



Do Game Developers Want a Union?

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GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE[®]

MOSCONE CENTER · SAN FRANCISCO, CA

MARCH 2-6, 2015 · EXPO: MARCH 4-6, 2015

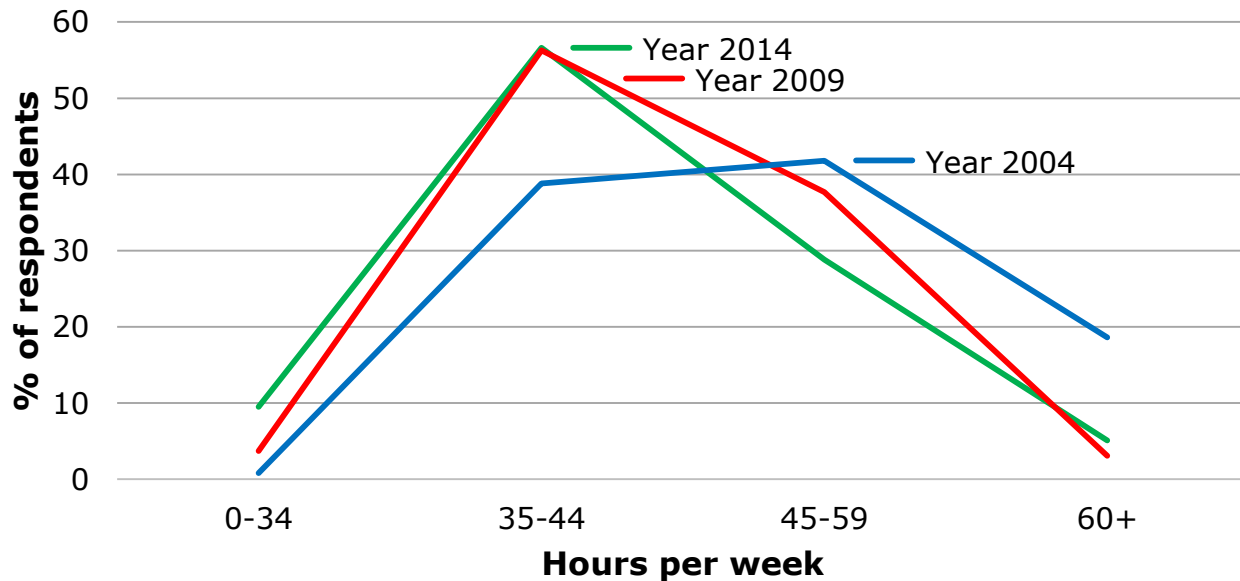


Background: IGDA surveys

- 3 international surveys about QoL: 2004-2009-2014, 3 milestones
- We were partners for the latest 2
- We teach Labour Relations and are interested in working conditions
- Data analyzed here = developers only

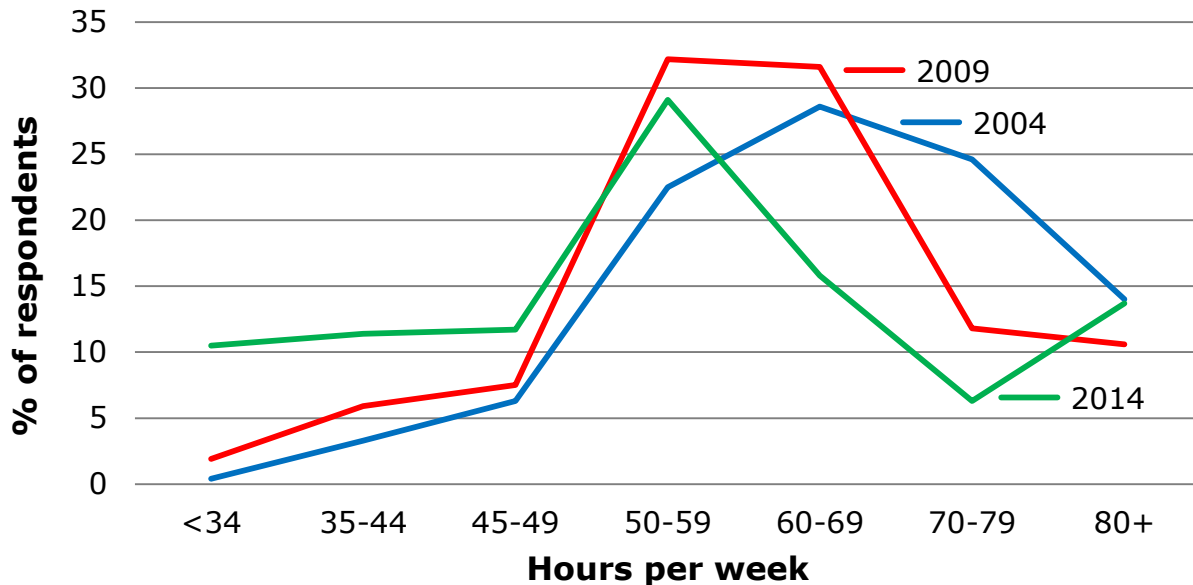


Regular hours of work: a general decrease



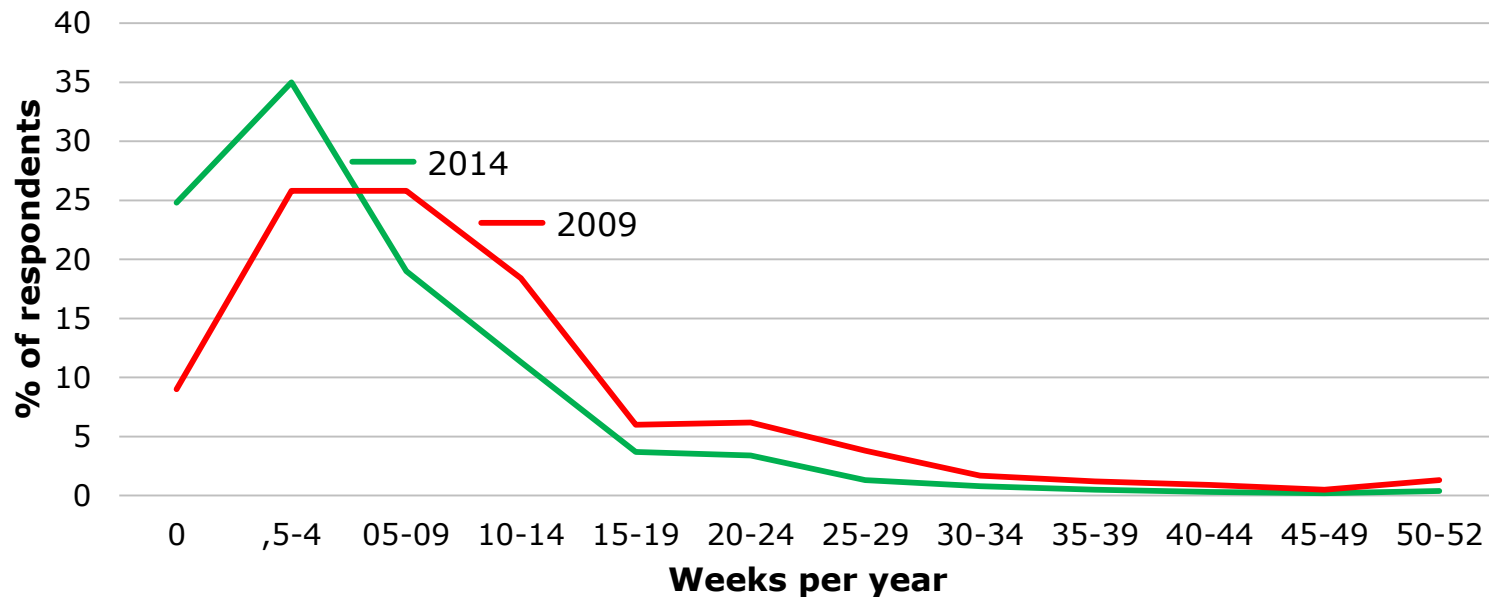


Hours in crunch: a general decrease



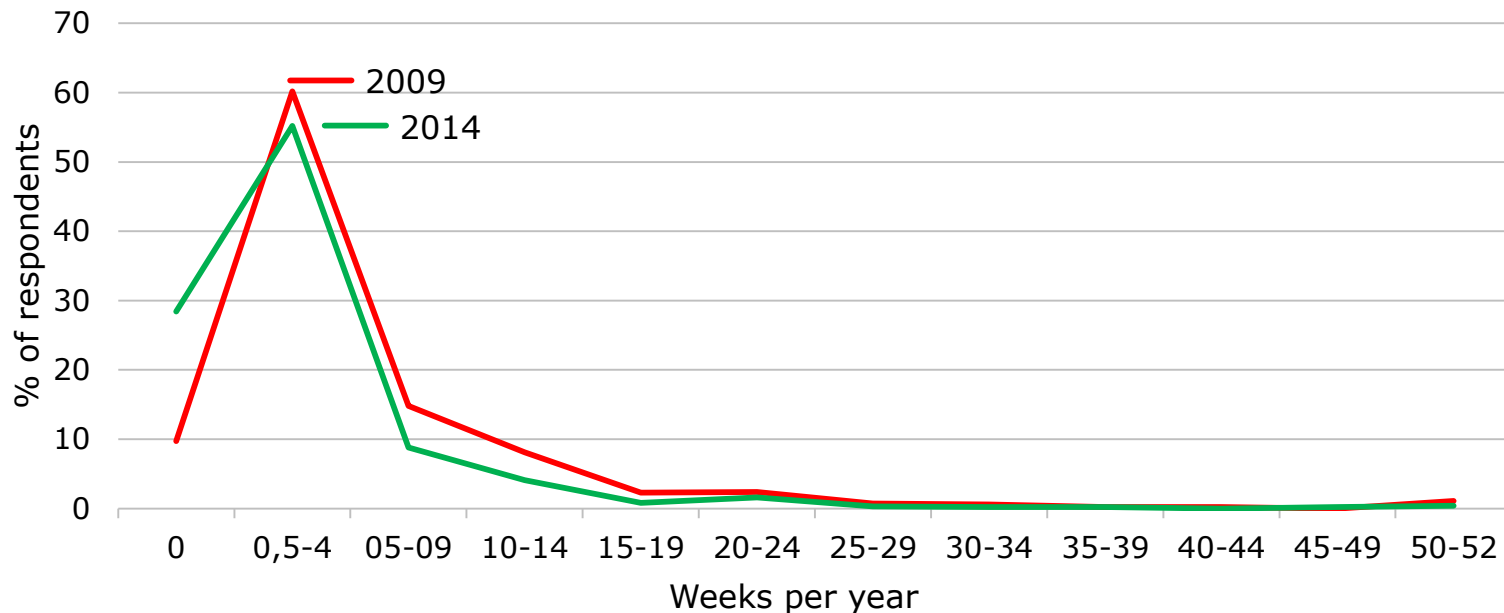


Crunch weeks per year: Decrease





Hours of crunch in a row: Decrease





No crunch: upward trend

2004	2009	2014
1.4%	9%	24.8%



Compensated or not

	2004	2009	2014
Perks during crunch		17	31
Not any compensation	48	44	28
Time off	27	17	24
Paid overtime (i.e., time and a half)	2	9	8
Lump sum bonuses	17	5	3
Time off and bonuses		7	3



Feel like sharing in the profits?

	2009	2014
Agree – strongly agree	38%	31%
Disagree – strongly disagree	39%	45%



QoL: Concerning upward trends

	% Agree in	
	2009	2014
After work, too tired to do some of the things I'd like to do	50	55.2
People close to me complain that I am preoccupied with work when not working	25	30
My work interferes with my ability to spend time with my family	33.6	39.7
The tension of trying to balance work and home life leaves me emotionally drained	36.3	42.7



QoL: Stable trends in some high figures, 2009-2014

Do not enjoy a good work and life balance	42%
Worry whether they should work less and spend more time with their children	40%
Need more time for themselves	61%
Need more time to be with friends	52%
Consider there is not enough time in their day to accomplish all they have to do	56%
Crunch time negatively affected life outside of work by affecting emotional/physical health	54 / 48%



Is crunch unavoidable? More and more critical...

	% Agree in	
	2009	2014
Crunch is a necessary part of game development	27	20.4



Is crunch unavoidable? More and more critical...

Do you believe crunch to be necessary, unavoidable, part and parcel in game development? (Canadian interviews, 2013-14)

	(%)
Avoidable	48.3
Part avoidable, part unavoidable	27.6
Unavoidable	24.1



Is crunch unavoidable? More and more critical...

Available	Unavoidable
Mismanagement: poor resource and schedule planning, exaggerated fear not to meet deadlines	Technical problems, feature creeps
Too tightly negotiated contracts: time frames, budgets => understaffed	Delays in the chain of subcontractors
Problem of discipline among the creative crowd - procrastination	Partner studio abroad, in another time zone
Changes in the course of project / Formal change control policy or not	Inherent uncertainty in innovation



Game Developers Take Action against These Challenges

Individually: basically by leaving

Online mobilisation: UbiFree (France), UbiFree 2.0 (Montreal), EA Spouse, Rockstar Spouse, LA Noire, Trendy Entertainment, 38 Studios Spouse, Gamewatch.org wiki, Gamasutra

Class action law suits

Involvement in the IGDA



Do developers want...

- Something else?
- Something more?
- Do developers want a union?



A union:

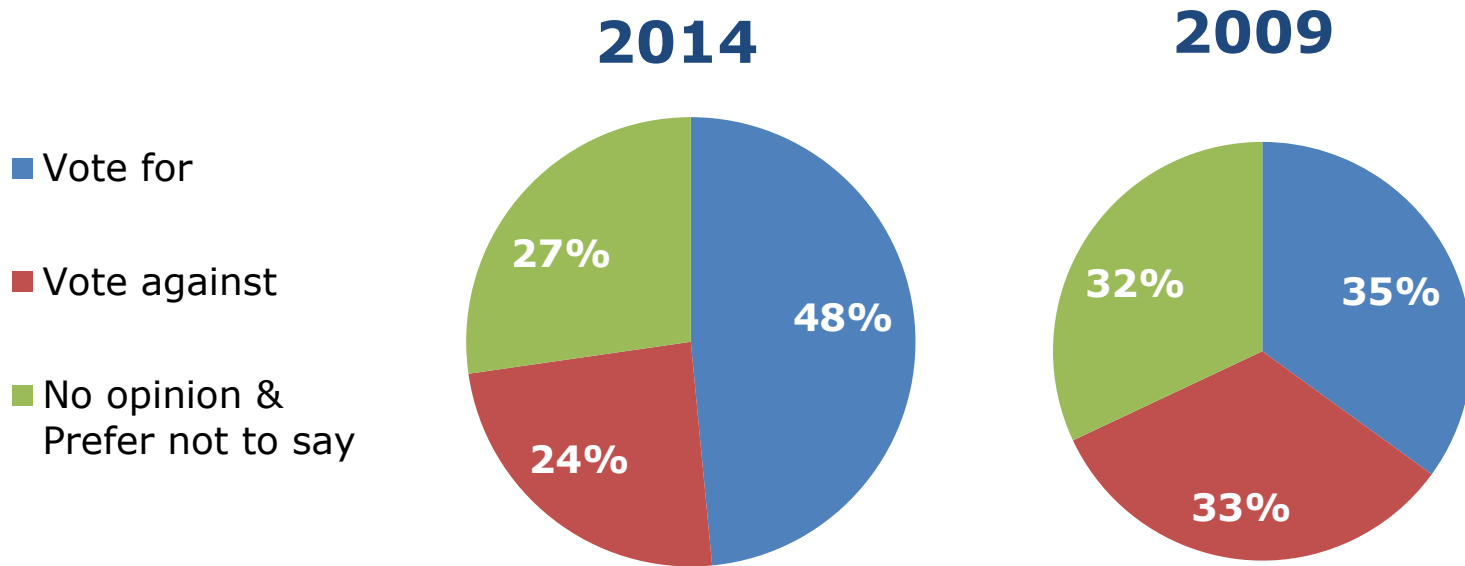
Organized association of workers

**Protects and promotes the rights
and interests of workers**

**Negotiates legally binding contracts
with employers**



How would you vote?





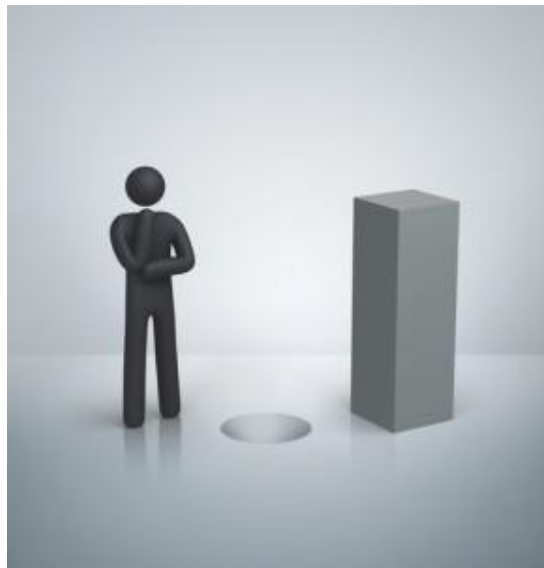
Why vote for a union?

- Job insecurity
- Dissatisfaction with pay
- Dissatisfaction with career options
- Job type
- Everyone else is doing it



But, Do Unions Fit?

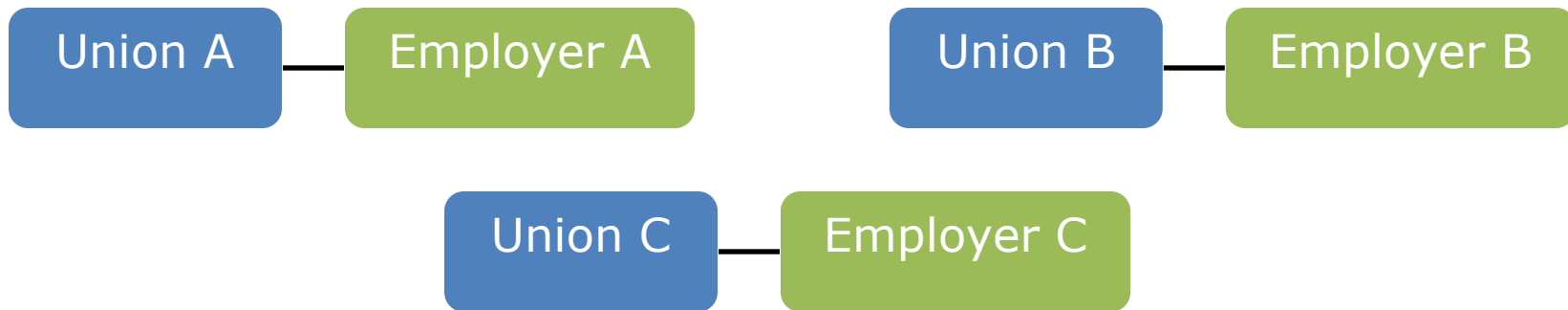
- Merit vs. seniority?
- Mobility?
- Constrained flexibility?
- Outsourcing?
- Impact on start-ups?





Perhaps These Don't...

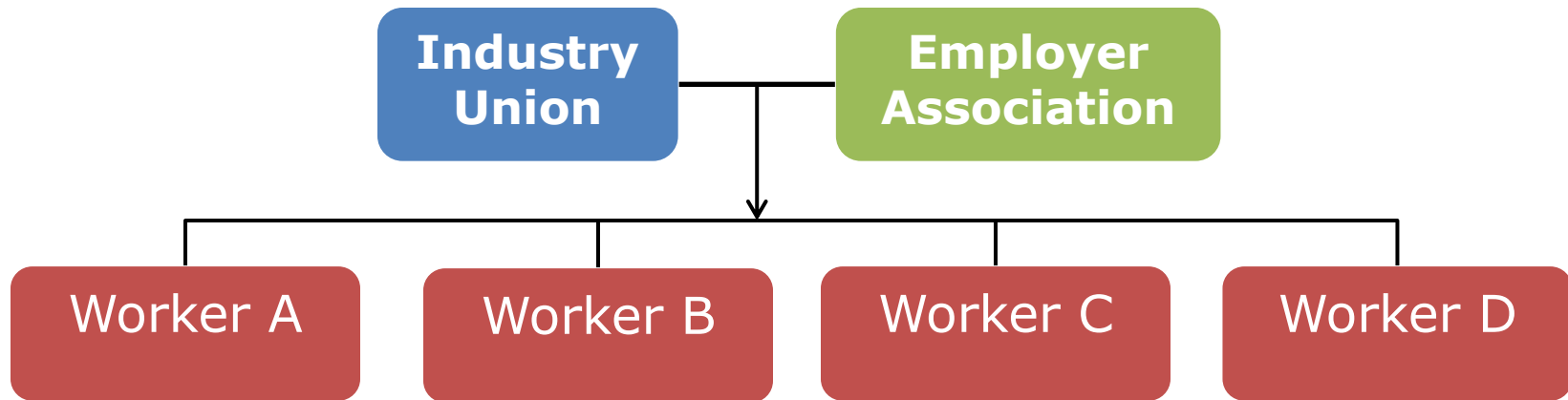
- Enterprise Unions: Represent workers at a single workplace or employer





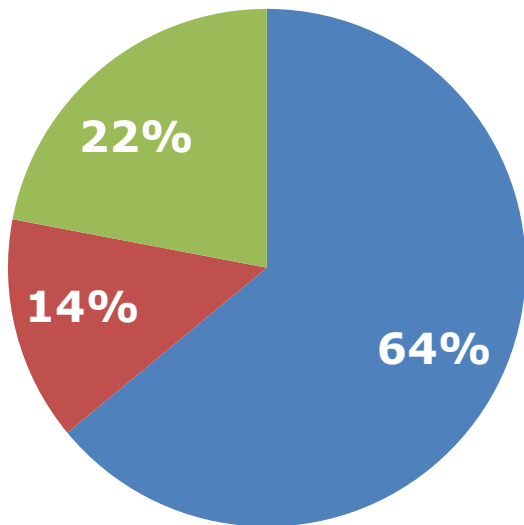
But These Might...

- **Industry Unions:** Represent workers across an entire craft or industry





How would you vote: Industry union?



■ Vote for

■ Vote against

■ Would not vote &
Prefer not to say



In Conclusion...

- Many desire a stronger form of collective action
- Real barriers to traditional unionization
- Challenge to unions and governments to create models that fit contemporary workplaces



gameqol.org



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Want to take part in the survey?

<http://bit.ly/take-the-IGDADSS2015>

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