

Key Findings from 2016 TV Ratings Research among Parents

From June 3 to 6, 2016, Hart Research Associates conducted a nationwide online survey among 1,007 parents of children age two to 17 in households with at least one television. This survey is part of the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board's continuing effort to track parents' awareness, usage, and impressions of TV ratings that includes similar online surveys conducted among parents in May 2014 and November 2011.

Overview: The TV ratings system earns high marks from parents. Nearly four in five parents (79%) have a favorable opinion of the TV ratings system, and 88% find the system helpful. Additionally, fully 96% of parents say that, in general, they are satisfied with the accuracy of the parental ratings for TV shows on broadcast and cable television, including 59% who are very satisfied.

Awareness of the TV ratings system: more than nine in 10 parents are aware of the TV ratings system, and most parents feel they understand it.

- More than nine in 10 (94%) parents are aware that broadcast and cable networks provide parental ratings for television programs, and a similarly high proportion (89%) is aware that these parental ratings appear on screen at the start of shows. This high level of awareness mirrors the findings from two years ago, when 94% of parents were aware that the networks provide ratings and 90% were aware that they appear on screen at the beginning of each program.
- Parents' sense of how well they understand the parental ratings system has largely held steady. Today, 91% of parents say they understand the system well, including 47% who say they understand it very well. This is only slightly lower than in 2014, when 93% said they understood it well, including 52% who felt they understood it very well.

Impressions and use of TV ratings: the TV ratings system is viewed favorably by most parents, and more than three in four parents report using it.

- Nearly four in five parents (79%) have a favorable view of the parental ratings for TV programs. This is an increase from 2011 (69% of parents were favorable) and up slightly from 2014 (76% of parents were favorable).
- Today, fully 77% of parents report using TV ratings often (40%) or sometimes (37%). This builds upon the modest increase in reported usage from 2011 (68% used often or sometimes) to 2014 (72% used often or sometimes).

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- Nearly nine in ten (88%) parents find the TV ratings very (49%) or somewhat (39%) helpful. The proportion of parents who find them *very* helpful has climbed from 33% in 2011, to 41% in 2014, to 49% today.

	%
Have a favorable opinion of TV ratings	79
Find TV ratings very/somewhat helpful	88
Use TV ratings fairly often/sometimes	77

Satisfaction with the accuracy of ratings for TV programs: fully 96% of parents say they are satisfied with the accuracy of ratings for TV shows on broadcast and cable television in general, including 59% who are very satisfied. When specifically asked, 35% of parents say they recall seeing a show in the past three months that they felt was rated inaccurately, but 65% do not. Nonetheless, most parents who recall a show they thought was rated inaccurately have a favorable view of the TV ratings system (76%) and are satisfied with the accuracy of ratings for TV shows in general (91%).

- Parents were given an overview of the six TV ratings and five content descriptors that are used to rate TV programs, and then asked how satisfied they were, in general, with the accuracy of the parental ratings for TV shows on broadcast and cable television. Fully 59% of parents report that they are *very* satisfied with the accuracy of ratings for TV shows, and another 37% indicate that they are *somewhat* satisfied, for a total of 96% who say they are satisfied. Just 4% say they are dissatisfied with the accuracy of ratings for TV shows in general.
- When asked specifically whether they have seen a show in the past three months that they thought had an inaccurate rating, the large majority (65%) of parents say they do *not* recall seeing any show that they felt should have been rated differently than it was. This leaves 35% of parents who recall seeing a show in the past three months that they felt should have been rated differently, which includes just 13% who say they *frequently* saw an inaccurate rating for a show in the past few months.
 - While this group of parents has seen some specific programs that they believe were not rated accurately, they are not offering an indictment of the entire TV ratings system; fully 76% of them view the TV ratings system favorably and 91% say they are very or somewhat satisfied with the accuracy of ratings for TV shows in general.

Use of parental controls: reported use of parental controls has held steady since 2011, with just over one in three parents saying they have used them. Parents who have not used them say they manage their children's television viewing in other ways.

- Thirty-six percent (36%) of parents say they have used either the V-Chip or cable parental controls. (This is close to the 38% of parents who reported having used them in 2014.)

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- Virtually all parents who have used parental controls or the V-chip have found these tools useful: 77% of parents find them very useful and 22% think they were somewhat useful.
- When asked why they have never used parental controls or the V-chip, parents who say they have them but have not used them indicate that it is mainly because they supervise their children's viewing (60%) and/or they have household rules regarding TV viewing (50%).

Streaming TV shows: most parents say their children have streamed TV shows.

- Fully 63% of parents say that over the past few weeks their children have watched TV programs streamed from the Internet onto a television, and 75% say their children have watched television content on one of six non-television devices during this time. Only 18% of parents say their child has not watched a TV program either streamed to a TV or to an alternative device.
 - The proportion of parents who say their child has recently streamed TV programs onto a television has grown from 47% in 2014 to 63% today.
 - Besides watching on a television, parents today are most likely to say their children have watched TV shows on a tablet (49%), smartphone (42%), video game console (38%), or laptop (36%).