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C E N T E R F O R M E D I A E D U C A T I O N

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## In New Poll, Public Backs More Educational TV for Kids

*60% Would Require One Hour or More Daily  
On Commercial Broadcast Outlets*

Washington, D.C. October 5, 1995. Americans are dissatisfied with the quality of programming for children on commercial over-the-air television, and they support a requirement that broadcasters air one hour or two hours of educational fare each day, according to a new poll released today by the Center for Media Education (CME).

Among the poll's major findings are:

*More than four in five American adults (82%) believe there is not enough educational children's programming on commercial broadcast television.*

*Three in five adults surveyed (60%) support specific requirements that broadcasters air an hour of educational programming -- or more -- for children each day. More than a third of all parents (35%) would require two hours daily.*

*Eighty percent of Americans believe there are good reasons to regulate children's TV more strictly than programming intended for general or adult audiences.*

*The two most frequently cited reasons for the lack of quality in children's broadcast programming are violence (43%) and insufficient educational programming (25%).*

"It's clear from this survey that there is strong public support for regulatory policies to ensure that broadcasters serve the needs of America's children," said Kathryn Montgomery, Ph.D., President of the nonprofit research and advocacy group.

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The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is currently considering proposed rules designed to more effectively implement the Children's Television Act of 1990 (CTA). The CTA requires broadcasters to air some specifically-designed educational and informational programs for children as a condition of license renewal. The FCC's rulemaking is in response to widespread complaints from the education, health, and child advocacy community that broadcasters are failing to comply with the CTA's mandate. For example, some broadcasters have claimed that such shows as "The Jetsons" and "GI Joe" are educational. In addition, too often educational shows have been shunted to pre-dawn hours when most children are asleep.

"The findings of this poll should send a strong message to the FCC that the public expects decisive action from the Commission to ensure that more educational programs are available to children," Dr. Montgomery said. "Americans want more alternatives to the violent and merchandise-driven programs that dominate the children's TV schedule. And they support specific daily programming requirements for broadcasters."

The survey, which was conducted in late August 1995, was designed and analyzed by Mark Cooper, Ph.D., of Citizens Research. The questions were asked of 514 men and 513 women in a random digit dial national sample.



C E N T E R F O R M E D I A E D U C A T I O N

## Public Attitudes About Children's Television

### Summary of Survey Results

The following are major findings of public attitudes about children's programming on commercial broadcast television. They are based on a national survey of 514 men and 513 women conducted in late August 1995.

*An overwhelming majority of the public wants more educational programs for children on commercial television.*

More than four in five American adults (82%) believe there is not enough educational children's programming on commercial broadcast television. Among those with children the percentage rises to nearly nine of ten (88%).

*More than three-quarters of Americans believe there are good reasons to regulate children's TV more strictly than programming intended for general or adult audiences.*

Eighty percent of respondents in the survey believe there are good reasons to regulate children's television. The public believes more regulation is in order because: (1) children watch so much TV; (2) television has such a strong impact on children and; (3) TV reaches so many children.

*Most people support specific requirements for broadcasters of one hour or more per day of educational programming for children; a substantial number believe there should be a requirement for two hours a day.*

When respondents were asked how much children's educational programming broadcasters should be required to air, the single most frequent answer was two hours a day (31%), with the second most frequent answer being one hour a day (29%), yielding a total of 60% supporting one hour a day or more. Among respondents with children, the totals of those calling for one hour a day or more were even higher (64%), with more than a third (35%) believing the requirement should be two hours a day.

***One of the reasons that people support regulation of children's programming is that they believe it has a negative impact.***

When asked about the nature of TV's influence on children (that is, whether it is positive, negative or neutral), and the power of that influence (very strong, somewhat strong and so forth), overall, the negatives exceeded the positives by two-to-one. Forty-five percent of respondents believe that children's programs on commercial broadcast television are having a negative influence, with ten percent saying the influence is "very negative." Only 23% of the sample believe that children's programming is having a positive influence on children's lives, with just six percent saying the impact is very positive.

***The majority of people believe that the quality of children's programming is not getting better; more than a third believe it is getting worse.***

Less than a quarter of the respondents (23%) say that children's television is "good" or "excellent," with only a tiny fraction of the respondents (2%) saying the programming is excellent. More people say the quality of children's programming is "poor" (20%) or "very poor" (8%) than the percentage that say it is good or excellent. The two most frequently cited reasons for the lack of quality in children's broadcast programming were violence (43%) and insufficient educational programming (25%).

Only one in eight respondents (12%) believes that the quality of commercial children's TV is getting better, while more than three in eight (38%) say it is getting worse and 41% say it is staying the same. In addition, very few respondents who ranked the current quality of programming as fair or worse expect improvement. Nearly two-thirds of the sample (63%) say programming is only fair or worse and not improving.

***Most people blame the networks and advertisers for the lack of quality in children's television.***

Respondents were far more likely to assign responsibility to the television networks and advertisers than to the viewing public. Over two-thirds of the sample identified the networks (41%) or advertisers (27%), while only 16% held viewers themselves responsible for the lack of quality in children's television. Among those with children, over three-quarters gave these responses, with networks being held responsible by almost one-half (48%).

*The survey was designed and analyzed by Mark Cooper, Ph.D., of Citizens Research. The questions were part of a national random digit dial computer assisted survey conducted August 24-27, 1995. The questions were developed by relying on questions which had been asked by major survey organizations in previous national opinion surveys. The wording made it clear that all references were to commercial broadcasting outlets, and not cable TV or PBS. Along with standard demographic questions such as income and education level, respondents were asked if they have at least one child under the age of 18. The survey results have a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points.*