



Exploring the Prevalence of Gaming Disorder and Internet Gaming Disorder: A Rapid Scoping Review

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Summary

Gaming disorder (GD) and internet gaming disorder (IGD) were included in the DSM-5 and ICD-11 because excessive gaming can cause harm. In response, the WHO commissioned a rapid scoping review to find out how common these problems are, how often severe cases occur, and what health issues are linked to them.

We did not find any studies on GD. We did find many studies on IGD, but they used different methods to diagnose it. Because of this, the reported rates of IGD varied across populations.

What does this mean?

These results show what is currently known about IGD. However, since studies used different tests to diagnose it, the reported rates should be viewed with caution. More research is needed on GD, and researchers need to agree on clear ways to define and measure IGD. This will help us better understand how common these problems really are.

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What is the current situation?

Internet gaming disorder (IGD) is listed as a non-substance addiction in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)¹. This is because research shows that excessive gaming could be harmful. The World Health Organization also recognized gaming disorder (GD) as harmful in 2018, when it added it to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11).²

What questions did we aim to answer in our research?

- How common are gaming disorder (defined by the ICD-11) and internet gaming disorder (defined by the DSM-5) among people of all ages worldwide?
- How common are severe cases of GD and IGD?
- What health issues do researchers study in people with GD or IGD?

How did we approach these questions?

- We searched research databases and other sources, including difficult to locate or unpublished materials.
- We included studies that reported how common GD or IGD is, focusing on people diagnosed with GD (ICD-11) or IGD (DSM-5).
- All types of gaming were considered (online or offline, mobile or console, single or multi-player).

What answers did we find from our research?

- **No studies on GD** were found.
- We identified 160 studies of various designs on IGD, which used 35 different methods to diagnose the disorder.
- **Rates of IGD varied widely:** in general populations, less than 1% to over 50%; in groups receiving treatments, about 3% to over 90%; and in groups receiving treatment for more severe cases, rates were between 50% and 79%.
- Most of the research was conducted in South Korea, China, and the United States.
- The most common health conditions studied alongside IGD were **depression, internet addiction, anxiety, impulsiveness, and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.**

How confident are we in these findings?

Because studies used many different tests, the reported rates should be interpreted carefully. More research is needed on GD, and researchers need to agree on clear definitions and measures for IGD. This will help us understand how common these disorders really are.

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¹ Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5): a manual used by mental health professionals in the U.S. and worldwide to diagnose and classify mental disorders.

² International Classification of Diseases, 11th Edition (ICD-11): a manual published by the World Health Organization (WHO) to classify all diseases and health conditions.