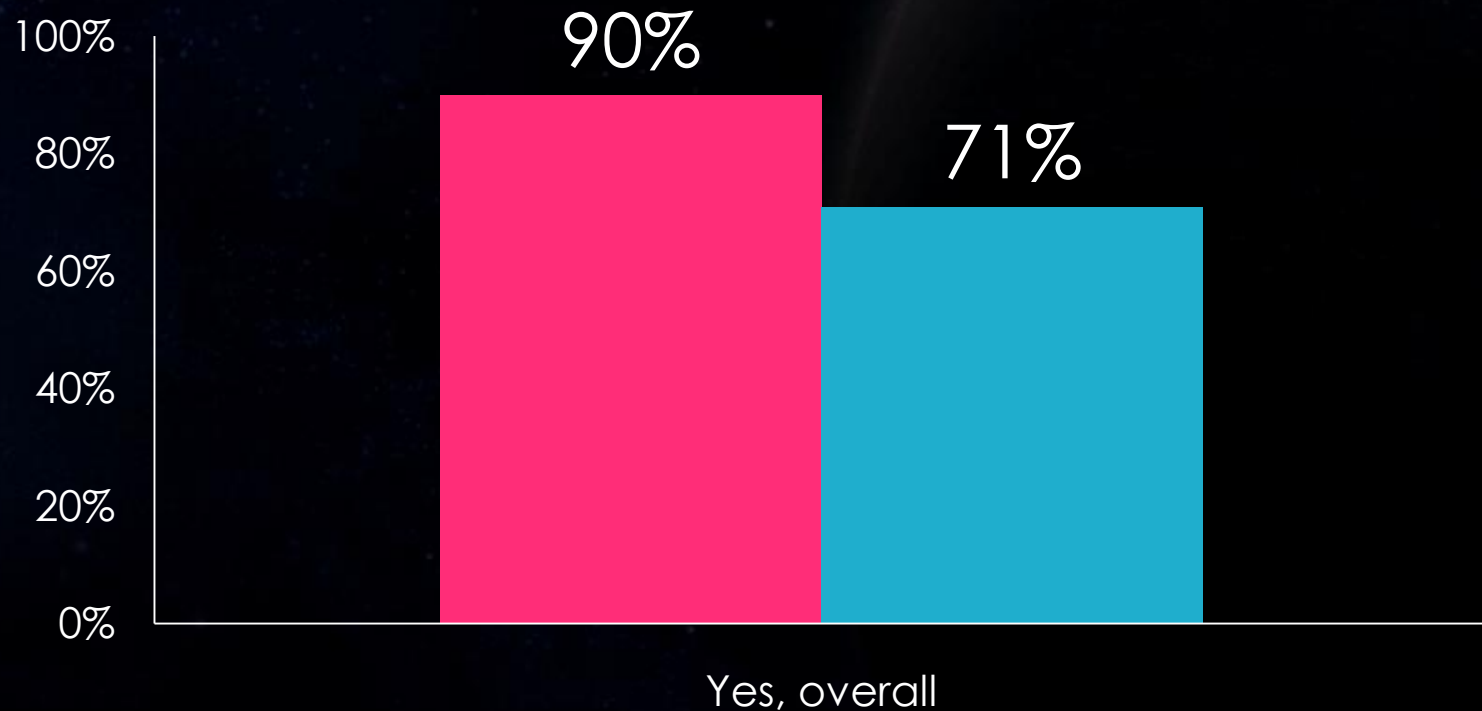
Overall results

Overall, did you enjoy playing the level?



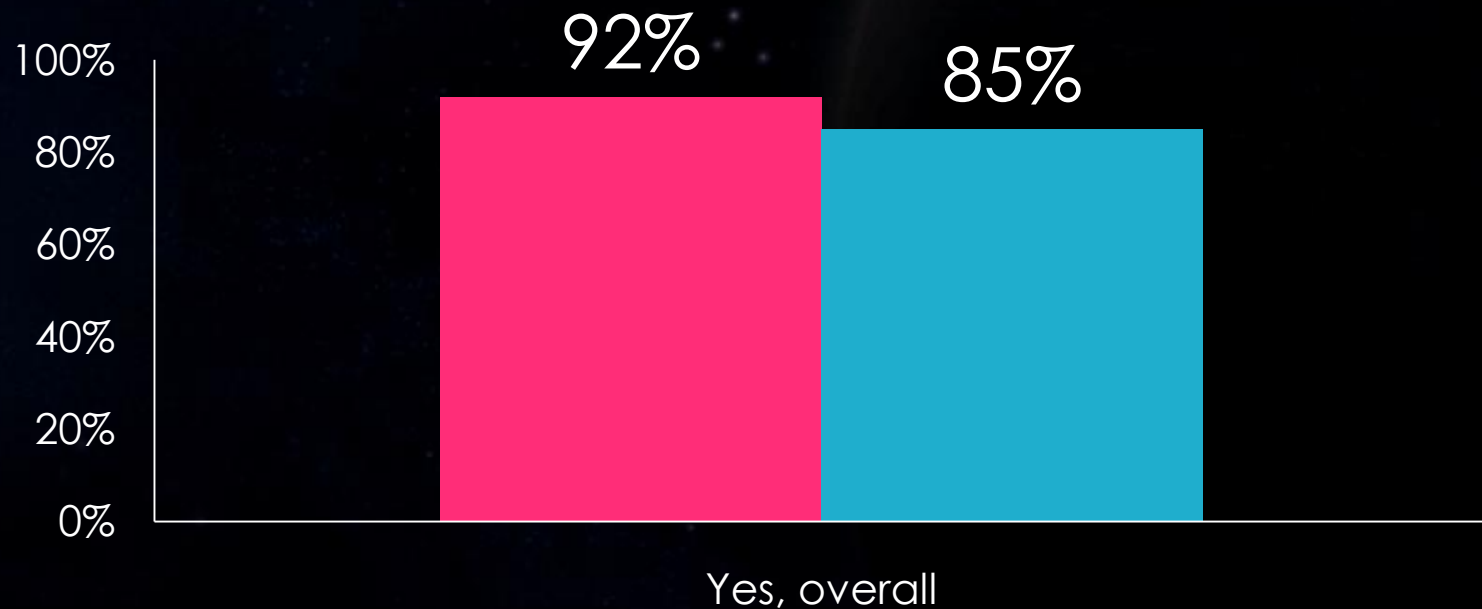
Overall results

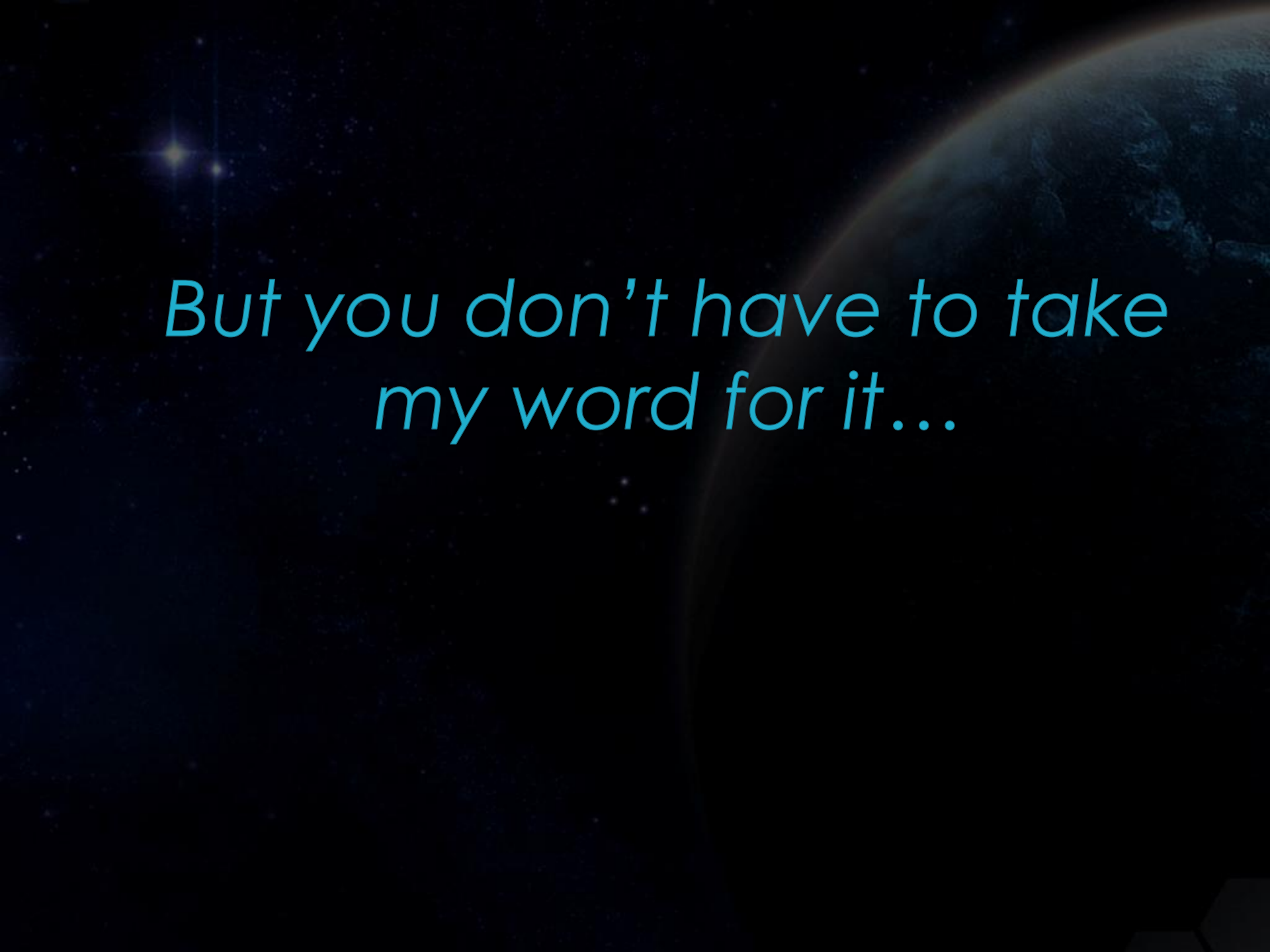
Do you feel like you, personally, are the type of gamer at which 'Mirei of Estrel' is aimed?



Overall results

If you heard about another gameplay experience that was noted as "similar to 'Mirei of Estrel'", would that make you more likely to want to play it?



A dark blue space background featuring a large, curved horizon of the Earth on the right side. The Earth's surface shows some cloud detail. In the upper left, there is a bright star with a four-pointed diffraction pattern. Numerous smaller, faint stars are scattered across the dark blue field.

*But you don't have to take
my word for it...*

Beyond Good and Evil

- ◉ Detailed backstory
- ◉ Non-stereotypical female characters
- ◉ In-game relationships
- ◉ Emotional stimuli
- ◉ Moral complexity
- ◉ Non-violent action
 - > (Platforming , Puzzles, + Stealth)
- ◉ Flexibility and choices
- ◉ Meaningful victory

8/8



Portal

- Detailed backstory
- Non-stereotypical female characters
- In-game relationships
- Emotional stimuli
- Moral complexity
- Non-violent action
- Flexibility and choices
- Meaningful victory

6/8



Mass Effect

- ◉ Detailed backstory
- ◉ Non-stereotypical female characters
- ◉ In-game relationships
- ◉ Emotional stimuli
- ◉ Moral complexity
- ◉ Non-violent action
- ◉ Flexibility and choices
- ◉ Meaningful victory

7/8



Ico and Shadow of the Colossus

- Detailed backstory (Both)
- Non-stereotypical female characters (Ico)
- In-game relationships (Both)
- Emotional stimuli (Both)
- Moral complexity (Sotc)
- Non-violent action (Ico)
 - > (Platforming + Puzzles)
- Flexibility and choices (Sotc)
- Meaningful victory (Both)

6/8, 6/8



Bioshock

- ◉ Detailed backstory
- ◉ Non-stereotypical female characters
- ◉ In-game relationships
- ◉ Emotional stimuli
- ◉ Moral complexity
- ◉ Non-violent action
- ◉ Flexibility and choices
- ◉ Meaningful victory

7/8



Prince of Persia

- Detailed backstory
- Non-stereotypical female characters
- In-game relationships
- Emotional stimuli
- Moral complexity
- Non-violent action
 - (Platforming + Puzzles)
- Flexibility and choices
- Meaningful victory



Uncharted 2

- ◉ Detailed backstory
- ◉ Non-stereotypical female characters
- ◉ In-game relationships
- ◉ Emotional stimuli
- ◉ Moral complexity
- ◉ Non-violent action
 - > (Platforming + Puzzles)
- ◉ Flexibility and choices
- ◉ Meaningful victory

7/8



The 'Female-Friendly' Checklist

1. Detailed backstory for characters and the world
2. Major female character(s), non-stereotypical
3. In-game relationships, especially ones the player can affect
4. Emotional moments
5. Moral complexity in characters and situations
6. Opportunities for non-violent action
7. Gameplay variety that creates strategic options
8. Important choices
9. Meaningful victory condition

The background of the slide is a dark space scene. On the right side, a large, curved horizon of a planet with a blue and white surface is visible. In the upper left, there is a bright star with a lens flare effect. The overall color palette is dark blue and black.

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