# ESSENTIAL FACTS
## ABOUT GAMES AND VIOLENCE

## FACTS, COMMON SENSE, AND NUMEROUS STUDIES ALL REFUTE THE CLAIM THAT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN VIDEO GAMES AND VIOLENCE.

Blaming video games for violence in the real world is no more productive than blaming the news media for bringing violent crime into our homes night after night. Numerous authorities have examined the scientific record and found that it does not establish any causal link between media content and real-life violence.

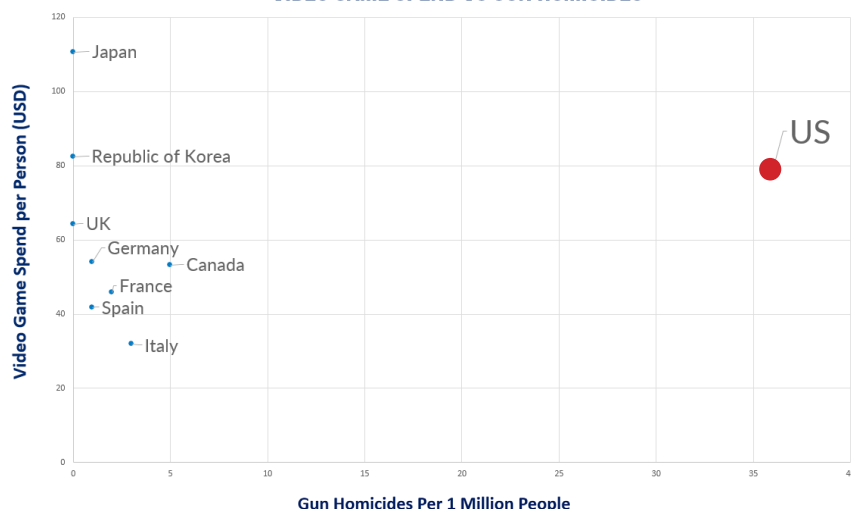| AVERAGE GAME PLAYER AGE: | AVERAGE GAME BUYER AGE: | PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS PRESENT WHEN THEIR CHILDREN PURCHASE OR RENT A VIDEO GAME: | PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS WHO MONITOR THE CONTENT OF THE GAMES THEIR CHILDREN PLAY: |
|---|---|---|---|
| **35** | **36** | **90%** | **94%** |

## CREDIBLE REAL-WORLD EVIDENCE DEMONSTRATES THE FALLACY OF LINKING GAMES AND VIOLENCE.

- Violent crime, particularly among the young, has decreased dramatically since the early 1990s. During the same period of time, video games have steadily increased in popularity and use, exactly the opposite of what one would expect if there were a causal link. Many games with violent content sold in the US – and some with far more violence – are also sold in foreign markets.

- Video games, including those with violent content, are popular in many countries with much lower violent crime rates than the US, suggesting that influences such as the background of the individual, the availability of guns, and other factors are more relevant to understanding the cause of any particular crime. An analysis of gun ownership by The New York Times concluded the "only variable that can explain the high rate of mass shootings in America is its astronomical number of guns ... Whether a population plays more or fewer video games also appears to have no impact. Americans are no more likely to play video games than people in any other developed country." Read The New York Times analysis **here**.

### VIDEO GAME SPEND VS GUN HOMICIDES



Scatter plot: Video Game Spend per Person (USD) vs Gun Homicides Per 1 Million People. Data points labeled: Japan, Republic of Korea, UK, Germany, Canada, France, Spain, Italy, US.

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## CREDIBLE REAL-WORLD EVIDENCE DEMONSTRATES THE FALLACY OF LINKING GAMES AND VIOLENCE.

- An international coalition of 228 distinguished academics, researchers, and scholars issued an open letter to the American Psychological Association (APA) challenging its 2005 policy statement on media and violence. According to the scholars, APA relied on flawed research, including inconsistent findings and manipulated data, to identify a causal link between video games and violence. To read the letter to APA in its entirety, please **click here.**

> "PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES PURPORTING TO SHOW A CONNECTION BETWEEN EXPOSURE TO VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES AND HARMFUL EFFECTS ON CHILDREN DO NOT PROVE THAT SUCH EXPOSURE CAUSES MINORS TO ACT AGGRESSIVELY."
>
> **US SUPREME COURT JUSTICE ANTONIN SCALIA**
> MAJORITY OPINION IN BROWN V. EMA/ESA

## WHAT DOES THE SCIENCE SAY?

Kuhn, Simone, et al. *Does playing violent video games cause aggression? A longitudinal intervention study.* Molecular Psychology, 2018. doi:10.1038/s41380-018-0031-7

- Taken together, the findings of the present study show that an extensive game intervention over the course of 2 months did not reveal any specific changes in aggression, empathy, interpersonal competencies, impulsivity-related constructs, depressivity, anxiety or executive control functions; neither in comparison to an active control group that played a non-violent video game nor to a passive control group. Read the full report **here.**

Bean, A.M & Ferro, L. *Predictors of Video Game Console Aggression.* Revista Argentina De Ciencias del Comportamiento 8, no. 1 (2016): 61.

- A study by Drs. Bean and Ferro found, "no aggression differences in all twelve t-tests for the three aggression variables . . . no support found suggesting that violent video games caused aggression as touted by past researchers." Read the full report **here.**

DeCamp, W. and Ferguson, C. *The Impact of Degree of Exposure to Violent Video Games, Family Background, and Other Factors on Youth Violence.* Journal of Youth and Adolescence 46 (2016): 388. doi: 10.1007/s10964-016-0561-8

- In a study examining video games, family background, and other environmental factors, researchers found "video game violence is not a meaningful predictor of youth violence and, instead, support the conclusion that family and social variables are more influential factors." Read the full report **here.**

# ESSENTIAL FACTS ABOUT GAMES AND VIOLENCE

## VIOLENT CRIME RATE AND VIDEO GAME SALES 1998 — 2015

**VIOLENT CRIME OFFENSES PER 100K PEOPLE**   **VIDEO GAME SALES ($ IN BILLIONS)**
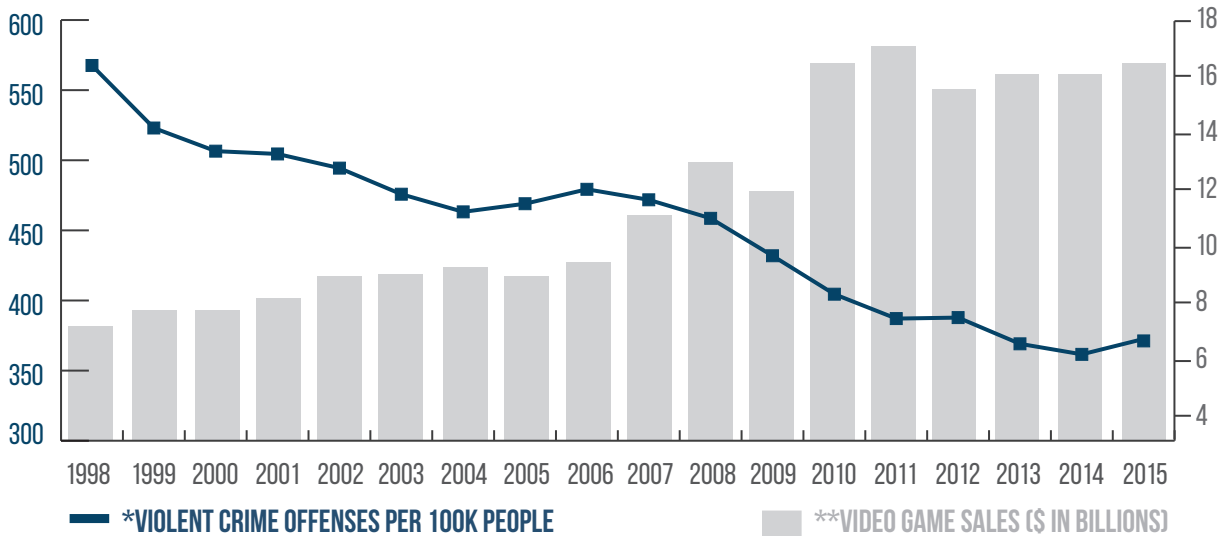
SOURCES: *FBI UNIFORM CRIME REPORTING, 1998-2015   **THE NPD GROUP, INC./RETAIL TRACKING, 1998-2015

## WHAT DOES THE SCIENCE SAY?

Ferguson, Christopher J., Stephanie M. Rueda, Amanda M. Cruz, Diana E. Ferguson, Stacey Fritz and Shawn M. Smith. *Violent video games and aggression: Causal relationship or byproduct of family violence and intrinsic violence motivation?* Criminal Justice & Behavior 35 (2008): 311-332. Web. 10 Aug. 2011.

- "Two studies examined the relationship between exposure to violent video games and aggression or violence in the laboratory and in real life. Study 1 participants were either randomized or allowed to choose to play a violent or nonviolent game. Although males were more aggressive than females, neither randomized exposure to violent video game conditions nor previous real life exposure to violent video games caused any differences in aggression. Study 2 examined correlations between trait aggression, violent criminal acts, and exposure to both violent games and family violence. Results indicated that trait aggression, family violence, and male gender were predictive of violent crime, but exposure to violent games was not. Structural equation modeling suggested that family violence and innate aggression as predictors of violent crime were a better fit to the data than was exposure to video game violence. These results question the common belief that violent-video-game exposure causes violent acts."

  "Findings from the two studies were mutually supportive. These results suggest that playing violent video games does not constitute a significant risk for future violent criminal acts. Because there was no evidence in either study to support a direct link between video game exposure and aggressive or violent behavior, these results call into question the GAM as a useful predictive model of aggression."

  Read the research **here.**

# ESSENTIAL FACTS ABOUT GAMES AND VIOLENCE

## WHAT DOES THE SCIENCE SAY?

Ferguson, Christopher. *Do Angry Birds Make for Angry Children? A Meta-Analysis of Video Game Influences on Children's and Adolescents' Aggression, Mental Health, Prosocial Behavior, and Academic Performance.* Perspectives on Psychological Science 10 no. 5 (2015): 646.

- In *"Do Angry Birds Make for Angry Children?,"* Dr. Ferguson concludes that academic publishing suffers from a trend of publication bias when it comes to video games: "The overall results of the meta-analysis indicate that video games, whether violent or nonviolent, have minimal deleterious influence on children's well-being." Read the full report **here.**

Hilgard, J., Engelhardt, C., and Rouder, J. *Overstated Evidence for Short-Term Effects of Violent Games on Affect and Behavior: A Reanalysis of Anderson et al. (2010).* Psychological Bulletin (2016).

- For an in-depth examination of media aggression bias, researchers uncovered concerning issues with video game aggression studies' methodologies. Specifically, when trying to reproduce experiments that yield support for theories on games an aggression, the researchers show that "experiments meeting the original authors' criteria for methodological quality do not yield larger adjusted effects than other experiments, but instead yield larger indications of bias, indicating that perhaps they were selected for significance." Read the full report **here.**

## RATINGS AND PARENTAL CONTROLS HELP PARENTS MAKE APPROPRIATE ENTERTAINMENT CHOICES FOR THEIR FAMILIES.

Just as with other types of entertainment, there is a wide variety of content available in computer and video games to suit the wide variety of individuals who play games. The industry has also voluntarily established numerous tools and policies to help parents make educated choices and ensure that retailers only sell games to those whose age is appropriate for the game in question.

- Computer and video games are rated by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), whose system includes age recommendations, content descriptors and interactive elements. The Federal Trade Commission credited the video game industry with "outpacing" other entertainment industries in curtailing the marketing of mature-rated products to children. In addition, a June 2017 study conducted by Hart Research Associates found:

  - 84% of parents are aware of the ESRB rating system.
  - 71% regularly check a game's rating before making a purchase.
  - 74% are aware of content descriptors, 81% of whom check them regularly.

- All new video game consoles include parental controls that limit a child's access to games based on their ESRB ratings. According to a 2016 study, 94 percent of parents believe parental controls on video game consoles are useful.

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## RATINGS AND PARENTAL CONTROLS*

- Parents impose time usage limits on video games more than any other form of entertainment:

    - **75% of parents place time limits on video game playing.**

    - **71% of parents place time limits on Internet usage.**

    - **68% of parents place time limits on television viewing.**

    - **61% of parents place time limits on movie viewing.**

*Source: *2017 Essential Facts About the Computer and Video Game Industry*, ESA

## OF THE 1,948 RATINGS ASSIGNED BY ESRB IN 2017:

**EVERYONE — E — ESRB**
**34%**
received an
E (Everyone) rating

**EVERYONE 10+ — E 10+ — ESRB**
**22%**
received an E10+
(Everyone 10+) rating

**TEEN — T — ESRB**
**31%**
received an
T (Teen) rating

**MATURE 17+ — M — ESRB**
**13%**
received an M
(Mature) rating

- "Self-regulation, such as that done by the Entertainment Software Rating Board for video games, is an effective way for companies to modify their behavior to protect consumers where the government could or should not act … The electronic game industry continues to have the strongest self-regulatory code and enforcement of restrictions on marketing, advertising, and selling mature-rated games to younger audiences." - FTC Commissioner Maureen K. Ohlhausen at the Better Business Bureau (BBB) Self-Regulation Conference in Washington, DC [June 24, 2014]

# ESSENTIAL FACTS ABOUT GAMES AND VIOLENCE

## YOUTH VIOLENCE

We all search for answers when something terrible involving children happens, but terrible things occur due to a host of complicated reasons that may defy easy explanation. Studies have failed to establish a causal link between video games and actual violence. Violent crime, particularly among the young, has been decreasing in our country as video games have been increasing in popularity.

Patrick M. Markey, PhD, Charlotte N. Markey, PhD, Juliana French, *Violent Video Games and Real-World Violence: Rhetoric Versus Data for Psychology of Popular Media Culture,* August 2014

- "Contrary to the claims that violent video games are linked to aggressive assaults and homicides, no evidence was found to suggest that this medium was a major (or minor) contributing cause of violence in the United States. Annual trends in video game sales for the past 33 years were unrelated to violent crime both concurrently and up to 4 years later. Unexpectedly, monthly sales of video games were related to concurrent decreases in aggravated assaults and were unrelated to homicides...

  [H]omicides tended to decrease in the months following the release of popular M-rated violent video games...

  If video games are really the equivalent of flight simulators training people to kill... it is difficult to explain why homicide rates would go down after millions of these 'murder simulators' have been sold. When the media, politicians, or researchers link the murderous rampages of male adolescents with violent video games, they are conveying a classic illusory correlation... These individuals are ignoring that 90% of young males play video games... Finding that a young man who committed a violent crime also played a popular video game, such as *Call of Duty, Halo,* or *Grand Theft Auto,* is as pointless as pointing out that the criminal also wore socks. The rhetoric about violent video games does not match the data."

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## YOUTH VIOLENCE

**Christopher Ferguson, PhD, Associate Professor and Chair of Psychology at Stetson University,**
*Video Games Don't Make Kids Violent* TIME Magazine, December 2011

- "Quite simply, the research just hasn't panned out. For one thing, even while video game sales have skyrocketed, youth violence plummeted to its lowest levels in 40 years according to government statistics. Secondly, it has been increasingly recognized that much of the early research on violent video games linking them to increased aggression was problematic: most studies used outcome measures that had nothing to do with real-life aggression and failed to control carefully for other important variables, such as family violence, mental health issues or even gender in many studies (boys both play more violent video games and are more aggressive). More recent research has not found that children who play violent video games are more violent than other kids, nor harmed in any other identifiable fashion. A recent longitudinal study of my own, following 165 10- to 14-year-old boys and girls over a three-year period, now in press with Journal of Psychiatric Research, finds no long-term link between violent video games and youth aggression or dating violence."

**Henry Jenkins, PhD, Provost's Professor of Communication, Journalism, and Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California, Reality Bytes:** *Eight Myths about Video Games Debunked.*

- "According to federal crime statistics, the rate of juvenile violent crime in the United States is at a 30-year low. Researchers find that people serving time for violent crimes typically consume less media before committing their crimes than the average person in the general population. It's true that young offenders who have committed school shootings in America have also been game players. But young people in general are more likely to be gamers - 90 percent of boys and 40 percent of girls play. The overwhelming majority of kids who play do NOT commit antisocial acts.

  According to a 2001 US Surgeon General's report (1.3 MB) [linked in existing question], the strongest risk factors for school shootings centered on mental stability and the quality of home life, not media exposure. The moral panic over violent video games is doubly harmful. It has led adult authorities to be more suspicious and hostile to many kids who already feel cut off from the system. It also misdirects energy away from eliminating the actual causes of youth violence and allows problems to continue to fester."