



Survey: Average gamer is 35, fat and depressed

CDC study finds playing leads to 'lower extraversion' in adult gamers

By Suzanne Choney

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A new study says the average age of video-game players in the United States is 35, and oh, by the way: They're overweight and tend to be depressed.

Investigators from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Emory University and Andrews University analyzed survey data from more than 500 adults in the Seattle-Tacoma area. The subjects ranged in age from 19 to 90, according to the study, published in the October issue of the [American Journal of Preventive Medicine](#).

The hypothesis was that video-game players have a higher body mass index — the measure of a person's weight in relation to their height — and "a greater number of poor mental health days" versus nonplayers, said Dr. James B. Weaver III of the CDC's National Center for Health Marketing. The hypothesis was correct, he said.

The findings, he said in the article, "differentiated adult video-game players from nonplayers. Video-game players also reported lower extraversion, consistent with research on adolescents that linked video-game playing to a sedentary lifestyle and overweight status, and to mental-health concerns."

The Seattle-Tacoma area was chosen for the study, researchers said, both because of its size as the 13th largest media market in the United States and because its Internet usage level is "the highest in the nation."

Female video-game players reported greater incidents of depression and "lower health status" than women who do not play video games, researchers said, while male players reported a higher BMI and more Internet use time than nonplayers.

"Internet community support and time spent online distinguished adult video-game players from nonplayers, a finding consistent with prior research pointing to the willingness of adult video-game enthusiasts to sacrifice real-world social activities to play video games," Weaver said in the article.

The data, he said, points to the need for "further research among adults to clarify how to use digital opportunities more effectively to promote health and prevent disease."

In a commentary in the same issue of the magazine, Dr. Brian A. Primack of the University of Pittsburgh's School of Medicine agrees, and asks: "How do we simultaneously help the public steer away from imitation playlike activities, harness the potentially positive aspects of video games and keep in perspective the overall place of video games in our society?"

For children and adults, he writes, games that require physical exertion, such as "Hide and seek" and "Freeze tag" are "still probably what we need most."

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