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A S S O C I A T E S

# National Survey on Decency in Television

The Luntz Research Companies  
120 South Payne Street  
Alexandria, VA 22203  
Tel: 703-358-0080

Peter D. Hart Research Associates  
1724 Connecticut Avenue  
Washington, DC 20009  
Tel: 202-234-5570

**AMERICANS WANT TO DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES WHAT THEY WATCH ON TV; NOT HAVE THE GOVERNMENT DECIDE**

Based on a nationwide survey of 1,000 Americans age 18 and over conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates and the Luntz Research Companies in early March 2005, by a ratio of nearly four to one, Americans want personal choice rather than government control. A significant population of Americans is concerned about content on television but say that government regulation is not the answer. Instead, they want the information and tools they need to make their own choices about the programming content that they and their families watch.

*Which statement do you agree with more?*

People should be able to choose for themselves what they watch in their own homes. More government regulation is not the solution. Personal responsibility is. Network broadcasters can help by providing tools and information, like program warnings, ratings and the V-chip, but ultimately it should be our decision what to watch.	<b>74%</b>
Broadcast television and radio have gone too far. They don't care about maintaining standards and do everything they can to pursue ratings. Network broadcasters constantly expose people to offensive material. It's time for the FCC to penalize the networks and increase government control and enforcement.	<b>20%</b>

**PEOPLE CARE ABOUT CONTENT BUT FAVOR INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Many Americans do have concerns about the content of television programming. While 80% enjoy the programs they watch regularly, nearly half of Americans (45%) said they have seen something in the last month that they felt should not have been broadcast.

Despite this, more than nine of ten (91%) Americans – and 80% of those who said they “often” see things they feel should not have been broadcast – agree that *“Some people will always be able to find something on television or radio that offends them. But the sensitivities of a few should not dictate the choices for everyone else.”*

An overwhelming majority of respondents (87%) – including 76% of those who “often” see objectionable content and 86% of weekly churchgoers – also agree that *“if you don't like what's on television, change the channel, but don't deny everyone else the right to watch what they want to see.”*

Men and women, Republicans and Democrats, religious and liberal and conservative, those most often offended to those who are rarely offended – overwhelmingly agree that the choice should be left to them – even on broadcast television.

## AMERICANS DO NOT WANT GOVERNMENT TO REGULATE CONTENT

Americans believe that government should play a role in the debate over decency in television, but they do not want the government to start making decisions about what content is appropriate for them to watch.

- More than nine out of ten Americans (92%) agree that while they don't always like the content of the programs that they and their families watch, *"I'd rather make that decision for myself than have the government make the decision for me."*
- At the same time, fewer than half of Americans (46%) believe that *"It doesn't matter how strong a warning the television networks put on their shows. Network television simply should not broadcast content that has the potential to offend people."*
- Notably, even *three-quarters* (74%) of those respondents who "often" find television content objectionable agree that they prefer *"people exercising personal choice over what they watch on television,"* and not *"government regulation of what is appropriate."*

And when it comes to their children, Americans want to raise them how they, and not the government, see fit. By an *eight to one* ratio, respondents believe that "more parental involvement" is a better solution than "increase [d] government control" when it comes to keeping kids from seeing adult content.

*Which of the following statements do you agree with more?*

More parental involvement is the best way to keep kids from seeing what they shouldn't see	86%
The government should increase control and enforcement of network television programming	11%

## AMERICANS BELIEVE THERE’S ALREADY BEEN A NEGATIVE IMPACT

There are a significant majority of Americans who already believe that FCC actions have caused a ripple effect on broadcast television that Americans see as a negative sign for the future. Nearly two-thirds of Americans believe that recent events surrounding television are actually depriving them of content they want to see because of broadcasters’ reactions to indecency issues.

TV EVENT	WRONG TRACK	RIGHT DIRECTION
Network television stations have said that they could not show the movie “The Passion of the Christ” as it was shown in theaters because the Government might object to its violent content.	67%	22%
On Veteran’s Day, some local television affiliates refused to air the unedited version of “Saving Private Ryan” because they feared being fined by the Government for showing a movie with strong language and depictions of war.	67%	22%
During a PBS documentary about the Iraq war, the actual language of American soldiers was edited to be less coarse.	53%	38%

## WHAT AMERICANS WANT: INFORMATION AND TOOLS TO MAKE THEIR OWN CHOICES

Instead of more regulation of content, Americans want government to provide them with the tools and information they need to make their own choices. According to 89% of Americans: *“Washington should make sure we have the information and tools we need to make educated decisions about the content we watch. But Washington should not make content decisions for us.”*

Many of these tools already exist and most of these available tools are considered appropriate to meet the challenge of indecency. Consider the fact that more than *three-fourths* of all respondents believe that the following TV industry steps are an “appropriate response” to prevent objectionable material from being aired or to reduce the possibility that viewers are surprised by content they may find offensive:

- Warning at the beginning of programs that contain strong language or images
- Rating symbols on the television screen at regular interludes
- Listing content ratings on television guides
- Putting parental controls in cable and satellite boxes
- Putting a V-Chip in all new televisions today that are 13” or larger

In fact, when asked what impact the V-chip and channel lock-out on home televisions would have on their opinion about the regulation of television content – **61% of respondents say that additional government regulation would be either “much less” or “completely” unnecessary if they had access to these tools.**

## **ABOUT THIS SURVEY**

### **Methodology:**

This national survey was released jointly by The Luntz Research Companies and Peter D. Hart Research Associates.

The survey consisted of national random digit dialed telephone interviews with 1002 registered voters who watch at least 30 minutes of daytime or primetime network television on a typical day.

This survey was conducted March 11-14, 2005 and has a margin of error of 3.1%.

**TV WATCH POLL**  
**Luntz Research & Peter D. Hart Research**  
**March 2005**

1. How many minutes or hours of daytime or primetime network television do you watch on a typical day? A guess will do.

- 6%** 30 MINUTES
- 3%** 31-59 MINUTES
- 12%** 60 MINUTES/AN HOUR
- 5%** 90 MINUTES
- 21%** TWO HOURS
- 19%** THREE HOURS
- 15%** FOUR HOURS
- 19%** FIVE HOURS OR MORE

**GENERAL**

2. When you watch TV, are you more likely to watch the broadcast networks like NBC, CBS, ABC, Fox, UPN and WB, or are you more likely to watch cable channels like USA Network, A&E and the Discovery Channel, or are you more likely to watch premium channels like HBO, Showtime and Cinemax?

- 51%** NETWORK
- 32%** CABLE CHANNELS
- 3%** PREMIUM CHANNELS
- 13%** EQUAL / DON'T KNOW

3. Thinking about the shows that you watch regularly on network television – including CBS, NBC, FOX, ABC, UPN and WB, but NOT including cable channels like HBO, Showtime or Bravo –, would you say that you...?

- 33%** ENJOY THEM A GREAT DEAL
- 47%** ENJOY THEM SOMEWHAT
- 11%** DON'T ENJOY THEM MUCH BUT WATCH BECAUSE THEY'RE ON
- 7%** DON'T WATCH ANY PRIME TIME NETWORK SHOWS
- 2%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

## **GAUGING CONCERN**

4. Now, I'd like you to think of those times you change the channel because you see something you don't like when you're watching network TV shows. What is the single most important reason why you will change the channel during a show?

**27%** PROGRAM DOES NOT INTEREST ME/IS BAD/ BORING  
**23%** TOO MANY COMMERCIALS/ ADVERTISEMENTS/  
PRODUCT PLACEMENTS  
**12%** JUST DON'T LIKE THE SHOW  
**10%** SEXUAL SITUATIONS/ THEMES/ JOKES /INNUENDOS  
**7%** LANGUAGE/ PROFANITY  
**6%** VIOLENCE  
**4%** NOT APPROPRIATE FOR MY CHILDREN TO WATCH  
**9%** OTHER  
**3%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

5. When was the last time you personally saw something on network television specifically during the day or early evening that you felt definitely should not have been permitted to be broadcast? If the answer is never, just say so.

**16%** WITHIN THE LAST 24 HOURS  
**19%** WITHIN THE LAST WEEK  
**10%** WITHIN THE LAST MONTH  
**6%** WITHIN THE LAST YEAR  
**4%** MORE THAN A YEAR AGO  
**34%** NEVER  
**12%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

6. Is seeing something that you feel definitely should not have been broadcast something that happens all the time, often, once in a while, or only rarely?

**12%** IT HAPPENS ALL THE TIME  
**17%** OFTEN  
**17%** EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE  
**17%** RARELY  
**34%** NEVER  
**2%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

## **KNOWLEDGE**

7. Were you aware before today that all new televisions today that are 13" or larger contain something called a V-Chip that allows parents to block television programming they don't want their children to watch based on the TV rating system?

**78%** YES  
**22%** NO

8. Were you aware before today that most cable and satellite boxes have controls that allow parents to lock-out channels they don't want their children to watch?

**86%** YES  
**13%** NO  
**1%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

## **AGREE/DISAGREE**

Now I'm going to read you a series of statements about network television broadcasting. These statements relate only to content on the broadcast networks like NBC, CBS, ABC, FOX, UPN and WB. They do NOT include cable channels like USA Network, A&E, the Discovery Channel, Showtime and HBO. After each one, I want you to tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.

9. Some people will always be able to find something on television or radio that offends them. But the sensitivities of a few should not dictate the choices for everyone else.

**68%** STRONGLY AGREE  
**23%** SOMEWHAT AGREE  
**5%** SOMEWHAT DISAGREE  
**4%** STRONGLY DISAGREE  
**1%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

10. If you don't like what's on television, exercise your right to turn the channel, but don't deny everyone else the right to watch what they want to see.

**65%** STRONGLY AGREE  
**22%** SOMEWHAT AGREE  
**6%** SOMEWHAT DISAGREE  
**6%** STRONGLY DISAGREE  
**1%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

11. I have no problem with other people watching what they want, but there should be ratings and warnings so people do not end up watching offensive content by mistake.

**68%** STRONGLY AGREE  
**22%** SOMEWHAT AGREE  
**5%** SOMEWHAT DISAGREE  
**4%** STRONGLY DISAGREE  
**1%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

12. It doesn't matter how strong a warning the television networks put on their shows. Network television simply should not broadcast content that has the potential to offend people.

**26%** STRONGLY AGREE  
**22%** SOMEWHAT AGREE  
**22%** SOMEWHAT DISAGREE  
**28%** STRONGLY DISAGREE  
**3%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

13. While I don't always like the content of the programs my family and I watch, I'd rather make that decision for myself than have the government make the decision for me.

**76%** STRONGLY AGREE  
**16%** SOMEWHAT AGREE  
**4%** SOMEWHAT DISAGREE  
**3%** STRONGLY DISAGREE  
**1%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

14. Washington should make sure that we have the information and tools we need to make educated decisions about the content we watch. But Washington should not make content decisions for us.

**65%** STRONGLY AGREE  
**24%** SOMEWHAT AGREE  
**4%** SOMEWHAT DISAGREE  
**5%** STRONGLY DISAGREE  
**2%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

Now I'm going to read you a list of things that have happened recently involving television. After each one, I want you to tell me if you think it is a positive sign things are moving in the right direction or a negative sign that things are heading down the wrong track.

15. On Veteran's Day, some local television affiliates refused to air the unedited version of the movie "Saving Private Ryan" because they feared being fined by the Government for showing a movie with strong language and depictions of war.

**67%** NEGATIVE SIGN, ON WRONG TRACK  
**22%** POSITIVE SIGN, IN RIGHT DIRECTION  
**6%** NEITHER A POSITIVE NOR NEGATIVE SIGN  
**5%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

16. During a PBS documentary about the Iraq war, the actual language of American soldiers under attack was edited to be less coarse.

**53%** NEGATIVE SIGN, ON WRONG TRACK  
**38%** POSITIVE SIGN, IN RIGHT DIRECTION  
**6%** NEITHER A POSITIVE NOR NEGATIVE SIGN  
**4%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

17. Network television stations have said that they could not show the movie "The Passion of Christ" as it was shown in theaters because the Government might object to its violent content.

**67%** NEGATIVE SIGN, ON WRONG TRACK  
**22%** POSITIVE SIGN, IN RIGHT DIRECTION  
**5%** NEITHER A POSITIVE NOR NEGATIVE SIGN  
**6%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

18. If a network television channel wanted to air Mel Gibson's recent film "The Passion of the Christ," do you think the film should be aired uncut, aired but with strong warnings about its content, subject to limited editing to eliminate only the most violent scenes, subject to extensive editing to eliminate all violent scenes, or should it not be aired at all?

**27%** AIRED UNCUT  
**45%** AIRED WITH STRONG WARNINGS  
**13%** LIMITED EDITING  
**4%** EXTENSIVE EDITING  
**8%** NOT AIRED AT ALL  
**3%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

19. Now I'm going to read you two statements. After I read them both, I want you to tell me which one comes closest to your point of view regarding kids and television.

- 86%** MORE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IS THE BEST WAY TO KEEP KIDS FROM SEEING WHAT THEY SHOULDN'T SEE
- 11%** THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD INCREASE CONTROL AND ENFORCEMENT OF NETWORK TELEVISION PROGRAMMING
- 3%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

20. The next two statements are...

- 74%** People should be able to choose for themselves what they watch in their own homes. More government regulation is not the solution. Personal responsibility is. Network broadcasters can help by providing tools and information, like program warnings, ratings and the V-chip, but ultimately it should be our decision what to watch.
- 20%** Broadcast television and radio have gone too far. They don't care about maintaining standards and do everything they can to pursue ratings. Network broadcasters constantly expose people to offensive material. It's time for the FCC to penalize the networks and increase government control and enforcement.
- 6%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

## **REGULATION**

21. Who do you think would do a better job of understanding what people LIKE YOU want to see on television?

- 68%** THE TELEVISION NETWORKS
- 12%** THE GOVERNMENT
- 20%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

22. Which concerns you more...?

- 62%** EXCESSIVE GOVERNMENT CONTROL OVER TV AND RADIO BROADCASTS
- 31%** OFFENSIVE CONTENT BROADCAST ON TV AND RADIO
- 8%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

23. Who do you think would do a better job of protecting children from indecent and offensive content on television or radio?

- 89%** PARENTS
- 10%** THE GOVERNMENT
- 2%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

24. If you had to choose one or the other, which would you prefer ...?

- 85%** PEOPLE EXERCISING PERSONAL CHOICE OVER WHAT THEY WATCH ON TELEVISION
- 11%** GOVERNMENT REGULATION OF WHAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR TELEVISION
- 2%** NEITHER
- 1%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

Now I'm going to list a series of actions networks have taken recently, tools that networks can use for pre-recorded programs, and tools available to television viewers. Each item is intended to either prevent inappropriate material from being aired or to reduce the possibility that viewers are surprised by content they may find offensive. After each of the following, please tell me if you think that it is...?

25. Five-second delays and cut-away cameras for covering live events.

- 66%** AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE
- 21%** GOES TOO FAR IN LIMITING WHAT VIEWERS CAN SEE
- 7%** DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH TO PREVENT THE BROADCASTING OF OFFENSIVE MATERIAL
- 6%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

26. "Bleeping" out bad language.

- 67%** AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE
- 20%** GOES TOO FAR IN LIMITING WHAT VIEWERS CAN SEE
- 9%** DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH TO PREVENT THE BROADCASTING OF OFFENSIVE MATERIAL
- 4%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

27. Warning at the beginning of programs that contains strong language or images
- 87%** AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE
  - 6%** GOES TOO FAR IN LIMITING WHAT VIEWERS CAN SEE
  - 6%** DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH TO PREVENT THE BROADCASTING OF OFFENSIVE MATERIAL
  - 1%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED
28. Verbal warnings after each commercial break.
- 69%** AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE
  - 22%** GOES TOO FAR IN LIMITING WHAT VIEWERS CAN SEE
  - 7%** DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH TO PREVENT THE BROADCASTING OF OFFENSIVE MATERIAL
  - 3%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED
29. Rating symbols on the television screen at regular interludes.
- 80%** AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE
  - 11%** GOES TOO FAR IN LIMITING WHAT VIEWERS CAN SEE
  - 6%** DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH TO PREVENT THE BROADCASTING OF OFFENSIVE MATERIAL
  - 3%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED
30. Listing content ratings in television guides
- 85%** AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE
  - 5%** GOES TOO FAR IN LIMITING WHAT VIEWERS CAN SEE
  - 7%** DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH TO PREVENT THE BROADCASTING OF OFFENSIVE MATERIAL
  - 3%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED
31. Putting a V-Chip in all new televisions today that are 13" or larger.
- 79%** AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE
  - 12%** GOES TOO FAR IN LIMITING WHAT VIEWERS CAN SEE
  - 6%** DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH TO PREVENT THE BROADCASTING OF OFFENSIVE MATERIAL
  - 3%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

32. Putting parental controls in cable and satellite boxes.
- 85%** AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE
  - 8%** GOES TOO FAR IN LIMITING WHAT VIEWERS CAN SEE
  - 6%** DOES NOT GO FAR ENOUGH TO PREVENT THE BROADCASTING OF OFFENSIVE MATERIAL
  - 2%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED
33. Now, if you had access to tools such as the V-chip and channel lockout on your home television, and these tools were easy to use what impact would that have on your attitude toward additional government regulation of the content on broadcast television. Would it make you feel that additional government regulation was...?
- 38%** COMPLETELY UNNECESSARY
  - 23%** MUCH LESS NECESSARY
  - 17%** A LITTLE LESS NECESSARY
  - 18%** JUST AS NECESSARY AS BEFORE
  - 5%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

We're almost done. Now I'm going to ask you some demographic questions for statistical purposes only.

34. When it comes to television, do you subscribe to cable or satellite?
- 60%** CABLE
  - 26%** SATELLITE
  - 2%** BOTH
  - 11%** NEITHER (**SKIP TO Q. 38**)
  - 1%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED (**SKIP TO Q. 38**)

**(IF CABLE/SATELLITE:)**

35. Do you subscribe to any premium movie channels such as HBO or Showtime?
- 33%** YES
  - 67%** NO

36. And, how many hours is your television ON in a typical day, whether or not you personally are watching?

**4%** ONE HOUR  
**11%** TWO HOURS  
**17%** THREE HOURS  
**14%** FOUR HOURS  
**13%** FIVE HOURS  
**11%** SIX HOURS  
**4%** SEVEN HOURS  
**23%** EIGHT HOURS OR MORE  
**3%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

37. What is your age, please?

**20%** 18-29  
**21%** 30-39  
**20%** 40-49  
**22%** 50-64  
**16%** 65+  
**2%** DON'T KNOW / REFUSED

38. What best describes your formal level of education?

**4%** SOME HIGH SCHOOL  
**26%** COMPLETED HIGH SCHOOL  
**28%** VOCATIONAL SCHOOL OR SOME COLLEGE  
**28%** 4-YEAR COLLEGE GRADUATE  
**14%** A POST-GRADUATE DEGREE  
**2%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

39. In the 2004 presidential election, did you vote for George Bush, John Kerry, or someone else? If you did not vote, just say so.

**39%** GEORGE W. BUSH  
**36%** JOHN KERRY  
**3%** OTHER  
**9%** DID NOT VOTE  
**14%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

40. And in general, when it comes to social issues, do you consider yourself to be liberal, moderate or conservative in your beliefs? I do need you to choose one of those three.

**23%** LIBERAL  
**36%** MODERATE  
**33%** CONSERVATIVE  
**9%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

41. How often do you attend religious services?

**13%** MORE THAN ONCE PER WEEK  
**28%** ONCE PER WEEK  
**13%** ONCE A MONTH OR SO  
**13%** A FEW TIMES PER YEAR  
**13%** RARELY  
**16%** NEVER  
**4%** DON'T KNOW / REFUSED

42. Do you have any children aged 18 or younger that live at home with you?

**38%** YES  
**61%** NO  
**2%** DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

43. Gender

**48%** MALE  
**52%** FEMALE

44. REGION

**21%** NORTHEAST  
**20%** INDUSTRIAL MIDWEST  
**18%** WEST/MIDWEST  
**25%** SOUTH  
**17%** PACIFIC