

violence and video games

Since their creation in the 1970s, video games have changed drastically. The first mass-marketed video game, *Pong*, allowed users to play a simulated game of tennis. Recent video games, including *Grand Theft Auto*, allow users to travel a fictional world engaging in tasks through a character's eyes in which they can steal cars, murder police officers and civilians, and destroy things with guns, grenades, tanks, and other weapons. The violent nature of many popular video games has increasingly concerned scholars and parents alike. Scholars remain divided as to the actual influence video game violence has upon children.



Video game usage has grown significantly in various parts of the world since the 1970s. In 2012, a report by the Entertainment Software Association found that in the United States, the average household owned one or more dedicated game console, PC, or smart phone. Forty-nine percent of households owned a dedicated game console; on average those households owned two dedicated consoles. The average age of game players was 30, with 37% over the age of 36, 31% between the ages of 18 and 35, and 32% under 18 years old. Males played video games at a slightly higher rate than females. More parents said they place a time limit on video game playing (84%) than said they do for Internet usage (79%), television viewing (78%), or movie viewing (72%). Ninety-one percent of parents said they pay attention to the content of the games their kids play.

The increase in game play, as well as the graphic nature of video game violence, has worried many parents and scholars. Some members of the media and others have frequently attributed violent actions to video games and other violent forms of entertainment. Many scholars have attempted to find a correlation between the playing of violent video games and violent action. A series of studies at different age levels found mixed results. In 1995, Derek Scott found no significant connection between playing video games and increased aggression when he studied university students. A second study during the same year found that second-grade students who played martial arts games were more aggressive than students who played other games. Nearly 20 years after the 1995 study, more than 130 research reports involving more than 130,000 participants have shown that violent video games increase aggressive thoughts, angry feelings, and aggressive behavior, according Ohio State University professor of communication and psychology Brad J. Bushman.

However, such reports do not rule out that children with increased aggression already had a predisposition to more violent video games. Are people who are likely to play violent video games already more aggressive, inclined to be angry, and less empathetic than those who do not play violent video games? It is impossible to tell with these surveys and research, and there is no scientific evidence linking true crime and violent behavior to violent video game play. Much of the evidence linking violent video games to crimes is anecdotal.

Despite results finding a weak connection between aggression and violent video games, the increased awareness and prevalence of school violence has led to greater calls for censorship and reform. In 1998, two students shot and killed themselves and 13 other people at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Following the event, news reports and some members of different religious groups targeted the killers' preference for the violent video games *Doom* and *Duke Nukem*. In 2007, 17-year-old Daniel Petric of Wellington, Ohio, killed his mother and father after they forbade him from playing *Halo 3*. Petric claimed to be addicted to video games and had apparently played *Halo*

3 for up to 18 hours per day prior to the shooting. Similar incidents in schools across the United States have frequently caused people to consider violent video games as a factor in influencing the students' actions.

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Further Reading

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[back to top](#) **Entry ID: 981592**