

Just a game? Study shows no evidence that violent video games lead to real-life violence

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Mass media and general public often link violent video games to real-life violence, although there is limited evidence to support the link.

Debate on the topic generally intensifies after mass public shootings, with some commentators linking these [violent acts](#) to the perpetrators' interests in violent video games.

However, others have pointed out that different factors, such as [mental health issues](#) and/or easy access to guns, are more likely explanations.

In the light of these conflicting claims, President Obama called in 2013 for more [government funding](#) for research on video games and violence.

But before governments introduce any policies restricting access to violent video games, it is important to establish whether violent video games do indeed make players behave violently in the [real world](#).

Research by Dr. Agne Suziedelyte, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Economics at City, University of London, provides evidence of the effects of violent [video game](#) releases on children's violent behavior using data from the US.

Dr. Suziedelyte examined the effects of violent video games on two types of violence: aggression against other people, and destruction of things/property.

The study, published in the *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, focused on boys aged 8-18 years—the group most likely to play violent video games.

Dr. Suziedelyte used econometric methods that identify plausibly causal effects of violent video games on violence, rather than only associations.

She found no evidence that violence against other people increases after a new violent video game is released. Parents reported, however, that children were more likely to destroy things after playing violent video

games.

Dr. Suziedelyte said: "Taken together, these results suggest that violent video games may agitate children, but this agitation does not translate into violence against other people—which is the type of violence which we care about most.

"A likely explanation for my results is that video game playing usually takes place at home, where opportunities to engage in violence are lower. This 'incapacitation' effect is especially important for violence-prone boys who may be especially attracted to [violent video games](#).

"Therefore, policies that place restrictions on video game sales to minors are unlikely to reduce violence."

More information: Agne Suziedelyte, Is it only a game? Video games and violence, *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* (2021).
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