

12th Annual MediaWise[®] Video Game Report Card



Presented by:

*National Institute
on MEDIA
and the FAMILY[®]*

with results from the 2007 MediaWise-Harris Interactive[®] Poll



The MediaWise[®] 12th Annual Video Game Report Card

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This MediaWise Video Game Report Card is the twelfth issued by the National Institute on Media and the Family, an independent, non-partisan, non-sectarian, nonprofit organization. The MediaWise Video Game Report Card provides a snapshot of the interactive gaming industry with a focus on issues related to the welfare of children and teens.

An Ominous Backslide on Multiple Fronts

Every year the world of video games grows in influence and importance for the lives of American families. Amazing new games outdo the imagination and artistry of older games. Ingenious new marketing campaigns instill ever-higher levels of desire for the latest games and platforms in gamers young and old. Groundbreaking new technologies unlock new possibilities for interaction, entertainment, and impact.

Some of this growth is great news for people who love video games. And increasingly, that label applies to a lot of us. According to our new MediaWise-Harris Interactive® Poll, nine out of 10 kids (86%) ages 8 to 16 play video games in their homes. We also know the average age of gamers continues to increase, as the generation who grew up with the Atari and Nintendo continue to play video games well into their adulthood. Sequels to popular game franchises like *Halo* and *Guitar Hero*, and increasingly intricate massive multi-player games, made 2007 an exciting year for gamers.

Families also received some good news in 2007. In February, GameStop, one of the nation's largest specialty retailers of video games, clamped down on the sale of M-rated (Mature) video games to minors by terminating sales clerks and store managers who sell these games to minors. The Target Corporation took a bold step in pulling *Manhunt 2* from its shelves after it was revealed that AO (Adults-Only) content was viewable, on the M-rated game for Sony's PSP and PS2, by changing the game's code.

In October, Microsoft announced it was enhancing its Xbox 360's parental controls with the addition of a screen time timer. With a quick download, parents will be able to set screen time limits for their child.

In spite of this progress, there is plenty of cause for concern.

While the medium and its audience continue to grow, efforts to protect children from the now undeniable potential harms of excessively violent video games have not kept pace with industry growth. Some of this shortfall is due to a chronic phenomenon: as the industry and its influence continue to grow, video games present new challenges for families.

However this year, our findings suggest that the unacceptable negative impact of excessively violent video games on young people is a problem depicted in an ever-expanding body of research. Increasingly, the companies which create and market the games, the retailers who sell them and the parents who buy them have become too comfortable with the voluntary standards they set for themselves in previous years.

Complacency, especially on the part of retailers and parents, appears to have caused a backslide in ratings awareness and enforcement. And, at the same time, while the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) has continued to educate the public about its video game rating system, several shocking incidents have inadvertently revealed dangerous loopholes in the ratings process. Simply put, some of the hard-won progress

seen in previous years has been lost, and now, too many children are spending too much time playing inappropriate video games that can harm their health and development.

Earlier this year, a disturbing trend appeared in some public libraries and churches across the country. To recruit youth to use public libraries and participate in church activities, several libraries and churches resorted to using video game tournaments with popular M-rated (Mature) video games, like *Halo 2*. While video game tournaments are an innovative way to reach today's children, allowing 13- and 14- year old teenagers to play games that are rated for players over the age of 17 is irresponsible. This strategy undercuts the rating system and sabotages parents who are trying to follow the ratings and restrict their children from playing M-rated games.

In light of this disappointing complacency on the part of the gaming industry, retailers and parents, the National Institute on Media and the Family presents this annual report to reinvigorate and reform efforts to ensure that our kids are gaining the benefits from games while minimizing the harm. All of us care about children, and thanks to years of study and practice, we know how to maximize the benefits. But right now, families and retailers have put too much faith in the current ratings system; the ESRB has put too much trust in the gaming industry; and some in the gaming industry have not done enough to monitor themselves.

We know how to keep adult games out of the hands of kids, but significant changes are needed in the ratings system. The end result means helping our kids have healthy, happy, MediaWise futures.

Annual MediaWise-Harris Interactive Poll

For the first time, the National Institute on Media and the Family has joined efforts with Harris Interactive, renowned for *The Harris Poll*[®], to conduct our national survey of parents and children to determine the role of video games in their lives.

We are proud to collaborate with one of the world's leading polling organizations in order to offer the public the most accurate possible portrait of video gaming behavior in the American family.

Kids know more about the ESRB ratings than their parents

Parents seem increasingly eager to portray themselves in a good light when it comes to the ratings. More than half of parents (54%) claim to ever use the ratings. Yet more than seven out of 10 parents (72%) know little or nothing about the ratings system overall and many could not identify the meanings of specific ratings such as AO (Adults Only) and EC (Early Childhood).

Since kids are more likely to play video games than their parents, it is likely to assume that our kids know more about the ESRB ratings than their parents. But according to our latest poll, the gap is alarmingly dramatic. For example, tweens and teens are more likely to say they know what a T- and E10+-rating means than are their parents (T-rating: 75% vs. 59%; E10+-rating: 61% vs. 41%).

How much do you (parents) understand about video game ratings?	
Everything	6%
A lot	21%
A little	44%
Not at all	28%

Everything	6%
A lot	21%
A little	44%
Not at all	28%

Few parents play the games their kids play

Kids think their parents understand the ratings better than the parents actually do. This misperception would probably not be as prevalent if parents played video games with their children, as we have recommended for years. But, 38 percent of mothers and 31 percent of fathers of the kids who play video games reported that their parents never play any of the games with them. Unfortunately, this lack of monitoring may be one of the causes contributing to the fact that half (50%) of young players (8-12 years old) and most young teens (79%) admit to playing M-rated (Mature) video games.

More parents understand TV ratings than video game ratings

Seventy two percent of parents understand little or nothing about video game ratings. This is surprising, given the efforts over the years to provide in-store displays by retailers, public service announcements (PSAs) by the ESRB, and ratings disclaimers in television ads by game makers. And, when compared to TV ratings, which are not required for television programming, twice as many parents say they understand TV ratings compared to video game ratings (54% vs. 27%).

This knowledge gap appears to be a big problem – a majority of parents have not stopped their children from playing a game because of its rating. Equally as alarming, four out of 10 parents (37%) rarely use the ratings when letting their child get or play games.

Video games are causing family friction

On one important matter kids and parents seem to agree: video games are causing family friction. Almost four out of 10 parents who have kids who play video games (38%) argue very often or sometimes with their children about the amount of time they spend playing video games, similar to the number of kids (36%) who report these arguments. Arguments about when games should be played are common as well (38% of parents; 33% of kids). These findings suggest that video games present families with more than escape and entertainment. And, while many parents seem to be attempting to establish rules to regulate game playing, most parents could be doing more to make sure those rules are enforced.

How often do you argue with your parents/children about when they are allowed to play video games?

	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Children</u>
Very often	8%	6%
Sometimes	30%	27%
Rarely	22%	27%
Never	39%	40%

**Asked of children and parents who play video games.*

Overall, the MediaWise-Harris Interactive Video Game Report Card Poll suggests that parental involvement is lower than it should be when it comes to the role of video games in their kids' lives. For the most part, useful ratings information is available. It is up to parents to put it to use. The data, however, show that the ratings are not serving their intended purpose in the lives of American families.

A copy of this year's poll is available at the end of this report.

2007 Retailer Ratings Education and Enforcement Surveys

Once again, the National Institute on Media and the Family conducted its annual retailer education and enforcement surveys. In a year encouragingly marked by an increased effort on the part of the industry to educate parents about ESRB ratings, 2007 also saw previously compliant retailers backsliding in their efforts to enforce their own ratings policies. The year also found fewer retailers educating their employees and customers on the ratings system.

After years of public pressure from the National Institute on Media and the Family and other organizations, every game retailer at least claims to have a policy to enforce the ratings; but having a policy and putting it into practice are, unfortunately, two different matters.

To examine the education policies of America's retailers, the National Institute on Media and the Family conducted a telephone survey of 96 video game rental or retailer stores in 24 cities in 12 states (Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Mexico, Texas, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin).

One out of three retailers fails to educate customers about ESRB ratings

In a significant shift from last year, only 59 percent of retailers educate customers about the ESRB ratings, either through signage, brochures, or videos. In 2006, our survey found that 73 percent of retailers educated their customers about the ratings. It is hard to completely blame parents for not understanding the rating system when retailers come up short on their commitment to educate the public.

The 2007 survey found that almost one-third of all stores still do not make ratings information available for its customers. When comparing national retailers to local stores, only 30 percent of local retailers have any system of educating the public about the ESRB ratings. National retailers fared much better, with 69 percent having some sort of ratings education.

Does your store educate its customers about the ESRB ratings?	
All stores	<u>Yes</u> 59%
Rental stores	67%
Retail stores	46%
National chains	69%
Local stores	30%

This year's survey suggests we should question the effectiveness of the ESRB's "OK to play" campaign. According to the survey, only 8 percent of retailers actively promoted the gaming industry's campaign. Launched in 2003, the campaign, which targets parents of children who play video games, aims to raise consumer awareness and increase use of the ESRB rating system.

As in past years, the National Institute on Media and the Family conducted a "sting" operation to determine the extent to which retailers enforce their ratings policies with 58 sting operations performed across the country.

Kids successfully purchased M-rated games almost 50 percent of the time

Last year, many of the major retailers performed perfectly. This year, the overall enforcement was cut in half. Despite 94 percent of stores say they have a policy preventing children younger than 17 from buying or renting a M-rated game, almost 50 percent of the time our secret shoppers walked into the national retailers and walked out with an M-rated game. The good news is that chains specializing in video games performed a better job of keeping M-rated games out of the hands of kids this year, succeeding four out of five times.

Retailer Compliance (Percentage of stores which denied minors purchasing M-rated games)	
Overall Compliance	55%
National Retailers	54%
Specialty Stores	80%
Rental Companies	17%

Shockingly, our young shoppers were able to buy M-rated games almost half the time. The worst offenders were rental chains that sold video games.

However a few retailers deserve special recognition for perfect compliance. **Kmart, Hollywood Video and EB Games** were 100 percent compliant with ratings enforcement according to our survey.

Older teens able to purchase M-rated games more often than not

Encouragingly, our 8-year-old shoppers were prevented from buying M-rated games. However, kids as young as 12 were able to buy M-rated games almost half the times they attempted to do so. And, the 15-year-olds were able to purchase M-rated games almost two-thirds of the time. Perhaps the worst example of the system failing was an incident in which a 16-year-old girl was requested to show her ID, but after the clerk reviewed her ID, she was still able to purchase an M-rated game intended for players 17 and up.

The top three M-rated games minors successfully purchased were: *Grand Theft Auto* (either *Vice City* or *San Andreas*), *Halo 2*, and *Scarface*.

Younger sales clerks allow minors to purchase inappropriate games

One dimension underlying gaps in retail ratings enforcement is the age of the clerk. In our study, older clerks were more compliant with existing store policies than younger clerks.

Another dimension is the lack of education sales clerks receive from their employer. Although nine out of 10 sales clerks say they understand the ESRB rating system, only 60 percent of stores train clerks on how to enforce the rating on a game's box.

These results suggest that retailers need to educate their younger clerks about the importance of the ratings. Perhaps people who grew up with video games do not take the ratings

Sales Clerk Compliance by Age (Percentage of clerks who denied minors from purchasing M-rated games)	
Teens	50%
Early 20s	50%
Late 20s	56%
Over 30	80%

system as seriously as those who did not. Regardless of the underlying reasons, retailers should not accept such a lack of compliance with company policies from any employees.

In conclusion, this year's ratings enforcement survey is discouraging. After progress in previous years, the overall compliance rate slipped badly this year. Although certain factors, such as clerk age and big box retailer compliance, seem to account for some of this backtracking, it is unclear why, after years of pressure and claims from corporate representatives that policies are in place, retailers are still not adequately enforcing the ratings.

The 2007 ESRB Rating System and Rating Education Efforts

The Entertainment Software Rating Board's system for determining the ratings of games needs review and some loopholes regarding locked and blurred content must be closed. One incident in particular highlights the need for new procedures to ensure that content only appropriate for adults does not fall into the hands of minors.

In June, *Manhunt 2*, the latest slasher title from Rockstar Games, the makers of the controversial *Grand Theft Auto* series, was given a rating of AO (Adults Only) for graphic violent and sexual content. The AO-rating is economically devastating for game makers as most gaming consoles will not play and retailers will not sell the AO games. Despite claims it would not change the game, two months later Rockstar resubmitted an edited version of the game without some of original content to the ESRB for a new rating. The ESRB then issued a rating of M (for Mature) for the game and Rockstar shipped it to retail outlets.

Although certain violent depictions were removed entirely from the game's disc, others were simply blurred the code using a special effects filter incorporated into the game's code. But, as has been the case for as long as video games with alternate scenarios and "cheat" modes have existed, such barriers are quickly compromised by gamers who love to explore a game's every possibility.

In September, two months before retail release, an unauthorized AO-rated version of *Manhunt 2* was leaked on the Internet. This allowed hackers the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the game's basic code so that once the retail M-rated versions were released; they could find ways to remove the blurring effect on certain adult content that was still on the discs. The hackers then released the instructions on the Internet on how to remove the blurred content so that others could view certain graphically violent scenes that had originally garnered *Manhunt 2* its original AO rating.

Sadly, the problem of hidden or blurred content which is inappropriate for kids is not a new issue and undermines the ESRB rating. The *Manhunt 2* controversy was reminiscent of the infamous "Hot Coffee" incident involving graphic sexual content in a *Grand Theft Auto* game. *Manhunt 2* is the latest example of what is becoming a disturbing pattern.

Unfortunately, the ratings process has not kept up with technological advances. Although it revised its policies to require companies to disclose all playable and non-playable, locked-out content in a games code, the ESRB still needs significant reforms to reassure families of its game ratings.

Rather than admit that its current procedures fail to prohibit children and youth from accessing adult content, the ESRB suggested that people who hack into games like *Manhunt 2* are committing a crime. According to the ESRB, it is illegal to use *Manhunt 2* for anything but its intended use. Besides, the ratings board has to rate more than 1,000 games a year; the ESRB simply doesn't have time to look at a game's code.

This argument is nonsense. M-rated games, officially sanctioned for 17-year-olds and widely available to much younger children, should not contain easily unblurable or ununlockable AO-rated adult content, “blurred” or not. The ratings procedures should take into account not only all the official content of regular gameplay, but all of the code on the discs. Under the current system, the ESRB fails to discourage hackers and makes adult content all the more enticing to children in its right-under-their-noses secrecy.

It seems that the software manufacturers behind the ESRB are trying to get around their own rules. In the past, we have commended the software makers for creating an entity, the ESRB, to hold themselves accountable. It’s time to close loopholes in the ratings procedures to ensure that game makers are living up to the responsibility they have claimed to accept.

Reflecting the concern of the National Institute on Media and the Family and others regarding *Manhunt 2* content, the Target Corporation should be commended for its decision to keep *Manhunt 2* off their shelves, making ratings enforcement of a game with an inappropriate rating a moot point.

This year also marked a laudable effort on the part of the ESRB to make ratings education for parents a higher priority than ever before. Creating and distributing a series of public service announcements (PSAs) about the importance of using video game ratings, the ESRB teamed up with governors and state attorney generals in Utah, Georgia, and Rhode Island, Washington, and several others. This effort is a novel and ambitious attempt to encourage parents to use the ratings, and in tandem with the ESRB’s practice of making in store ratings signage available to retailers, it seems to be having some impact. We have seen modest gains in parental awareness of the ratings over the years we’ve watched the industry.

Unfortunately, these efforts aren’t working well enough. Parents are still largely ignorant of the ratings. Retailers still treat the ratings’ importance as optional. A continuing trend of questionable marketing practices on the part of the game makers that the National Institute on Media and the Family believes undermines the ESRB’s attempts to make the ratings matter. In one instance, an M-rated game, *Kane & Lynch: Dead Men*, was promoted on MySpace.com with a contest to win attendance at a Playboy photo shoot. In another example, the supposedly family friendly Nintendo Wii promoted the launch of *Manhunt 2* on the console with a special edition Wii which had fake blood splattered all over it.

Any parent who is paying attention cannot help but question the credibility of a ratings system employed by an industry that seems more than eager to circumvent it. This might explain why a majority of parents (57%) clearly support having one, universal rating system that could be used for all media and ending the current concoction of alphabet soup.

We hope that in the coming year, the ESRB reforms the procedures for rating games and ensures that the game makers themselves honor the importance of the ratings system.

MediaWise Video Game Report Card Summary

Parental Involvement Grade: C

Once again, parents are not doing enough to protect their kids from the potential harms of video games. Although the ratings system is imperfect, it is largely a useful tool in helping keep inappropriate content away from young people. And, since information on the ratings is now widely available, parental complacency seems to be one important factor in parents' failure to make use of the ratings. It is time for parents to take video games seriously.

ESRB Ratings Education Grade: B-

Although we commend the industry for intensifying efforts to help parents understand the importance of using video game ratings, the efforts have not yet sufficiently become part of public consciousness. The partnering with state government officials to create new PSAs is an encouraging step in education efforts, but their limited reach and failure to educate parents suggest that the industry could be doing much more to educate parents and retailers about the ratings.

Retailer Policies..... Grade: C-

We were surprised by this year's surveys by the National Institute on Media and the Family that showed one out of three retailers does not educate its employees on the ESRB ratings. That's a significant drop from last year. Even more shocking was that only 30 percent of local retailers provided families with information on the game rating system.

Retailer Ratings Enforcement

National Retailers Grade: D

Specialty Stores..... Grade: B

Rental Stores Grade: F

Retailers do not seem to understand the importance of enforcing the ratings. While the specialty retailers have shown encouraging improvement in enforcing their own policies to honor ESRB ratings this year, the big box retailers have slipped badly from last year's performance. The rental retailers are dropping the ball completely and remain an embarrassing blight on the video game retail industry. A bright spot: K-Mart, EB Games and Hollywood Video were 100 percent compliant this year.

The Gaming Industry..... Grade: C

Assessing the performance of the gaming industry this year is a difficult task with so many highlights and lowlights to examine. Console manufacturers, for the most part, seem to understand the importance of making games safe for kids. Microsoft included a timer feature that allows parents to limit their children's video game playing time, a praiseworthy innovation. On the other hand, Nintendo Wii offered a blood-spattered special edition with a *Manhunt 2* promotion. Some software makers made great games that pushed the edge of the envelope in creativity and storytelling. Others, once again, dredged the well of poor taste, with titles like Rockstar's *Manhunt 2* and Eidos Interactive's *Kane & Lynch: Dead Men*. Some game makers also found creative new ways to market adult games on kids, a

disgustingly familiar practice over the years. Too few game makers disclose when illegal versions of their games are stolen from their facilities and leaked on the Internet.

ESRB Ratings Grade: C+

The *Manhunt 2* rating debacle shows that the ESRB needs to change its procedures to close a gaping loophole that some game publishers are all too eager to slip through. The ESRB rating should be based on all of a game's content and code, locked or unlocked, blurred or unblurred. A game's rating will be meaningless unless serious steps are taken to prevent games from being unlocked.

Recommendations

- A universal ratings system is needed now, more than ever, to increase ratings knowledge and reduce confusion. A majority of parents favor one rating system for all media.
- The ESRB should issue its rating based on the game's entire content, blurred or unblurred, locked or unlocked. Game makers should only disclose when such content exists in the code, but should provide footage of the blocked or blurred code along with the footage they provide of easily accessible code.
- Retailers must return to the level of compliance of which they have proven in the past they are capable.
- Retailers need to educate their employees, especially the younger ones, concerning the importance of enforcing the ratings.
- Parents need to become better educated about the ratings and then make use of them. Parents also need to learn about and use the parental controls offered by the new console systems.
- Libraries, schools, churches and other public institutions should follow the game's rating and only allow games appropriate for the age of the youth. By promoting M-rated games, they are undercutting the ESRB's rating system and undermining parental credibility and authority.

2007 Buying Guide for Parents

Parent Alert! Games to Avoid for your Children and Teens

Game	Rating
<i>Assassin's Creed</i>	M
<i>Call to Duty 4</i>	M
<i>Conan</i>	M
<i>The Darkness</i>	M
<i>Jericho</i>	M
<i>Kane & Lynch: Dead Men</i>	M
<i>Manhunt 2</i>	M
<i>Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles</i>	M
<i>Stranglehold</i>	M
<i>Time Shift</i>	M

MediaWise Recommended Games for Children and Teens

Game	Rating
<i>FIFA Soccer 08</i>	E
<i>Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock</i>	T
<i>Hannah Montana: Spotlight World Tour</i>	E
<i>Madden NFL 08</i>	E
<i>Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Games</i>	E
<i>Need for Speed Pro Street</i>	E+10
<i>The Sims 2: Castaway</i>	T
<i>Super Mario Bros. 3</i>	E
<i>Super Mario Galaxy</i>	E
<i>Viva Pinta</i>	E

Research

The research on video games continues to focus on themes demonstrating the diversity of effects that games can have. These effects continue to be able to be characterized largely by reference to the *amount* of game play, the *content* of game play, or the *structure* of the games themselves.

Amount

Cummings and Vandewater (2007) surveyed 1,491 children 10 to 19. They found that video game players (compared to non-gamers) spent 30 percent less time reading and 34 percent less time doing homework, after controlling for income, parent education, age, ethnicity, parent hours at work, and time spent in school and work. This result helps to explain the results of several studies demonstrating a negative correlation between amount of video game play and school performance (e.g., Anderson et al., 2007).

Content

As has been found repeatedly, research reported this year demonstrates that players learn from and are affected by the content of the games they play. In one study, 375 adolescent and young adult cancer patients were randomly assigned to play either a commercial video game or also a game developed to teach about cancer and its treatment (*Re-Mission*). Those who played *Re-Mission* had significantly higher gains in cancer knowledge (Beale, Kato, Marin-Bowling, Guthrie, & Cole, 2007).

In a series of studies with children and adolescents, including an experimental study, a correlational study, and the first longitudinal study with children, Anderson et al. (2007) studied the effects of playing games with aggressive content. Two findings are of particular note. In Study 1, 161 elementary school children and 354 college students were randomly assigned to play either a violent or a matched non-violent children's game. These games were not bloody Mature-rated games, but cartoonish and cute children's games. Yet, both children and college students were more aggressive to others after playing the aggressive game, even though it did not include what most parents would consider "violent" content. It is important to remember that aggression is typically defined as intentional harm to victims, and not by how graphic it looks. It seems that practicing intentional harm is what matters, even if the game looks cute and harmless.

In the third study, 430 elementary school children, their peers, and their teachers were surveyed at two times during a school year. Children who played more violent video games early in the school year actually changed to become more physically aggressive by later in the school year, even after controlling for physical aggression at time 1, total screen time, parent involvement, sex, and hostile attribution bias. These results are remarkable because the changes in behavior were noticed by children's peers and teachers, even though they do not know what the other children are playing at home.

In an experimental study, Dutch adolescent boys were randomly assigned to play a violent or non-violent game, and then were given an opportunity to punish an opponent with a loud noise blast (Konijn, Bijvank, & Bushman, 2007). In contrast to many other studies

that use this approach, the boys in this study were told that the highest levels of noise could cause permanent hearing damage for their opponents. Adolescents who played the violent game and identified with the violent characters strongly used noise levels loud enough to cause permanent damage to their partners, even though their partners had not provoked them.

This year one meta-analysis received a large amount of attention for allegedly showing little evidence of violent game effects on aggression, but this is not what this study found.

Ferguson (2007) reports the results of a meta-analysis of the past 10 years' worth of studies on violent video game effects. The study's own numbers demonstrate an effect that most researchers would consider significant on increasing physiological arousal ($r+ = .27$), aggressive thoughts ($r+ = .25$), aggressive behavior ($r+ = .29$), and decreasing prosocial behavior ($r+ = .30$), yet the author uses these results to draw another conclusion.

Furthermore, he does not contest the effects on arousal, aggressive thoughts, or prosocial behavior. Finally, he also claims that scholarly journals have a bias toward publishing studies that demonstrate an effect for aggressive behavior, claiming unpublished studies would show otherwise.

Structure

Some studies have been finding results that are difficult to interpret in terms of amount or content. Rosser and his colleagues (2007) found that laparoscopic surgeons who had played video games in the past were better at advanced surgical skills. Furthermore, Green & Bavelier (2007) found that playing action video games predicts visual attention skills. These results seem to be related to how the games are structured on the screen. If people practice gathering detailed information from video screens and responding quickly, this seems to improve visual attention and other skills needed to be an effective laparoscopic surgeon.

Conclusion

In short, the research published this year continues to provide more evidence about the power of video games to have both intended effects and unintended effects. This wide set of results makes it clear that parents must pay attention to and be involved in children's video game habits.

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MediaWise®-Harris Interactive Poll

Method: Youth Survey

This YouthQuerySM was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive between August 15 to August 22, 2007 among 1,360 U.S. 8-18 year olds, including 1,158 8-16 year olds (597 8-12 year olds and 561 13-16 year olds). The results presented in the 2007 MediaWise Video Game Report Card are based only on the 8-16 year olds.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the U.S. 8-18 year old population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to be invited to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

Gender

Male	51%
Female	49%

Race

White	59%
Hispanic	18%
Black or African American	15%
Asian or Pacific Islanders	3%
Native American	1%
Multi-racial or other	4%

Age

Tweens (8-12 years old)	53%
Teens (13-16 years old)	47%

BASE: US 8-16 YEAR OLDS

Q900 Now we would like to ask you some questions about video or computer games.

Do you ever play video games or computer games at home? This includes games you could play on a computer, on a video game system like Xbox, PlayStation, or Nintendo Wii, or on a handheld system like Game Boy or Nintendo DS.

	All	Tweens	Teens
Yes	90%	94%	85%
No	10%	6%	15%

BASE: PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q905 Here are different ratings of computer and video games. How much do you know about each of these ratings?

	EC	E	E10+	T	M	AO	RP
Overall sample							
I know what this means	35%	73%	61%	75%	71%	30%	28%
I've seen this, but don't know what this means	21%	9%	11%	7%	10%	18%	20%
I've never seen this	45%	18%	28%	18%	20%	52%	52%
Tweens							
I know what this means	28%	66%	53%	66%	60%	20%	18%
Teens							
I know what this means	42%	82%	71%	87%	85%	43%	41%

BASE: PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q910 How often has your mother or father stopped you from getting a video game because of its rating?

	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
All	18%	28%	16%	38%
Tweens	26%	32%	14%	28%
Teens	10%	23%	18%	49%

BASE: PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q911 How often have you played M-rated ("Mature") video games?

	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
All	16%	26%	20%	38%
Tweens	8%	22%	20%	51%
Teens	27%	32%	20%	22%

BASE: PLAYS VIDEO GAMES (Q900/1)

Q915 Have you ever bought or received a video game that was rated M (“Mature”)? Please select all that apply.

	Received Gift	Bought with Own money	Bought with Parent’s money	No
All	22%	22%	16%	65%
Tweens	14%	11%	11%	78%
Teens	31%	34%	22%	48%

BASE: HAVE BOUGHT AN M-RATED GAME WITH EITHER PARENT’S OR OWN MONEY AND ANSWERED QUESTION

Q920 When you bought an M-rated video game, did your mother or father know about it?

	Yes	No
All	92%	8%
Tweens	90%	10%
Teens	93%	7%

BASE: HAVE BOUGHT AN M-RATED GAME WITH EITHER PARENT’S OR OWN MONEY AND ANSWERED QUESTION

Q921 When you bought an M-rated video game, was your mother or father with you?

	Yes	No
All	87%	13%
Tweens	88%	13%
Teens	87%	13%

BASE: PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q925 How often do you argue with your parents about how much time you spend playing video games?

	Very Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
All	10%	26%	28%	35%
Tweens	12%	29%	31%	27%
Teens	8%	22%	25%	45%

BASE: PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q926 How often do you argue with your parents about when you are allowed to play video games?

	Very Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
All	6%	27%	27%	40%
Tweens	7%	31%	30%	31%
Teens	5%	21%	23%	51%

BASE: PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q927 How often do you argue with your parents about the types of video games you may play?

	<u>Very Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>
All	3%	17%	26%	55%
Tweens	3%	19%	30%	48%
Teens	3%	13%	20%	63%

BASE: PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q930 How often does your mother play video games together with you?

	<u>Very Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>No Mother</u>
All	5%	27%	29%	38%	1%
Tweens	5%	33%	33%	29%	1%
Teens	4%	21%	24%	51%	1%

BASE: PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q935 How often does your father play video games together with you?

	<u>Very Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>No Father</u>
All	9%	29%	24%	31%	8%
Tweens	12%	35%	23%	22%	8%
Teens	5%	21%	24%	43%	8%

BASE: PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q940 How often do your parents use the video game ratings to decide whether you may get or play a video game?

	<u>All</u>	<u>Tweens</u>	<u>Teens</u>
Every time	22%	33%	9%
Most of the time	21%	27%	14%
About half of the time	9%	9%	9%
Rarely	15%	15%	16%
Never	23%	9%	37%
Not sure	11%	7%	15%

BASE: WATCHES TV

Q941 How often do your parents Use the movie ratings to decide whether you may watch a movie?

	<u>All</u>	<u>Tweens</u>	<u>Teens</u>
Every time	26%	36%	14%
Most of the time	25%	31%	18%
About half of the time	14%	15%	13%
Rarely	15%	11%	20%
Never	15%	4%	28%
Not sure	4%	3%	6%

BASE: WATCHES TV

Q942 How often do your parents use the television ratings to decide whether you may watch a TV show?

	<u>All</u>	<u>Tweens</u>	<u>Teens</u>
Every time	15%	23%	6%
Most of the time	20%	28%	11%
About half of the time	13%	16%	10%
Rarely	19%	17%	20%
Never	27%	11%	45%
Not sure	6%	4%	8%

BASE: PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q945 How much do your parents understand about video game ratings (EC, E, E10+, T, M, AO)?

	<u>Everything</u>	<u>A lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Not at all</u>
All	28%	36%	25%	12%
Tweens	32%	38%	21%	9%
Teens	23%	32%	29%	16%

BASE: PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q946 How much do your parents understand about movie ratings (G, PG, PG-13, R, NC-17)?

	<u>Everything</u>	<u>A lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Not at all</u>
All	62%	31%	5%	2%
Tweens	69%	27%	4%	1%
Teens	54%	36%	7%	3%

BASE: PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q947 How much do your parents understand about television ratings (TV-Y, TV-Y7, TV-G, TV-PG, TV-14, TV-MA, L, D, S, V, FV)?

	<u>Everything</u>	<u>A lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Not at all</u>
All	37%	39%	19%	5%
Tweens	42%	40%	14%	4%
Teens	31%	37%	25%	7%

Method: Parent Survey

This Harris Poll® was conducted online within the United States between September 11 and 18, 2007 among 2,392 adults (aged 18 and over) of whom 690 have a child in their household. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

BASE: HAS CHILD IN HOUSEHOLD

Q755 Here are different ratings of computer and video games. How much do you know about each of these ratings?

	<u>EC</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>E10+</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>AO</u>	<u>RP</u>
1 I know what this means	14%	60%	41%	59%	68%	23%	16%
2 I’ve seen this, but don’t know what this means	20%	11%	12%	8%	8%	14%	15%
3 I’ve never seen this	66%	29%	47%	34%	25%	63%	69%

BASE: HAS CHILD IN HOUSEHOLD WHO PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q760 How often do you argue with your child(ren) about how much time they spend playing video games?

Very Often	10%
Sometimes	28%
Rarely	25%
Never	36%

BASE: HAS CHILD IN HOUSEHOLD WHO PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q761 How often do you argue with your child(ren) about when they are allowed to play video games?

Very Often	8%
Sometimes	30%
Rarely	22%
Never	40%

BASE: HAS CHILD IN HOUSEHOLD WHO PLAYS VIDEO GAMES

Q762 How often do you argue with your child(ren) about the types of video games they may play?

Very Often	4%
Sometimes	19%
Rarely	27%
Never	50%

BASE: HAS CHILD IN HOUSEHOLD

Q765 How often do you use the video game ratings to decide whether your child(ren) may get or play a video game?

Every time	16%
Most of the time	17%
About half of the time	7%
Rarely	14%
Never	23%
I don't do this	21%

BASE: HAS CHILD IN HOUSEHOLD

Q766 How often do you use the movie ratings to decide whether your child(ren) may watch a movie?

Every time	24%
Most of the time	24%
About half of the time	11%
Rarely	13%
Never	16%
I don't do this	12%

BASE: HAS CHILD IN HOUSEHOLD

Q767 How often do you use the television ratings to decide whether your child(ren) may watch a TV show?

Every time	13%
Most of the time	18%
About half of the time	13%
Rarely	18%
Never	23%
I don't do this	14%

BASE: HAS CHILD IN HOUSEHOLD (Q751/ME1)

Q770 How much do you understand about the following rating systems?

Video game ratings (EC, E, E10+, T, M, AO)

Movie ratings (G, PG, PG-13, R, NC-17)

Television ratings (TV-Y, TV-Y7, TV-G, TV-PG, TV-14, TV-MA, L, D, S, V, FV)

	<u>Everything</u>	<u>A lot</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Not at all</u>
Video game ratings	6%	21%	44%	28%
Movie ratings	39%	47%	11%	4%
Television ratings	14%	40%	39%	8%

BASE: HAS CHILD IN HOUSEHOLD

Q775 Currently there are different rating systems for video games, television, movies, and music. Some of these ratings give information about how appropriate a product is for a certain age, and some give information about what types of content are in it, such as offensive language, sex, or violence.

If you could design the ideal rating system to help you make choices about what is appropriate for your child(ren), what would it include? Please select all that apply

Content Information	70%
Specific age recommendations	63%
General warning statements	61%
Something else	4%
Would not design a system	6%

BASE: HAS CHILD IN HOUSEHOLD

Q780 Currently there are different rating systems for video games, television, movies, and music. How much would you support or oppose having one rating system that could be used for all media?

Strongly support	31%
Somewhat support	26%
Neither support nor oppose	32%
Somewhat oppose	6%
Strongly oppose	5%