

Most Canadians today have access to 40 or 50 channels of television, either coming in direct from the U.S. or Canadian channels programming predominantly U.S. programming in peak viewing periods. Next year, if we want to buy the handkerchief-sized dish, we can get a lot more than that. The border, as Professor Donnerstein reminded us, at the recent Hincks Institute Symposium on Violence, is just air.²⁰

There are significant differences in the viewing habits of younger and older people. For example, in 1991 men 18 years and over were watching an average of 22 hours per week; women 18 years and over, 27 hours; teenagers 12 to 17 years, 18 hours; and children 2 to 11 years, 19 hours. The population group devoting the most time to television is found among men and women aged 60 and over; they report watching television for 32 and 36 hours per week respectively.

Committee members were exhorted by some witnesses such as Alan Mirabelli of the Alliance for Children and Television and Rose Dyson of Canadians Concerned About Violence in Entertainment to make recommendations which would lead to the protection of children against the harmful effects of exposure to television violence. It is for this reason that we researched the viewing habits of children and teenagers.²¹ We reported above that children 2 to 11 years of age spend 19 hours per week watching television. As can be expected, overall, half of this weekly viewing takes place during daytime (21% over the weekend and another 30% during the week).

However, what the Committee members found disturbing is that children spend another 30% of their viewing time during evening prime time hours, 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., Monday to Sunday, when generally more violent programming is shown on television. This relatively high amount of television viewing by children during prime time takes place even though an adequate amount of children's programming, but broadcasted outside prime time, is produced in Canada. The Committee was told that over \$100 million worth of children's programming was produced in Canada in 1989-90.²² As voiced by Alan Mirabelli, Chairman of the Alliance for Children and Television, the question then arises:

The problem is this: do those children ever get to see it? . . . once we saw the \$100 million figure, we felt that, yes, we still have to push and promote, but now there's a new issue, a new mission, a new direction that our organization has to devote itself to, and that is to pay attention to those who influence children. By that we don't necessarily mean children's television; we mean those who influence their behaviour.²³

Statistics also show that children, particularly teenagers, watch more foreign programming than older Canadians; anglophone teenagers watch foreign programs 83% of the time and francophone teenagers 48% of the time. The proportion of time for children was slightly less: 75% and 46% for anglophone and francophone children respectively. Speaking about violent programming watched by children during prime time, Professor Eileen Saunders said:

Yes, and not even just news hour. Look at some of the reality programming, Rescue 911 and so on. They're seeing a lot of episodes of violence — domestic violence, street violence and so on — in a docudrama form, which they take as a real incidence of violence. That's on in the hours that children are watching.²⁴

As far as teenagers are concerned, they watch even more prime time television; 47% of the average teenager's weekly television viewing time is devoted to prime time programming.