

Are Video Games

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Really a Problem?

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Question

- ◆ Many people believe that video games are bad for kids and they can promote laziness, aggressiveness, and affect school performance. We were intrigued because we play video games quite often yet never suffer these supposed symptoms.
- ◆ We wanted to test if playing video games is truly harmful, what the problems were, and what could be done.

Hypotheses

1. **Main:** That more time playing video games did NOT mean that:
 - a) kids would spend less time in physical activity.
 - b) kids would spend less time reading books
 - c) kids would get poor grades
2. Boys play video games for longer times per day and more often play violent video games
3. Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) ratings are not very helpful and kids often play games rated above their age level

Methods

- ◆ We researched this topic online and brainstormed questions related to our hypotheses.
- ◆ Then we created an online survey asking for parents' and kids' behaviors and beliefs about video games.
- ◆ We sent an email to families with a child in 4th grade and above inviting them to participate in the online survey.
- ◆ Data were downloaded into Microsoft Excel, then transferred to SPSS statistical software.
- ◆ Descriptive statistics and χ^2 tests were used.

Results

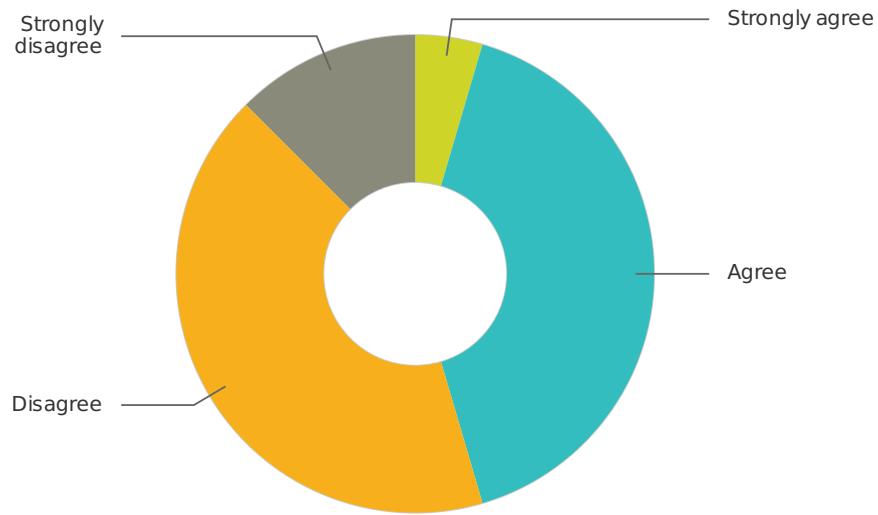
- ◆ We had a total of 92 completed responses.
- ◆ Most parents had actually used Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) ratings to not allow some games: Mature (73%) and Adult (67%), but only 36% had restricted Teen games.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

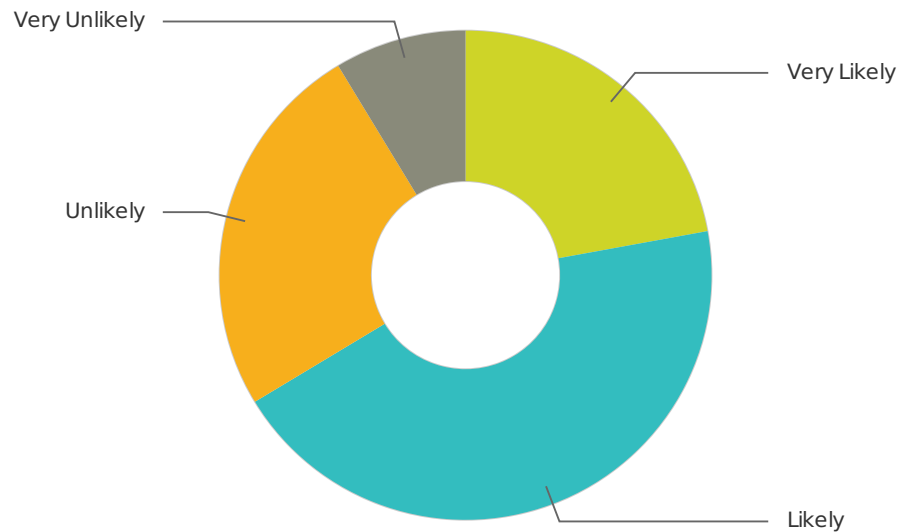
Gender	Number	Percent
Male	54	59%
Female	38	41%
Grade (Missing N=3)		
4 th	30	34%
5 th	19	21%
6 th	27	30%
7 th and above	13	14%

Table 2: Parents' behaviors

	Very frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Very rarely/ Never
Use parental controls	12%	17%	21%	14%	36%
Play video games alone/with other adults	0%	8%	12%	17%	63%
Play video games with their kids	1%	5%	26%	44%	25%



BUT: 46% of the kids think their parents should play more video games with them than they currently do.



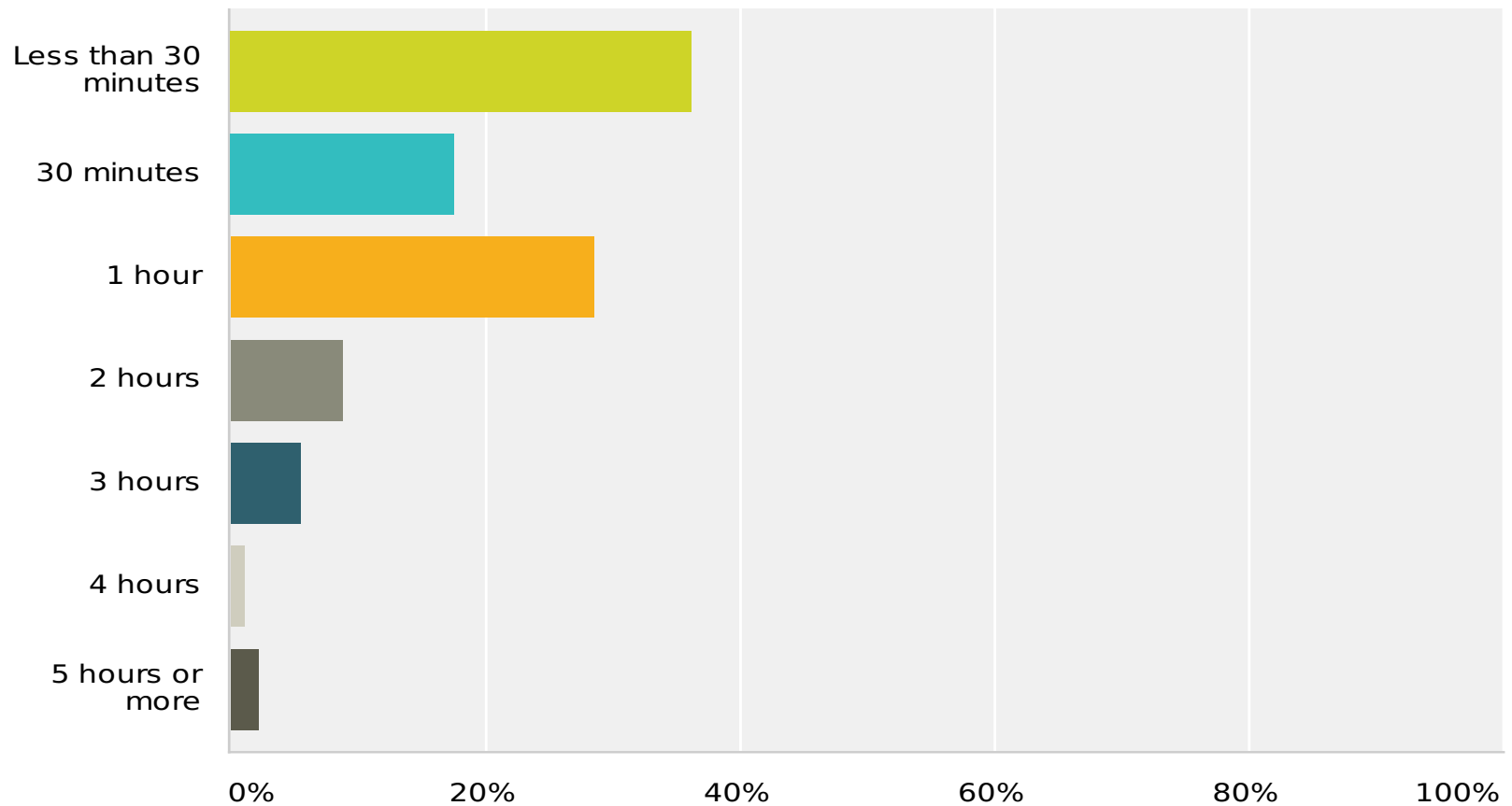
The majority of parents (67%) think that playing violent videogames contributes to making kids more violent

Table 3: Parents concern and kids' perception of parents' concern

		To child: Overall, how bothered do you think your parents are about your video game playing?					
		Not at all	A little	Moderately	Very	Extremely	TOTAL
To parent: Overall, how problematic do you think your child's video game playing is?	Not at all	31	12	2	1	0	46
	A little	0	9	7	4	2	22
	Moderately	0	3	9	2	0	14
	Very	0	1	2	0	1	4
	Extremely	0	0	0	1	1	2
	TOTAL	31	25	20	8	4	88

Chi² test, p < 0.001

- ◆ Most parents (**77%**) said that their child's videogame playing is not at all or only a little problematic.
- ◆ Interestingly, **18%** of the kids (shown in blue) thought their parents were concerned (moderately or more) about their video game playing though the parent said it was not at all or only a little problematic.



- ◆ Most kids said that they play video games for 1 hour or less per day (82%; graph above)
- ◆ 73% parents said the same about their kids (not shown).

Table 4: Time playing video games and physical activity

Video games/day	Physical activity/day				Total
	30 minutes or less	1 hour	2 or 3 hours	4 hours or more	
30 minutes or less	6	20	19	3	48
1 hour	4	11	9	1	25
2 or 3 hours	1	7	4	0	12
4 hours or more	0	3	0	0	3
Total	11	41	32	4	88

Chi² test, p=0.786

- ◆ Playing video games for more time every day was not associated with less time in physical activity

Table 5: Time playing video games and time reading books

		Time per day reading books			Total
		30 minutes or less	1 hour	2 hours or more	
Time per day playing video games	30 minutes or less	28	17	2	47
	1 hour	19	3	1	23
	2 or 3 hours	10	2	0	12
	4 hours or more	2	0	0	2
	Total	59 (70%)	22 (26%)	3 (4%)	84

Chi² test, p=0.354

- ◆ Playing video games for more time every day was not associated with less time reading books.

◆ Typical or most frequent grades in child's recent report card (more than one answer allowed):

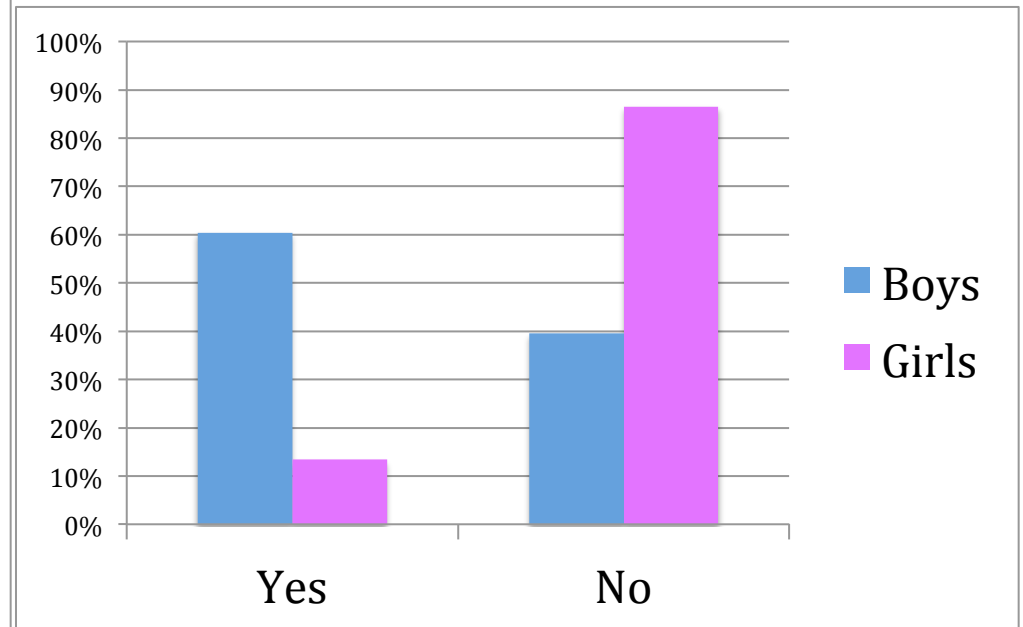
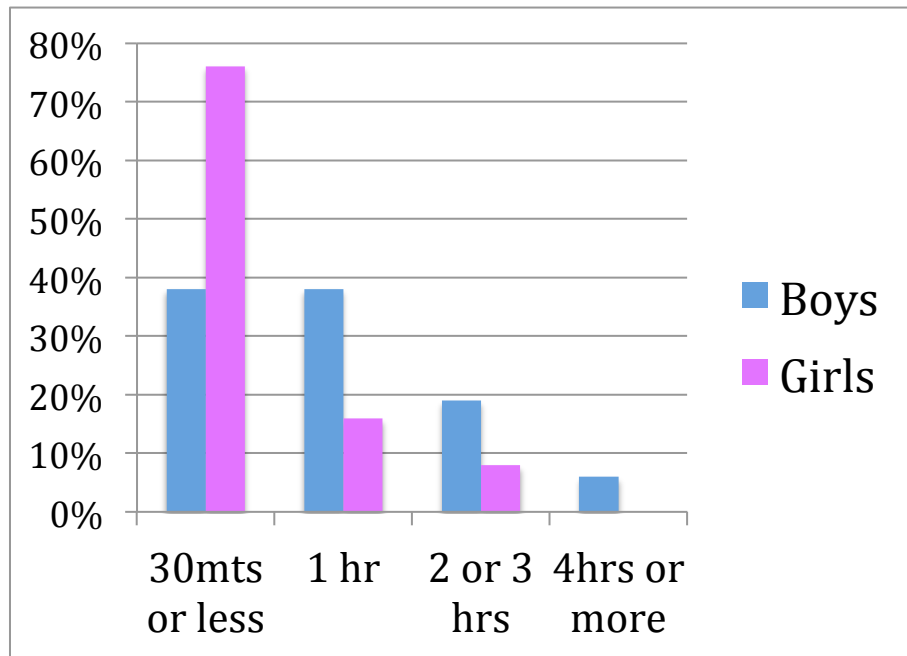
4s or As 69.6%

3s or Bs 45.7%

2s or Cs 2.2% (one kid played 30 minutes or less per day; one kid played 2 hours per day)

1s or Ds 0%

Boys Vs. Girls: Hours per day of playing video games



Chi² test, p= 0.004

Chi² test, p < 0.001

- ◆ Boys played video games for more time per day than girls
- ◆ A greater percentage of boys than girls played violent video games

Table 6: Kids' responses

	Very frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Very rarely/ Never
ESRB ratings correct/ helpful	13%	34%	38%	14%	1%
Play Teen games	7%	11%	24%	20%	38%
Play Mature17+ games	6%	3%	11%	16%	64%
Play Shooter games	7%	8%	22%	12%	51%
Play Fighting games	7%	10%	24%	21%	38%

- ◆ Fewer than 50% of kids thought that Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) ratings are frequently correct or helpful
- ◆ Many kids play Teen, Mature17+, and Violent video games
- ◆ 41.6% kids reported having played online with strangers and 11.5% reported having voice/video chatted with strangers

Conclusions

Is playing video games harmful?

- ◆ About a quarter of parents think that their kids' video game playing is problematic. Interestingly, though, some kids overestimated how concerned their parents were.
- ◆ Most kids play for 1 hour or less per day.
- ◆ Our main hypothesis was confirmed: that more time playing video games did not mean less time spent in physical activity or in reading books, or getting poor grades.

Boys vs. Girls

- ◆ Our hypothesis regarding Boys vs. Girls was confirmed. Boys play video games for more hours per day than girls and more often play violent video games. So future research should focus more on boys.
- ◆ Kids who play violent video games usually play for longer amounts of time per day.

Problem areas

- ◆ Two-thirds of parents think that it is likely or very likely that playing violent video games contributes to making kids more violent. Yet, 41% of kids played violent video games at least occasionally.
- ◆ But more than half the parents did not use parental controls and they should do this when needed.
- ◆ More than half the kids think that ESRB are not usually correct or helpful. Also, most parents don't forbid Teen rated games. Therefore, ESRB ratings should be revised or other rating systems developed.
- ◆ A significant proportion of kids interact online with strangers by playing, texting, voice chatting, or video chatting. Parents need to be more aware of this and to monitor this.
- ◆ Interestingly, parents rarely play video games with their kids, but many kids say that their parents should play video games with them more often. This will also make parents more aware of what games their kids are playing.

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