ESSENTIAL FACTS

entertainment® software association

ABOUT GAMES AND VIOLENCE

Facts, common sense and numerous studies all refute the claim that there is a link between video games and violence. Blaming video games for violence in the real world is no more productive than blaming the news media for bringing violent crimes into our homes night after night. Numerous authorities have examined the scientific record and found that it does not establish any causal link between media content and real-life violence.

Average game player age:

31

Average game buyer age:

35

Percentage of time parents are present when a game is purchased or rented:

91%

Percentage of parents who monitor the content of the games their children play:

95%

CREDIBLE REAL-WORLD EVIDENCE DEMONSTRATES THE FALLACY OF LINKING GAMES AND VIOLENCE:

■ Violent crime, particularly among the young, has decreased dramatically since the early 1990s. During the same period of time, video games have steadily increased in popularity and use, exactly the opposite of what one would expect if there were a causal link.

■ Many games with violent content sold in the U.S. – and some with far more violence – are also sold in foreign markets. However, the level of violent crime in these foreign markets is considerably lower than that in the U.S., suggesting that influences such as the background of the individual, the availability of guns and other factors are more relevant to understanding the cause of any particular crime. In fact, an analysis by *The Washington Post* of the 10 largest video game markets across the globe found no statistical correlation between video game consumption and gun-related deaths.

■ Numerous authorities, including the U.S. Supreme Court, U.S. Surgeon General, Federal Trade Commission and Federal Communications Commission have examined the scientific record and found that it does not establish any causal link between violent programming and violent behavior. The truth is, there is no scientific research that validates a link between computer and video games and violence, despite lots of overheated rhetoric from the industry's detractors. Instead, a host of respected researchers has concluded that there is no link between media violence and violent crime.

> "Psychological studies purporting to show a connection between exposure to violent video games and harmful effects on children do not prove that such exposure causes minors to act aggressively."
>
> — Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, majority opinion in *Brown v. EMA/ESA*

WHAT DOES THE SCIENCE SAY?

Ferguson, Christopher J. and John Kimburn. "The Public Health Risks of Media Violence: A Meta-Analytic Review." *Journal of Pediatrics* 154 (2009): 759-763. Web. 10 Aug. 2011.

> "This analysis does not find support for either a causal or correlational link between violent media and subsequent aggression in viewers. Why the belief of media violence effects persists despite inherent weaknesses of research is somewhat of an open question."

To read this research in its entirety, please go to: **http://tinyurl.com/yaeo7oe**

Kutner, Lawrence, PH.D. and Cheryl K. Olson, ScD. *Grand Theft Childhood: The Surprising Truth About Video Games And What Parents Can Do.* **New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008. Print.**

"For most kids and most parents, the bottom-line results of our research can be summed up in a single word: relax. While concerns about the effects of violent video games are understandable, they're basically no different from the unfounded concerns previous generations had about the new media of their day."

"It's clear that the `big fears' bandied about in the press—that violent video games make children significantly more violent in the real world… — are not supported by the current research, at least in such a simplistic form. That should make sense to anyone who thinks about it. After all, millions of children and adults play these games, yet the world has not been reduced to chaos and anarchy."

"The strong link between video game violence and real world violence, and the conclusion that video games lead to social isolation and poor interpersonal skills, are drawn from bad or irrelevant research, muddleheaded thinking and unfounded, simplistic news reports."

To learn more about this book, please go to: **www.grandtheftchildhood.com**

Ferguson, Christopher J., Stephanie M. Rueda, Amanda M. Cruz, Diana E. Ferguson, Stacey Fritz and Shawn M. Smith. "Violent video games and aggression: Causal relationship or byproduct of family violence and intrinsic violence motivation?" *Criminal Justice & Behavior* **35 (2008): 311-332. Web. 10 Aug. 2011.**

"Two studies examined the relationship between exposure to violent video games and aggression or violence in the laboratory and in real life. Study 1 participants were either randomized or allowed to choose to play a violent or nonviolent game. Although males were more aggressive than females, neither randomized exposure to violent video game conditions nor previous real life exposure to violent video games caused any differences in aggression. Study 2 examined correlations between trait aggression, violent criminal acts, and exposure to both violent games and family violence. Results indicated that trait aggression, family violence, and male gender were predictive of violent crime, but exposure to violent games was not. Structural equation modeling suggested that family violence and innate aggression as predictors of violent crime were a better fit to the data than was exposure to video game violence. These results question the common belief that violent-video-game exposure causes violent acts."

"Findings from the two studies were mutually supportive. These results suggest that playing violent video games does not constitute a significant risk for future violent criminal acts. Because there was no evidence in either study to support a direct link between video game exposure and aggressive or violent behavior, these results call into question the GAM as a useful predictive model of aggression."

To read this research in its entirety, please go to: **http://tinyurl.com/65dqyt**

Grimes, Thomas, James A. Anderson and Lori Bergen. *Media violence and aggression: Science and Ideology.* **Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2008. Print.**

"In nearly 80 percent of the studies investigated here, the measures of aggression were paper-and-pencil reports — often simple check marks on a scale… There are a few studies that investigate whether the predicted [aggressive] behavior actually occurs (and those few studies indicate that it does not)."

To learn more about this book, please go to: **http://tinyurl.com/6r69wx**

VIOLENT CRIME DECREASED DRAMATICALLY FROM 1998 TO 2013*
WHILE VIDEO GAME SALES SOARED, MORE THAN TRIPLING IN SALES
FROM $4.8 BILLION TO $14.8 BILLION**

Total violent crime offences (in millions)
Computer and video-game sales ($ in billions)
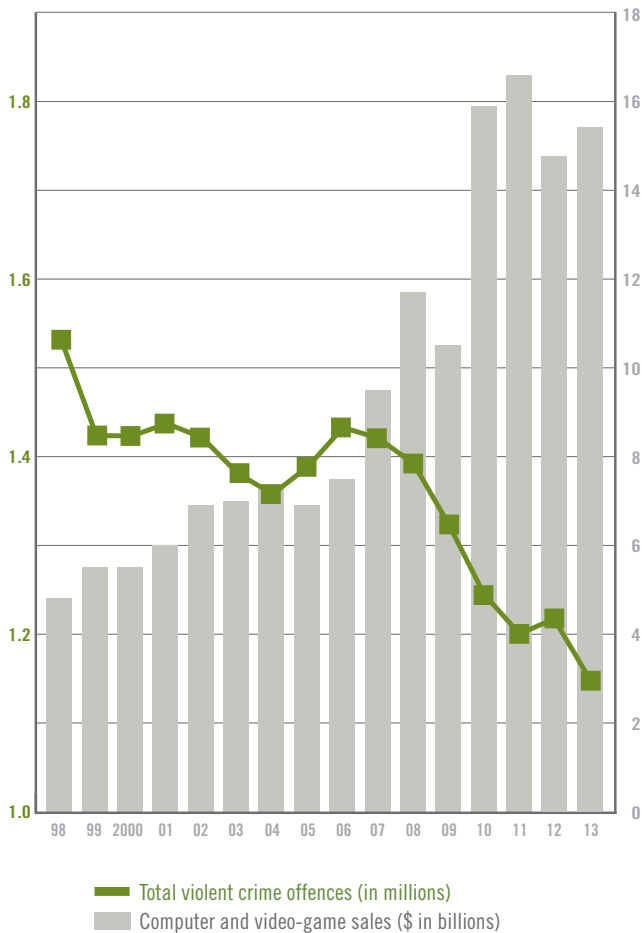
Sources: *U.S. Dept. of Justice - Federal Bureau of Investigation -
"Preliminary Annual Crime Stats 2012"
**The NPD Group, Inc./Retail Tracking

Sternheimer, Karen. "Do Video Games Kill?" Contexts 6.1 (2007): 13-17.

"By focusing so heavily on video games, news reports downplay the broader social contexts. While a handful of articles note the roles that guns, poverty, families, and the organization of schools may play in youth violence in general, when reporters mention research to explain the shooters' behavior, the vast majority of studies cited concern media effects…"

To read the entire article, please go to:
http://tinyurl.com/3j2zy6a

Donahue-Turner, Beth, Psy.D. and Amiram Elwork. *Constitutional Kombat: Psychological Evidence Used to Restrict Video-game Violence.* Diss. Widener University, 2009. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2010. Print.

"…the research results on the effects of violent video games have been inconsistent and equivocal. Our second conclusion is that none of these studies meets the minimal research criteria that the courts have established as necessary to be probative in legal context. For example, there has been no research to address the question of whether violent video games are more harmful than other forms of violent media. In addition, no research has been done on whether violent video games cause long-term or short-term effects."

To read the dissertation, please go to:
http://tinyurl.com/3plb6nk

Boyle, Raymond and Matthew Hibberd. *Review of Research on the Impact of Violent Computer Games on Young People.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, San Francisco, CA. 23 May, 2007. Stirling: Stirling Media Research Institute, Mar. 2005. Web.

"There are many inconsistencies in the reported amount of research into media violence. Put simply, there are a lot of myths, misinterpretations, and mis-representations surrounding the quantity and quality of research on this issue."

To read the entire paper, please go to:
http://tinyurl.com/3kywz9q

Salonius-Pasternak, Dorothy E. and Holly S. Gelfond. "The Next Level of Research on Electronic Play: Potential Benefits and Contextual Influences for Children and Adolescents." *Human Technology* 1.1 (2005): 5-22.

"Most research on electronic play has focused on its possible negative effects for children and adolescents, and contextual factors such as socioeconomic status and culture

are rarely considered…. The study explains how electronic games may also have potential benefits for young players that include providing children with the opportunity to negotiate society's rules and roles, allowing children to experiment with aggression in a safe setting without real world consequences, and facilitating children's development of self-regulation arousal."
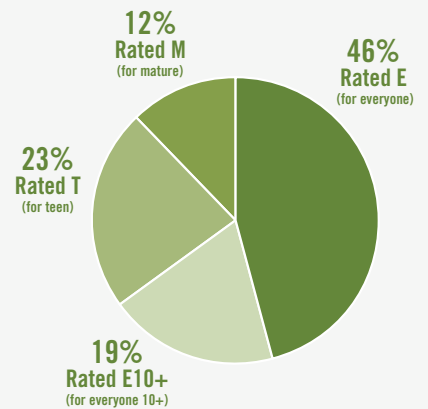
To read the entire article, please go to: **http://tinyurl.com/ov9km**

Ratings and parental controls help parents make appropriate entertainment choices for their families:

Just as with other types of entertainment, there is a wide variety of content available in computer and video games to suit the wide variety of individuals who play games. The industry has also voluntarily established numerous tools and policies to help parents make educated choices and ensure that retailers only sell games to those whose age is appropriate for the game in question.

■ Computer and video games are rated by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), whose system includes age recommendations and content descriptors. The Federal Trade Commission credited the video game industry with "outpacing" other entertainment industries in curtailing the marketing of mature-rated products to children. In addition, an August 2013 study conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates found:

> ❯ 85 percent of parents with children who play video games are aware of the ESRB ratings;

> ❯ 73 percent of parents regularly check a game's rating before making a purchase;

> ❯ 64 percent are aware of content descriptors; and

> ❯ 82 percent check the ESRB ratings regularly.

■ All new video game consoles include parental controls that limit a child's access to games based on their ESRB ratings. According to a 2014 study, 87 percent of parents believe parental controls are useful.

■ Parents impose time usage limits on video games more than any other form of entertainment:

> ❯ 83 percent of parents place time limits on video game playing

> ❯ 80 percent of parents place time limits on Internet usage

> ❯ 76 percent of parents place time limits on television viewing

> ❯ 70 percent of parents place time limits on movie viewing

VIDEO GAME RATINGS, 2013

12%
Rated M
(for mature)

46%
Rated E
(for everyone)

23%
Rated T
(for teen)

19%
Rated E10+
(for everyone 10+)

Source: ESRB

ESSENTIAL FACTS ABOUT GAMES AND VIOLENCE

www.theESA.com