

Media in the Home

The Fifth Annual Survey of Parents and Children

2000

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ABOUT THE ANNENBERG PUBLIC POLICY CENTER

The Annenberg Public Policy Center was established by publisher and philanthropist Walter Annenberg in 1994 to create a community of scholars within the University of Pennsylvania that would address public policy issues at the local, state, and federal levels. Consistent with the mission of the Annenberg School for Communication, the Center has four ongoing foci: Information and Society, Media and the Developing Mind, Media and the Dialogue of Democracy, and Health Communication. The Center supports research and sponsors lectures and conferences in these areas. This series of publications disseminates the work of the Center.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Media in the Home 2000 provides a profile of media ownership, use, and attitudes for parents and children in America. In addition, it tracks parental awareness, knowledge, and use of various public policies designed to regulate those media. This year's survey augments earlier APPC surveys by examining the ways in which parents supervise their children's use of the proliferating media that are increasingly a part of the American home, including a central media environment of the child: the bedroom. Conducted by Roper Starch Worldwide on behalf of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, this national survey of 1,235 parents of children between the ages of two and seventeen (margin of error ± 2.9 percent) and 416 children between the ages of eight and sixteen (margin of error ± 5 percent) reveals:

- **Almost half (48%) of all families with children between the ages of 2 and 17 have all four of the new media staples among families with children: a television, a VCR, video game equipment, and a computer.** (See page 7 for details)
- **These media have not only penetrated the homes of American families generally, but are also prevalent in the bedrooms of American children.** We surveyed children between the ages 8-16 and found: 57 percent of the sample has a television set in the bedroom; 39 percent has video game equipment; 36 percent has basic cable service; 32 percent has a telephone; 30 percent has a VCR; 20 percent has a computer; and 11 percent has access to the Internet. Children from low-income homes are more likely to have television sets in their bedrooms than children from higher income homes. (See page 17 for details)
- **The wealth in media ownership is not equally shared, however, as low-income families still lag far behind other families in their computer ownership and Internet access.** Though low-income (earning \$30,000 or less per year) families are equally as likely to own video game equipment as higher income families, they are less likely to own computers and have Internet access. Only four in ten low-income families have a computer in their homes compared to eight in ten middle-income (earning between \$30,000 and \$75,000 per year) families and nine in ten high-income (earning more than \$75,000 per year) families. Only two in ten low-income families have online access in the home compared to six in ten middle-income families and eight in ten high-income families. (See pages 11-14 for details)
- **According to parents, children spend almost 6½ hours using media each day.** Children from low-income households spend 54 minutes more watching television, 30 minutes more watching videotapes, and 27 minutes more playing video games than children from high-income households. (See pages 19-20 for details)
- **Parents continue to express a great deal of concern about the media in general, but remain most concerned about the influence of television in particular.** Parental concerns about the media, however, are not statistically related to the time their children spend with television. (See pages 27-28 for details)

- **Parents' knowledge of polices designed to help supervise their children's use of television remains low.** Awareness of the TV Parental Guidelines rating system among parents has steadily declined from 1997, when 70 percent of parents said that they were aware of the system, to this year, when only 50 percent of parents reported being aware of the system. (See page 32 for details) In addition, parents are confused about which programs are labeled as educational for children. For instance, many more parents (71%) thought *Oprah* received a label designating it educational for children (incorrect response) than knew that *Recess* received the label (correct response - 40%). (See pages 32-34 for details)
- **Despite weak knowledge of the policies, a significant number of parents report having and using television-blocking technologies to keep undesirable content away from their children.** Forty-percent of parents report having a television with parental control features such as a V-Chip or a channel-blocking device. Of those with blocking technology, 53 percent say that they currently have the control feature engaged. (See pages 36-37 for details)
- **Parents are more likely to supervise their children's use of television than they are to supervise use of the Internet and video games.** While most parents (88%) report regularly supervising their children's use of television, only about half report regularly supervising their children's use of the Internet or video games (50% and 48%, respectively). (See page 41 for details)
- **Finally, it is clear that the media environment of families with children is undergoing change.** For the first year since 1996, more families have an Internet subscription (52%) than a newspaper subscription (42%). In addition, though fewer preschoolers (24%) have bedroom television sets than previous years, the majority of adolescents (60%) have them. (See page 8 and page 16 for details)

INTRODUCTION

Since 1996, the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania (APPC) has examined the role that the media and media policy play in family life.¹ *Media in the Home 2000* marks the fifth annual survey of parents and children sponsored by APPC. As in previous years, this survey provides a profile of media ownership, use, and attitudes for parents and children while also tracking parental awareness, knowledge, and use of various public policies designed to regulate those media. This year's survey augments earlier work by taking a look at the ways in which parents supervise their children's use of the proliferating media that are increasingly a part of the American home, including a central media environment of the child: the bedroom.

METHODOLOGY

The latest *Media in the Home* survey is based on telephone interviews conducted from Saturday, April 8, 2000 through Tuesday, May 2, 2000 with 1,235 parents of children between the ages of two and seventeen and 416 children between the ages of eight and sixteen from around the United States, excluding Alaska and Hawaii. Roper Starch Worldwide implemented the survey. This year's sample of children is younger than that of previous years to allow a broader examination of the media use and behavior of elementary school age children, a group often excluded from survey research of this sort.

The samples were drawn through random-digit dialing.² Where appropriate, parents were asked questions related to their two to seventeen year-old children. In households with multiple children, parents were asked to focus on the one child between the ages of two and seventeen with the most recent birthday at the time of the interview. Where possible, the children of parents surveyed between the ages of eight and sixteen were also surveyed. Of the 1,235 parents, 712 (50%) had children between the ages of eight and sixteen. In 234 of these households (33%), an eight to sixteen year-olds was also interviewed. To

¹ At the direction of the Center, parents and children from across the country have been interviewed annually as a part of its Media and the Developing Mind program. The survey, initially titled Television in the Home was re-titled Media in the Home last year to reflect the growing significance of multiple media in the home.

² The sample of telephone exchanges called was selected electronically from a complete list of exchanges in the country. The exchanges were chosen to assure that each region of the country was

complete the sample, 182 children in this age range were interviewed independent of their parents. The response rate for parents and children was 31 percent.

Parent respondents were weighted to the March 1999 Census Bureau estimates on racial and ethnic groupings, educational attainment, and geographical region. Child respondents were weighted separately from adults on gender, age, and geographical region.

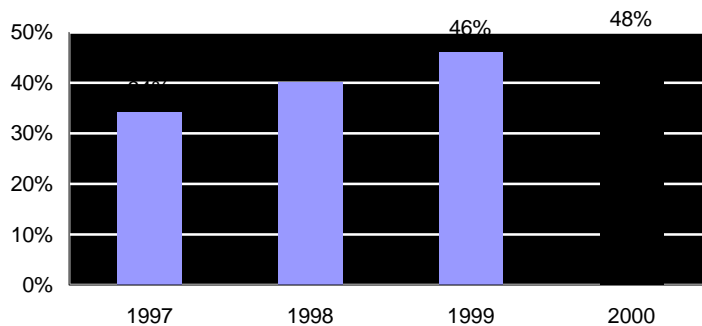
In theory, in 95 cases out of 100, the results based on such samples of parents will differ by no more than 2.9 percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by seeking out all parents of children between the ages of two and seventeen in the country. For the same 95 percent confidence interval, the results based on such samples of children will differ by no more than five percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by seeking out all children between the ages of eight and sixteen in the U.S. The potential margin of error for smaller subgroups is larger. For example, it is plus or minus 5.8 percentage points for the sub-sample of parents and their eight to sixteen year-olds.

represented. The random selection of the remaining telephone digits permitted access to both listed and unlisted numbers.

1. MEDIA IN THE HOME

The media remain a prominent feature in American family life. For the third consecutive year, ownership of media has increased both within and across families. Specifically, more families than in past years own all four of the new American media staples: a television set, a VCR, video game equipment, and a personal computer.³ Up slightly from last year, 48 percent of all families have all four media in their homes.

Figure 1.1: Proportion of Families with All Four Media Hardware: TV, VCR, Video Games, and PC



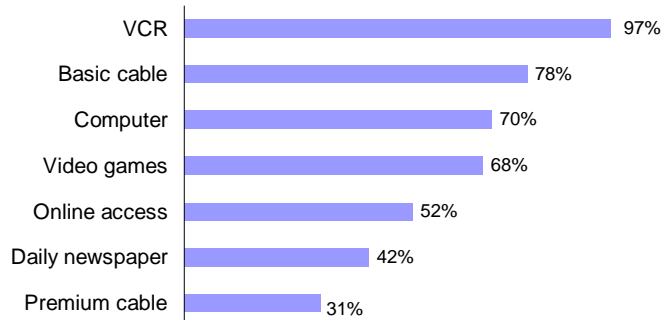
Media ownership varies significantly on the basis of family financial resources as defined by annual household income. Those with more income have significantly higher rates of ownership and those with less income have lower rates. This year, only 28 percent of families who earn less than \$30,000 annually own all four media technologies whereas 62 percent of those who make \$75,000 or more this year own all four.

The rates of increase in media ownership over the last four years are also significantly different depending upon household income. The increase in ownership is sharpest in Middle America where for those earning between \$30,000 and \$75,000 annually, media ownership has increased 18 percent over the last four years. Media ownership among those less well off and the more affluent has increased much more modestly ranging from eight percent to six percent, respectively.

³ A few decades ago American media staples were a newspaper, radio, telephone, and television set.

Ownership of Individual Media

Figure 1.2: Ownership of Individual Media (percent of homes with children 2-17)



Television

Television remains the most ubiquitous medium in the United States. Nielsen Media Research reports that of all U.S. households, this year 98 percent has at least one television.⁴ Television has an even stronger presence in homes with children. The average U.S. household has 2.4 television sets while the average household with children age two to seventeen has 2.8 sets.

Set ownership by families with children has remained stable over the last four years, varying only by income level. In 1997, families with household incomes of less than \$30,000 annually own an average 2.1 sets, families making between \$30,000 and \$75,000 own an average 2.5 sets, and families that make over \$75,000 own an average 3.0 sets. This year, the lowest income families average 2.3 sets, the middle income families own on average 2.8 sets, and the highest income families own 3.2 sets on average.

Families with children on average have more televisions than families without children, largely because a significant proportion of children have television sets in their bedrooms. This year, almost half (47%) of parents report that they have a child with a television set in his or her bedroom. We will discuss this more fully when we take a look at children's bedroom media.

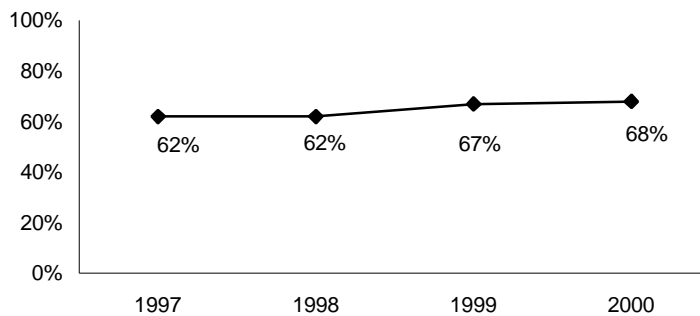
⁴ Television Bureau of Advertising (2000). Trends in television: Television households. Available: www.tvb.org/tvfacts/trends/tv/tvhouseholds.html (Accessed 5/27/2000).

VCRs and Cable

Just as the television is practically a universal commodity in the general population, this year's survey finds that the VCR is also nearly universal in households with children (97% of these homes have the technology). Families with two to seventeen year-old children are also more likely to subscribe to basic cable services than is the general television household population. In the general population, 68 percent of television households subscribe to basic cable services, while 78 percent of families with children in the target age group have the service. Both families in the sample and television households in the general population subscribe to premium cable services at a rate of about 31 percent.⁵

Video Games

Figure 1.3: Proportion of Families with Children 2-17 Who Own Video Game Equipment 1997-2000



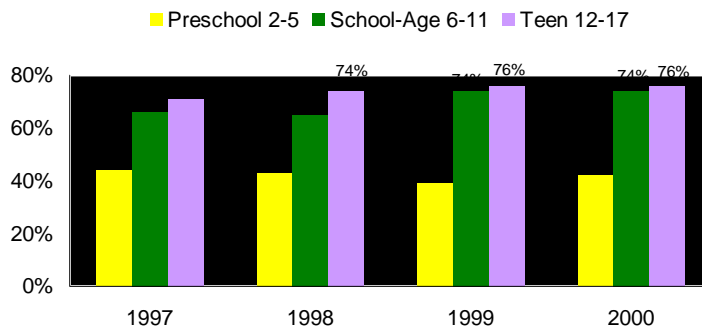
As depicted in Figure 1.3, ownership of video game equipment has been relatively stable over the last four years overall, growing only one percent (to 68%) in 2000. Analyses of video game ownership among families with different economic means show no significant differences.

What does seem to make a difference in video game ownership is the age of the child. Video games are more prevalent among children who are of elementary school age and older, as is evident from the last four years of our survey work. In this year's survey, we also observe that homes with at least one boy are significantly more likely to have video game equipment than homes with at least

⁵ Television Bureau of Advertising. (2000). Trends in television: Cable, pay cable & VCR households. Available: www.tvb.org/tvfacts/trends/tv/cable.html (Accessed 5/27/2000).

one girl (76 percent versus 58 percent, respectively). Finally, either video games are best enjoyed with siblings or two children can put more pressure to buy the equipment than one child, as they are significantly more likely to be present in homes with more than one child. In the year 2000 survey, video games are found in 75 percent of homes with more than one child but are in only 58 percent of homes with only one child.

Figure 1.4: Proportion of Families with Children 2-17 Who Own Video Game Equipment By Child Age Group 1997-2000



Computers and Online Access

Computers and online access have continued their meteoric ascent since 1996. On average, more families have a computer than video game equipment, and for the first time, online access has surpassed newspaper subscriptions. Seven in ten homes with children now have a personal computer and over half have online access (52 percent). This year, among families with computers, over three-quarters have online access, an almost 50 percent increase since 1996 when we first asked families about their online capabilities.

Figure 1.5: Overall Computer Ownership and Online Access 1996-2000 (percentage of homes with children 2-17)

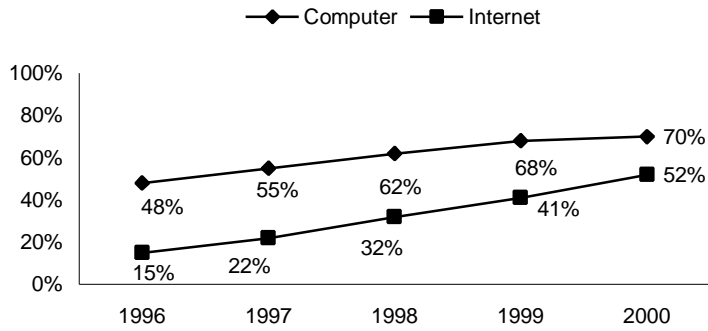
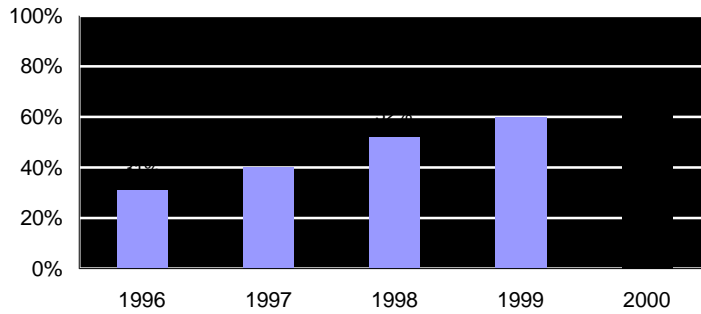


Figure 1.6: Proportion of Computers with Online Access

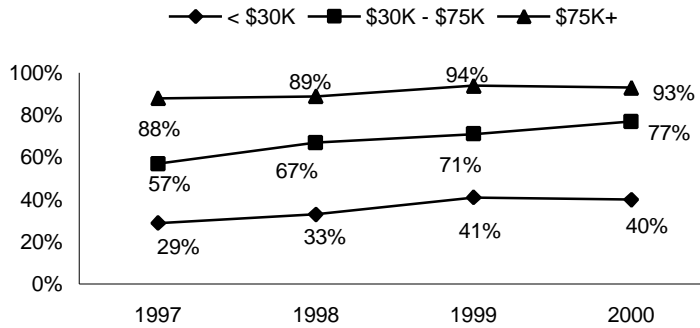


Households with at least one child aged six or older are significantly more likely to have a personal computer than households with younger children. This year there are no significant differences in online access by age. There are also no significant differences in either computer ownership or online access by the gender of the target child or the number of children in the household.

Despite the five-year highs in both computer ownership and online access, there is still a significant digital divide created by economic differences. On one side of the divide are the more affluent families that almost universally own digital technologies and services. On the other side of the divide are the less affluent families with much lower rates of technology ownership. Computer ownership leveled off in the highest income category, those households that earn more than \$75,000 annually, at 93 percent. It is also stable in the lowest income category, those households that earn less than \$30,000 annually, at 40 percent. The

middle-income category posts a four-year high with 77 percent of households who earn between \$30,000 and \$75,000 owning personal computers, an increase of six percent from the previous year.

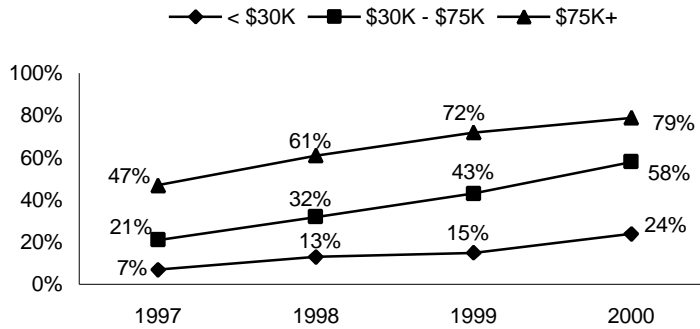
Figure 1.7: Overall Computer Ownership by Income 1997-2000 (percentage of homes with children 2-17)



There are significant increases in home Internet access across income categories. Though households in the lowest income category still lag behind the others (only 24 have online access), this income group nevertheless experienced the second largest growth (9 percent) in Internet access between 1999 and 2000. The middle-income category (with 58 percent of its households having online access) experienced the largest growth this year garnering a 15 percent increase over last year.

The Internet is not only widespread among those households with the highest incomes; it is beginning to be widely dispersed among the middle-income household strata as well. There is still a more than 50 percent difference in access for those in the highest and lowest income categories, however.

Figure 1.8: Overall Online Access by Income 1997-2000 (percentage of homes with children 2-17)

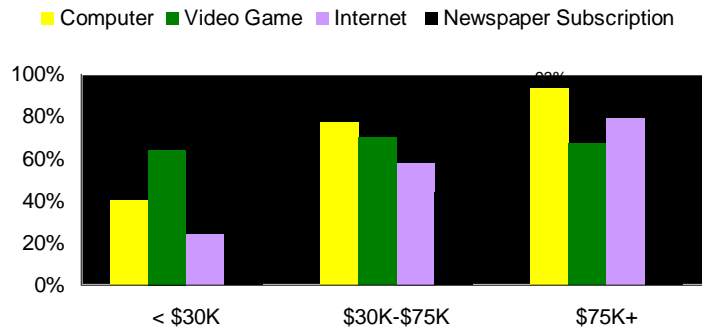


Income is a significant predictor of virtually all media ownership except for video games. This is best illustrated in Figure 1.9. Focusing on the bar of one medium at a time in the figure and tracing it across income categories, one sees a consistent increase in percentage ownership as income increases for all media except video games.

Figure 1.9 also provides a sense of media uses that coincide with media availability for families of different economic means. In the lowest income category, media ownership appears to primarily provide leisure time activity through video games (generally an entertainment vehicle) followed by the provision of computers (generally considered an educational resource). The Internet is least present in households in this income category, even less so than newspaper subscriptions.

In middle-income households, computers are more widely available than video games. The Internet is also more likely to be found than the newspaper in the middle-income household.

In the highest income families, both electronic information resources are most widely available, computers and Internet access. The implication of this finding is that children from higher income households have more informational tools and resources available in the home. The media that is equally likely to be found in lower, middle, and upper class homes is the video game. Computer ownership, Internet access, and newspaper subscriptions all increase as income increases.

Figure 1.9: Media Ownership by Income in 2000 (percentage of homes with children 2-17)

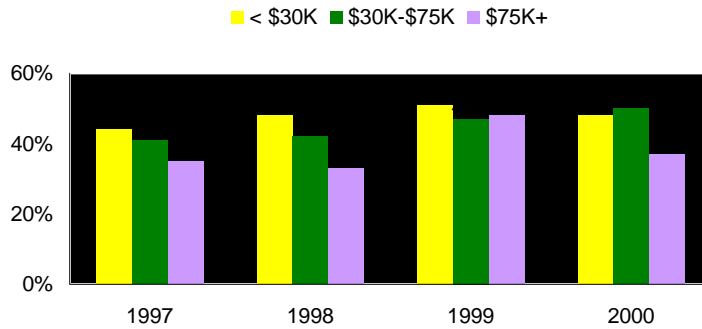
While overall media ownership is up in the year 2000, a more telling story is in the ownership of individual media among families. Television remains the most widespread medium, followed by VCRs. The acquisition of online services, however, continues to rise at a rapid rate. There remains a significant digital divide by economic resources in access to computers and online access. Nine out of ten high-income households have a computer and eight of ten have online access compared to only four out of ten with computers and two out of ten with online access among low-income households. Though low-income households are less likely to have information technologies, they are equally as likely to have video game equipment as households with greater income, a trend in ownership that may disadvantage children from low-income homes in the classroom.

The Media in Children's Bedrooms

The bedroom of the 21st century child is a multimedia environment. As noted earlier, in our survey of parents, 47 percent reported that at least one of their children had a television in his or her bedroom. We now turn to a more in-depth look at these bedroom television sets.

Interestingly, while more affluent families are likely to have more television sets in their homes overall, less well off families are more likely to have children with television sets in their bedrooms, a trend that has persisted over the last four years of the survey.

Figure 1.10: Proportion of Children 2-17 with TV Sets in Bedroom by Annual Household Income 1997-2000



In the year 2000 survey, 50 percent of parents who work full time outside of the home have children with bedroom television sets compared to only 41 percent of parents who do not work full time outside of the home. This difference cannot be entirely explained by the greater financial resources since family income is negatively related to child bedroom television sets (see Figure 1.10).

The distribution of child bedroom sets among single parents is also telling. Among single parent households with no other adult caretakers living in the household, 57 percent have children with bedroom television sets compared to 45 percent of households with multiple adult caretakers present. Thus, bedroom television sets may be a resource used by parents whose supervisory role is constrained by work commitments and/or the absence of parental assistance.

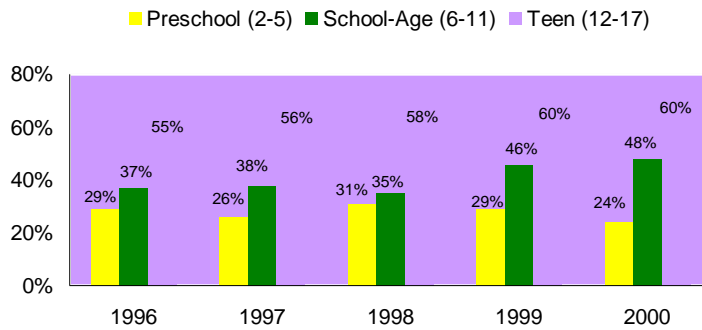
Parents who watch more television themselves are more likely to have children with bedroom television sets. In families in which parents watch little television (one hour or less per day), 39 percent of children have bedroom television sets. In those households in which parents watch more than two hours of television per day, 56 percent of children have bedroom televisions.

Differences among children also predict which parents provide bedroom television sets. Parents of boys are slightly more likely to provide their sons with a bedroom television set than are parents of girls (50 percent to 44 percent, respectively). The difference, however, is only marginally significant.

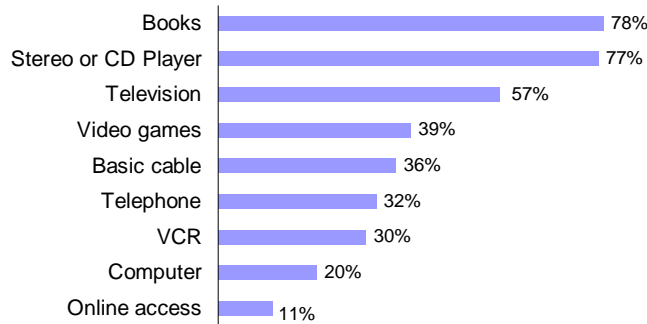
More significant differences are found in the distribution of television sets in the bedrooms of children of different ages. Preschool age children are the least

likely to have bedroom sets, this year found in only 24 percent of their bedrooms. Adolescents are most likely to have bedroom sets; 60 percent of them had televisions in their rooms this year. The proportion of television sets in the bedrooms of elementary school age children has increased significantly over the last five years (11 percent), posting a five-year high in 2000 at 48 percent of children in this age group. There was also a significant drop in the proportion of television sets in the bedrooms of preschool children, down seven percentage points from its five year high in 1998 of 31 percent. The decline in the presence of sets in the bedrooms of preschool children coincides with the American Academy of Pediatrics' 1999 pronouncement that children under the age of two should avoid television.

Figure 1.11: Proportion of Children 2-17 with TV Sets in Bedroom by Age Group 1996-2000



To take a more complete inventory of bedroom media, we asked the children aged eight to sixteen we surveyed about the types of media they have in their bedrooms at home. Books and stereos are the most prevalent media in children's bedrooms, occupying the bedrooms of over three-quarters of the children we surveyed. Television is the third most prevalent medium in bedrooms, with 57 percent having a set in the bedroom. Of those with television sets, 27 percent of children say their sets have a V-Chip or other parental control feature that enabled the blocking out of certain channels or shows.

Figure 1.12: Distribution of Media Children's (age 8-16) Bedrooms

Most children (59%) use their bedroom sets to watch television programming. Of the children with bedroom sets, almost a third (30%) do most of their television viewing in their bedrooms, presenting a potential challenge to parental supervision efforts. Another 38 percent of children with bedroom sets do at least some of their TV viewing in their bedrooms. Children also use bedroom sets for playing video games (29%) and watching videotapes (10%).

Twenty percent of children have computers in their bedrooms. Among those with computers, over half (54%) have Internet access in their bedrooms. Most children with bedroom computers use them for doing school projects (42%) and playing games (41%). Fourteen percent of children use their computers to communicate (e.g., e-mail, chat rooms, and instant messaging).

Finally, we asked children about the rules their parents put in place to govern media use in the home. We asked children about three rules across three media: television, the Internet, and video games. The rules and percentage of children with the rule are presented in Table 1.1.

About 7 in 10 children cannot use any of the listed media until they are done with schoolwork or household chores and at least about half of children are restricted in the media content they can consume. The majority of children reported being able to watch television and play video games for as long as they wanted. Most of their parents did, however, place restrictions on the amount of time spent online.

Table 1.1

Percentage of Children with Media Use Rules in the Home: The Child Perspective

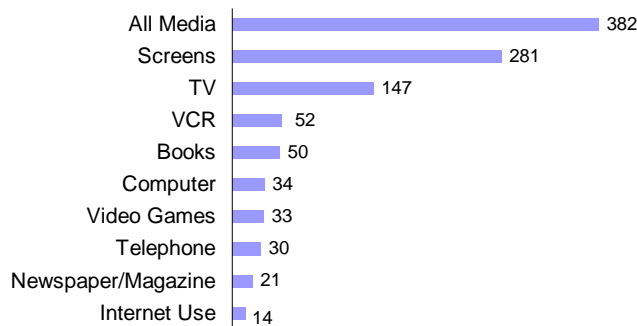
Rule	Description	Medium	%
Rule #1	Child can only use medium after homework or chores are completed.	Television	68%
		Internet*	63%
		Video Games*	71%
Rule #2	Child can only use the medium for a certain amount of time.	Television	39%
		Internet*	59%
		Video Games*	42%
Rule #3	Child can only engage certain media content. (e.g., can only watch certain shows, browse certain sites, and play certain games)	Television	50%
		Internet*	69%
		Video Games*	49%

* Among those with the medium in their homes.

2. TIME SPENT WITH MEDIA

For the fourth consecutive year, television is the medium with which children spend the most time. According to parents of children aged two to seventeen, children spend nearly two and a half hours (147 minutes) with television each day. Overall, parents report children spend an average of almost six and a half hours (382 minutes) in some form of mediated communication each day, be it watching television or video tapes, playing video games, using a computer, talking on the telephone, browsing the Internet, or reading a book, magazine or newspaper. It is important to note that children often engage these media simultaneously, for example, reading while watching television or using the computer while talking on the phone. In terms of time spent in front of screens, children reportedly spend over four and a half hours (281 minutes) watching television or videotapes, playing video games, using the computer, or browsing the Internet each day. This is up 21 minutes from the time reported spent in front of screens last year.

Figure 2.1: Average Daily Minutes Spent with Media by All Children 2-17 (Parental report)

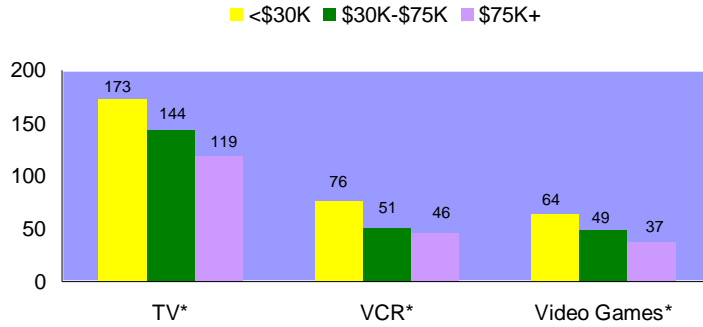


To help explain patterns in children's media use, a number of comparisons were made. Where applicable, comparisons were made only among those with the medium in their household. Only areas where there were significant differences are presented in the figures; others will be discussed in the text.

The first set of comparisons examined the role of household characteristics in time spent with media. In terms of family income, children from households with higher annual incomes watch significantly less television, and spend less time watching videotapes and playing video games than families with lower incomes.

There are no statistically significant differences across households of different economic means in time spent using the computer (among those owning computers), browsing the Internet (among those with online access), reading books or periodicals, or talking on the telephone.

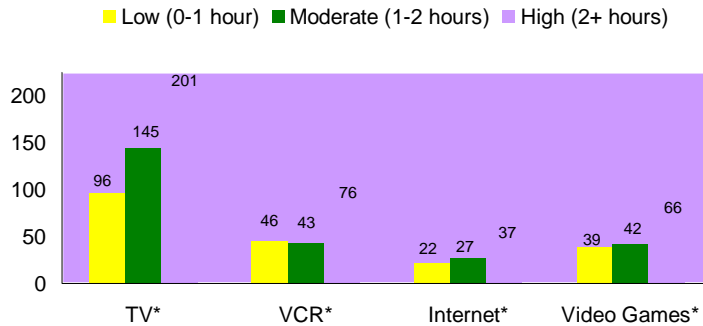
Figure 2.2: Average Daily Minutes Spent with Media by Income (Parental report)



* Differences significant at the p<.05 level

The influence of parental behavior and norms is evident in our analysis of media use. The children of heavy television viewing parents (more than 2 hours daily) themselves spend significantly more time watching television and videotapes, surfing the web, and playing video games than children of parents who watch less television.

Figure 2.3: Average Daily Minutes Children Spent with Media by Parental TV Viewing Habits



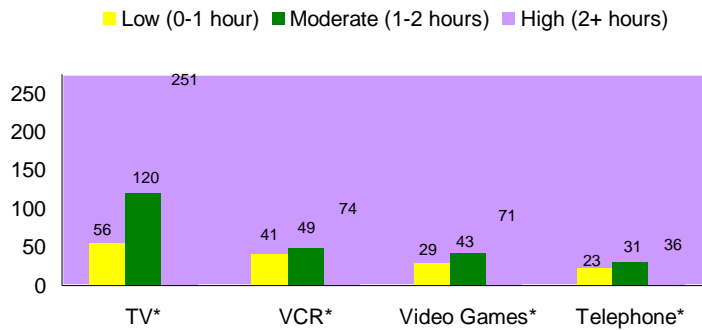
* Differences significant at the p<.05 level

We also see evidence that the media serve as a babysitter of sorts in some circumstances. Household characteristics that correspond to statistically significant differences in time spent with media include full-time parental employment outside of the home and family composition. Children of parents

who work full-time outside of the home spend an average 43 minutes more with all media than children parents who do not work full-time outside of the home (397 minutes vs. 354 minutes). Children of single parents spend 47 minutes more with all media each day than children where there is more than one adult caretaker available in the home (421 minutes vs. 374 minutes).

Children who are heavier television viewers are heavier media users overall. Children who spend more than two hours watching television daily also spend significantly more time watching videotapes, playing video games, and talking on the telephone. There are no statistically significant differences in time spent using the computer, browsing the Internet, reading books or periodicals by the amount of time the child spent with television.

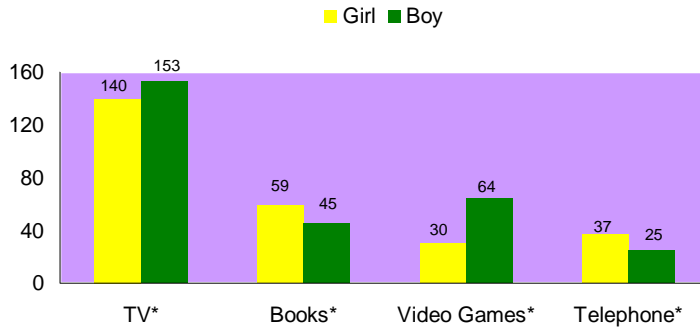
Figure 2.4: Average Daily Minutes Children Spent with Media by Child TV Viewing Habits



* Differences significant at the p<.05 level

The gender of the child corresponds with the use of several media. Boys spend more time watching television and playing video games while girls spend significantly more time reading books and talking on the telephone. There are no significant gender differences in Internet or computer use.

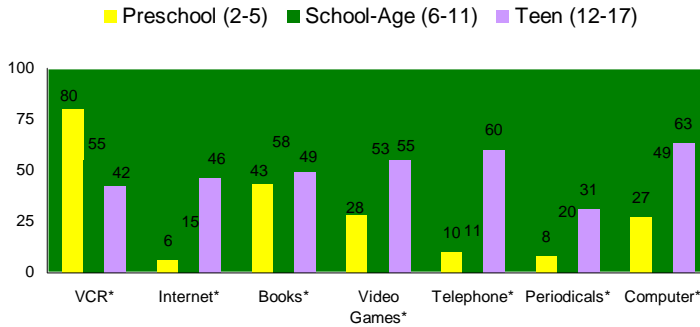
Figure 2.5: Average Daily Minutes Children Spent with Media by Child Gender



* Differences significant at the $p < .05$ level

Media use also varied among children of different ages. There are statistically significant differences in media use across all of the media except television viewing. Preschoolers spend the most time watching videotapes, elementary school age children spend the most time reading books, and adolescents spend the most time using the Internet, playing video games, talking on the telephone, reading periodicals, and generally using the computer.

Figure 2.6: Average Daily Minutes Children Spent with Media by Child Age



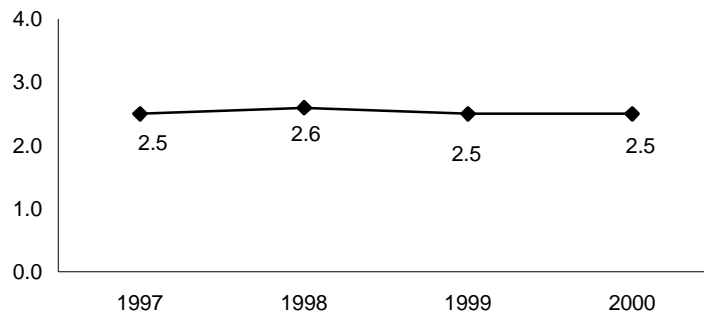
* Differences significant at the $p < .05$ level

It is possible that children without siblings could spend more time with media because of the reduced interpersonal interactions they experience. This year's data reveal that this is not the case. Children in homes where they are the "only child" do not generally spend more time with the media except for those that can be used to communicate with others, namely the telephone and the Internet.

As families own more media, one could predict that other media could displace the amount of time children spend with television. Overall, however, time spent

with television has not significantly diminished over time. In fact, time spent with television has been stable over the last four years leading Stanger and Gridina (1999) to conclude in our 1999 report that "...there has not been any reported significant decrease in television viewership by children over the years of our survey, even with the introduction of new media into a high percentage of homes."⁶

Figure 2.7: Average Daily Hours Spent with Television 1997-2000



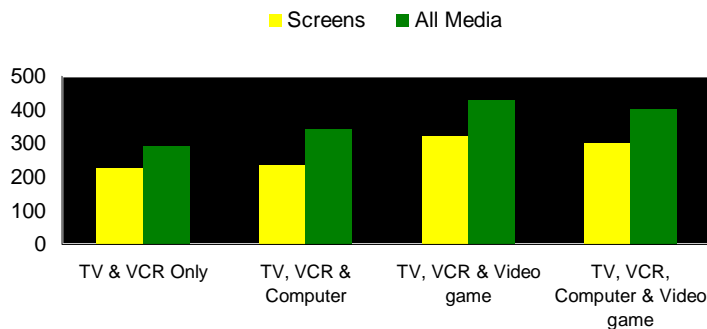
This year we took a closer look at the impact of time spent with new media as well as with some older media on time spent with television. Controlling for household income, parental television viewing habits, and the age and gender of the child, we compared the adjusted average time spent with television for children who spent time with and did not spend time with the following media: VCRs, video games, computers, and the Internet. We found significant correlations between video game use, computer use, and time spent with television. Children who use video games spend on average 21 more minutes watching television per day⁷ and children who use the computer for uses other than going online spend an average 14 minutes less watching television per day. VCR use (viewing video tapes) and Internet use did not significantly relate to time spent television viewing after controlling for the covariates listed earlier.

To investigate the relationship between media ownership and time spent with the media, comparisons were made between owners of varying amounts of media. One would expect that the more media owned the more time spent with media.

⁶ Stanger, J. D. & Gridina, N. (1999) *Television in the Home: 1999 National Survey of Parents and Children*. Annenberg Public Policy Center Survey Series No. 5, University of Pennsylvania. Page 9.

That is not the case, as owners of all four media, television sets, VCRs, video games, and computers, spend significantly less time with the media overall than did owners of television sets, VCRs, and video games. This is possibly due to the lower rate of computer ownership and higher rate of video game ownership by the heavy media using, low-income households that are more likely to populate the “TV, VCR, & Video Game” category and not the “TV, VCR, Computer & Video Game” category.

Figure 2.8: Average Daily Minutes Spent in front of “Screens” and with All Media by Media Ownership



This year, in addition to assessing time spent with media, we wanted to get a sense of the educational fare parents are encouraging their children to watch on television, whether children are actually watching the fare, and whether or not children are learning anything from it. Do parents and children see the medium primarily as an entertainment medium or do they see opportunities for learning? To begin to answer this question, we identified a number of television programs and program environments (channels) parents report their children learning from.⁸ We then asked parents and children in our national survey about their exposure to and learning from the shows and channels. We added a primarily entertaining channel (Cartoon Network) and a primarily entertaining program (*The Simpsons*) to each list to see how entertainment fare compared with educational fare.

⁷ Even though parents were asked to delineate between video game use and watching programs on television, some parents may have included time spent playing video games using the television set in their minutes spent “watching television.”

⁸ Schmitt, K. L. (2000) *Public policies, family rules, and children’s media use in the home* (Report No. 35). Philadelphia, PA: The Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania.

Table 2.1
Viewing of “Educational” Channels

Channel	% Encouraging ^a	% Regularly Watching ^b	% Learning ^{bc}
<i>Discovery Channel</i>	88%	53%	96%
<i>PBS</i>	60%	37%	80%
<i>Nickelodeon</i>	56%	60%	55%
<i>News channels</i>	43%	34%	96%
<i>Cartoon Network</i>	33%	49%	29%

^a Parents of children aged 8-16 reporting

^b Children age 8-16 reporting

^c Children were asked “Is this a show where you usually learn something when you watch it?”

Among parents of eight to sixteen year-olds (matching the age range of children also surveyed), the most encouraged program environment among the ones posed to parents is the Discovery Channel, followed by PBS and Nickelodeon. The least encouraged channel is the primarily entertaining one, the Cartoon Network. Most children, aged eight to sixteen, report watching Nickelodeon followed by the Discovery Channel. Most children report learning something from the Discovery Channel and news channels. Parents in households with incomes less than \$30,000 per year are significantly more likely to encourage their children to watch the Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, and news channels. Parents in households making between \$30,000 and \$75,000 are significantly more likely to encourage the Discovery Channel.

Table 2.2
Viewing of “Educational” Shows

Parents' Report (8-16 year-olds)			Children's Report (8-16 year-olds)		
Program	% View	% Learn ^a	Program	% View	% Learn ^a
<i>Who Wants to Be a Millionaire</i>	46%	87%	<i>Who Wants to Be a Millionaire</i>	60%	80%
<i>Saved by the Bell*</i>	36%	63%	<i>The Simpsons</i>	49%	12%
<i>7th Heaven</i>	31%	95%	<i>Recess*</i>	35%	33%
<i>Arthur</i>	28%	92%	<i>7th Heaven</i>	34%	59%
<i>The Simpsons</i>	28%	20%	<i>Arthur</i>	31%	64%
<i>Recess*</i>	12%	63%	<i>Saved by the Bell*</i>	29%	32%
<i>Oprah Winfrey</i>	9%	87%	<i>Histeria*</i>	14%	55%
<i>Histeria*</i>	5%	73%	<i>Oprah Winfrey</i>	14%	51%

^a Among those reporting regular viewing.

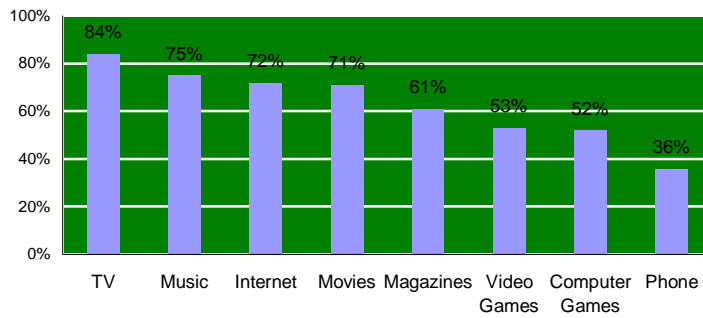
Starred programs are titles that are identified by commercial broadcasters as educational and informational (E/I) for children. The stations air E/I programs to satisfy the mandate of the Three-Hour Rule, a processing guideline designed to increase the number of educational programs available over the free airwaves.

According to parental reports of child viewing behavior, most children between the ages of eight and sixteen regularly watch *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, followed by the E/I program *Saved by the Bell*. Most children aged eight to sixteen, report regularly watching *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. We also asked both parents of children and children who regularly watch each program if they usually learn something they consider useful. Most parents thought that their children learned from *7th Heaven*, a general audience program that contains prosocial themes. Most children thought that they learned something from *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, a highly rated, trivia game show for a general audience.

3. PERCEPTIONS OF THE MEDIA

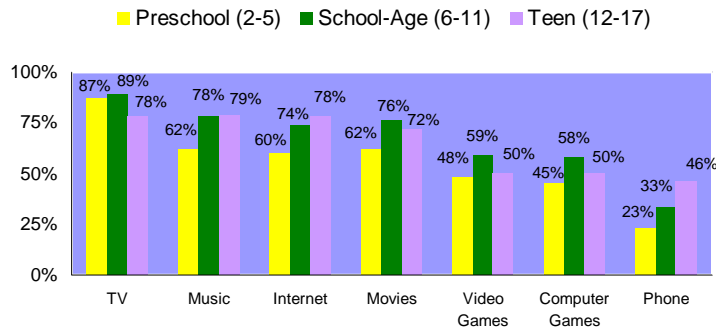
In our survey, parents were asked to rate their concern about several media on a four-point scale that varied from a one-- signifying that the parent was not at all concerned about the medium-- to a four-- signifying that the parent was very concerned about the medium. Figure 3.1 presents the percentages of parents that report being “somewhat” or “very concerned” about individual media.

Figure 3.1: Percentage of Parents of Children Aged 2-17 Expressing At Least “Some” Concern about Medium



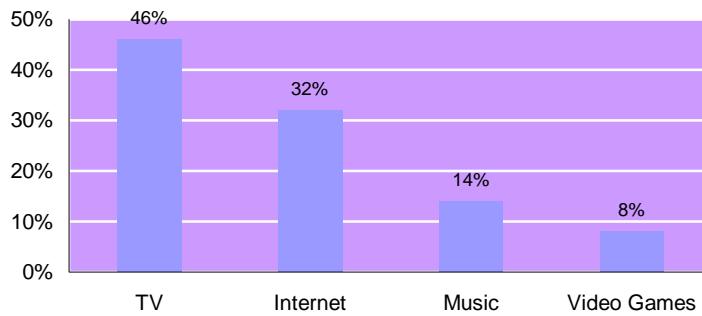
Television is the medium that still elicits the concern of most parents, followed by music, the Internet, and movies. Video and computer games garner just about the least concern among parents. Overall, parents seem to be anxious about the media generally, given that for all media, except for the telephone, the majority of parents expresses at least some concern.

Figure 3.2: Percentage of Parents Expressing At Least “Some” Concern about Medium By Child Age Group



Parental concern about the media varies significantly with the age of the child on which parents focused when responding. Significantly fewer parents of adolescents are concerned about television than parents of preschool and elementary school age children. Significantly fewer parents of preschoolers are concerned about music, the Internet, and movies, than parents of elementary school age children and parents of adolescents. Significantly more parents of elementary school age children are concerned about video and computer games than parents of differently aged children. Finally, concern about child telephone use is related to age. As the child's age increases, the number of parents concerned about telephone use also increases significantly.

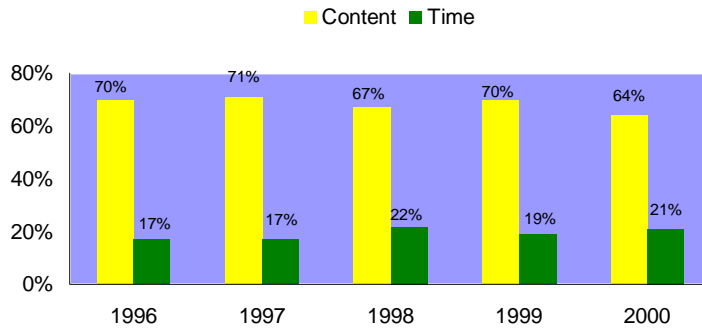
Figure 3.3: Percentage of Parents Expressing that the Medium Concerns Them Most



To determine which medium worried parents most, they were asked to choose which of the following four media concerned them most: television, music, the Internet, and video games. The majority of parents cite television (45 percent), followed by the Internet (31 percent), and then music (14 percent). Of least concern to parents are video games, with only eight percent stating that they are most concerned about their influence. This concern varies slightly by age of child. Most parents of adolescents express greatest concern about the Internet (40%) followed by television (30%).

So just what about television concerns parents so much? Is it the content to which children are exposed or is it the amount of time children spend with the medium? Our survey work over the last five years overwhelmingly indicates that it is content that concerns parents most.

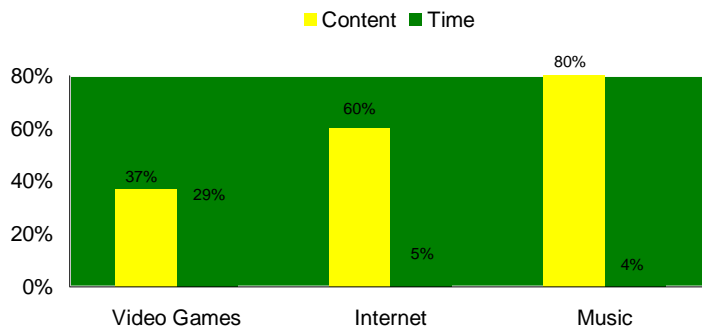
Figure 3.4: What Concerns Parents More About Television—Content or Time Spent with Medium?*



* Percentages do not equal 100 because some parents volunteered “neither” and “both equally” responses.

Concern about content over time spent with the medium is not limited to television, but seems to be consistent across media. Video games garner the most concern about time spent with the medium, but even in this case do not surpass concerns about the content of the games played.

Figure 3.5: What Concerns Parents More About Other Media—Content or Time Spent with Medium?*



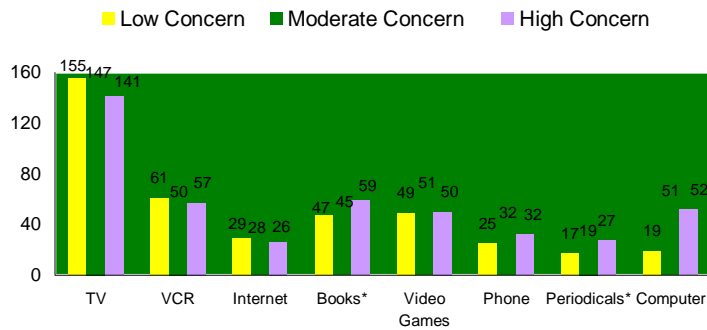
* Percentages do not equal 100 because some parents volunteered “neither” and “both equally” responses.

The emphasis on content of media explains why concern does not lead to reduced time spent with the media. Concerns about the media were aggregated and used to create an index of media concern. On the basis of index scores, parents were grouped into one of three categories, low concern, moderate concern, and high concern. The time the children of these parents spent with

media were then compared to see whether parental concern led to reduced time spent with the media. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 3.6.

As Figure 3.6 indicates, the only significant differences in time spent with media were in the reading of books and the reading of newspaper and magazines.⁹ What this indicates is that parents with concerns about the media may not curb the amount of time spent with the media they are concerned about but rather encourage media activities with which they are more comfortable, in this case the reading of books and periodicals.

Figure 3.6: Time Spent with Media by General Concern over Media

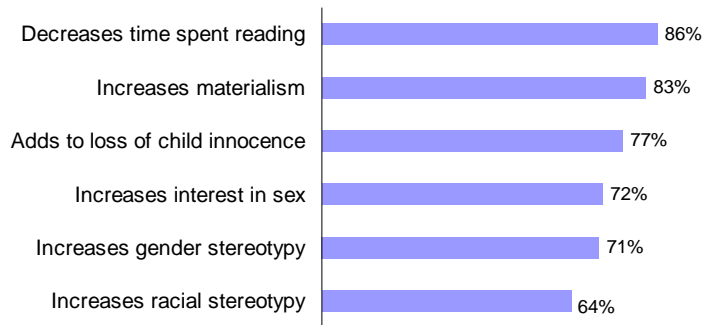


* Difference statistically significant at $p < .05$.

To further ascertain concerns parents had about television in particular, they were asked to agree or disagree with a host of views about television on five-point Likert-type scales where one was “Strongly Disagree” and five was “Strongly Agree.” An index of negative views about television was created with the items listed in Figure 3.7. The percentage of parents that indicated that they either “Somewhat Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” with the statement is listed next to the statement.

⁹ While time spent with television does move in the appropriate direction, the relationship failed to reach statistical significance.

**Figure 3.7: Percentage of Parents that at least “Somewhat” Agree with the Statement:
“Thinking about children in general, watching television...”**

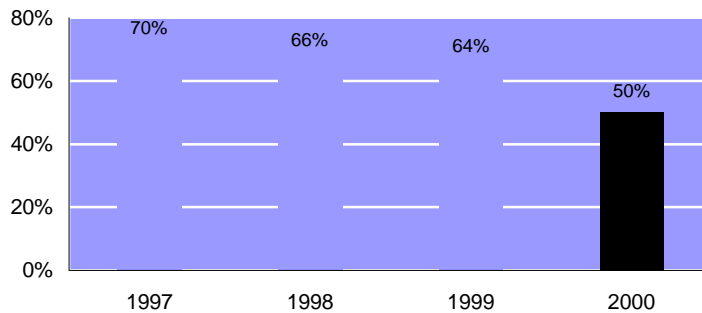


Despite overwhelmingly reporting that they are most concerned about the content of the media, most parents indicate concern about the impact of television on time spent reading. Scores on the negative views index are positively correlated with media concerns ($r = .303, p < .01$) and negatively correlated with parental television viewing ($r = -.127, p < .01$). That is, negative views about television are related to increasing concerns about television; the more television a parent watches the less negative that parent's view of television.

4. USE OF POLICIES, TECHNOLOGY AND INTERACTION TO GUIDE MEDIA USE

Two recent policies provide parents with information they can use to guide child television use. The first is a rating system known as the TV Parental Guidelines. A product of V-Chip legislation, these ratings inform parents about the age group television content is intended for as well as the presence of four problematic content themes: violence, sexual content, crude or indecent language, and adult dialogue. A second guideline is the product of a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) processing guideline known as the “Three-Hour Rule.” This guideline calls for commercial broadcasters (not cable-casters) to air three hours a week of programming that meets the cognitive/intellectual or social/emotional needs of children. The guideline also calls for broadcasters to label their educational offerings on the air and provide details about these shows to program listing services (e.g., *TV Guide*) so that parents can identify them. In terms of the TV Parental Guidelines rating system, this year finds that 50 percent of parents are aware that programs are rated for their suitability for different audiences. This represents a 14 percent decline in awareness of the system from last year and a 20 percent decline from awareness levels in 1997 when the rating system was first put into effect.

Figure 4.1: Percentage of Parents Aware of the TV Parental Guidelines Rating System 1997-2000



Of the parents aware of the ratings system, 54 percent accurately stated that the ratings system provides *both* age and content-based information about television programs. Forty-five percent of parents are aware that programs are rated on whether or not they are educational for children.

To assess parents' ability to use the ratings systems, we tested their knowledge of the systems. We identified eight popular programs frequently mentioned by parents in a series of focus groups¹⁰ and asked parents to identify the *age rating* of the programs and whether or not they were *labeled as educational* for children. Parents were only asked to identify the age rating and the E/I designation for programs they reported their children regularly watched. The programs, ratings, and percentage of parents correctly identifying rating information are listed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1
Parental Knowledge of Age Ratings and E/I Designation

Program	Rating	% Correct	E/I?	% Correct
<i>Arthur</i>	TVY	15%	No	13%
<i>Histeria</i>	TVY	8%	Yes	43%
<i>Recess</i>	TVY	8%	Yes	40%
<i>Who Wants to Be a Millionaire</i>	TVG	9%	No	30%
<i>Oprah Winfrey</i>	TVPG	8%	No	29%
<i>7th Heaven</i>	TVG	8%	No	28%
<i>The Simpsons</i>	TVPG	7%	No	84%
<i>Saved by the Bell</i>	TVY7*	9%	Yes	35%

*Some stations carrying the program in syndication rate it TVG, also accepted as a correct response.

Among the parents of children who regularly watch these programs, 84 percent of the sample could not accurately identify the age rating for *any* of the programs their child regularly watch. On average, parents could only accurately identify the age rating for 9 percent of the sample programs their children regularly view.

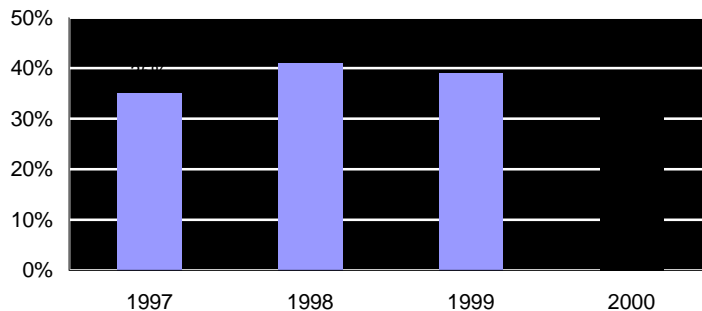
We also assessed parental knowledge of the system for labeling educational programs for children using the same sample of programs. Among the parents of children who regularly watch these programs, 47 percent of the sample could not accurately identify whether or not any of the sample programs their child regularly watches are labeled as educational for children. On average, parents only accurately identified the E/I designation for a third of the programs their children regularly watched.

¹⁰ See Schmitt, 2000.

To illustrate the misunderstandings about the educational program labeling system, 71 percent of parents whose children regularly watch *Oprah Winfrey* thought that the program was labeled as educational for children. Seventy percent thought that the program *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* was labeled educational for children. The educational label means that the program is designed specifically to meet the educational needs of a child audience, a goal neither of these programs shares.

Despite poor parental performance on our test of knowledge of the rating systems, 39 percent of parents report using the TV Parental Guidelines ratings system to guide their children's viewing, the same percentage that reported using the system last year.¹¹

Figure 4.2: Percentage of Parents who Report Using the TV Parental Guidelines to Guide Child Viewing

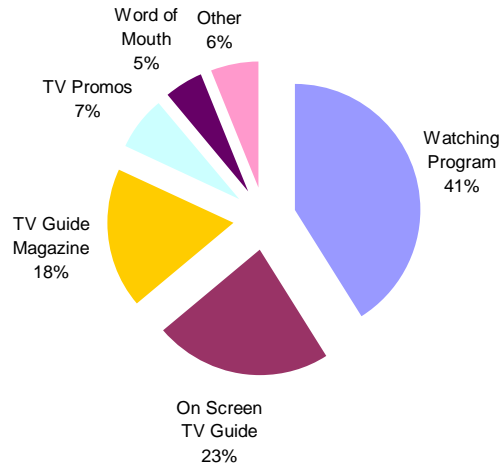


Where do parents get their information about the programs their children watch? As we found last year, most parents rely on watching programs themselves to determine appropriateness for their children. However, if that is their sole source of information, they are not likely to learn much about the rating system, as the ratings are not explained in the context of the shows and moreover only appear on screen for mere seconds at the very beginning of the program. If a parent does opt against a program on one channel, he or she is not likely to catch the rating information on the next because the ratings stay on screen for such a short period of time. Both print and electronic versions of TV guide have also been inconsistent sources of ratings information, only publishing TV Parental

¹¹ Before taking into account awareness of the system, 72% of parents reported using the ratings to guide child viewing.

Guidelines ratings information as space permits and dropping educational labels altogether.

Figure 4.3: Sources Parents Consult For Children's Television Program Information



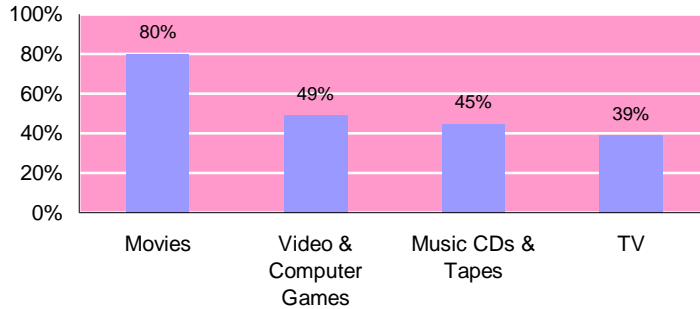
The children that we surveyed are more familiar with the ratings systems than the adults. Sixty-one percent of the children aged eight to sixteen surveyed are familiar with the TV Parental Guidelines ratings and 57 percent were familiar with the educational program ratings. When asked to identify whether or not the same eight programs posed to the adult respondents are labeled educational or not, only 9 percent of the children failed to accurately identify any of the programs. On average, children could accurately identify about half of the programs (48%) “they had heard of” as being labeled educational or not.

A potential pitfall of the ratings systems is that they attract or repel audiences inappropriately. In particular, broadcasters have disparaged the educational label claiming that children may avoid programs if they think they are good for them. Our data do not support that contention, at least from the perspective of parents. Ninety-two percent of parents think that the educational label either makes no difference in their child’s decision to view a program or it makes them more likely to view the program.

Other media also provide parents with information through ratings and advisories they use to help guide child media consumption. Figure 4.4 charts parental use of some of these ratings systems and advisories. The oldest among them, the

Motion Picture Association of America's rating system for movies, is the most widely used system for parental mediation of media content.

Figure 4.4: Percentage of Parents Using Various Media Rating Systems



The Use of Technology as a Supervisory Tool

Supervision through technology primarily involves the use of electronic blocking devices to prevent child access to content with which parents are uncomfortable. The first technology examined here is the V-Chip. Required in television sets as of January 1, 2000, the technology was designed to empower parents by enabling them to decide what does and does not get aired in the home. By interfacing with the TV Parental Guidelines described earlier, the V-Chip enables parents to block programs they deem inappropriate for their children. Blocking can be based on the audience to whom the programs are targeted, or the presence of potentially problematic content, or a combination of the two.

Our first survey since V-Chip equipped television sets have been widely available, *Media in the Home 2000*, gives us an early glimpse of the use of the technology as a mediation technique. In our survey, respondents were asked “Do you have a television with parental control features such as a V-Chip or channel blocking device that blocks out certain shows or channels?” Forty-percent of parents reported that they had blocking technology on their television sets. Of those with the blocking technology, 51 percent reported that they had programmed the channel blocking device at one point or another. Fifty-three percent of those with V-Chips or other channel blocking devices indicated that

the parental control feature would be engaged “If their child turned on the TV today.”¹²

Still in its infancy, the only statistically significant correlate to V-Chip use is parental knowledge of the information provided through the TV Parental Guidelines. Fifty-eight percent of those with higher knowledge about the Guidelines and ownership of blocking technology in their homes use the technology whereas 48 percent of those lower in media policy knowledge with the technology in their homes actually use it. Use does not vary by media ownership or use, child characteristics, or parental characteristics.

As blocking technology is now required in virtually all television sets, most families will acquire the technology as their current sets are replaced. Eleven-percent of parents acquired a new set since January of this year and another 26 percent say they are likely to purchase a new set in the next year or two.

Through filtering software parents can also block objectionable web site content from being displayed on home computers. Of those with Internet access at home, 32 percent report having used filtering devices for the Internet. This technology has been available longer than the V-Chip and does exhibit some patterns of differential use. Families that own all four media are significantly more likely to use the technology than are those who do not own all four, at a rate of 38 percent to 21 percent respectively. Parents who work full-time outside of the home are more likely to use filtering devices than parents who don't work full-time outside of the home (36% versus 24%). Single parents are more likely to use filtering devices than parents with the support of another adult care taker in the home (44% versus 31%). Finally, parents of preschoolers are significantly less likely to use filtering software than parents of school-age children and adolescents (18% versus 34% versus 36%, respectively).

A concern with V-Chip technology and other content blocking devices is that children may be more technically savvy than their parents and as a consequence be able to counter-program any blocking or filtering strategies their parents employ. This year's survey indicates that few children can circumnavigate their parents' blocking attempts. Nineteen percent of the children we surveyed with V-

¹² The discrepancy is likely attributed to another caretaker in the household programming the device or the device being pre-programmed.

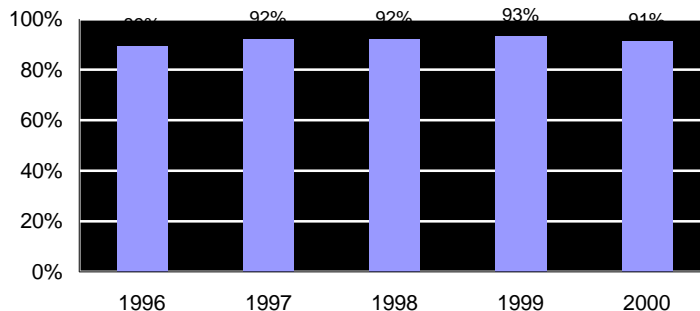
Chip technology in their homes said they knew how to get around it. Five percent of children with filtering software on home computers reported knowing how to get around those protective mechanisms. No screening technology exists yet for video games; however 19 percent of the children we surveyed said they knowingly played video games of which their parents would not approve.

Supervision Strategies in the New Media Environment

Discussions about parental supervision of media usually center on strategies parents use to guide child interactions with television. In this year's survey, we not only examine supervision strategies used with television, but also the techniques used with other media, specifically video games, music, and the Internet. We are interested in examining how parents talk to children about media content, the rules they establish for household media use, and the extent to which they use the media with their children. We begin with the supervision of television.

Parents and children watching television together is a guidance opportunity that we have examined over the last five years of this survey series. In the year 2000 survey, parents once again report a high level of television viewing with their children. Ninety-one percent of parents report watching television with their child at least sometimes.

Figure 4.5: Percentage of Parents Who Watch Television with their Children At Least "Sometimes"



To find out just what parents and their children watch together, we asked parents to name the last program viewed with their child. Table 4.2 lists the top ten named programs.

Table 4.2

Top Ten Last Co-Viewed Shows

-
1. **Who Wants to be a Millionaire***
 2. *Rugrats*
 3. *Blues Clues*
 4. **News***
 5. *Barney*
 6. **The Simpsons***
 7. *Arthur*
 8. **Walking With Dinosaurs***
 9. *Pokemon*
 10. **Friends***
-

* Not produced for the child audience.

Of the top ten named programs, half were designed specifically for children and half were adult or general audience programming. As is clear from the list, when parents do co-view children's programs they are most likely to be co-viewing with a preschool age child, as three of the five children's programs were specifically designed, at least in part, for the preschool audience.

Table 4.3

Most Encouraged Programs and Channels by Parents

Top 10 Encouraged Programs	Top 5 Encouraged Channels
1. <i>Sesame Street</i>	1. Discovery Channel
2. <i>Blues Clues</i>	2. PBS
3. News*	3. The History Channel
4. <i>Arthur</i>	4. The Learning Channel
5. <i>Barney</i>	5. Disney Channel
6. Touched by an Angel*	
7. Seventh Heaven*	
8. National Geographic*	
9. <i>Rugrats</i>	
10. <i>Little Bear</i>	

* Not produced for the child audience.

To find out which programs parents steer their children toward, we asked them to list the programs they encourage their children to watch. In response to this question, 43 percent of parents could not list one program that they encouraged

their child to watch, some cited the names of specific shows while others pointed to general programming environments. Parents of preschoolers were best able to come up with programs they encouraged (68% could name at least one program or programming environment), followed by parents of elementary school age children (60%) and then parents of adolescents (47%). The top ten encouraged shows and the top five encouraged programming environments are listed in Table 4.3. The program or programming environment most mentioned overall was the Discovery Channel.

Table 4.4

Top 10 Discouraged Programs or Programming Environments

-
1. *The Simpsons*
 2. MTV
 3. *South Park*
 4. Wrestling
 5. *Jerry Springer*
 6. *NYPD Blue*
 7. *Beavis and Butthead*
 8. *Friends*
 9. ***Power Rangers****
 10. Soap Operas
-

*Produced for the child audience.

To find out which programs parents steer their children away from, we asked them to list the programs they discourage their children from watching. In response to this question, 38 percent of parents could not list one program that they discouraged their child from watching. Parents of elementary school age children were best able to come up with programs they discouraged (69% could name at least one program or programming environment), followed by parents of preschool age children (62%) and then parents of adolescents (55%). Again, of those who could name a program they discourage, some cited the names of specific shows while others pointed to general programming environments. The top ten discouraged shows and programming environments are listed in Table 4.4. All of the programs most discouraged by parents are made for adult audiences except for *Power Rangers*.

In our survey of children, 97 percent reported that they watched the programs their parents recommended and 59 percent reported that they had watched a program a parent had discouraged.

Finally, in a more deliberate look at parental supervision of the media, we asked parents about their use of six common supervisory techniques. The techniques and the percentage of parents using the techniques by medium are listed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5
Parental Supervision Techniques by Medium

Percentage of parents using the technique at least "sometimes"...			
Forbid particular content		Use media with child (Co-view, listen, play...)	
TV	72%	TV	91%
Music	55%	Music	86%
Video Games*	49%	Video Games*	47%
Internet*	48%	Internet*	54%
Turn off objectionable content		Talk about content during use	
TV	74%	TV	87%
Music	58%	Music	68%
Video Games*	34%	Video Games*	50%
Internet*	35%	Internet*	47%
Restrict amount of time with medium		Encourage particular media content	
TV	72%	TV	74%
Music	31%	Music	56%
Video Games*	59%	Video Games*	28%
Internet*	48%	Internet*	41%

*Among those with the media technology in their homes.

Overall, television is the most supervised medium, followed by music. Video games and the Internet are least likely to be supervised in the ways described in Table 4.5. Across all media, supervision varied significantly by age of the child and general media concern. Parents of adolescents supervise television significantly less and the Internet significantly more than parents of children aged 11 and younger. Parents of school age children (6-11) spend significantly more time supervising television, music and video games than do parents of children of other ages. Media concern is positively related to supervision across all four media. Specifically, as parental concerns about the media increase their overall supervision also increases.