

Growing Up With Media: Parent and Youth Reported Household Rules Characteristics December 2011

One of the most common pieces of ‘Internet safety’ advice is about the importance of parental monitoring, including the use of filtering and blocking software. Less commonly suggested, but perhaps equally important, are simple things like talking to your children about what they do and see online.

This is the second in a series of 7 bulletins summarizing the methodology for and findings of the Growing up with Media (GuwM) Study. GuwM is a longitudinal survey of 1,586 youth aged 10-15 years at baseline. Data were collected initially between August - September, 2006, again between November, 2007 - January, 2008, and finally between August - November, 2008. The survey protocol was reviewed and approved by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Institutional Review Board (IRB).

In this report, we examine the frequency of household rules related to types of media. We also examine trends across time (i.e., Wave).

The report includes the following sections:

- Section 1: Household rules for different media types
- Section 2: Co-use and discussions between parents and children about the youth’s media use
- Section 3: Internet monitoring
- Section 4: Beliefs about media use

What is Growing up with Media?

- GuwM is a longitudinal online survey of a national sample of 1,586 young people, ages 10 to 15 years at Wave 1.¹
- Because exposures and experiences online were a main interest of the survey, youth were required to have used the Internet at least once in the past 6 months. The inclusion criteria was purposefully broad to ensure a wide variability in internet experience and exposure.
- Caregivers were members of the Harris Poll Online (HPOL) opt-in panel and residents of the U.S.
- Caregivers first completed a short online survey (approximately 5 minutes).
- With caregiver permission, youth completed an online survey; approximately 25 minutes.
- The sample was purposefully balanced on youth age and sex.
- Adult participants received \$10 and youth a \$15 gift certificate at Waves 1 and 2. To increase the response rate at Wave 3, adult participants received \$20 and youth a \$25 gift certificate.
- Data were collected across three time points:
 - Wave 1: August – September, 2006
 - Wave 2: November, 2007 – January, 2008
 - Wave 3: August – November, 2008
- Data were weighted to match the U.S. Population of adults with children between the ages of 10 and 15 years. Adults were the weighting target because they were the recruitment target.
- Propensity scoring was applied to adjust for the adult’s (i.e., recruitment target) propensity to be online, in HPOL, and to respond to the particular survey invitation.
- A full report on the methodology of the GuwM study is posted online at: <http://innovativepublichealth.com/guwm-methodology-bulletin>.

¹ As a result of data cleaning activities, the final sample size for Wave 1 is 1,581 (See the Methodological Details bulletin for more details).

SECTION 1: HOUSEHOLD RULES

Internet:

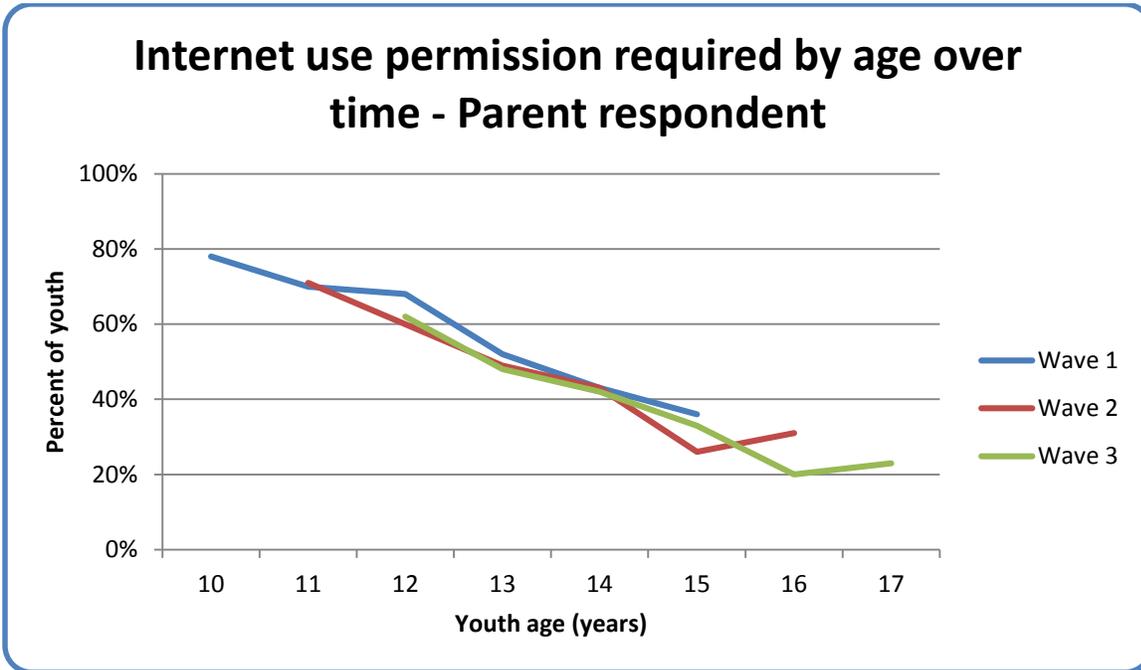
The overwhelming majority of parents (93-95%) reported having some type of Internet household rules...

...although the presence of Internet household rules tended to decrease over time.

The most common rule that parents had is restrictions on where their children can go online, including chat rooms, X-rated websites, etc. This rule was not only the most common, but also the most stable across time. Also reported by a majority of parents was the requirement that children have their chores, school work, and other responsibilities fulfilled before they could go online or use the computer.

<i>Internet household rules – Parent respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,581)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 1,195)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 1,150)</i>
Child cannot do certain things on the Internet (e.g., go to chat rooms)	83%	83%	83%
Child cannot use Internet/ computer until household chores are complete	66%	58%	55%
Child has to ask permission before using the Internet	57%	45%	38%
Child can only use Internet for a certain number of hours per day	53%	47%	45%
Parent has other household Internet rule(s)	28%	19%	15%
Parent does not have any rules about how child uses Internet	5%	6%	7%

Endorsement of most rules decreased over time. The most notable decrease was the requirement that their children ask permission before using the Internet. At Wave 1, nearly 3 of every 5 parents had this rule, but at Wave 3 less than 2 of every 5 parents had this rule. These decreases were largely explained by the increased age of the cohort over time (see Figure on page 3).



The overwhelming majority of youth (84-92%) also reported having Internet household rules.

<i>Internet household rules – Child respondent ¹</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,548)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 1,195)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 1,150)</i>
Child cannot do certain things on the Internet (e.g., go to chat rooms)	77%	72%	70%
Child cannot use Internet/ computer until household chores are complete	59%	55%	52%
Child has to ask permission before using the Internet	50%	39%	33%
Child can only use Internet for a certain number of hours per day	48%	45%	41%
Parent has other Internet household rule(s)	16%	12%	14%
Parent does not have any rules about how child uses Internet	8%	11%	15%

¹ This question was only asked of child respondents who had home Internet access at Wave 1.

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As shown in the previous table, there was strong convergence between rules reported by youth and those reported by their parents. The most common rule youth reported was the same as caregivers: a restriction on specific places online where youth were not allowed to go. Similar to caregivers as well, the majority of youth said that they had to finish their chores and school work before they could go online or use the computer. However, data in the table above shows that more youth reported a lack of rules over time: compared to a stable 7-8% of parents, we see a doubling of youth who said that they do not have rules over time, from 8% at Wave 1 to 16% at Wave 3.

About 3 of every 4 parents who have household Internet rules almost always enforced them.

Certainly, to have rules is one thing, but to enforce them is another thing.

<i>Enforce Internet household rules – Parent respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,505)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 1,115)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 1,059)</i>
Almost always	71%	71%	66%
Often	18%	18%	18%
Sometimes	8%	8%	12%
Almost never	3%	3%	3%

The vast majority (66-71%) of parents who have household rules about Internet use reported that they *almost always* enforce those rules. An additional 1 of every 5 reported that they *often* enforce those rules.

Concurrently, about 3 of every 4 youth who had household Internet rules almost always followed them.

<i>Follow Internet household rules – Child respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,423)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 1,050)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 971)</i>
Almost always	72%	71%	71%
Often	16%	17%	16%
Sometimes	10%	10%	10%
Almost never	2%	2%	3%

As shown in the table above, youth were overwhelmingly likely to report that they follow the Internet household rules. Thus, even though reports of individual household rules tended to decrease over time, youths’ tendencies to follow existing rules remained relatively constant over time.

Video, Computer, or Internet Games:

Over 90% of youth played video or computer games; and about 4 of every 5 of these youths' parents had rules about them.

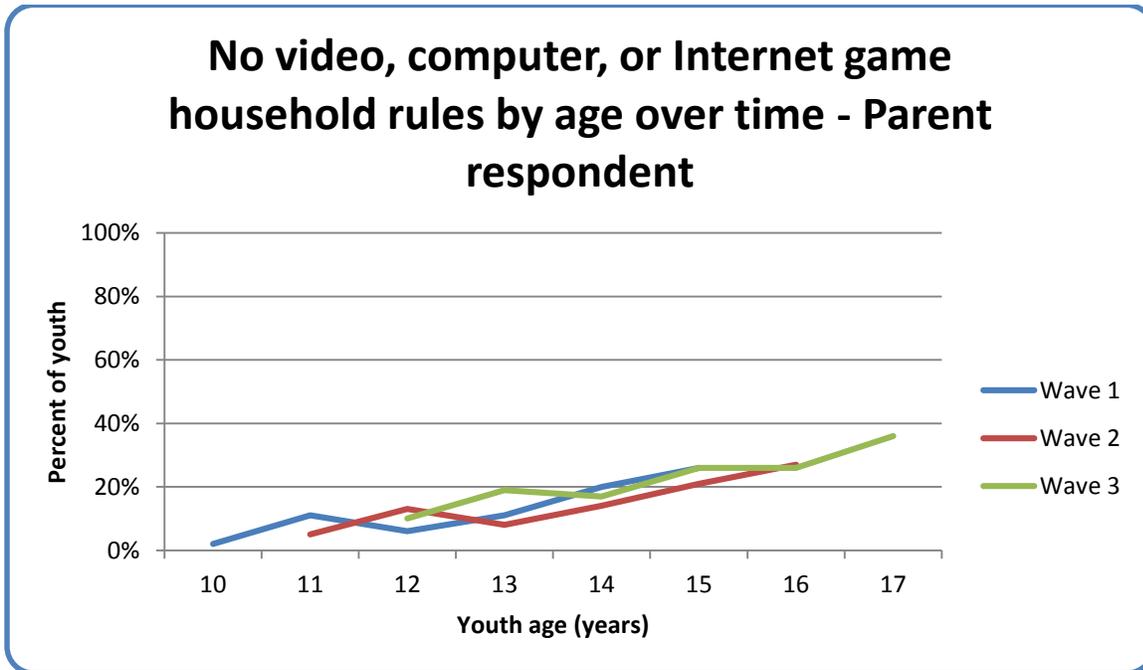
Unlike rules for the Internet, the most common rule parents had about games was a requirement that their children finish their chores and homework before playing. This is not to say that parents don't care about content: about half of parents at Wave 1 said they had restrictions on the types and ratings of games that their children could play. These restrictions decreased over time however, with about 2 of every 5 caregivers still having these rules over time. Fewer than 5% of caregivers said youth were allowed to play certain games that the caregivers did not like as long as the caregiver was outside of the room.

<i>Video, computer, or Internet games household rules – Parent respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,581)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 1,195)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 1,150)</i>
Child cannot play games until household chores or homework are complete	62%	54%	48%
Child can only play games with certain ratings	53%	46%	39%
Child can only play certain types of games	52%	45%	40%
Child can only play games for a certain number of hours per day	48%	40%	39%
Child has to ask permission before playing games	35%	25%	19%
Parent has other video, computer, or Internet games household rule(s)	22%	15%	14%
Parent does not have any rules about video, computer, or Internet games	13%	15%	22%
Child can only play certain games when parent is not in the room	3%	2%	3%

The most notable decrease in rules about video or computer games reported by parents over time was in the requirement of the child to ask permission before playing games. At Wave 1, more than 1 of every 3 parents reported having this rule in their home, whereas only 1 of every 5 parents reported having this rule at Wave 3. There were also notable decreases over time in parents allowing their child to only play games with certain ratings and not allowing their child to play games until household chores or homework were done.

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A lifting of all household rules related to game play was more common for older children; this was true across the three years of the study (see Figure below).



Youth-reported household rules for game play were similar.

<i>Video, computer, or Internet games household rules – Child respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,481)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 1,124)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 1,059)</i>
Cannot play games until household chores or homework are complete	63%	57%	55%
Can only play certain types of games	53%	46%	43%
Can only play games with certain ratings	49%	44%	40%
Can only play games for a certain number of hours per day	47%	42%	39%
Has to ask permission before playing games	39%	32%	27%
Has other video, computer, or games household rule(s)	17%	17%	16%
Does not have any rules about video, computer, or Internet games	14%	19%	22%
Can only play certain games when parent is not in the room	4%	5%	4%

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As with Internet rules, there was strong convergence between caregiver and youth report about game rules. Indeed, some rules were more commonly reported by youth: 55% of youth compared to 48% of parents at Wave 3 said that they were required to complete their chores and school work before playing games (see Table on page 6).

Over half of parents who had household rules for their child about game use almost always enforced these rules.

<i>Enforce video, computer, and Internet games household rules— Parent respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,298)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 914)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 834)</i>
Almost always	64%	58%	59%
Often	22%	28%	25%
Sometimes	12%	11%	14%
Almost never	2%	3%	3%

Slightly fewer parents reported almost always enforcing game rules compared to Internet rules, although more parents reported doing so ‘often’. Enforcement was stable across time, despite the aging of the cohort.

2 of every 3 youth whose parents had household rules about video, computer, and Internet game play almost always followed these rules.

<i>Follow video, computer, and Internet games household rules – Child respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,268)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 888)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 818)</i>
Almost always	62%	66%	62%
Often	24%	20%	21%
Sometimes	12%	13%	14%
Almost never	2%	2%	3%

Youth were equally likely to report following rules as caregivers were to report enforcing them.

Television:

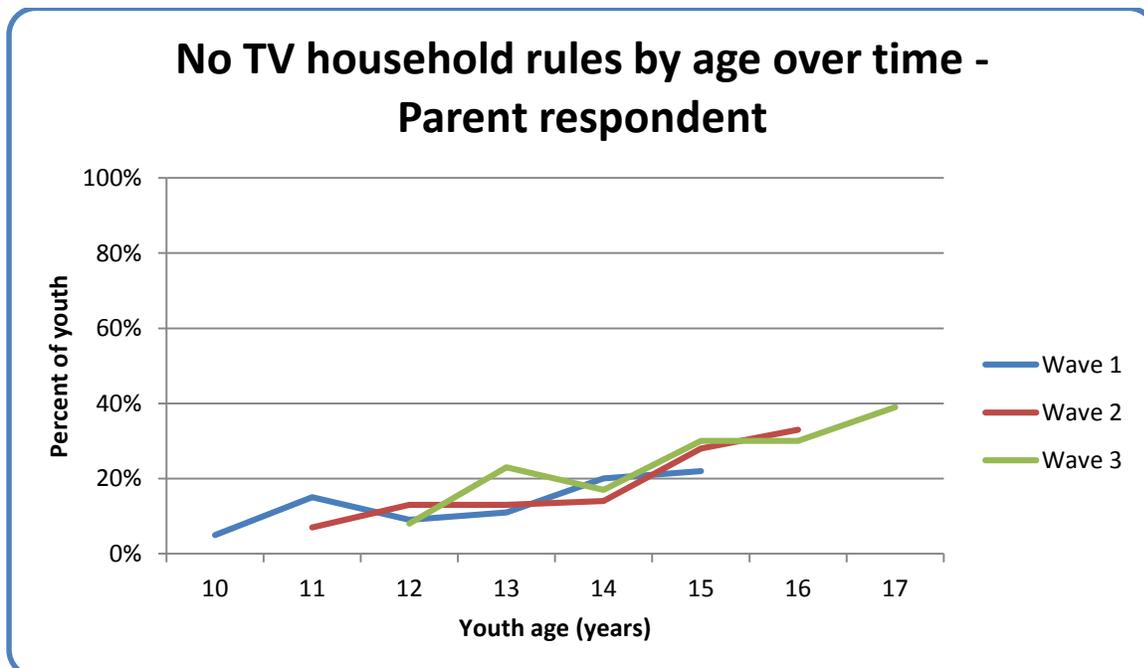
According to parents, 99% of youth watched TV; and the majority of parents (75-86%) had household rules about TV use.

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<i>Television household rules – Parent respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,570)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 1,195)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 1,150)</i>
Child can only watch certain types of shows	68%	62%	58%
Child cannot watch TV until household chores or homework are complete	59%	53%	47%
Child has to ask permission before watching TV	--	15%	12%
Child can only watch TV for a certain number of hours per day	38%	31%	30%
Child can only watch certain shows when parent is not in the room	7%	7%	8%
Parent has other TV household rule(s)	29%	18%	18%
Parent does not have any rules about TV	14%	19%	25%

As shown in the table above, content is a major concern for caregivers. The most common rule related to television was having certain shows that youth were not allowed to watch. In addition to being the most common rule, the most notable decrease in TV household rules was also having certain shows that youth were not allowed to watch.

The percentage of parents who reported that their child does not have TV household rules increased with age, and these rates within age tended to be consistent over time (see Figure below).



Similar to games, over half of parents who had rules for their child about television almost always enforced these rules.

<i>Enforce TV household rules – Parent respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,364)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 966)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 876)</i>
Almost always	61%	58%	56%
Often	24%	26%	26%
Sometimes	13%	13%	14%
Almost never	3%	4%	3%

Parents were less likely to report almost always enforcing their rules about television compared to the Internet and games; nonetheless, the vast majority reported doing so, with an additional quarter of parents saying they ‘often’ did.

Due to space limitations in the survey, youth were not asked about TV-related household rules.

SECTION 2: CO-USE AND DISCUSSIONS

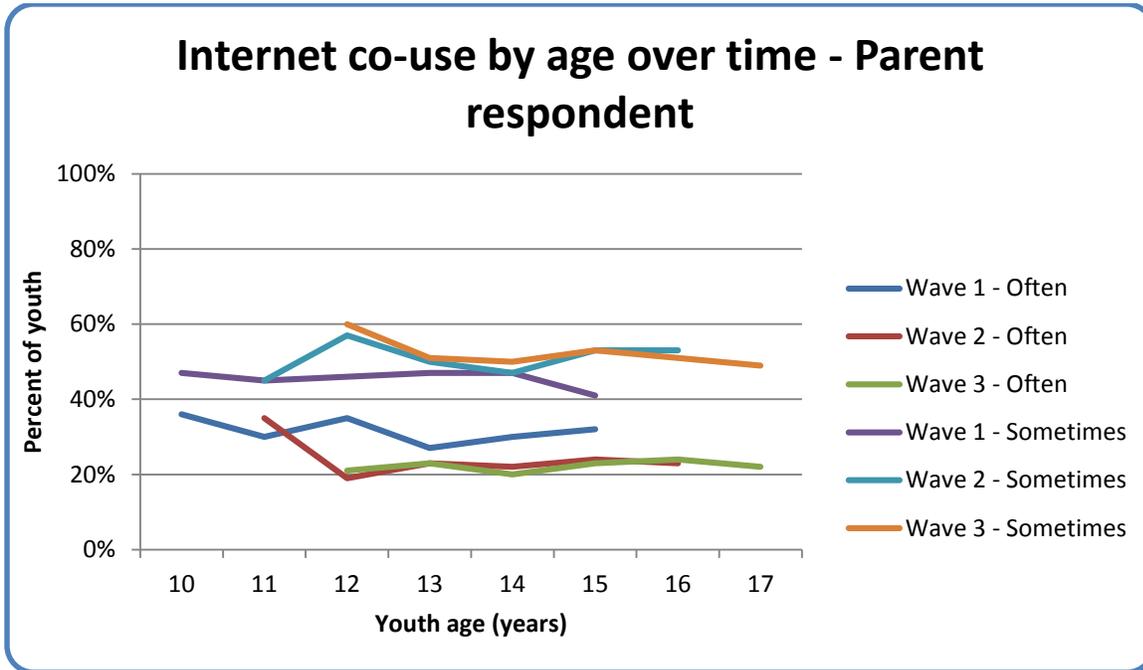
Internet:

Most parents used the Internet with their child at least some of the time.

<i>Use the Internet with my child – Parent respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,581)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 1,195)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 1,150)</i>
Almost always	12%	11%	9%
Often	32%	24%	22%
Sometimes	45%	51%	52%
Almost never	11%	14%	16%

Co-use of media helps parents understand how their children are using and experiencing the Internet. Few parents said they almost always or almost never used the Internet with their children. Much more commonly, parents said they sometimes or often did.

As the cohort aged the frequency of co-use seemed to decrease over time (see Figure on page 10).



Parents are equally likely (1 in every 3) to report that they often, sometimes, or almost always talked to their child about the things they see on the Internet.

It's not enough to simply co-use; parents also need to talk with their children about their children's online experiences. Research about the effects of violent television on behavior suggests that children whose parents talk to them about the violence are less negatively affected than children whose parents watch violent television with them without comment. It also gives the two an opportunity to discuss these things within the context of the parent's personal values.

<i>Discuss the things my child sees on the Internet – Parent respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,581)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 1,195)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 1,150)</i>
Almost always	32%	31%	28%
Often	33%	34%	33%
Sometimes	29%	29%	34%
Almost never	6%	6%	4%

Data in the above table suggests that parents were almost evenly split about how frequently they talked to their children about things they saw online: about a third said they almost always did, a third said they often did, and a third said they sometimes did. Very few said they almost never did. Unlike Internet co-use, these rates were relatively stable over time.

Video, Computer, and Internet Games:

Parents rarely played video, computer, and Internet games with their child.

<i>Game-related activities with child – Parent respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,504)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 1,098)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 1,070)</i>
Play video, computer, and Internet games with my child			
Almost always	6%	10%	8%
Often	16%	16%	15%
Sometimes	38%	38%	38%
Almost never	40%	36%	40%
Discuss the things my child sees while playing video, computer, and Internet games			
Almost always	20%	17%	17%
Often	29%	26%	22%
Sometimes	35%	40%	40%
Almost never	17%	17%	20%

Unlike the Internet, parents commonly reported almost never playing games with their children. Similar percentages said that they sometimes did; fewer said they often or almost always did. Even as youth got older, the rates stayed relatively stable.

Similarly, more parents reported almost never talking to their children about things they see in games compared to the Internet. Nonetheless, 3 in every 5 parents said that they sometimes or often discussed the game content with their children, suggesting that the majority of parents are concerned about the content youth are being exposed to in games.

In contrast, 26-35% of youth who play video, computer, and Internet games reported that their parents almost never talk to them about the things they see on the games they play.

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<i>Game-related activities with child – Child respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,481)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 1,124)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 1,059)</i>
Parent discusses the things child sees while playing video, computer, and Internet games			
Almost always	12%	10%	12%
Often	20%	19%	15%
Sometimes	42%	39%	38%
Almost never	26%	33%	35%

Youth agree that most parents sometimes talk to them about the things they see in games. Fewer youth say that their parents almost always or often do however, and more say that their parents almost never talk to them about their game experience.

These inconsistencies may be because youth were less likely to remember the discussions, or because parents over-reported these discussions because they felt like they *should* be having them with their children.

Television:

More than 7 of every 10 parents whose children watch TV often or almost always watched TV with their child.

<i>TV-related activities with child – Parent respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,570)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 1,185)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 1,138)</i>
Watch TV with my child			
Almost always	26%	23%	20%
Often	44%	48%	48%
Sometimes	26%	26%	29%
Almost never	3%	3%	3%
Discuss the things my child sees on TV			
Almost always	30%	26%	26%
Often	37%	39%	35%
Sometimes	28%	29%	34%
Almost never	5%	6%	6%

Parents were much more likely to watch TV with their child than to games with them. While only about 1 of every 5 parents *often* or *almost always* played games with their child across time, about 7 of every 10 parents *often* or *almost always* watched TV with their child.

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Parents also were more likely to discuss with their child the things they saw on TV than the things they saw in video, computer, and Internet games. Across time, 39%-49% of parents reported that they *often* or *almost always* discussed the things their child sees in computerized games, whereas 61%-67% of parents *often* or *almost always* had these discussions regarding TV.

Due to space limitations in the survey, youth were not asked about co-viewing experiences related to TV.

SECTION 3: INTERNET MONITORING

4 in every 5 parents monitored what their kids were doing online.

<i>Internet monitoring- Parent respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,581)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 1,195)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 1,150)</i>
Ask child where they go and what they see on the Internet	88%	87%	83%
Check history function on browser ²	77%	72%	68%
Check child's files, CD's, or disks to see what's on them	59%	56%	54%

Almost nine in ten parents reported talking to their children about where they go and what they see online. All three behaviors were commonly reported however, with more than half of parents endorsing each one.

Youth agree... mostly...

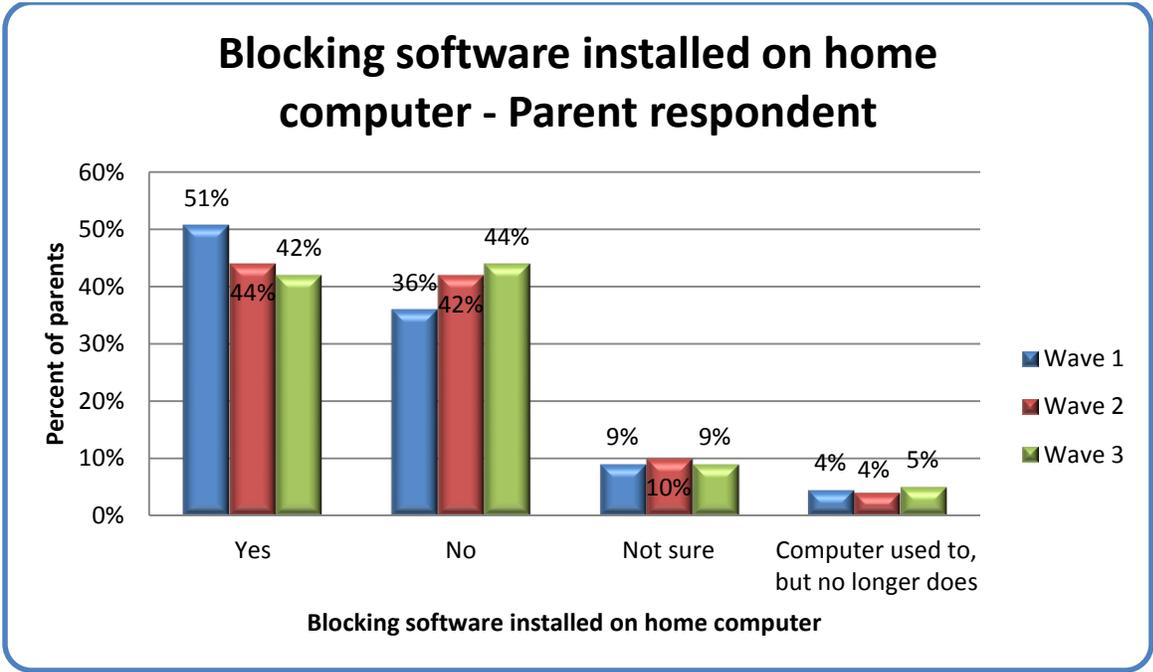
<i>Internet monitoring- Child respondent³</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 1,581)</i>		<i>Wave 2 (n = 1,195)</i>		<i>Wave 3 (n = 1,150)</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
Parent asks where child goes and what they see on the Internet	75%	7%	73%	6%	72%	6%
Parent checks history function on browser	35%	42%	37%	38%	34%	39%
Parent checks child's files, CD's, or disks to see what's on them	28%	38%	26%	36%	24%	36%

² All respondents were asked this question at Wave 1. At Wave 2 and Wave 3 this question was only asked of those with home internet access (NWave2= 1,154; NWave3= 1,112).

³ The 'not sure' response option was not available for parent respondents.

Similar to parents, the most common parental monitoring activity reported by youth was their parents asking them questions about where they go and what they do on the Internet (see Table on page 13). Rates reported by parents and child differed notably for monitoring activities where parents did not need to directly ask the youth questions (i.e., asking child about what sites they visit on the Internet). Because parents are able to check the history function on the Internet browser indirectly without needing to ask their child questions, parents are able to complete these monitoring activities without the child’s knowledge. Thus, youth are less aware of whether these types of parental monitoring activities take place.

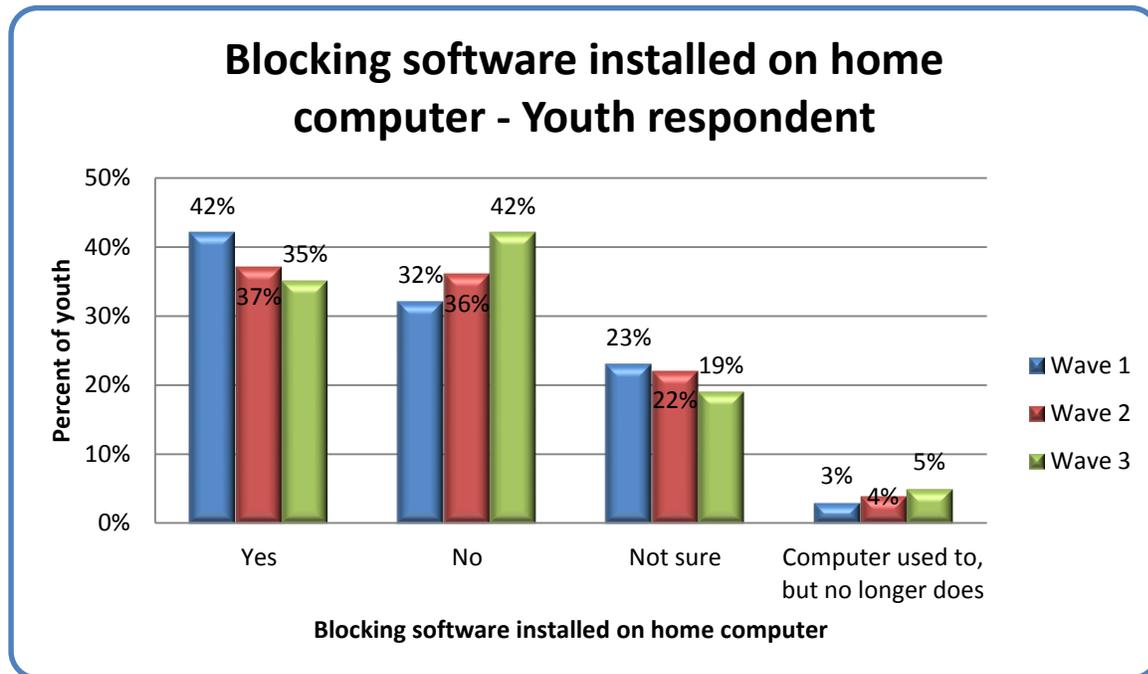
Half of parents used blocking software, but this decreased over time.



The use of blocking software fell from 51% to 42% over the 36 month period. As shown in the figure above, the rate of unsure parents remained stable at 10% across time, as did the percent of adults reporting that the computer used to have software but it had been subsequently removed. It is unclear how this last group can be reconciled with the decrease in software use. Perhaps, it’s a bit ‘out of sight, out of mind’. Blocking software can make web surfing cumbersome and frustrating. Maybe because it’s a much more seamless Internet use experience without the software, parents forgot that it was ever on the computer.

Fewer youth than parents reported blocking software on the computer.

About 10 percentage points fewer youth reported the presence of blocking software on the home computer. It is possible that some parents were using the software covertly. It’s also possible that some parents had not installed the software correctly; or that the parents and children had a different understanding of what blocking software is.



About 1 of every 4 of youth who know they have blocking software or parental controls on their home computer knew how to get around or disable blocking software or parental controls.

<i>Know how to get around or disable blocking software or parental controls – Child respondent</i>	<i>Wave 1 (n = 667)</i>	<i>Wave 2 (n = 505)</i>	<i>Wave 3 (n = 450)</i>
Yes	24%	24%	25%
Not sure	11%	18%	17%

Being able to get around or disable restrictions on the computer was not related to age: the rates were stable across time. This may be partly because of increasingly sophisticated software that made it more difficult to subvert.

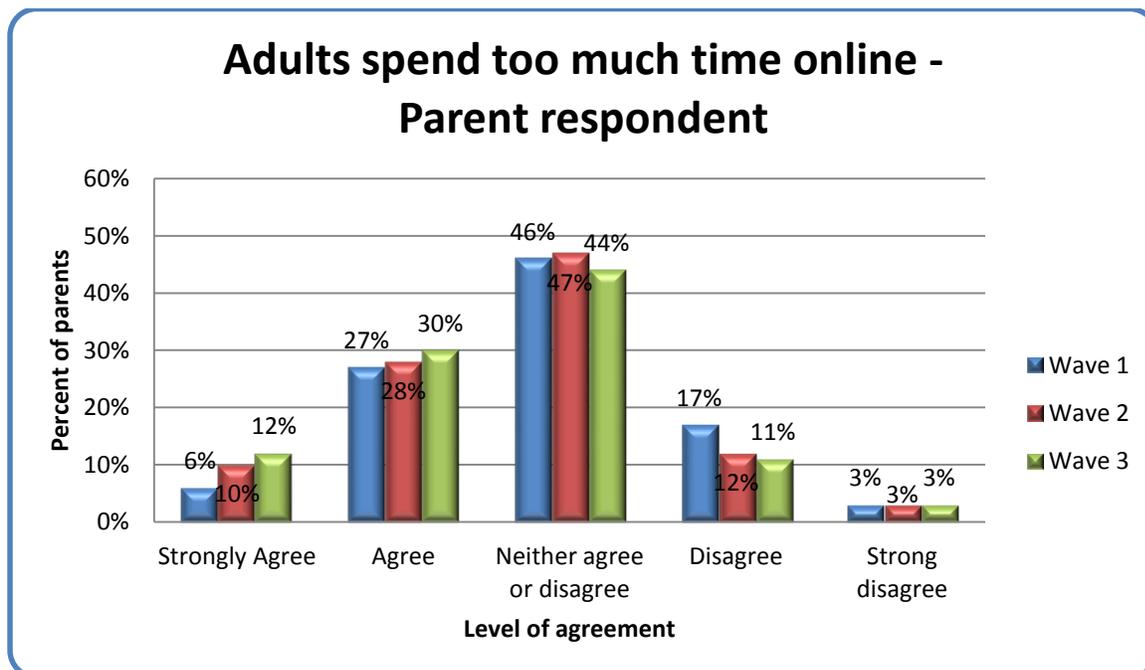
SECTION 4: BELIEFS ABOUT MEDIA USE

7 of every 10 parents felt that in general, parents should worry most about what children see online.

What parents should worry most about – Parent respondent	Wave 1 (n = 1,581)	Wave 2 (n = 1,195)	Wave 3 (n = 1,150)
What children see online	68%	67%	70%
What children see on TV	20%	18%	16%
What children see in video games	--	5%	4%
Not sure	12%	11%	10%

The majority of parents thought that caregivers should worry most about what young people see online. Only one in 5 thought that TV content should be of concern, and one in 20 that video game content was worrisome.

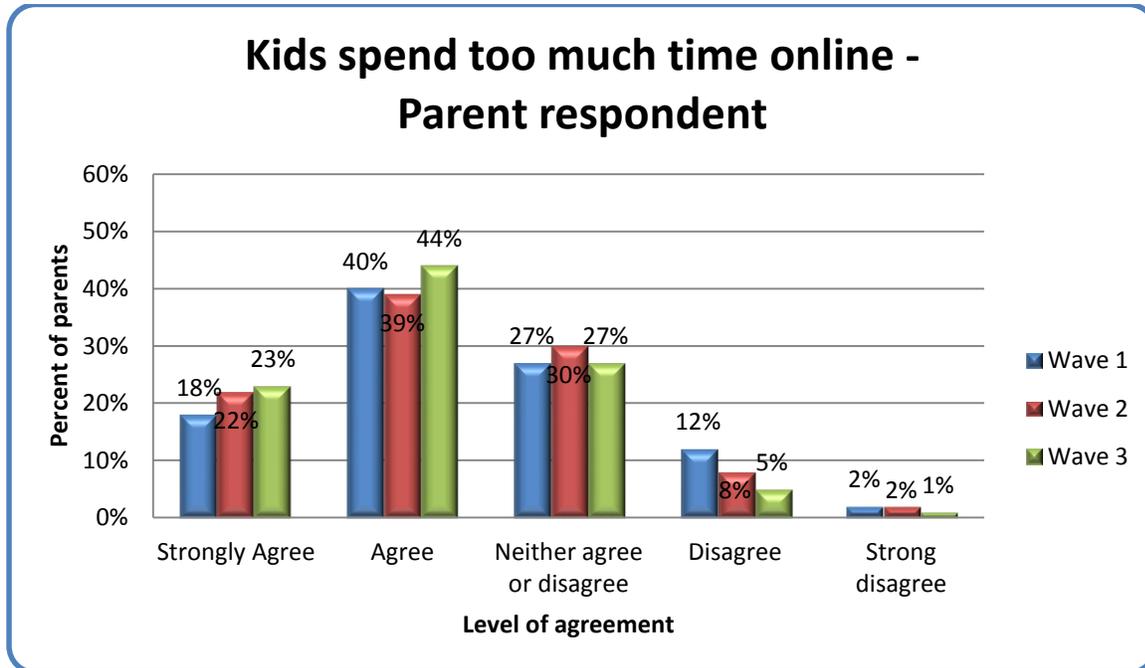
The majority of parents neither agreed nor disagreed that adults spend too much time online.



As shown in the figure above, 1 in 3 parents (33-42%) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that adults spend too much time online.

But, the majority of parents believed that kids spend too much time online.

In contrast, more than 1 of every 2 parents (58-67%) *agreed or strongly agreed* that kids spend too much time online.



CONCLUSION:

There is lots of good news: most households have rules about media use, and most parents and children agree about what these rules are. Most parents enforce, and most youth follow these rules. Also too, monitoring and co-use of the Internet and television was commonly reported by parents (but this was less true for video games).

It seems that Internet safety efforts have been effective at educating parents about the importance of monitoring and talking to their children about what they do and see online. Perhaps future efforts should be more integrated to focus on media use more generally and helping parents appreciate the need for involvement in how their young people are using and experiencing all types of media. This may be especially true for video games. The most common rule for Internet and television was a restriction about content that youth were allowed to see. For games however, the most common rule was ensuring that home work and other chores were done before youth were allowed to play. Similarly, the fewest number of caregivers thought that parents should be worried about what youth see in games. Certainly, media play an influential and often positive role in the lives of young people. Empowering parents with the tools to help their children safe is an integral part of this.

Center for Innovative Public Health Research:

Center for Innovative Public Health Research is a non-profit research organization in the United States centered on understanding the impact on and opportunities for adolescent health represented by new technologies. For, if we are to affect young people, we must go to where they “are”. Our mission is to promote new and innovative methods that improve the health and safety of young people. We believe a multi-pronged approach is necessary, with survey and epidemiological research alongside active youth intervention and prevention efforts.

This bulletin was prepared jointly by (in alphabetical order): Dr. Josephine Korchmaros, Ms. Elise Lopez, Dr. Kimberly Mitchell, Ms. Tonya Prescott, and Dr. Michele Ybarra.

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Other Bulletins in this Series:

- Methodological Details
- Parent and Youth Media Use Patterns
- Exposure to Violence and Sex in Media
- Youth Violence Victimization and Perpetration
- Mental Health and Psychosocial Indicators

Selection of Other Publications:

Ybarra, M., Diener-West, M., Markow, D., Leaf, P., Hamburger, M., & Boxer, P. (2008). Linkages between internet and other media violence with seriously violent behavior by youth. *Pediatrics*, 122(5), 929-937.

Ybarra, M.L., Espelage, D., & Mitchell, K.J. (2007). The co-occurrence of internet harassment and unwanted sexual solicitation victimization and perpetration: Associations with psychosocial indicators. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 41 (6,Suppl), S31-S41.

Mitchell, K.J. & Ybarra, M.L. (2009). Social networking sites: Finding a balance between their risks and benefits. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 163(1) 87-89.

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