

TV RATINGS SURVEY

PRINCETON SURVEY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES for THE KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION

Rahy
GW

N=1,350 parents of children aged 2-17

Field period: April 6-23, 1998

1. Last year, the television industry introduced a ratings system, designed to help parents decide whether a TV show is appropriate for their family to watch. Some of the ratings used are TV-G, TV-PG, and TV-14. Have you seen or heard anything about the TV ratings system?
2. In addition to television, other entertainment media like movie and recording industries also have ratings systems or parental advisory labels to help people decide whether material is appropriate for their family. In general, do you think the ratings and parental advisories used by television and other media are a good idea or a bad idea?
3. As I read you some different rating systems and parental advisories, tell me whether or not you have EVER used each one to help guide YOUR OWN family's choices. (First, have you ever used...
 - a. The ratings for TV shows?
 - b. The parental advisories on CDs and music tapes?
 - c. The rating system for movies in theaters and on video?
 - d. The parental advisories on video and computer games?
 - e. The ratings and parental advisories on Internet Web sites?
4. Please tell me how USEFUL each of the following has been in helping guide your family's choices. How useful has this been...(INSERT FIRST ITEM, USING SAME ORDER AS Q.3) : very useful, somewhat useful, not too useful, or not at all useful? How useful has this been...(INSERT NEXT ITEM)
 - a. The ratings for TV shows
 - b. The parental advisories on CDs and music tapes
 - c. The ratings for movies
 - d. The parental advisories on video and computer games
 - e. The ratings and parental advisories on Internet Web sites
5. Now I have some questions about your family's television viewing habits... In TOTAL, how many televisions do you now have in your household?
- *6. On an average WEEKDAY, Monday through Friday, about how many hours do you personally spend watching TV? (*Gallup trend 1990*)

- *7. On an average WEEKEND DAY, Saturday or Sunday, about how many hours do you personally spend watching TV? *(Gallup trend 1990)*
- *8. Parents have different concerns about what their children may be exposed to in the TV shows they watch. How concerned are YOU that your children are being exposed to too much...**(INSERT--READ AND ROTATE)** in the TV shows they watch? Are you concerned a great deal, somewhat, not too much, or not at all? **(RECORD RESPONSE AND THEN CONTINUE WITH NEXT ITEM)** How concerned are you that your children are being exposed to too much...*(Kaiser/PSRA trend)*
- a. Violent content
 - b. Sexual content
 - c. Adult language
9. Which ONE of the following concerns you MOST as a parent? Is it the amount of ... **(READ RELEVANT ITEMS FROM Q.8)** in the TV shows your children are watching?
- 1) a. Violent content (or)
 - 2) b. Sexual content (or)
 - 3) c. Adult language (or)
 - 4) **(VOL.)** All about the same/No one in particular
 - 9) **(DO NOT READ)** Don't know/Refused
10. Thinking again about the ratings system the television industry introduced last year ... How well would you say you personally understand the TV ratings system... **(READ)**
- 1) Very well
 - 2) Somewhat well
 - 3) Not too well, OR
 - 4) Not at all well?
 - 9) **(DO NOT READ)** Don't know/Refused

11. Now I'm going to ask you some questions about the TV ratings system and how it works. We don't expect you to know all the answers. If you're not sure of something, just say so and I'll go to the next questions. As far as you know, what kind of information does the TV rating system NOW provide about a TV show? Does it tell you ...**(READ)**
- 1) What AGE level a TV show is appropriate for, OR...
 - 2) What kind of CONTENT is in a TV show, such as the amount of sex, violence, or adult language
OR
 - 3) Does it provide BOTH age- and content-based information?
12. Now I'm going to read you some different kinds of TV programming. As I read each one, tell me whether or not you think it is now rated under the TV ratings system. (First,) what about... **(INSERT--READ AND ROTATE)** Is this kind of programming now rated, or not?
- a. Children's shows like Sesame Street and Saturday morning cartoons
 - b. Daytime soap operas like Days of Our Lives and General Hospital
 - c. Talk shows like Oprah and Jerry Springer
 - d. Live sports like Monday Night Football
 - e. TV news magazines like Dateline and 60 Minutes
 - f. Prime time dramas like ER and NYPD Blue
 - g. Prime time comedies like Seinfeld and Cosby
13. The TV ratings system uses different numbers and letters to provide information about a show. Do you happen to know ANY of the specific ratings now being used in rating CHILDREN'S SHOWS, such as Sesame Street and Saturday morning cartoons?
- 1) Yes, correct response (TV-Y, TV-Y7, FV)
 - 2) Yes, other response **(SPECIFY)**
 - 3) No, don't know any
14. One of the specific ratings for children's shows is "TV-Y." Can you tell me what this rating means?
- 1) Yes, correct response (suitable for all children/children of all ages)
 - 2) Yes, other response **(SPECIFY)**
 - 3) No, don't know
 - 9) Refused

15. Another specific rating used for children's shows is "TV-Y7." Can you tell me what this means?
- 1) Yes, correct response (directed to older children/children age 7 and older/may contain fantasy violence)
 - 2) Yes, other response (**SPECIFY**)
 - 3) No, don't know
 - 9) Refused
16. Other specific ratings are used for general programming that is NOT specifically designed for children. I'm going to ask you what some specific ratings for general programming mean. Again, if you're not sure of an answer, just say so and I'll go to the next item. (First,) what about the rating... (**INSERT--ROTATE ORDER**) Can you tell me what this means?
- a. "TV-MA."
 - b. "TV-14."
 - c. "TV-PG."
 - d. "TV-G."
- 1) Yes, correct response
 - 2) Yes, other response (**SPECIFY**)
 - 3) No, don't know
 - 9) Refused
17. The TV ratings system uses different letters to provide information about the **CONTENT** of a program. One of these letters is... (**INSERT--READ AND ROTATE**) Can you tell me what this letter stands for?
- a. "D" as in "David"
 - b. "FV" as in "Frank Victor"
 - c. "S" as in "Sam"
 - d. "L" as in "Larry"
 - e. "V" as in "Victor"
- 1) Yes, correct response
 - 2) Yes, other response (**SPECIFY**)
 - 3) No, don't know
 - 9) Refused
18. Do you know where you can find out what a TV show has been rated under this system?
- 1) Yes
 - 2) No

19. Where can you find out? **PROBE FOR FULL RESPONSE:** Anywhere else?
- 1) TV Guide or other weekly TV magazine
 - 2) Newspaper/Newspaper TV listings
 - 3) On the TV screen
 - 4) Other (**SPECIFY**)
 - 8) No, don't know
 - 9) Refused
20. Have you ever seen anything -- on television, in newspapers, magazines, or anywhere else -- that explained how to use the TV ratings system and told you what each specific rating means?
- 1) Yes
 - 2) No
 - 9) Don't know/Refused
21. Have you ever talked to any of your children about the TV ratings system?
- 1) Yes
 - 2) No
 - 9) Don't know/Refused
22. When YOU watch a television show, how often do you know its rating? (**READ**)
- 1) Almost always
 - 2) Most of the time
 - 3) Only sometimes
 - 4) Hardly ever, OR
 - 5) Never?
 - 6) Always (**VOL.**)
 - 9) (**DO NOT READ**) Don't know/Refused
23. What about when ONE OF YOUR CHILDREN is watching a television show, how often do you know the show's rating then?
- 1) Almost always
 - 2) Most of the time
 - 3) Only sometimes
 - 4) Hardly ever, OR
 - 5) Never?
 - 6) Always (**VOL.**)
 - 9) (**DO NOT READ**) Don't know/Refused

24. How frequently do you use the TV ratings system to help make decisions about what shows YOU, yourself, will watch...(READ)
- 1) Often
 - 2) Sometimes
 - 3) Hardly ever, OR
 - 4) Never?
 - 9) Don't know/Refused
25. How frequently do you use the TV ratings system to help make decisions about what shows YOUR CHILDREN will watch...(READ)
- 1) Often
 - 2) Sometimes
 - 3) Hardly ever, OR
 - 4) Never?
 - 9) Don't know/Refused
26. Please tell me whether or not each of the following is a MAJOR reason, a MINOR reason, or NOT a reason why you don't use the TV ratings system (more often) to help make decisions about what shows your children watch. What about this...(INSERT--READ AND ROTATE)? Is this a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason?
- a. You don't always know what the ratings mean
 - b. The ratings seem overly complicated and difficult to use
 - c. It's not easy enough to find out what a show is rated
 - d. The ratings don't tell you anything about the QUALITY of a show
 - e. You're not always in the room when a child is watching
 - f. You'd rather decide for yourself what shows are appropriate for your family without any ratings
 - g. You see the ratings as a form of censorship that may keep some quality programming off the air
27. Which ONE of these is the MOST important reason...
- 1) a. You don't always know what the ratings mean
 - 2) b. The ratings seem overly complicated
 - 3) c. It's not easy enough to find out what a show is rated
 - 4) d. The ratings don't tell you anything about QUALITY
 - 6) e. You're not always in the room when a child is watching
 - 7) f. You'd rather decide for yourself without any ratings
 - 8) g. You see the ratings as a form of censorship
 - 9) (DO NOT READ) Don't know/Refused

28. We'd like your opinion of how useful the current TV rating system is in helping you decide whether it's okay for your children to watch a show. On a 10-point scale where "10" means the system is VERY USEFUL to you and "1" means it is NOT USEFUL AT ALL, what number best describes your opinion? You can name any number between 1 and 10, the higher the number, the more useful it is to you.
29. Is there any change you would like to see made in the TV rating system that would make it more useful to you as a parent?
- 1) Yes
 - 2) No
 - 9) Don't know/Refused
30. What change would you MOST like to see?
31. Which part of the rating system provides the most useful information for YOU as a parent -- the part that tells you what AGES a show is appropriate for, such as TV-Y and TV-PG, or the part that tells you about a show's CONTENT, such as "S" for sexual content and "V" for violent content?
32. One of the four major TV networks only provides age-based ratings, such as TV-PG and TV-14, and does NOT provide any content-based ratings, such as "S" for sexual content and "V" for violence. Do you happen to know which ONE of the major networks does NOT provide content-based ratings? Is it...
- 1) ABC
 - 2) CBS
 - 3) NBC, or
 - 4) FOX
 - 9) Don't know/Refused
33. Where are you MOST likely to find out how a television show has been rated? Do you see it...(READ)
- 1) In TV Guide magazine
 - 2) In the weekly TV magazine or guide from your Sunday newspaper
 - 3) In the TV listings in your daily newspaper
 - 4) On screen in promos or ads for the show
 - 5) On screen at the beginning of the show itself, OR
 - 6) Somewhere else? (SPECIFY)
 - 7) (VOL.) Never see/look for rating
 - 9) (DO NOT READ) Don't know/Refused

34. The rating appears on your TV screen for about 15 seconds at the start of a show. How frequently do you look for a show's rating on your TV screen to help you decide whether it's okay for your children to watch it... **(READ)**
- 1) Often
 - 2) Sometimes
 - 3) Hardly ever, OR
 - 4) Never?
 - 9) **(DO NOT READ)** Don't know/Refused
35. Have you ever wanted to see a show's rating on your TV screen but MISSED it because you were distracted or not paying close enough attention?
- 1) Yes
 - 2) No
 - 9) Don't know/Refused
36. About how many times has this happened...**(READ)**
- 1) Once or twice
 - 2) Three to five times
 - 3) Six to 10 times, or
 - 4) More than 10 times?
 - 9) **(DO NOT READ)** Don't know/Refused
37. We'd like to know what influence, if any, the TV ratings system has had on YOUR OWN family's television viewing. Have you ever stopped a child from watching a TV show because it had a specific rating?
- 1) Yes
 - 2) No
 - 3) **(VOL.)** Stopped child from watching after seeing a show, but not specifically because of rating
 - 9) Don't know/Refused
38. About how many times has this happened...**(READ)**
- 1) Once or twice
 - 2) Three to five times
 - 3) Six to 10 times, or
 - 4) More than 10 times?
 - 9) **(DO NOT READ)** Don't know/Refused

39. We're interested in which ratings have caused you to stop a child from watching. Did you ever stop a child from watching a TV show because it was rated...(READ a-d IN ORDER, THEN ROTATE ORDER OF e-i)
- a. TV-PG
 - b. TV-14
 - c. TV-MA
 - d. TV-Y7
 - e. "S" as in "Sam"
 - f. "L" as in "Larry"
 - g. "V" as in "Victor"
 - h. "D" as in "David"
 - i. "FV" as in "Frank Victor"
40. All in all, how successful do you think the TV ratings system has been in keeping children from being exposed to inappropriate material? Would you say it has been...(READ)
- 1) Very successful
 - 2) Somewhat successful
 - 3) Not too successful, OR
 - 4) Not at all successful?
 - 9) **(DO NOT READ)** Don't know/Refused
41. Some people feel the TV rating system won't succeed in reducing children's exposure to inappropriate material because labeling something as inappropriate for children only makes it more attractive to them. Have you noticed any of your own children being attracted to TV shows with inappropriate material because of their ratings?
- 1) Yes
 - 2) No
 - 9) Don't know/Refused
42. Under the current system, a TV show's rating appears on screen for about 15 seconds at the beginning of the program. Do you think this is... **(READ)**
- 1) More than enough time
 - 2) Just enough time, OR
 - 3) Not enough time for people to see the rating?
 - 9) **(DO NOT READ)** Don't know/Refused

43. I'm going to read you some different ways the TV rating system might be changed to try to make it more useful for parents. Please tell me which of these changes, if any, you would like to see. **(INSERT--READ AND ROTATE)** Would you like to see this change, or not?
- a. What if the rating had to appear on screen several times during a show, instead of just at the beginning?
 - b. What if the rating also had to be said out loud on audio at the beginning of a show, so parents can hear the rating if they're not in the room?
 - c. What if a show's rating had to appear on screen in all promos and ads for the show?
 - d. What if the rating had to stay on screen throughout the entire show?
 - e. What if the rating told you more about the context of sex and violence in a show and whether it is being portrayed responsibly?
44. We're interested in parents' opinions about the accuracy of the TV ratings. Do you think the age- and content-based information the ratings provide about TV programs is reasonably accurate, or not?
- 1) Yes, reasonably accurate
 - 2) No, not accurate
 - 9) Don't know
45. Have you ever personally disagreed with the rating a television show received?
- 1) Yes
 - 2) No
 - 9) Don't know/Refused
46. If you disagreed with the rating a show receives, would you know who to complain to, or not?
- 1) Yes
 - 2) No
 - 9) Don't know/Refused

47. To whom would you be MOST likely to complain?
48. As far as you know, under the current system, who decides what a TV show's rating should be... **(READ)**
- 1) The TV industry itself
 - 2) A government agency, OR
 - 3) An independent review board?
 - 4) **(VOL.)** Other
 - 9) **(DO NOT READ)** Don't know/Refused
49. As you may know, the TV ratings system has been designed to work with a TV programming device called a "V-chip" that will allow you to block shows with certain ratings from your television set. You will be able to get a V-chip later this year by buying a new television set or paying 50 to 100 dollars for a special "set-top" box to use with your current TV. How likely is it that you will get a V-chip by buying a new television or a set-top box in the next year or two? Would you say you are... **(READ)**
- 1) Very likely
 - 2) Somewhat likely
 - 3) Not too likely, OR
 - 4) Not at all likely?
 - 5) **(VOL.)** Already have
 - 9) **(DO NOT READ)** Don't know/Refused
50. If you had a V-chip in your home, do you think you would ever use it to block shows you don't want your children to see?
- 1) Yes
 - 2) No
 - 9) Don't know

51. Which ONE of the following is the MOST important reason you wouldn't use a V-chip to block shows... **(READ)**
- 1) It would be too difficult to program
 - 2) Your children would find ways around it
 - 3) You don't want the ratings to play such a big role in determining what your family watches
 - 4) You see it as a form of censorship, OR
 - 5) Some other reason? **(SPECIFY)**
 - 9) **(DO NOT READ)** Don't know/Refused
52. Please tell me if YOU would block shows with each of the following ratings if you had a V-chip in your home today. Would you block shows with this rating, or not... **IF YES, ASK: Would you block all shows with this rating, or only some shows? (READ a-d IN ORDER, THEN ROTATE ORDER OF e-i)**
- a. TV-PG, parental guidance suggested, for shows that some parents may feel is not suitable for younger children
 - b. TV-14, parents strongly cautioned, for shows that many parents would find not suitable for children under 14
 - c. TV-MA, mature audiences only, for shows designed specifically for adults that may not be suitable for children under 17
 - d. TV-Y7, directed to older children, for shows designed for children aged 7 and older
- 1) Yes, block all shows
 - 2) Yes, only some shows
 - 3) No, would not block
 - 9) Don't know/Refused
- 52e. Would you block shows rated "S" for sexual content? **IF "YES" ASK: Would you only block shows with "explicit sexual activity," OR would you also block shows with "intense sexual situations" OR would you also block shows even if they have just a few sexual situations?**
- 1) Yes, only if explicit sex
 - 2) Yes, also if intense sexual situations
 - 3) Yes, also if have just a few sexual situations
 - 4) No, would not block
 - 9) Don't know/Refused

52f. Would you block shows rated “L” for coarse language? **IF “YES” ASK:** Would you only block shows with “crude, indecent language,” OR would you also block shows with “strong coarse language” OR would you also block shows even if they have just occasional coarse language?

- 1) Yes, only crude indecent language
- 2) Yes, also if strong coarse language
- 3) Yes, also if have just occasional coarse language
- 4) No, would not block
- 9) Don’t know/Refused

52g. Would you block shows rated “V” for violent content? **IF “YES” ASK:** Would you only block shows with “graphic violence,” OR would you also block shows with “intense violence” OR would you also block shows even if they have just moderate violence?

- 1) Yes, only if graphic violence
- 2) Yes, also if intense violence
- 3) Yes, also if moderate violence
- 4) No, would not block
- 9) Don’t know/Refused

52h. Would you block shows rated “D” for adult dialogue? **IF “YES” ASK:** Would you only block shows with “intensely suggestive dialogue,” OR would you also block shows even if they have just some suggestive dialogue?

- 1) Yes, only if intensely suggestive
- 2) Yes, any kind of adult dialogue
- 3) No, would not block
- 9) Don’t know/Refused

52i. Would you block shows rated “FV” for fantasy or cartoon violence? **IF “YES” ASK:** Would you block all shows with this rating, or only some shows?

- 1) Yes, block all shows
- 2) Yes, only some shows
- 3) No, would not block
- 9) Don’t know/Refused

53. On an average SCHOOL DAY, Monday through Friday, about how many hours does your child spend watching TV?

54. On an average WEEKEND DAY, Saturday or Sunday, about how many hours does (he/she/he or she) spend watching TV?
55. When (he/she/he or she) watches television, how often is a parent or another adult in the same room...(READ)
- 1) Almost always
 - 2) Most of the time
 - 3) Only sometimes
 - 4) Hardly ever, OR
 - 5) Never?
 - 6) (VOL.) Always
 - 9) Don't know/Refused
56. Does (INSERT NAME/"your child") have a television in (his/her/his or her) own room?
57. Does your family have any RULES about when (he/she/he or she) can watch TV, or about what shows (he/she/he or she) is allowed to watch?
58. Which of the following rules do you have...(INSERT--READ ITEMS IN ORDER)
- a. (He/she/he or she) can only watch TV after homework or other responsibilities are completed
 - b. (He/she/he or she) can only watch TV for a certain amount of time
 - c. (He/she/he or she) is not allowed to watch certain shows or kinds of shows
 - d. (He/she/he or she) is not allowed to watch shows that have certain age- or content-based RATINGS
59. Which of the following does (he/she/he or she) spend the most time watching...(READ)
- 1) Shows on major networks such as ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX
 - 2) Shows on PBS, that is, public television, OR
 - 3) Shows on cable channels, such as Nickelodeon, MTV, ESPN and the Family Channel?
 - 4) (VOL.--SPECIFY) Other
 - 5) (VOL.) Never watches TV
 - 9) (DO NOT READ) Don't know/Refused

60. Next, I need to ask whether you have some different equipment or services in your household. (First,) do you have... **(READ ITEMS, IN ORDER)**
- a. Cable, satellite, or pay TV?
 - b. Access to HBO, Showtime, or other cable premium movie channels?
 - c. A personal computer with computer games?
 - d. Access to the Internet?
 - e. Video game equipment such as Sega, Nintendo or Playstation?



March 30, 1998

VICKY RIDEOUT
DIRECTOR, ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA
AND PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM

Vice President Albert Gore
Office of the Vice President
Old Executive Office Building,
Room 286
Washington, D.C. 20501

Dear Mr. Vice President,

This May, the Kaiser Family Foundation will release the results of a major national survey on the television ratings system. This release is designed to coincide with the end of the first full television season using the new ratings system.

The Foundation extends an invitation to you to participate in a panel discussion/briefing for members of the press in Washington during the week of May 18th to review our findings. Our panel will include a representative of the television industry's implementation group and a representative of a parents organization, both of whom will comment on our findings as well. We would be greatly honored to have you participate in this important event.

The survey will certainly be the most comprehensive analysis to date of how the public is responding to the ratings system. We will be surveying 1,350 parents of children, ages 2-17, as well as 500 of the parents' children, ages 10-17. I have enclosed a summary of the kinds of questions we will be asking. As you will see, the survey is quite extensive, and goes into far greater depth than any other survey conducted since the ratings system was inaugurated.

While there is no telling at this point what the results will be, I must say I thought the results of the recent Associated Press survey were seriously mischaracterized in the press. The impression given by most of the reporting I saw was that people don't really care about the ratings system and are not using it. In fact, if you looked at the *parents* in the AP survey, 40% said they use the system to help guide their children's viewing.

In our survey, if parents are not using the ratings system, we hope to find out why that is – whether it is because they don't have a good way of finding the rating for a particular show, because they don't fully understand what the ratings mean yet, because they are not at home when their children are watching television, or because they simply want to make their own judgments about what their children will watch. We also hope to get a sense of whether and how they plan to make use of the v-chip when it becomes available.

Your participation in our event analyzing the survey results would certainly help bring renewed public attention to the television ratings system and be an important reminder to parents of the availability of this new tool to help them monitor what their children are watching.

I appreciate your consideration of this invitation, and look forward to hearing from your office soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vicky Rideout". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end.

Vicky Rideout

Enclosure

cc: Jim Kohlenberger



Robert
Purvis

DRAFT AGENDA

TV RATINGS SURVEY RELEASE

Kaiser Family Foundation

Tentative date: Thursday, May 21st, 9:00 am
Location: Press Club, Washington, D.C.

Rationale: The release is timed to coincide with the end of the first complete TV season using the new TV ratings system. The survey will be the most comprehensive look at how parents are or are not using the ratings system to guide their children's viewing. It will also explore why some parents are not making more extensive use of the ratings.

Program:

Option: Breakfast/informal discussion with a group of parents and kids about whether/how they use the ratings system. **The Vice President could participate in this breakfast.**

Welcome: Drew Altman, President, Kaiser Family Foundation

Presentation of survey results: Vicky Rideout, Kaiser Family Foundation

Option: **Remarks, Vice President Gore** or President Clinton

Panel discussion: Moderator: Jonathan Alter, Newsweek (*invited*) *confirmed*
Option: The Vice President could moderate this discussion

Network TV representative who is a member of the ratings implementation group (invitees include Chris Hikawa, ABC; Martin Franks, CBS; Eddie Fritts, NAB)

A representative from the PTA (invitee is Ginny Markell, PTA rep to the ratings implementation group)

Congressman Ed Markey (*invited*) *confirmed*