



# THE MOST DANGEROUS PLAYGROUND IS NOW ... *IN OUR KIDS' POCKETS*

## Hardcore Pornography on Digital Devices Is Damaging America's Children

With more than half of children in the U.S. now owning smartphones by age 11, and the time kids spend on digital devices averaging four to seven hours per day,<sup>1</sup> we can't deny the incredible influence of the online world.

And while this technology offers many benefits to kids when it comes to both learning and entertainment, **the ease with which young children can access hardcore pornography on digital devices is deeply troubling—and damaging their development.**

### Hardcore Pornography and Children on Digital Devices

#### Readily Available



In a survey which sampled 1,358 teens ages 13 – 17 years, 73% reported that they had consumed pornography (75% boys, 70% girls); of exposed children, 15% first saw pornography at age 10 or younger and 54% at age 13 or younger.<sup>2</sup> A search of slang sexual terms quickly yields a myriad of results that include hardcore videos and pictures. No proof of age is required.

#### Frequently Violent



The same survey found that 52% of 13- to 17-year-olds exposed to pornography (73% of sample) saw violent pornography including choking (36%), someone in pain (37%), or depictions of what appeared to be rape (19%).

#### Poorly Controlled



Technology corporations have placed the burden on parents, schools, and even children to protect themselves from pornography, and government agencies have been slow to recognize and address childhood pornography exposure and exploitation of children online.

Virtually all devices have built-in filters to block pornography, but the filters are turned "OFF" when devices are activated. **By mandating that cell phones and tablets default to safety upon activation, parents can more easily protect their children from destructive content.**

## Damage Caused by Childhood Exposure to Pornography

Adolescents are more susceptible than adults to addictions and to developmental effects on the brain.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, there are many potential negative consequences related to children viewing pornography:

**Sexual Violence:** Longitudinal research shows that childhood exposure to violent pornography predicts a nearly six-fold increase in self-reported sexually aggressive behavior later in life.<sup>5</sup> A meta-analysis of 37 studies found that exposure to violent or rape pornography increased a child's odds of experiencing sexual exploitation by nearly three times.<sup>6</sup>

**Sharing of Self-produced Child Sexual Abuse Material:** In 2020, 34% of 13- to 14-year-olds said it is normal for kids to share self-generated nude photos of themselves with others.<sup>7</sup> Sending, receiving, and asking someone for nude images ("sexts") is significantly associated with pornography use among boys and girls.<sup>8</sup> Sexting, when involving minors, is legally classified as child sexual abuse material (child pornography) which is a serious U.S. federal crime.

**Child Sexual Exploitation:** Self-generated imagery now accounts for nearly a third of web pages featuring sexual images of children (child pornography).<sup>9</sup>

**Poor Academic Achievement:** The more adolescent boys view pornography online, the poorer their grades are.<sup>10</sup> Low academic performance among adolescents is linked with poor social skills, aggressive behavior, and earlier sexual intercourse.<sup>11</sup>

**Mental and Social Disorders:** Use of hardcore pornography is linked to harmful outcomes such as mental health problems,<sup>12</sup> child-on-child harmful sexual behaviors,<sup>13</sup> risky sexual behaviors,<sup>14</sup> and physical and sexual victimization.<sup>15</sup>

**Long-Term Pornography Use:** Among males, younger age of first exposure to pornography has been linked to higher rates of pornography use later in life,<sup>16</sup> as well as the viewing of animal and child sexual abuse material (i.e., child pornography) as adults.<sup>17</sup>

**Links to Prostitution:** Frequent male users of pornography are significantly more likely to have sold and purchased sex than other males of the same age."<sup>18</sup>

## What Youth Say About the Impact of Their Exposure to Pornography

"Because of porn, I have slowly become unsociable towards my friends and family, and I have never been able to have a romantic relationship with anyone besides the screen of my computer."

— Male, 19 years old<sup>19</sup>

"I think pornography has made me react positively to non-consensual sex and violence against women."

— Female, 16 years old<sup>20</sup>



"I've been struggling for so long, and it's taxing on my mind and body. I'm tired and have little motivation, which often leads to me skipping homework assignments and social gatherings just because of porn. I'm honestly scared, scared for my future, my relationships, and my well-being."

— Male, 18 years old<sup>21</sup>

"I think it really destroyed my brain, and I feel incredibly devastated that I was exposed to so much porn."

— Female pop star Billie Eilish, 19 years old<sup>22</sup>



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