



The Multiplayer Family: Parents of Gamers Report

WebPurify
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The Multiplayer Family Report is an in-depth look at parents' sentiments surrounding the evolution of harmful content within video games and how they are seeking to manage it. Gathered through Censuswide, an accredited third-party research platform, the new insights are fueled by data from over 1,000 Americans who are gamers themselves and now have children who play.

The findings reveal the ways video game content and in-game interaction have changed over the decades, how they are impacting children today, and the way parents are taking action to protect their children from inappropriate and harmful content.

Foreword

"Video games as a medium have evolved so drastically from what I remember playing when I was a kid, games like Duck Hunt. Today's games are more realistic, more engaging and more interactive between players – all aspects that make them more compelling but also present avenues for misuse. This new data critically sets the record straight on long-held speculations about the impacts of today's games on children: it's not the game content doing the most harm, it's the players themselves and the interactions in-game that often go unchecked. It's clear that game developers must pay closer attention to moderating user-generated content in upcoming games, to win over both young players and their parents."

- Joshua Buxbaum, [Director of Client Services, WebPurify](#)



It's Not the Video Games, but the Players That Are Exposing Children to Danger

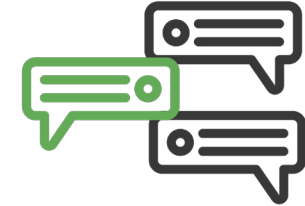
While first-person shooters and gory graphics have long been criticized, the data reveals the most illicit and disturbing material tends to come from players themselves, in the form of content within in-game chats and multiplayer interactions.



74% of gamers turned parents say they've seen an obviously inappropriate gamer username

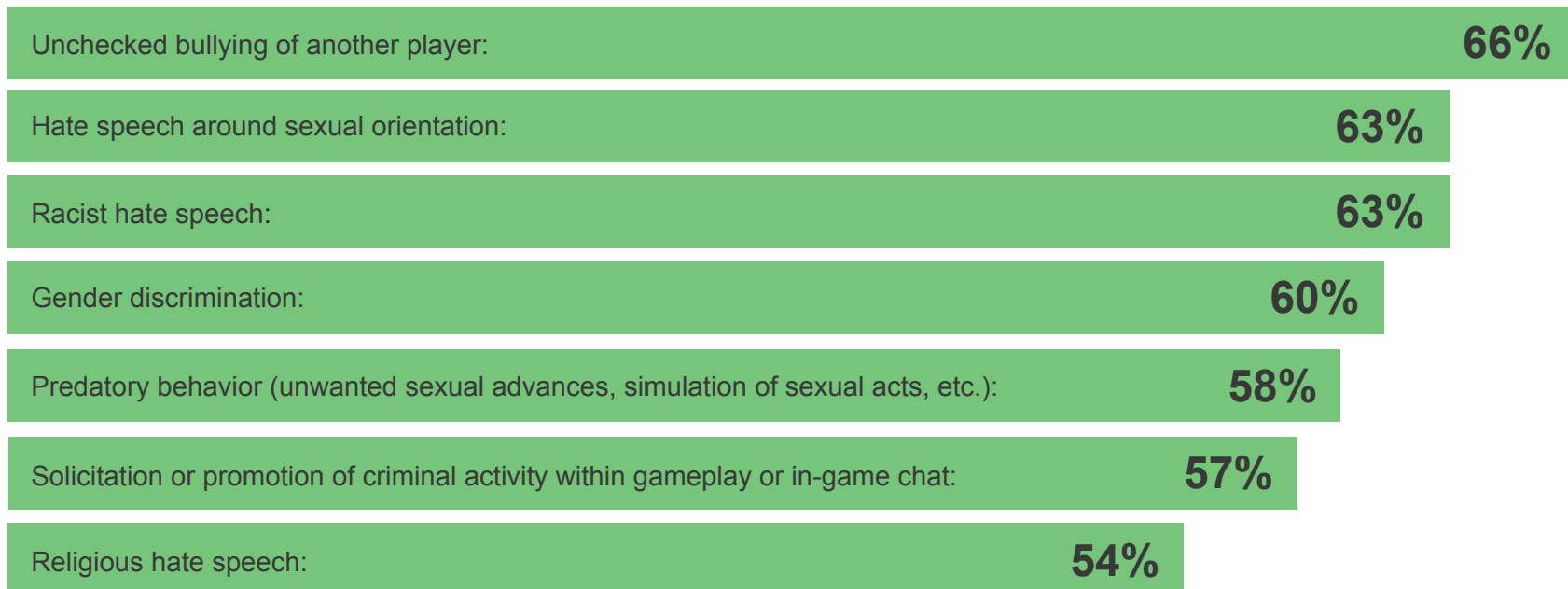


44% of gamer parents agree in-game user-generated content (UGC) is one of the most harmful aspects of video games for kids



Inappropriate interactions in multiplayer games (**41%**) and interacting with strangers in-game (**40%**) were top concerns

Over half of gamer parents say they've encountered UGC that can be extremely offensive or even outright illegal:



Parents Say Today's Games Are More Harmful Than Those of Their Youth

Gamer parents still cite definite benefits to their child playing video games:

63% of gamer parents believe gaming enhances their child's spatial reasoning and social skills

54% agree that gaming gives their child a community they can feel good about
67% of fathers vs 46% of mothers

50% believe video games are an effective tool to expose children to difficult adult themes (violence, sex, hate speech, etc.) in a safe environment



However, they also cite additional harms, particularly referencing that today's games are often more intense than those they played as kids:

62% of gamer parents believe today's video games carry more of a risk for kids than those of their youth

50% would not have allowed their younger selves to play some of today's hyper realistic games

44% wish their child only had access to the lower-resolution games of their youth

42% have noticed adverse effects on their child's mental health related to playing video games
50% of fathers vs 36% of mothers

Overall, gamer parents are nostalgic with **65%** saying they miss the simpler games of their youth

What Drives Today's Game Intensity



58% of gamer parents believe kids today like more violent video games than when they were growing up



53% of gamer parents say the increased amount of game options available today encourages kids to seek out the ones with the most shock value

While player-to-player UGC carries the most threat, parents also noted other factors in their child's games that they believe cause harm today, such as:



49%

Explicit sexual themes/scenes



45%

Encouragement or celebration of killing/violence



35%

Exposure to realistic blood/gore



34%

Giving the impression that achievements, money, or clout come easily in real life



21%

The hyperreality of AR/VR

While many parents look to game ratings to offer a check on content appropriate for certain ages, gamer parents say they are often ineffective.



68% have seen an underaged child playing an adult-only rated game

Gamer Parents Want More Control from Console & Game Developers

While gamer parents voice an understanding of how and why games have changed over time, they also believe console and game developers should do a better job of restoring control over the content kids are exposed to.

62% of gamer parents say it is the **gaming console's responsibility** to ensure parents have all the tools they need to **effectively restrict the content child players can see**



66% wish their gaming console made it easier to restrict inappropriate content



61% would like to control every game their child has access to



45% say they don't trust their gaming consoles' parental controls to effectively restrict all inappropriate content



40% agree parents today have less control over their kids' gaming experience because of **remote access to games**, with **36%** suspecting their child currently has an **inappropriate game** on their phone they would not approve.

Parents also want game developers to consider their concerns: **54%** say if one existed, they'd purchase a **women-only version of a game** for their daughter (to protect them from predators, reduce their exposure to hate speech, etc.)

But as parents await better moderation of video game content, especially for in-game UGC like multiplayer chats, they say they'd prefer their kids play games solo: **47%** prefer their child only play solo and not engage in any multiplayer gameplay

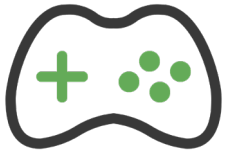
In the Meantime, Parents Take Matters into Their Own Hands

In the next six months, gamer parents say they will:

- 42%:** Limit the amount of time their child is allowed to play video games
- 40%:** Introduce their child to games they enjoyed in their youth
- 36%:** Cut down the hours they themselves game, to set an example for their child
- 31%:** Set stricter parental controls on their child's video game console



Looking to the future, once parents know that the moderation is more comprehensive and effective to stop in-game abuses or limit inappropriate content, they say they'd be ready to let their kids explore games more readily:



37% would let their child play video games alone



34% would let their child interact in VR spaces by themselves



31% would let their child participate in open in-game chats



24% would let their child play first-person shooter games with blood and gore

“From the first multiplayer games like Pong and Spacewar! to today’s new virtual reality offerings, the trend as games evolve has always been to increase interaction between players, however, the industry hasn’t increased monitoring or moderation of those interactions proportionately. What we’re seeing as a result is an increase in in-game bullying and exposure to harmful content which is even harder for parents to control today with remote-accessibility of games from any smartphone or connected console. Parents now need game developers to listen and take action, or feel forced to restrict their child’s time or access to games.”

-Alexandra Popken, *Vice President of Trust & Safety, WebPurify*

Research Methodology

The total sample size was 1008 parents in the United States who play video games. The survey was conducted from September 11 - 14, 2023. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society which is based on the ESOMAR principles.

About WebPurify

The world's leading content moderation service, WebPurify combines AI and human moderation to keep brands and online communities safe. With 17 years of experience (and counting) to its name, WebPurify is trusted by some of the world's most well-known organizations, including Microsoft, PBS, Allstate, LegalZoom and beyond. WebPurify makes moderation accessible to businesses of all sizes, offering a range of solutions from plug-and-play to custom enterprise moderation. WebPurify is proud to, in many respects, function as the "first responders of the internet," protecting vulnerable groups from illicit content and supporting law enforcement in removing the worst offenders from our digital spheres.

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