

ANNUAL REPORT

2022

THE TV PARENTAL GUIDELINES
MONITORING BOARD

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A NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Last year was historic for our industry with more television and episodic content to enjoy than ever before. Together, we have created a great meeting place where all Americans can be informed, connected and entertained.

For 26 years, the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board (Monitoring Board) has had the great responsibility of equipping parents with the guidance they need to ensure sound and age-appropriate television content for their children. It has been an honor to serve as chairman of the Monitoring Board over the last two years, and I am grateful to report on the important work that has been accomplished in 2022.

Since 1996, the Monitoring Board has maintained consistent use of parental guidelines for families. Today, we remain steadfast in upholding the highest standards for participating networks and streaming services. I'm proud to report that our efforts are working. According to our 2022 parental survey, an overwhelming majority of Americans have confidence in the TV Parental Guidelines. Specifically:

- 95% of parents are satisfied with the accuracy of ratings,
- 90% of parents find the ratings to be helpful,
- 92% understand the ratings well, demonstrating the success of the TV Parental Guidelines, and
- 78% have a favorable opinion of the TV Parental Guidelines.

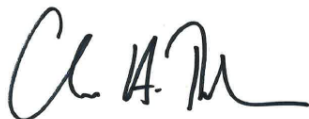
This year's Annual Report also highlights the activities that the Monitoring Board has established to address the growth of episodic content offered on streaming services, including the essential work of our Streaming Task Force which ensures that our ratings are applied consistently across all new services.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Monitoring Board and proudly welcome our new members from 2022. I also want to welcome the incoming Monitoring Board chairman, National Association of Broadcasters President and CEO Curtis LeGeyt.

Serving as chair over the past two years has been an honor, and I look forward to continuing this important work with my dedicated colleagues on the Monitoring Board.

Sincerely,

Charles Rivkin



Chairman of the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board
Chairman and CEO of the Motion Picture Association



ABOUT THE TV PARENTAL GUIDELINES MONITORING BOARD



The TV Parental Guidelines (also known as the TV ratings) were created in 1996 to help parents make informed decisions about what programs are suitable for their children. Designed by leading organizations of the TV industry, in consultation with representatives of a broad range of children's, medical and other interested stakeholders, the TV ratings are easily recognizable and easy to use. The ratings work in conjunction with parental control technology such as the V-Chip, built into most televisions as well as cable set-top boxes, allowing parents to block programs they determine to be inappropriate for their families. TV ratings are available both for television programming designed for children and for programming intended for general audiences. The ratings provide information about the content and age-appropriateness of programs and apply to most television shows. Some programs, such as news, sports, religious and most home shopping programming, are not rated. The ratings information is prominently displayed at the beginning of – and often after commercial breaks in – all rated programming. Ratings information also is available in the TV listings of many newspapers, in other printed and online program listings and on numerous websites. In conjunction with the ratings, the television industry established the Monitoring Board to help ensure that ratings are applied on a consistent basis across networks and programs. The Monitoring Board provides oversight by constantly reviewing and updating its practices considering feedback; reviewing and responding to complaints and other public input; and facilitating discussion among members of the Monitoring Board to ensure that ratings are being consistently applied from program to program. The Monitoring Board meets at least once annually to consider and review correspondence sent to the Monitoring Board, discuss current research and review any other issues relevant to the TV Parental Guidelines.

The Monitoring Board is comprised of up to 24 members: the chairman (the head of the Motion Picture Association (MPA), the Internet & Television Association (NCTA) or the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) on a rotating basis); as many as 18 industry members from the broadcast, cable and creative communities appointed by the NAB, NCTA or MPA; and up to five third-party groups with an interest in children and media appointed by the Monitoring Board chairman. The chairman serves for a two-year term.

CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE MONITORING BOARD:

- A+E Networks
- Call for Action
- Lifetime Networks
- The Walt Disney
- AMC Networks
- Discovery, Inc.
- National PTA
- Company
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- Entertainment Industries Council
- NBC Universal
- WarnerMedia
- Boys and Girls Club of America
- Fox Corporation
- Sony Pictures Entertainment
- Univision
- ViacomCBS
- Hulu



BIENNIAL SURVEY OF PARENTS



In 2022, the Monitoring Board commissioned Hart Research Associates to conduct a national survey of parents as part of an ongoing effort to track parents' awareness of, usage of and sentiments about the TV ratings. Results were released to the public on October 12, 2022. Hart Research Associates surveyed 1,052 English- and Spanish-speaking parents of children between the ages of 2 and 17. The survey is a follow up to surveys conducted in 2011, 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020.

The 2022 survey found that parents' awareness and understanding of the TV ratings remains high. Additionally, parental satisfaction with the TV Parental Guidelines remains high and parents continue to view the TV ratings as a valuable resource when determining the age appropriateness of television programs.

The survey revealed the following topline results:

- More than 9-in-10 parents (92%) say they understand the parental ratings for television.
- Nearly 80% of parents (78%) hold a favorable view of the parental ratings for TV programs.
- Most parents (79%) report using parental ratings sometimes or often when deciding whether their child can watch a particular TV show.
- Most parents feel the TV ratings descriptors (S, L, V, D, FV) are important to know about each of the types of content indicated in the content labels when determining what their children can watch.
- 95% of parents feel it is important to know about sexual situations (S), and 88% say it is important to know about violence.
- Virtually all parents (99%) who have used parental controls (V-chip) say they are helpful.
- Digital streaming services remain the most common way children watch TV shows, with 86% of parents reporting their children using streaming services to watch TV shows in the past two weeks.

"The television landscape has changed dramatically over the past few years as more and more programming options have been made available to American families. This survey demonstrates the value and trust that parents place in the TV Parental Guidelines to help them navigate the age-appropriateness of TV programs. The Monitoring Board is proud to remain a trusted partner of parents when they are making critical decisions about the shows their children can watch," said Charles Rivkin, Chairman of the Monitoring Board and Chairman and CEO of the Motion Picture Association (MPA).



STREAMING TASK FORCE



In 2020, the Monitoring Board established a task force to review how TV ratings are utilized across the wide scope of video streaming services that have launched and/or are in the process of rolling out (the Streaming Task Force). The Streaming Task Force was also established to better engage with streaming services that do not currently participate in the TV ratings and to formulate best practices for how to apply ratings consistently on streaming services — these recommendations are listed in the [Best Practices Document](#), which was established by the task force in 2021. The Streaming Task Force is primarily composed of Monitoring Board members who have or are in the process of launching a streaming video service, including Discovery+, Disney+, HBO Max, Hulu, Paramount+, Peacock and Tubi, among others.

The Monitoring Board decided to establish the Streaming Task Force in part because the 2020 biennial TV Parental Guidelines survey found that 84% of children are watching some TV shows via streaming service. This year's TV Parental Guidelines survey reaffirmed the importance of the task force, as 86% of parents reported their children using streaming services to watch TV shows.

Over the past year, the Streaming Task Force continued discussions and will continue to update and revise the document in 2023 as additional stakeholder and public feedback is received.

The Streaming Task Force plans to meet quarterly in 2023 as it prepares to better engage with the streaming services that do not currently participate in the TV ratings.



TV RATING SPOT CHECK REVIEWS



In keeping with its commitment to ensuring that TV ratings are applied to programs on an accurate and consistent basis, the Monitoring Board voted at its 2019 Annual Meeting to formally establish a spot check review program. The program is designed to assess whether television programs are receiving accurate and consistent ratings across different networks and time slots. This concept was piloted in 2019, formally rolled out in January 2020, and continued in 2021 and 2022. Also in 2022, the Monitoring Board began including streaming service programming as part of the spot check review.

To conduct the spot check review, the Monitoring Board established four groups with one group meeting each calendar quarter. The Monitoring Board's public interest board members were each assigned to one of the four groups, allowing the process to consider broader perspectives and feedback.

To ensure that the spot check review encompassed a wide variety of content and intended audiences, programming was selected from each of the Monitoring Board representatives' networks at a randomly predetermined time on a specific day each calendar quarter. For instance, one group reviewed programming shown during early morning hours, which is often intended for younger children. Another group reviewed late night programs, which are typically intended for adult audiences. Two additional groups evaluated programs that appeared on television during daytime and primetime hours.

After reviewing their respective programs, each group met to determine if it agreed or disagreed with the rating assigned to a given program. The spot check review was designed so that if a group determined that it disagrees with a rating, a dialogue is initiated with the network that showed the program. If the network disagrees with the review group's determination, the matter will be brought to the Monitoring Board chairman to determine appropriate next steps, including consideration before the full Monitoring Board, which has the authority to adjudicate disputes if consensus discussion does not resolve the question.

For reviewing streaming services that utilize their own ratings, programs are evaluated based on the platform's rating system. If the review group disagrees with a streaming service rating, the chair of the group will reach out to the streaming platform network representative that submitted the program to learn more about the platform's rating system. If additional action is necessary, the program will be reviewed by the Streaming Task Force.

In general, the 2022 spot check review indicated that age ratings and descriptors were applied consistently and accurately to the content reviewed. There was only one instance in which the review group questioned a program's rating descriptor, resulting in the network agreeing to add a descriptor to the program's rating. There were no other ratings discrepancies flagged in 2022.

The spot check review worked as intended — reinforcing that most of the content is rated correctly while also providing Monitoring Board members with the opportunity to engage in helpful discussions with one another about the application of ratings and use of descriptors. These conversations will further facilitate the ability of networks and streaming services to hone their decision-making about which ratings to apply and when and how to use descriptors consistently going forward.



ANNUAL MONITORING BOARD MEETING



On September 27, 2022, Chairman Charles Rivkin and MPA hosted the Annual Meeting of the Monitoring Board in a hybrid model. The Annual Meeting brings together Monitoring Board members to review yearly activities, discuss correspondence and ratings complaints and plan for the year ahead. The Annual Meeting supplements multiple informal meetings in which Monitoring Board members gather — via video conference or phone — throughout the year to discuss ongoing work. The following presents an overview of the 2022 Annual Meeting.

REVIEW OF 2022 ACTIVITIES

In 2022, the Monitoring Board oversaw the completion and promotion of the third annual report, continued to implement quarterly meetings for the Streaming Task Force and the ratings spot check review, conducted the 2022 survey of parental opinions on the TV Parental Guidelines and held an in-person Annual Meeting (a few board members attended virtually).

More information on these specific activities can be found on pages four through six of this report.

PRESENTATION BY ABIGAIL DAVENPORT OF HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Abigail Davenport, a partner at Hart Research Associates, began this year's Annual Meeting as a guest speaker to present the findings of the 2022 parental survey. The survey results revealed that parents' understanding of and support for the TV ratings remains high, even as parents report that their children increasingly are watching TV programs through streaming services. The data also indicated that children are consuming TV programming through streaming services at historic levels while accessing programming through cable TV on demand or on DVR has decreased. Overall, parents continue to use the TV Parental Guidelines often and find them helpful.

More information on the 2022 parental survey can be found on page four of this report.

STREAMING TASK FORCE

The Streaming Task Force reported on its activities throughout 2022 and focused on considering feedback from the release of the [Best Practices Document](#). This year, the task force discussed streamlining content labels and discussed how to improve engagement with the streaming services that are not under the purview of the TV Parental Guidelines. They discussed their respective networks' streaming services, challenges faced when applying ratings to streaming programming and straight-to-streaming movies and the different types of ratings and content descriptors used by their respective streaming platforms. The task force will meet quarterly throughout 2023 and will continue conversations with streaming services.

More information about the Streaming Task Force can be found on page five of this report.



ANNUAL MONITORING BOARD MEETING



TV RATINGS SPOT CHECK

For the third full year, the Monitoring Board conducted its TV Ratings spot check review, which audits programming aired on Monitoring Board members' networks to ensure accurate and consistent use of the TV ratings. During the Annual Meeting, representatives from three of the four spot check review groups (those that had completed their spot checks in the first three quarters of 2022) presented their findings. Overall, Monitoring Board members expressed consensus that this process serves as a valuable tool to better understand the application of the TV ratings, helps public interest Monitoring Board members gain insight into the ratings process and ensures that age ratings and descriptors are being applied consistently and accurately across networks and during different time slots. The Monitoring Board agreed to More information about the spot check review can be found on page six of this report.

REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Prior to the Annual Meeting, a summary of all correspondence and complaints received by the Monitoring Board since the previous meeting was shared with Monitoring Board members. During the meeting, Monitoring Board members reviewed the year's emails, phone calls and letters. As has been the case for several years, most of the correspondence received related to commercials and the subject matter of program content or scheduling changes rather than complaints about the accuracy of ratings.

PREVIEW OF 2023 ACTIVITIES

In addition to continuing the spot check review and regular meetings of the Streaming Task Force, the Monitoring Board continues to explore opportunities to raise greater awareness about the TV Parental Guidelines online, be more visible through press outreach and events and effectively communicate with the public.



2022 CORRESPONDENCE SUMMARY

JANUARY - DECEMBER

One of the primary roles of the Monitoring Board is to address complaints about the ratings on specific programs. The Monitoring Board fulfills this duty by reviewing complaints and other correspondence, facilitating discussion about the application of the ratings and working to resolve concerns as expeditiously as possible.

In 2022, the Monitoring Board continued an enhanced policy of responding to all correspondence, which it instituted in 2019. Ratings complaints are now shared with a broader team of representatives from the applicable network to ensure greater awareness of ratings complaints and to facilitate a timely response. Beginning this year, the Monitoring Board also will share streaming service complaints with the Streaming Task Force to provide feedback on streaming service-specific ratings. The Monitoring Board has improved its correspondence tracking system to allow for better complaint processing and status tracking of each piece of correspondence. When complaints about ratings are received, the Monitoring Board works closely with network representatives to determine why the show was given a particular rating and to communicate that information to the viewer. In some cases, a network also agrees to modify its rating.

From January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022, the Monitoring Board received 436 public comments — one letter, 71 phone calls, and 364 emails. Complaints that discussed the general content or casting of shows totaled 117, while 73 focused on commercials and advertisements and 63 mentioned scheduling changes. Only 18 complaints provided comments on the TV ratings.

Of the 18 ratings complaints, 14 were directed at broadcast and cable television networks or streaming services that participate in the TV Parental Guidelines. The other four complaints were related to programming on streaming services that do not participate in the TV Parental Guidelines. Valid ratings complaints about programming on a broadcast, cable network or streaming service that participates in the TV Parental Guidelines are sent to the respective industry representatives. Industry representatives then review the ratings internally and respond to the viewer either directly or through the Monitoring Board with further information about the rating and/or to resolve any discrepancies. All ratings complaints also are shared with representatives from the NCTA, MPA and NAB monthly along with a summary of all correspondence.

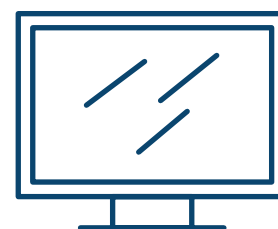


BELOW ARE EXAMPLES OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT SPECIFIC PROGRAMS THAT THE MONITORING BOARD RECEIVED THIS YEAR, ALONG WITH A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIONS TAKEN TO ADDRESS THE COMPLAINTS.

- In April, one viewer complained that he had seen a TV series listed on television and a streaming service with different ratings and asked for clarification. The Monitoring Board responded, explaining that the streaming service does not use the TV ratings and therefore the service had instituted a separate rating. The Monitoring Board emphasized that it understood the viewer's concern and recommended that they reach out to the streaming service directly. The Monitoring Board also flagged this piece of correspondence for the Streaming Task Force.
- In August, a viewer complained about an advertisement for a show with an expletive in the title while watching another program. The viewer requested that the advertisement be removed because their children were watching the program. The Monitoring Board responded to the viewer by explaining that it has no oversight over commercials or advertisements since its focus is on ensuring consistent use of the TV ratings across networks. The feedback also was forwarded to the appropriate network.
- In October, a viewer requested that the rating of a show be upgraded from TV-14 to TV-MA due to a brief scene in an episode where a character's upper back without a shirt on was exposed. The Monitoring Board reached out to the network representative for clarification. The network representative emphasized that the scene was brief and that there was no nudity in the scene besides the bare back. The network representative therefore deemed the rating of TV-14 — LSV to be appropriate. The Monitoring Board responded to the viewer, letting them know that their feedback was shared with the appropriate network and provided them with the feedback that the network representative shared in the review process.
- In November, three separate viewers requested that a separate rating be added for LGBTQ+ content and characters to the TV Parental Guidelines. The Monitoring Board thanked each of the viewers for reaching out and explained that LGBTQ+ content and characters do not impact the TV Parental Guidelines and that the TV ratings were consistent for the language and dialogue of the programs in question. The Monitoring Board further explained that it is not the place of the Monitoring Board to make political or moral judgements, but rather to apply the TV Parental Guidelines to television programming in a consistent and uniform manner and to provide parents with accurate guidance on programming for their children.
- In December, a viewer complained that the language on a TV series is too harsh and requested that the language be taken down to the PG-13 level. The Monitoring Board explained that it has no oversight over content and dialogue decisions as its focus is ensuring consistent TV ratings across networks. The Monitoring Board also encouraged the viewer to reach out to the show's network directly.




CONCLUSION



In 2022, the Monitoring Board continued its work to promote and refine the TV ratings. Through administering a survey, the Monitoring Board strived to ascertain parental sentiment of the TV ratings and assessed whether ratings are being applied accurately and on a consistent basis on traditional cable, broadcast channels and streaming services. The Monitoring Board focused on strengthening its spot check review and improving the Streaming Task Force while also responding to all public correspondence. The goal of these efforts was to ensure that parents are aware of the tools available to help make informed decisions about what programs are suitable for their children and ensure uniformity among the ratings system across platforms. The Monitoring Board looks forward to recommitting to these efforts in 2023 and improving in the year ahead.

For more information, please visit www.tvguidelines.org.



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