

Video game devotees are much more likely to be working-class than middle-class, says research

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Credit: Anton Porsche from Pexels

Adults who play video games daily are much more likely to be working-class than middle-class, new research shows.

Although as teenagers their rates of daily playing were similar, by aged 20 middle- class people were devoting more time to their careers, the study found.

Xiaobin Zhou, Dr. Adrian Leguina and Professor Paula Saukko, from Loughborough University, interviewed 37 gamers and analyzed [survey data](#) on 3,357 English people aged 16–34.

From the survey, they found that among people aged 20–24, 8.7% working in higher managerial or professional jobs played video games every day, compared with 20% of people in routine or manual jobs. The figures for 25- to 34-year-olds were 8.7% and 13% respectively.

Xiaobin Zhou told the British Sociological Association's [online annual conference](#) held today (Friday 5 April 2024) that after aged 20, "the rate of those playing daily decreased dramatically among the middle-class, which contrasts with the routine-manual group where the decline is considerably less marked."

In his interviews with 37 gamers, he found that "most middle-class and upwardly mobile participants' gaming time gradually decreased because of educational or professional responsibilities. They considered [self-control](#) a valuable achievement, and underlined that they had found a balance between gaming as a hobby and normal life."

Their self-disciplined habit was "likely inculcated in higher education institutions and professional workplaces. It affects participants' gaming as well as enhances careers and economic positions."

As middle-class people moved away from their homes to study or work, they gamed less together or switched to solo gaming, which allowed them to fit gaming into their busy everyday routine.

The gaming habits of working-class people changed less when they became adults because their life situation stayed the same.

"Working-class participants, especially in further education or not fully employed, often continued to play more frequently and for longer each session when transitioning to young adulthood.

"Some held negative views about their gaming and considered they probably spent too much time gaming, which might not be healthy, but nonetheless rarely sought to control it. Not adopting such controlled gaming habits might make them acutely conscious or ashamed of their gaming."

The study found that working-class participants, who often remained in the same [social circle](#) throughout their lives, stressed the bonding they experienced when they played video games with the same friends. This further encouraged them to play video games.

A working-class interviewee told Xiaobin Zhou that he spent about eight hours a day playing video games, "maybe more, maybe less, depending on how well my gaming session is going. It's probably not a healthy amount, but for me personally I quite enjoy it."

One middle-class participant told him, "I'd love to be able to play more and put more time into it but I know it's not the most important thing in my life at this point, so it's always going to take a back seat to something else."

Xiaobin Zhou said that the research was the first to study the transition from adolescence to young adulthood. "We can see video [game](#) studies flourishing during the past two decades, but the impact of social class on video gaming has been frequently overlooked."

The survey recorded data on the careers of 16- to 19-year-olds, a few of whom were in managerial jobs, some by running their own business. Of these, 33% played video games every day, compared with 38% of those in routine or manual jobs.

Half of 16- to 19-year-olds in a higher managerial job never played video games, compared with a third in routine or manual jobs. For later ages the figures were 50%–60% for both classes.

The study analyzed data from the English Taking Part Survey, which is an annual survey representative of the English population conducted by the DCMS. The study analyzed a sub-sample of young respondents grouped in three age categories (16–19, 20–24 and 25–34).

The secondary analysis involved merging data from two waves of the TPS (years 2018–2019 and 2019–2020) on 1,771 out of 8,156 people in TPS 2018–2019 and 1,586 out of 7,483 people in TPS 2019–2020 who fell into the selected age range. The interviews carried out by the three researchers were of people between the ages of 18 to 35 years who frequently played games, mainly recruited online from Facebook groups and sub-Reddits in the UK Midlands.

Provided by British Sociological Association

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