

-Video games / Compulsive behavior

Rise in gaming disorder seen amid pandemic

Proportion of people with online addiction has also increased in line with spread of virus

The Japan Times · 8 Nov 2021 · 4

More and more people in Japan are showing behaviors associated with gaming disorder and online addiction amid the coronavirus pandemic, a study by KDDI Corp. and others has shown.



With many feeling increased stress as a result of the virus crisis, the number of people who showed a tendency of having gaming disorder went up about 1.6-fold from a prepandemic level, according to the study.

The research also showed that COVID-19 patients had a 5.67-times higher risk of becoming addicted to gaming when compared with uninfected people.

A group of researchers from KDDI, the Advanced Telecommunications Research Institute International and other organizations surveyed some 51,000 people age between 20 and 69 over the internet in December 2019, before the virus outbreak in Japan, and again in August 2020.

The group examined how the number of people with addiction changed after the virus began to spread using data of some 4,000 of the surveyed people.

The results indicated that the proportion of people showing a tendency of having gaming disorder, such as lacking self-control over gaming and prioritizing gaming over daily activities including work and study, rose to 5.9% in 2020 from 3.7% in 2019.

The proportion of people with symptoms specific to gaming disorder also increased from a prepandemic level. Such people included those with a desire to play harder games and those who get upset when not being able to play games.

In May 2019, the World Health Organization recognized gaming addiction as a disorder. Such addiction has become a serious issue in Japan.

The research also showed that the proportion of people with online addiction increased to 11.6%, up from 7.9% logged before the virus outbreak.

“Many people, especially those who contracted the coronavirus, may have got into gaming in order to cope with their stress,” the research group said.

The group will continue to conduct surveys to look into how gaming disorder and other issues are affected by the pandemic.