AOC makes explosive Twitch debut with over 435,000 Among Us viewers

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Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) drew more than 430,000 concurrent viewers to her first-ever Twitch stream Tuesday night.

Ocasio-Cortez's 3.5 hour *Among Us* session—which she used in part to encourage viewers to vote—included fellow Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) and popular streamers like Pokimane and Disguised Toast, who responded rapidly to an off-handed tweet invite on Monday. And just in case you were wondering, Omar tweeted out the specs of her (very nice) gaming rig.

The debut instantly made Ocasio-Cortez—who admitted to having little experience with *Among Us* beforehand—one of the most popular streamers on the Amazon-owned video streaming service. Her peak of 435,000 viewers put her in the top 20 most popular streams ever on the site, according to data gathered by TwitchTracker, an echelon that's dominated by major gaming brands with massive marketing departments. As of this writing, the AOC Twitch account has over 571,000 followers, and her debut video clip has attracted over 4.73 million views.

> *AOC talks healthcare with @Hbomberguy, who is from the UK, where healthcare is free. pic.twitter.com/3wMUZXpuF7*
>
> *— Brennan Murphy (@brenonade) October 21, 2020*

In between gasp-filled games full of *Among Us*‘ usual accusations and back-biting, Ocasio-Cortez directed viewers to “make a voting plan” via IwillVote.com. She also found time to talk about universal health care with her fellow players and share some thoughts on the world-building of *Among Us* itself. “When it comes to video games, it’s the lore,” she said on the stream. “How did these people get here? What year are we in? Et cetera.”

A new kind of politicking

Ocasio-Cortez previously appeared on Twitch last January, when she called in to a charity-focused *Donkey Kong 64* stream raising money for Mermaids, a UK-based gender-dysphoria charity. “The added layer of discrimination [that trans people face] makes these issues much more acute in these crises than they usually are on average for other people,” she said at the time. “It’s important we do talk about these issues in the economic frame but not let go of the fact that discrimination is a core reason for the economic hardship.”

As we said back then, appearing on Twitch reflects a new kind of “go where the voters are” politicking of the type that used to be exemplified by politicians going to state fairs and pretending to be interested in butter sculptures.

The use of Twitch also highlights gaming’s unique role as a social gathering place. As we wrote:

> *Perhaps more than any other artistic medium, games provide a handy latch point for that kind of casual secondary social interaction. Meeting friends at a concert or a movie or a book reading might offer some opportunities for socializing,*

> *but those events often demand too much attention to really allow you to focus on your fellow attendees. The right kind of game, though, can serve as a kind of conversational background noise, not taking too much attention away from your companions while also providing just enough distraction to smooth over any lulls (see also: road trips and sporting events).*
>
> …
>
> *"When people ask me what Twitch is, my default answer is that it's a place to watch people playing video games. But that's really an incomplete answer. These days, Twitch is just as often a place where watching video games serves as a convenient excuse to gather with like-minded streamers and viewers in the closest thing we have to a live digital town square.*
>
> *The game itself is increasingly beside the point. The chance to gather together around the game is what makes these online gatherings special.*

Elsewhere in politicians-in-gaming news, Joe Biden's presidential campaign has rolled out virtual signage for use in *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* and recently introduced its own island full of Get out the Vote imagery.

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