



**“Basically... porn is
everywhere”**

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Summary for Children and Young People
June 2013

Background

This work was commissioned by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) as part of its two year inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (CSEGG) – the final report of the CSEGG inquiry is due in November 2013. The work was led by Middlesex University and looks at what we know about how pornography affects children and young people.

The reason for doing this work is that a question arose in the CSEGG inquiry: does finding, seeking, accessing or viewing (in this summary all four will be referred to as “viewing”) pornography have an effect on children's and young people's views towards relationships and sexual activity?

We decided to take a quick look to see what's out there. This is a summary of some of the findings and press coverage from the report.

Findings



What can we say?

A large number of children and young people access pornography.

Accidentally seeing pornography is more common than deliberately looking for it.

Viewing pornography appears to increase with age. Children first view it between 10 and 17 years old.

Children and young people view pornography on and offline, in magazines, DVDs, television and books but in recent years they appear to use the internet most frequently.

Viewing sexualised and violent material affects children and young people. To understand the ways in which they may be affected and how long-lasting the effects are, more work is needed.

Viewing pornography affects children's and young people's sexual beliefs:

- Pornography has been linked to unrealistic ideas about sex, more casual attitudes about sex, beliefs that women are sex objects and confusion about sexual relationships
- Children and young people learn from and may change their behaviour due to accessing pornography.

There are gender differences:

- Boys are more likely to access pornography than girls
- Boys generally view pornography more positively and say they access it mainly out of curiosity
- Girls have more negative attitudes about pornography and say it is distasteful
- Girls feel more uncomfortable than boys when viewing pornography.

Viewing pornography is linked to children and young people taking part in “risky behaviours”:

- Young people who view pornography are more likely to have had anal sex, sex with multiple partners and to have used alcohol and drugs during sex. This research shows a link but there is not enough evidence to show what causes the other
- Sexting is a recent and common “risky behaviour”, young men are more likely to ask young women for images than the other way round.

Recommendations



To the government:

The **Department for Education** should make sure all schools understand the importance of, and deliver, effective relationship and sex education, which must include safe use of the internet.

The **Department for Education** should make sure relationship and sex education covers access to pornography and sexual practices that are relevant to young people's lives and experiences.

The **Department for Education** should rename 'sex and relationship education' (SRE) to 'relationship and sex education' (RSE) to put importance on healthy, positive, respectful relationships.

The **Government** should embark on a national campaign to better inform parents, professionals and the public about the content of pornography and young people's access of, and exposure to, such content.

The **Home Office** and the **Department for Education** should ask for more research into the effects of accessing pornography. This should come under the commitment to protect girls and young women from gender-based violence in the ending violence against women and girls action plan.

The **Home Office** should include the findings of this report in the ongoing teen abuse campaign. Future activity on this work should reflect young people's access to violent imagery within their peer groups and relationships.



To the Youth Justice Board:

The **Youth Justice Board** should include questions on access to pornography within the way they look at young people's needs (ASSET) to better understand the possible links between attitude and behaviour and better understand how to work with and help young people displaying violent or sexually harmful behaviours.

What happens now?

- The Deputy Children's Commissioner, Sue Berelowitz, wrote to the Secretary of State for Education and the Youth Justice Board asking for a response to the seven recommendations above. They have a legal duty to consider our recommendations and respond in writing
- We are looking to work with organisations and charities to follow up on areas that still need more research to better understand the effects of pornography on children and young people and identify how to improve how we listen and involve children and young people in this
- We will include our findings in the final CSEGG report to be published in November 2013.

This work was published on **Friday 24 May 2013**. There was lots of press coverage, some of which is included on the following pages.

The **full report** can be found on our website: <http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/>

If you are worried about yourself, your child, someone else or have any questions there are a number of people you can contact:

NSPCC ChildLine:

For general information about help and advice you can visit the website:

<http://www.childline.org.uk/pages/home.aspx>

To speak to someone on the phone you can call:

0800 1111

THIS NUMBER IS FREE FROM MOBILES, LANDLINES AND PAYPHONES

If you would rather talk to someone online, ask a question or email you can go to:

<http://www.childline.org.uk/talk/Pages/Talk.aspx>

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP):

If you are a parent and want practical advice you can visit:

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>

For practical advice for all ages you can visit the CEOP help page:

<http://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

The CEOP help page has a link to the “thinkuknow” website. If you are a child, young person or adult you can visit this to learn how to be safe online. If you work with children and young people there is a section on the website for you:

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

tesconnect

Exposure to porn is linked to risky behaviour

- news | Published in TES magazine on 24 May, 2013 | By: Kerra Maddern
- Comment:
- Last Updated: 31 May, 2013
- Section: news

England's deputy children's commissioner urges schools to act
Exposure to pornography, now readily accessible via mobile phones, affects children's beliefs and can lead to unrealistic attitudes to sex, according to the report, a detailed analysis of 276 previous studies from around the world. "We know that pornography is pervasive and that a significant proportion of children are exposed to it or are accessing it," deputy children's commissioner Sue Berelowitz wrote. "We know that boys are more likely to view pornography out of choice than girls, who are much more reluctant viewers. Access to explicit material today is "fundamentally different from that of previous generations", Ms Berelowitz said, with extreme and violent images only "a few clicks away".

"The proliferation of smartphones and tablets and their use by children and young people to access the internet, often away from adult supervision, make it very difficult for parents to control access to these images," she added.

'Porn is everywhere'

"A group of inner-city 16- and 17-year-olds told the researchers that 'porn is everywhere'. They were not happy about this and wanted adults to step in and take measures to protect them. The research evidence shows compellingly that there is cause to be concerned. The immediate pressing issue is to find a way to limit children's access to pornography and act to build their resilience."

FULL LINK: http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6336268#_Uz86edLb1Hw.twitter

FULL LINK: <http://news.sky.com/story/1094975/warning-over-kids-raised-on-diet-of-porn>



theguardian

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FULL LINK:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2013/may/24/protect-children-internet-pornography-report>

Protect children from internet pornography, report demands



Children are exposed to violent and sadistic imagery which risks distorting their attitudes towards relationships and sex, according to the children's commissioner for England. A report released on Thursday by the commissioner's office found that children who watch [pornography](#) are more likely to develop sexually risky behaviour and become sexually active at a younger age. It called for urgent action to "develop children's resilience to pornography" after discovering that a significant number have access to sexually explicit images. It also called on the Department for Education to ensure all [schools](#) delivered effective relationship and [sex education](#), including how to use the [internet](#) safely. "We are living at a time when violent and sadistic imagery is readily available to very young children ... even if they do not go searching for it, their friends may show it to them or they may stumble on it while using the internet," said the commissioner, Maggie Atkinson. "For years we have applied age restrictions to films at the cinema but now we are permitting access to far more troubling imagery via the internet. It is a risky experiment to allow a generation of [young people](#) to be raised on a diet of pornography."

FULL LINK: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2013/may/24/protect-children-internet-pornography-report>



education struggles to keep pace with online porn

The report, led by the University of Middlesex and commissioned by the Office of The Children's Commissioner, suggests some children are exposed to pornography while still at primary school, and the proportion increases with age with "a significant proportion of children and young people" viewing pornography. Lessons on relationships should start in primary school, it argues, while relationships and sex education should be compulsory in all schools and include time for pupils to discuss the impact of pornography. Some types of online porn are "very different" to what today's parents may have seen as children, said Ms Berelowitz.

'Risky behaviours'

It can lead to more sexually permissive attitudes, more casual sex, sex at a younger age, and the belief that women are sex objects with males dominant and females submissive, suggests the study. There is a correlation between children and young people who use pornography and "risky behaviours" such as anal sex, sex with multiple partners and using alcohol and other drugs during sex, say the authors. Young men and boys are more likely than young women and girls to do both, say the authors. "Boys and young men generally view pornography more positively and state that they view it primarily out of curiosity while girls and young women generally report that it is unwelcome and socially distasteful." The findings are based on interviews with young people in England, plus analysis of 276 previous academic papers on young people and pornography. The report urges the Department for Education to ensure that all schools, including private schools, faith schools, colleges and academies, "deliver effective relationship and sex education they are receiving and 'increasingly' draw on pornography for education and information on sexual practices."

FULL LINK: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-22643072>

