

THE IMPACT OF SCREEN-BASED MEDIA ON TEENAGE BEHAVIOUR

A SURVEY OF PARENTS' VIEWS

Produced for the Parent Teacher Association of
St Ann's High School for Girls

by Kathryn Hxxxxxx

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This report is based on the results of a survey of parents with teenage children at St Ann's High School for Girls in Linden.

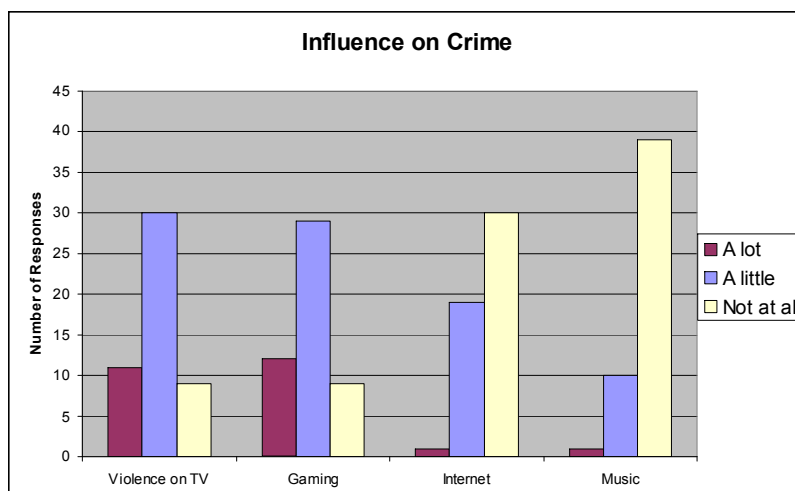
I handed out 60 questionnaires to parents attending a Year 10 parent evening and got 50 completed forms. Most of the parents filled in the questionnaire on their own while they were waiting to speak to teachers. I collected the completed questionnaires in as the parents were leaving the sports hall. There is a copy of my questionnaire in Appendix 1.

Only 12 fathers completed a questionnaire. This was disappointing because I was interested in finding out whether mothers and fathers have different points of view.

The majority of parents (34%) said there is 'a little' teenage crime in this area. 30% said there is 'a lot'. Of these, 52% reported that vandalism is the main type of crime. Only 16% felt that violent crimes are the most common.

40% of parents said they felt threatened 'a lot' by groups of teenagers on the street or on public transport. More mothers (47%) felt threatened than fathers (17%).

The graph below shows to what extent parents think screen-based media has an influence on teenage crime in our area.



These results show that most parents think that violence on TV and computer gaming have ‘a little’ influence on crime. However, some parents think that they have ‘a lot’ of influence. The Internet and music were not felt to be important.

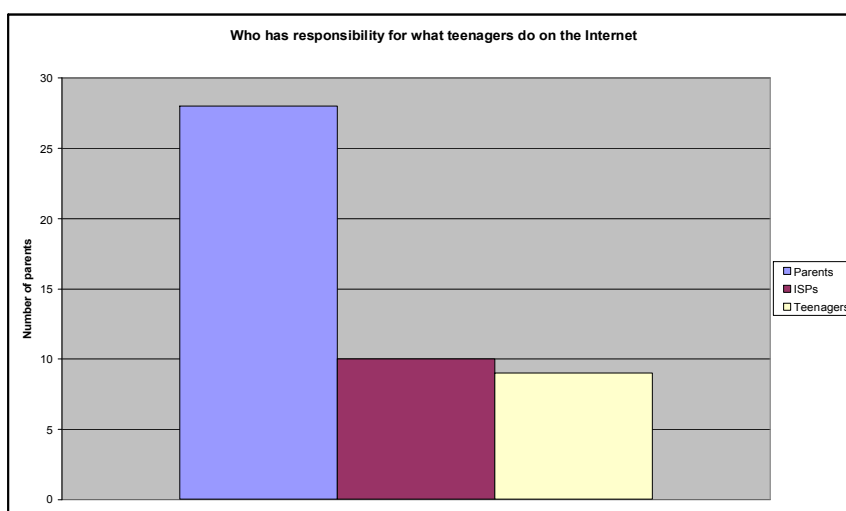
The table below shows the level of control parents said they have on their teenagers’ TV viewing, computer gaming etc.

	A lot	A little	Not at all
TV viewing	34%	40%	26%
Computer gaming	8%	58%	34%
Internet usage	26%	68%	6%
Music	0%	6%	94%

This table shows that parents control their teenagers’ TV viewing and Internet usage a lot more than their computer gaming. It is strange that only four (36%) of the parents who said that violence on TV influences teenage crime ‘a lot’ actually control their children’s viewing. Only two (17%) parents who said that computer gaming influences teenage crime ‘a lot’ control their children’s gaming.

96% of parents said that local shops do not do enough to enforce the age limits on films, games and music. This is a worrying statistic as it means that children of any age can buy even the most violent of games with very little control. 76% parents also said that television companies do not do enough to limit violence before the watershed.

The graph below shows where parents think responsibility lies for what their teenagers watch, play and see on the Internet.



It shows that parents believe that they are most responsible for what their children watch and play. Some parents felt that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) could do more to protect their children and also that teenagers have some responsibility.

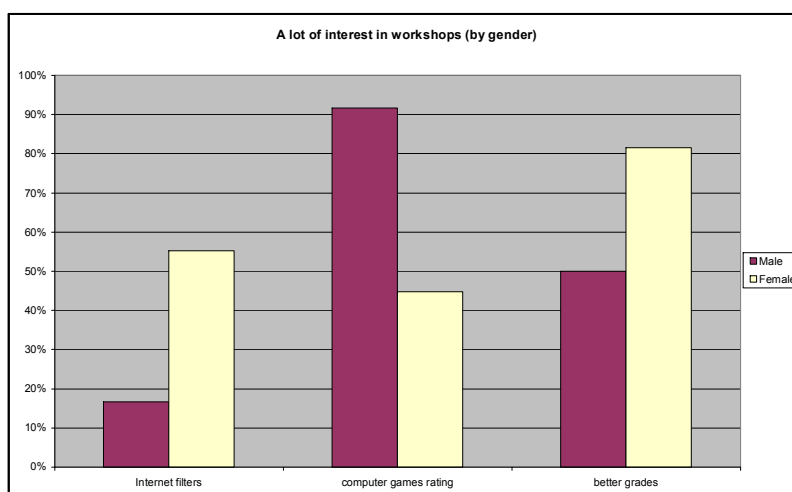
The table below shows what parents felt about some of my ideas to reduce teenage crime.

	A lot	A little	Not at all
Tighter parental control	60%	34%	6%
More free and low cost activities for teenagers	74%	24%	2%
More visible policing	8%	40%	52%

As part of my survey I wanted to find out if parents would be interested in going to workshops to help them find out more about screen-based media. The table below shows that there was ‘a lot’ of interest in all the workshops. ‘Using screen-based media to get better grades’ was most popular. This might be because I carried out my survey at a parents evening.

	A lot	A little	Not at all
Using Internet filters to control teenagers’ access to the Internet	46%	46%	8%
Understanding computer games ratings	56%	38%	6%
Using screen-based media to get better grades	74%	26%	0%

The graph below shows that mothers and fathers prefer different workshops. Fathers were keener on ‘understanding computer game ratings’ and mothers liked ‘using screen-based media to get better grades’. However, my sample of fathers is a lot smaller than my sample of mothers.



75% of the parents who said that computer gaming influences crime 'a lot' said they are interested in 'understanding computer game ratings'. Of the 29 parents who said they are interested 'a lot' in 'understanding computer game ratings', only three (10%) said that they control their teenagers' computer gaming 'a lot'. Of the 24 parents who said they are interested 'a lot' in 'using Internet filters to control teenagers' access to the Internet', seven (29%) said that they control their teenagers' Internet usage 'a lot'.

In conclusion, my survey shows that parents do not feel that gaming or violence on TV are totally responsible for teenage crime, but do feel they are contributing factors. They agree that parents should take more control over what their teenagers watch and play and would be interested in workshops to find out more about this. Nearly three quarters of parents want the council to provide more free and low cost activities for teenagers.

Recommendations

Based on my findings, I recommend that the Parent Teacher Association takes the following actions:

1. Produces an appropriate publication for distribution to parents giving guidance on why it is important to control teenagers' viewing and gaming and how to go about this.
2. Contacts local shops to urge them to enforce the age limits on sale of computer games, films and music.
3. Asks the council to provide more out-of-school activities for teenagers so that they have an alternative to watching TV and playing on the computer.
4. Runs workshops for parents starting with 'using screen-based media to get better grades'.

For further information about the influence of screen-based media on teenagers, I recommend these sources.

www.bbc.co.uk/gloucestershire/getfresh/2003/08/teenagers_matt.shtml

www.bbc.co.uk/teens

www.apa.org/pubinfo/violence.html

www.literacytrust.org.uk/Database/TV.html

www.ci.appstate.edu/programs/edmedia/medialit/ml_adolescents2.html

www.spiked-online.com/articles/00000002D0D2.htm

www.vnunet.com/vnunet/news/2141383/jury-violent-games

<http://gr.bolt.com/articles/violence/violence.htm>

www.videostandards.org.uk/video_violence.htm

www.aber.ack.uk/media/Documents/short/vidgame.html

Jessica Harris (2001) 'The effects of computer games on young children – a review of the research' *Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate Communications Development Unit*

Appendix 1

Parents' Survey

I am conducting a survey to find out what St Ann's High School parents think about the influence of screen-based media on teenagers' behaviour.

Please complete this form and leave it in the box labelled SURVEY at the entrance to the sports hall.

1. I am: male female

2. Do you think there is a lot of teenage crime in your area? (Please tick)
 A lot A little None at all

3. Would you say these crimes were mainly (Please tick one)
 Vandalism Violence Theft Other
 If "Other", please state:

4. Do you think these crimes are influenced by the following: (Please tick)

	A lot	A little	Not at all
Violence on TV			
Computer gaming			
Internet			
Music			

5. Do you feel threatened when you see groups of teenagers in the street or on public transport (Please tick)
 A lot A little Not at all

6. Do you control your teenagers'... (Please tick)

	A lot	A little	Not at all
TV viewing			
Computer gaming			
Internet usage			
Music			

7. Do you feel TV companies do enough to limit violence before the watershed? Yes No
8. Do you feel local shops do enough to ensure age limits on films, games and music are observed? Yes No

9. Who do you feel has responsibility for what teenagers watch, play and see on the internet? (Please tick)

	A lot	A little	Not at all
Parents			
Internet service providers (ISPs)			
Teenagers			

10. Will the following improve teenagers' behaviour in our area? (Please tick)

	A lot	A little	Not at all
Greater parental control of teenagers' use of screen-based media			
More free and low cost activities for teenagers provided by the council			
More visible policing			

11. Would you be interested in any of the following workshops? (Please tick)

	A lot	A little	Not at all
Using Internet filters to control teenagers' access to the Internet			
Understanding computer game ratings			
Using screen-based media to get better grades			

Thank you for your help. I will be presenting the results of my survey in a report to the Parent Teacher Association. You will also be able to read a summary of my findings on the school website.