Pornography and its Harms

Edited by Justin Healey

ISSUES IN SOCIETY
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The Spinney Press

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Pornography and its Harms is Volume 439 in the ‘Issues in Society’ series of educational resource books. The aim of this series is to offer current, diverse information about important issues in our world, from an Australian perspective.

**KEY ISSUES IN THIS TOPIC**

Nearly half of Australian children aged 9-16 years experience regular exposure to sexual images via the media, online and hand-held devices. Pornography does not exist in a digital vacuum, but rather within a broader social context which reinforces sexual attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes about gender, sexism, sexual objectification, unsafe sexual health practices and violence-supportive attitudes.

What are the impacts of porn? How do young people navigate the risks and realities of intended and accidental exposure to explicit content?

This resource sensitively handles topics including ‘sexting’ and image-based abuse, age verification, parental controls and communication with teens about pornography. The book also explores interventions and initiatives aimed at educators, parents and young people to address the harms of pornography through promotion of online safety practices, critical thinking and discussion.

How do we deal with the harms of early access to pornography and in turn promote appropriate digital and sexual literacies for young people and their developing sexuality? “Sex sells” – but if it is so freely available and left to its own devices – at what price?

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Titles in the ‘Issues in Society’ series are individual resource books which provide an overview on a specific subject comprised of facts and opinions.

The information in this resource book is not from any single author, publication or organisation. The unique value of the ‘Issues in Society’ series lies in its diversity of content and perspectives.

The content comes from a wide variety of sources and includes:

- Newspaper reports and opinion pieces
- Website fact sheets
- Magazine and journal articles
- Statistics and surveys
- Government reports
- Literature from special interest groups

**CRITICAL EVALUATION**

As the information reproduced in this book is from a number of different sources, readers should always be aware of the origin of the text and whether or not the source is likely to be expressing a particular bias or agenda.

It is hoped that, as you read about the many aspects of the issues explored in this book, you will critically evaluate the information presented. In some cases, it is important that you decide whether you are being presented with facts or opinions. Does the writer give a biased or an unbiased report? If an opinion is being expressed, do you agree with the writer?

**EXPLORING ISSUES**

The ‘Exploring issues’ section at the back of this book features a range of ready-to-use worksheets relating to the articles and issues raised in this book. The activities and exercises in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond.

**FURTHER RESEARCH**

This title offers a useful starting point for those who need convenient access to information about the issues involved. However, it is only a starting point. The ‘Web links’ section at the back of this book contains a list of useful websites which you can access for more reading on the topic.
ONLINE PORNOGRAPHY: EFFECTS ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A guide authored by Antonia Quadara, Alissar El-Murr and Joe Latham, published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies

There is a lot of discussion about the possible effects of online pornography on children and young people and the messages pornography generates about gender, equality and sexuality. In 2016, the Australian Institute of Family Studies was engaged by the Department of Social Services to review what the available research evidence tells us about the issue.1

SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF PORNOGRAPHY

Any discussion of pornography and its effects on children and young people needs to acknowledge that pornography and its consumption is embedded within a broader sociocultural context.

This includes:
• Online technologies, platforms and practices in general, and more specifically how children and young people interact with the online environment.

KEY MESSAGES

• Pornography exists within a broader sociocultural context in which stereotypes about gender, sexism, sexual objectification and violence-supportive attitudes are also at play
• Nearly half of children between the ages of 9-16 experience regular exposure to sexual images
• Young males are more likely than females to deliberately seek out pornography and to do so frequently
• Pornography use can shape sexual practices and is associated with unsafe sexual health practices such as not using condoms and unsafe anal and vaginal sex
• Pornography may strengthen attitudes supportive of sexual violence and violence against women
• The best approach for parents, caregivers and teachers responding to children’s exposure to pornography is to encourage open communication, discussion and critical thinking on the part of children, while educating themselves about the internet and social media
• Parents and caregivers are less likely to be intimidated by online risks if they are informed and take an active role in their children’s digital lives.

Being online and connected is a fundamental part of children and young people’s everyday lives and relationships
• The range of online risks children and young people experience, for example the dynamics and prevalence of cyberbullying, sexting, exploitative relationships and connections online
• Social scripts and discourses about men, women and sex, such as “once aroused, men cannot control themselves”, “women say no when they mean yes”, “women often play hard to get”, “it’s men’s role to pursue women”
• The underlying factors that enable sexual violence and violence against women, such as rigid stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, gendered inequality regarding decision-making and resources in private and public life, male peer relationships that condone aggression, and minimising, excusing and rationalising violence against women.
EXPOSURE TO PORNOGRAPHY

In Australia, just under half (44%) of children aged 9-16 surveyed had encountered sexual images in the last month. Of these, 16% had seen images of someone having sex and 17% of someone's genitals.

Younger children (those aged 9-12) are particularly likely to be distressed or upset by pornography.

Parents tend to overestimate exposure to pornography for younger children and underestimate the extent of exposure for older children.

The extent and frequency of viewing pornography differs by gender, with males more likely to deliberately seek out pornography and to do so frequently.

Attitudes and responses to exposure also vary by gender, with females having more negative views and responses such as shock or distress compared to males, particularly in older teens, who are more likely to experience pornography as amusing, arousing or exciting.

THE EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE

In the absence of other information, pornography can be the main source of a young person’s sex education.

The use of pornography by adolescents is associated with stronger permissive sexual attitudes (e.g. pre-marital sex, casual sex). There is some evidence that exposure to pornography can increase the likelihood of earlier first-time sexual experience, particularly for those adolescents who consume pornography more frequently.

Pornography can influence a young person’s expectations about sex, for example what young men expect their partners to do and vice versa. It can shape sexual practices, with studies finding that young people may try performing common sexual acts seen in dominant hetero pornography such as:

- Anal intercourse;
- Facial ejaculation;
- Sex with multiple partners; and
- Deep fellatio.

Pornography is also associated with unsafe sexual health practices such as not using condoms and unsafe anal and vaginal sex.

Gaps between expectations and reality can produce ‘sexual uncertainty’ about sexual beliefs and values and may also be related to sexual dissatisfaction, anxiety and fear. The content of pornography may reinforce double standards of an active male sexuality and passive female receptacle.

Both male and female consumers of pornography had increased levels of self-objectification and body surveillance.

Adolescent pornography use is associated with stronger beliefs in gender stereotypes, particularly for males. Male adolescents who view pornography frequently are more likely to view women as sex objects and to hold sexist attitudes such as women ‘leading men on’.

Pornography may strengthen attitudes supportive of sexual violence and violence against women. There is evidence of an association between consuming pornography and perpetrating sexual harassment for boys.

Adolescents who consumed violent pornography were six times more likely to be sexually aggressive compared to those who viewed non-violent pornography or no pornography.

Sexual preoccupation, compulsive consumption and ‘addiction’ can be associated with the frequency of viewing pornography and also the purposes of using pornography (e.g. as a way of relieving negative states).

While some of the effects of viewing pornography, such as more permissive attitudes and beliefs about sex, knowledge about sexual practice and sexual practices themselves may not be inherently problematic, the most dominant, popular and accessible pornography contains messages and behaviours about sex, gender, power and pleasure that are deeply problematic. In particular, the physical aggression (slapping, choking, gagging, hair-pulling) and verbal aggression such as name-calling, that is predominantly done by men to their female partners.

“...
RESPONDING TO ONLINE PORNOGRAPHY EXPOSURE AND OTHER RISKS

Exposure to explicit online content may cause children and young people to develop different ‘sexual literacies’ to previous generations. Australian Government and non-government services have taken steps to reduce children and young people’s exposure to online risks – including pornography – and enact harm minimisation strategies.

Three key types of intervention have been identified:
- Legal and regulatory avenues to existing legislation regarding online pornography and online behaviour such as sexting and the sharing of explicit images;
- Education for children and young people (e.g. critical media and digital literacy, respectful relationships, sexuality and sexual health); and
- Education and resources for teachers and parents about how they can support safe, respectful relationships for children and young people both online and IRL (in real life).

The following advice is useful for parents, caregivers and teachers.

Open communication
It is important for parents and caregivers to be able to initiate open conversations about their child’s online experiences. Schools too can play an important role in assisting children and young people to make sense of their exposure to online pornography in healthy ways.

Critical thinking

Young people are not just passive consumers of pornography. Critical thinking helps viewers to reflect on the messages contained in online pornography. It fosters discussion while respecting the agency of the young people involved.

Arming children and young people with tools to engage critically with media is important to their understanding of the differences between online pornography and their offline sexual relationships.

Digital literacy
Parents and caregivers are encouraged to educate themselves about the internet and social media, in order to be aware of the current online dangers and opportunities facing their children. Parents and caregivers are less likely to be intimidated by online risks if they are informed and take an active role in their children’s digital lives.

Mediation
Parental controls are essential to harm-minimisation strategies. The Office of the e-Safety Commissioner (2016) cautions parents and caregivers: “You can teach your child strategies about how to deal with offensive material, but be vigilant, especially if your child is prone to taking risks or is emotionally or psychologically vulnerable”.

Support
Support for children and young people who have been exposed to online pornography is extremely important to their ability to process their experience in healthy ways.

In What can I do if my child sees content that’s offensive?, the Office of the Children’s e-Safety Commissioner (2016) advises:
- Encourage your child to talk if they have seen something online that has upset them.
- Let them know that if they report viewing inappropriate content they won’t be punished or have their access to the internet taken away.
- Educate them so that if they are sent something inappropriate online they know not to respond.

NOTES

REFERENCES

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Exposure of young people to pornography
RESULTS FROM AN ONLINE SURVEY BY RELATIONSHIPS AUSTRALIA

Introduction

In 2016 the Australian Institute of Family Studies reviewed contemporary literature relating to young people’s experience of online pornography (AIFS, 2016). The review found increasing exposure and associated harmful impacts on young people over the past three decades due to a proliferation of violent pornographic material available online, and enhanced opportunity for effortless access through increased internet speeds and the availability of handheld devices. This increased ease of access to online pornography has also contributed to the likelihood of children’s accidental exposure.

While research in this area is difficult due to ethical considerations related to conducting research into pornography with child subjects, available evidence suggests that exposure to online pornography by children and young people increases harmful gender stereotypes; unhealthy and sexist views of women and sex; higher rates of acceptance of violence against women; sexually coercive behaviour by young men; and contributes to unrealistic understandings of sex and sexuality.

In February 2018, Relationships Australia sought to increase its understanding of the impacts of exposure to online pornography for young people aged 11 to 16 years through its monthly online survey. The survey asked visitors to our website to report on their understanding of young people’s exposure to pornography, potential harm and where they would go for assistance if they had concerns about a young person.

Results

More than 1,000 people responded to Relationships Australia’s online survey in February 2018. Three-quarters (74%) of survey respondents identified as female; with more females than males responding in every age group (Figure 1). Eighty-five per cent of survey respondents were aged between 20 to 59 years, while more than one-third (36%) of respondents comprised women aged between 30 to 49 years (inclusive).

As for previous surveys, the demographic profile of survey respondents remains consistent with our experience of the groups of people that are accessing the Relationships Australia website.

Men were more likely than women to estimate higher rates of exposure to online pornography (Figure 2). Just under 80 per cent of men and 75 per cent of women estimated that they thought more than 60 per cent of young people aged between 11 and 16 years had been exposed to pornography.

A substantial proportion of survey respondents estimated that young people were harmed if they were exposed to online pornography on at least one occasion (Figure 3). Women (45%) were more likely than men (27%) to report a single exposure to online pornography harms young people, while men (22%) were more likely than women (11%) to report young people are only harmed if they see online pornography frequently.

More than 60 per cent of women and 50 per cent of men reported that online exposure to pornography causes young people multiple types of harm (Figure 4). Men (29%) were more likely than women (20%) to report that young people’s online exposure to pornography leads to unrealistic expectations of sex, while men and women were equally likely (8%) to report young people’s exposure to online pornography increases risky behaviour such as sex at younger ages and unprotected sex.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate who they consider is responsible for protecting young adolescents (11-16 years old) against the potential harm of online pornography. More than 80 per cent of women and 65 per cent of men reported that everyone has responsibility, including parents, extended family, schools, and state and Commonwealth government. Seventeen per cent of women and 29 per cent of men thought parents were responsible for protecting young people.

Around half of survey respondents...
indicated they would seek help from a range of sources if they were worried about a young person’s exposure to online pornography (Figure 5).

The most commonly cited places men and women would seek help included the internet and local support services. Very few men (12%) and women (6%) reported they would only seek help from family or friends.

REFERENCES


PORN CAN BE HARMFUL

FACT SHEET ADVICE REPRODUCED COURTESY OF KIDS HELPLINE

You might be curious about pornography or have even watched it yourself. Be sure to know the facts and understand how porn can let you down and cause problems later on.

LET’S TALK ABOUT PORN

It seems everywhere you go there are sexy images of people trying to get your attention.

- Sexy images can appear in the media, magazines or on billboards. They are usually trying to sell you something.
- In a similar way to advertising, porn also tries to get your attention. This is especially true when you’re on the internet.
- Pornography is a multi-billion dollar business that makes a lot of money because they believe ‘sex sells’.
- Porn sends us messages about what sex ‘should’ be like.
- Porn can change your thinking about sex which means you could have problems in your relationships later on.
- Watching porn can actually make your sex life less enjoyable.
- If you watch porn you might start to believe that people’s feelings don’t matter and only the physical act of sex is important – but that’s not true because sex is an emotional act as well as a physical one.

IT’S REALLY TEMPTING TO CHECK OUT PORN ON THE INTERNET

There are many reasons why people watch porn. It can vary from one person to another, but here are some of the more common reasons why:

- It’s free and easy to access
- Curiosity
- Boredom
- To learn about sex
- To learn about other people’s bodies
- Pressure from your mates or boy/girlfriend
- It seems that everybody else is doing it
- You can’t stop watching it – it’s addictive.

Make up your own mind about it so you can choose whether or not to watch it.

PEOPLE MIGHT SAY IT’S OK TO WATCH PORN BUT THERE ARE LOTS OF REASONS WHY IT’S NOT GOOD FOR YOU

Make up your own mind about it so you can choose whether or not to watch it.

- Porn isn’t real and doesn’t show you what sex in real life is like
- People in porn aren’t having sex for fun, they’re acting like they enjoy it even when it hurts or doesn’t feel good
- Porn is a fantasy but you might be tricked into thinking that’s how regular people have sex
• The bodies you see in porn aren’t what regular bodies look like
• Porn shows people having sex without a condom but it’s really unsafe as 50% of porn actors have a life-long sexually transmitted disease
• In porn, the women are often there only to please the man but women are not sex objects – sex must be consensual and respectful
• The type of sex they have in porn isn’t very common in real life
• Sex in porn can last hours but in real life penetration only lasts about 5 minutes on average
• Women in porn are often mistreated which is not OK in real life – women’s needs and wants matter just as much as a man’s
• In porn, they’re always ready to have sex but in real life that’s not the case – many things affect if a person is ready for sex or not
• In real life when somebody says “no” to sex you need to respect that – it’s not OK to pressure people into sex or try and convince them like they do in porn
• In porn, they make sex into a performance for the cameras which isn’t how people have sex in real life.

Talking about porn can feel awkward but it’s important to reach out for help if you’re worried about anything you see or hear.

Watching porn might seem like fun but it can change the way you think about sex in a negative way.

HELP IS AVAILABLE IF YOU NEED SUPPORT OR WANT TO KNOW MORE
Talking about porn can feel awkward but it’s important to reach out for help if you’re worried about anything you see or hear.

Try telling a parent or a trusted adult who can support you, or you can always visit the eSafety website (www.esafety.gov.au) to find out more about what you can do.

If you’re still unsure about what to do and need to talk to someone about it, give us a call (1800 55 1800), start a WebChat or send us an email today.

A landmark Burnet Institute study into the use of pornography by young Australians has shown an extremely high prevalence, and recommends that pornography be addressed in Australian secondary school sexuality education programs. By Angus Morgan

The study, the first of its kind in Australia in the smartphone era, found associations between pornography use and potentially harmful outcomes such as mental health problems, and sexual activity at a younger age.

Lead author Dr Megan Lim, Burnet’s Deputy Program Director, Behaviours and Health Risks, said she was surprised at how commonly pornography was viewed by Australians aged 15-29 who took part in the study.

“Around 80 per cent of young men said they watched weekly, and among the women who watched pornography, nearly two-thirds viewed at least monthly.”

“All the young men in our study said they’d seen pornography, and so did the majority of women. They also reported seeing pornography at quite high frequency,” Dr Lim said.

“Around 80 per cent of young men said they watched weekly, and among the women who watched pornography, nearly two-thirds viewed at least monthly.

“While we’re not clear on what kind of influence it might be having on their sexual development, with such high rates of use pornography needs to be considered in teaching people about sex in a changing world.

“The findings of this study have important implications for designing sexuality education.”

**RESULTS**

Ever viewing pornography was reported by 815 of 941 (87%) participants. The median age at first pornography viewing was 13 years for men and 16 years for women. More frequent pornography viewing was associated with male gender, younger age, higher education, non-heterosexual identity, ever having anal intercourse and recent mental health problems.

Younger age at first pornography viewing was associated with male gender, younger current age, higher education, non-heterosexual identity, younger age at first sexual contact and recent mental health problems.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Pornography use is common and associated with some health and behavioural outcomes. Longitudinal research is needed to determine the causal impact of pornography on these factors.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC HEALTH**

Viewing pornography is common and frequent among young people from a young age and this needs to be considered in sexuality education.

The study authors recommend that age-appropriate educational programs be implemented from the formative years of high school, if not sooner, and should address issues such as the prevalence and practice of heterosexual anal sex in the ‘real world’ as opposed to pornography.

Other findings of the study, based on an online survey of 941 participants recruited via social media in 2015, published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, showed:

- Frequent users of pornography are more likely to be male and well-educated
- The average age of first exposure to pornography is declining
- The median age of first viewing is 13 years for boys and 16 years for girls
- Young people identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (GLBTIQ) watch pornography more frequently and from a younger age

The study authors recommend that age-appropriate educational programs be implemented from the formative years of high school, if not sooner.

- Interventions such as age verification and internet filtering software are not likely to be effective in preventing a motivated young person’s access to pornography
- There’s a correlation between the use of pornography and poor mental health.

“It is unclear whether pornography is a causal factor in poor mental health or an indicator of underlying problems,” Dr Lim said.

“In either case, it’s a concern, and those involved in treating young people with mental health problems may want to consider whether pornography is a problem for some clients.”

Dr Lim said increased viewing of pornography among GLBTIQ young people may reflect a lack of information in mainstream culture around non-hetero-normative sexual behaviour.

“People who don’t identify as heterosexual are often excluded from sexual education at school which is often very focused on hetero-normative sexual behaviour,” she said.

“That’s anecdotally one of the reasons they seek out pornography, so they can see more diverse representations of sexuality to help them find out what they’re interested in, and attracted to.”

This research was supported by The AMP Tomorrow Makers Fund.

Recent media campaigns have linked children watching online pornography to an increase in the number of school children committing sexual assault. One article linked school students sexually assaulting each other to the rise in online porn.

But is there evidence children watching online porn is linked to an increase in sexual offending?

We know the public is concerned about the potential harm to young people watching online pornography, with a Senate inquiry on the matter due to report towards the end of November 2016.

We also know how easy it is for children to watch online porn, not only on the computers in their bedrooms but on their smartphones. Most children come across online pornography accidentally. Most girls report feeling sick, shocked, embarrassed and repulsed by it but boys say they are sexually excited.

Of course, many young people search for it. In an Australian study of 200 young people, 38% of 16 and 17-year-old boys and 2% of girls said they searched for pornography.

Another Australian study reported 93% of boys and 61% of girls aged 13-16 years old had seen pornography. Another study reported 44% had seen online pornography. For both of these studies we don’t know if this was by accident or on purpose.

It is true the number of young sex offenders is increasing in Australia, as are adult sexual offenders.

But can this rise in young sex offenders be attributed to watching more online pornography?

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

We know children who watch pornography are more likely to be either physically or verbally sexually aggressive, especially if the pornography is violent. Behaviours range from verbal sexual harassment and unwanted kissing to sexual assault. We also know that popular porn is becoming more violent.

But has there been a corresponding increase in young people watching violent pornography to match the rise in sexual offending?

We don’t know.

It is tempting to assume young Australians’ easier access to more violent pornography explains the increase in sexual offending from 2011 to 2015. But we don’t have any current data on that in Australia.
In the US, watching violent pornography is relatively uncommon and watching non-violent pornography is unrelated to sexual aggression.

We also don’t know if watching violent pornography is the only factor in young people carrying out sexual assault. They could have been abused; be using alcohol and drugs; have witnessed domestic violence; or be acting out from what they see on the internet or from what they see at home.

As one eminent author on porn says:

*Some pornography under some circumstances may affect some people in some ways some of the time.*

This is not to say children watching pornography is not harmful. It is.

Children being exposed to pornography leads them to believe women are sex objects as women are devalued and degraded by pornography. Young girls who seek porn show more liberal attitudes to sex and believe it is fine to have sex without affection or love.

Young people who seek out online porn also tend to engage in unsafe sex and are more likely to be pressured by their peers into sexual activity.

However, watching porn doesn’t always result in sexual aggression and pornography may not be the only factor in child sexual offending.

**BEFTER WAYS TO LEARN ABOUT SEX**

The main message from a media campaign to parents and teachers shouldn’t be one of fear of children sexually abusing others but that watching porn is not a good place for children to learn about sex.

The difficulty is that in Queensland, for instance, schools are not required to teach sex education even though it is in the national curriculum with the choice to do so left up to the school and its community.

Also many parents are too embarrassed to talk to their children about sex, let alone pornography. Parents, especially fathers, need to explain that pornography is staged; it is fiction. Most people do not look like porn ‘stars’ and most people do not behave as they do.

Pornography is not a sex manual. But if young people cannot find out about the mechanics of sex within a caring relationship, they may access pornography to find out what to do and model their sexual life on it.

Parents, teachers and the media all need to talk to young people about pornography but not to give the message that if children do watch pornography they will sexually assault others.

**DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

Marilyn Campbell does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond her academic appointment.

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Most Australians view porn but few report ill effects: new research

Is there a mismatch between concerns about the genre and the experiences of consumers? Most Australians have viewed pornography but few report any ill effects, research in The Journal of Sex Research reveals. A report by Dan Gaffney from the University of Sydney

Most men (84%) and about half of women (54%) reported that they had ever looked at pornographic material, with three-quarters of these men (76%) and one-third of these women (41%) having viewed pornography in the past year.

The finding is based on a national survey of 20,000 Australians conducted between October 2012 and November 2013 as part of the Second Australian Study of Health and Relationships.

Among both men and women, those more likely to view pornography had greater sexual experience and inclination – more recent sexual partners, recent masturbation, and anal sex experience – compared to people less likely to use pornography – being older, and having a religion.

This pattern of association is consistent with other research reporting an association with sexual proclivity and both internet pornography and general pornography use.

Few respondents said they were addicted to pornography (men 4%, women 1%), and of those who said they were addicted, about half said using pornography had had a bad effect on them. Overall, a substantial minority of respondents (12%) reported a bad effect from pornography.

“Looking at pornographic material appears to be reasonably common in Australia, with adverse effects reported by a small minority,” said University of Sydney’s Professor Chris Rissel, the study’s lead author. “Very few respondents who had looked at pornography agreed with the statement that they were addicted to pornography. Given the prominence of public debates about the addictive nature of pornography, this finding suggests a mismatch between concerns about the genre and the experiences of consumers.

“Among those respondents who did nominate an addictive relationship, about half agreed that pornography had had a bad effect on them, which raises a question about how respondents interpreted the word ‘addicted’ in this context.”

The survey was conducted between October 2012 and November 2013 using computer-assisted telephone interviews with a representative sample of 20,094 Australian residents aged 16 to 69 years from all states and territories.

The study was funded by The National Health and Medical Research Council.


FAST FACTS

• Most respondents (men, 90%; women, 79%) agreed or strongly agreed that pornography could enhance the pleasure of masturbation.
• A substantial minority of respondents (men, 42%; women, 49%) agreed or strongly agreed that pornography degrades women shown in it.
• One third of respondents (men, 30%; women, 37%) agreed or strongly agreed that pornography degrades men shown in it.
• A majority of respondents (men, 66%; women, 54%) agreed or strongly agreed that pornography can improve sexual relations among adults.

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Pornography and its Harms

Issues in Society | Volume 439
Sexting and the impacts on young people

According to this fact sheet from Kids Helpline, talking about sexting can feel uncomfortable for many parents. Learn more about what sexting means, its impact on your kids and how you can talk to them about it.

Understanding sexting and the risks

As a parent, you might feel left in the dark about sexting and the consequences that it can have for your teen.

Here are some facts about sexting:

• Sexting is using the internet or a mobile phone for creating, sharing, sending or posting sexually explicit messages or images
• Sexting is becoming more common and sending, receiving or distributing a naked or semi-naked photo is the most common form of sexting
• Sexting is illegal when it involves anyone under 18 or to harass people of any age
• Young people can be charged and potentially registered as a sex offender if they create, receive or transmit a sexualised image or video of a person under 18
• If your child sends a sexy image, they have no control over where it might end up
• Victims of sexting may experience serious psychological harm and ongoing damage to their reputation.

Sexting is becoming a really common issue for parents of teens but there are ways you can help minimise the risks.

Why do young people sext

With increasing time spent on phones and technology, there are some risks. What could motivate your child to sext?

• Increasing use of technology paired with normal teen risk-taking behaviour and interest in sexual experimentation
• Young people’s understanding of the consequences is low or they may think they’re the exception and nothing bad will happen to them
• It’s easier to let your guard down on the phone or internet than it might be in person
• What is seen as acceptable today may have changed from previous generations.

There are some warning signs that things might not be OK with your child

You might notice any of the following:

• Avoiding friends and social situations
• Resistance or lack of interest in going to school, sport or other activities
• Changes in sleep (sleeping lots more or lots less)
• Increased level of anxiety (nail-biting, hair-pulling, crying or self-harm).

Report image-based abuse

• Your child is not alone when it comes to dealing with sexting! You can make a complaint to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner.

How to protect your child from the risks of sexting

Sexting can have serious social and legal consequences. You might be worried and unsure what you can do. There are ways to support them to stay safe.

• Tell them that sexting is illegal and images can be difficult to remove once posted
• Give them clear expectations about how they use their mobile phones
• Advise them to report ‘strange’ behaviour online just like they would offline
• Don’t minimise sexting as a ‘prank’
• Have open discussions about who they talk to online
• Talk through their experience or what they’ve heard about sexting
• Try not to use labels like ‘promiscuous’ when talking about sexting
• It’s important to remain calm and approachable and let them know you care
• Reassure them that talking about sexting doesn’t mean they have to give up their phone/device.

There’s help available

If you’re struggling with a parenting issue like this one, know that you’re not alone.

Check out the eSafety website (www.esafety.gov.au) for more information on how to support your child and how to report sexting.

You can also call Parentline (www.parentline.com.au) in your State or Territory for more support and guidance on any parenting issue.

If your child needs support with a sexting issue, or for any other reason, encourage them to talk to a Kids Helpline counsellor. They can call us, start a WebChat or email us today.

IMAGE-BASED ABUSE

This information has been provided by 1800RESPECT, the national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service

- Image-based abuse happens when a nude or sexual image of a person is shared without their consent or permission
- Image-based abuse can happen to anyone, and like other forms of abuse, it is usually about power and control
- Image-based abuse is not acceptable and is against the law
- There are ways to get support if image-based abuse is happening to you or someone you know.

WHAT IS IMAGE-BASED ABUSE?

Image-based abuse happens when a nude or sexual image of a person is taken or shared without that person’s permission. Image-based abuse also includes threatening to take or share a nude or sexual image of another person. Abusers can be intimate partners, ex-partners, family members, friends, people you work with or strangers.

Image-based abuse can also be called ‘revenge pornography’. This is how it may be spoken about in the news or media, but revenge is not always the reason behind image-based abuse. People might use this type of abuse for many different reasons, including for money or to embarrass or control another person.

WHAT DOES IMAGE-BASED ABUSE LOOK LIKE?

Image-based abuse can be many different things. Someone may share (or threaten to share) intimate photos or videos of a person without their permission so that others, including the person’s friends and family, will see them.

This could be:
- On the internet, including a website or blog
- On social media sites, like Facebook or Instagram
- With a mobile phone, through text message or other message app.

Some abusers will include information to identify the person in the image. They may also encourage others to contact the person and post abusive comments about the image. In some cases, the images of a person are taken or shared in private settings, without the person knowing. Abusers may also try to blackmail or ask for money by threatening to share a person’s intimate images.

Some images may be taken with permission, for example, images shared during an intimate relationship. It becomes abuse when there is no consent for images to be taken or shared, or when the abuser threatens to share the images with others. An abuser can also get personal images by accessing a computer or other digital device, or by using threats to make a person send an image of themselves to the abuser.

Some examples of image-based abuse include:
- Taking a nude or sexual image of another person without their permission
- Sharing a nude or sexual image of another person without their permission
- Posting a nude or sexual image of another person online without their permission
- Photoshopping a person’s image onto a sexually explicit photograph or video
- Taking an image of a woman’s breasts or cleavage without her permission (known as ‘downblousing’)
- Taking an image up a woman’s skirt without her permission (known as ‘upskirting’)
- Secretly filming consensual sexual activity
- Filming a sexual assault
- Sharing images of a sexual assault
- Threatening to distribute nude or sexual images of another person, even if these images don’t actually exist
- Accessing another person’s personal computer files and stealing their intimate images.

Some facts about image-based abuse
- 1 in 5 Australians aged 16 to 49 have experienced some form of image-based abuse in their lifetime
- Women are more likely than men to experience some forms of image-based abuse
- Abusers are more likely to be male
- Image-based abuse is more commonly experienced by:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
  - People with disability
  - People who identify as LGBTI
  - Young people aged 16 to 29 years
- People who experience image-based abuse are almost twice as likely as those who haven’t experienced image-based abuse to report experiencing high levels of psychological distress, including symptoms of moderate to severe depression and anxiety, and feeling very fearful for their safety.

IMAGE-BASED ABUSE IS NOT YOUR FAULT

Image-based abuse is not acceptable. It is a form of abuse and it is against the law. It doesn’t matter whether or not you give permission to share an image of yourself with another person. If that person has shared (or threatened to share) that image with others without your permission, they are to blame. They have betrayed your trust and broken the law. If you have experienced image-based abuse, it is not your fault.

IMAGE-BASED ABUSE IS AGAINST THE LAW

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT), New South Wales (NSW), South Australia (SA) and Victoria have specific laws on image-based abuse. Other Australian
states and territories are currently considering introducing image-based abuse laws.

The laws in the ACT, NSW, SA and Victoria mean it is against the law to:
• Record or capture intimate images without permission
• Distribute intimate images without permission
• Threaten to record or distribute intimate images.

Each state or territory law is slightly different. Depending on which state the abuse occurs in, abusers can face up to two or three years in prison.

Under Australian federal law, it is a criminal offence to use a carriage service (such as the internet or a mobile phone) to menace, harass or cause offence. This means that even if the abuse occurred outside the states and territories that have specific image-based abuse laws (ACT, NSW, SA or Victoria), abusers may still be prosecuted under this federal law and could face up to three years in prison. In states or territories without specific laws, it might also be possible to charge abusers for stalking, using surveillance devices, blackmail or indecency offences.

Civil laws relating to anti-discrimination, copyright, breach of confidence and intervention orders can also be used to deal with image-based abuse. It’s important to remember that suing a person can be expensive, can take a long time and the existing laws may not apply in all cases.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS EXPERIENCED IMAGE-BASED ABUSE

Support is available
If you or someone you know has experienced image-based abuse, you may want to get support. For confidential information, referral and counselling you can contact 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732.

Your doctor or GP can also refer you to a psychologist or counsellor if you would like emotional support.

Getting the image taken down
If you find an intimate image of yourself online, you can contact the website or the social media service and ask to have the images removed. Some sites have an image-removal request form that you can fill out. Facebook uses photo-matching software to detect and prevent the image from emerging again on Facebook after you make a formal complaint. You can also make a request to Google or Bing to have content involving you taken out of internet searches.

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner website provides support and resources on image-based abuse including:
• How to report an image to a social media service or website to request that your image be removed
• Information on collecting evidence of the abuse for the police
• How to find and delete images from online.

You can also report image-based abuse to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner. They can provide assistance and support in relation to:
• Getting the image removed from social media or an app
• Getting the image removed from a website
• Helping in situations where an intimate image has been shared by email or text without your permission
• Guidance on how to communicate with someone who may have an intimate image of you to request they remove it.

This service is available to anyone who has experienced image-based abuse.

Reporting to the police
Image-based abuse is a crime and can be reported to the police. The ACT, NSW, SA and Victoria all have laws on image-based abuse. Abusers can also be charged under the federal telecommunications law. It might also be possible to charge abusers with stalking, using surveillance devices, blackmail or indecency offences. Image-based abuse involving a minor is a crime in all Australian states and territories, and people can be charged for receiving or distributing child exploitation material (‘child pornography’).

Legal advice
You may like to get some advice from a lawyer about options available to you. Free legal advice is available from Community Legal Centres and Women’s Legal Services. You may also be eligible to get legal advice from Legal Aid. If you are under 18, free legal advice is available from the National Children’s Youth Law Centre.

If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit 1800RESPECT.org.au. In an emergency, call 000.

Not just ‘revenge porn’ – image-based abuse hits 1 in 5 Australians

The first comprehensive research on ‘revenge porn’ has revealed the mass scale of victimisation across Australia, with 1 in 5 people suffering image-based abuse, reports Gosia Kaszubska from RMIT

The survey of more than 4,200 people by RMIT University and Monash University researchers has shown women and men are equally likely to be victims.

But the research also showed marginalised groups are especially vulnerable, with image-based abuse affecting 1 in 2 Indigenous Australians and 1 in 2 people with a disability. The risk of victimisation is also higher for young people and lesbian, gay and bisexual Australians.

The most common types of abuse were taking sexual or nude images without consent (20 per cent), distributing images without consent (11 per cent) and threatening to share images (9 per cent).

The survey also for the first time revealed the damaging psychological toll on victims, with those threatened and experiencing ‘sextortion’, and those whose images had been distributed, the most severely affected by depression and/or anxiety.

Chief investigator, RMIT University’s Dr Nicola Henry, said the research showed this type of abuse was far more common and affected a wider range of people than previously thought.

“This isn’t just about ‘revenge porn’ – images are being used to control, abuse and humiliate people in ways that go well beyond the ‘relationship gone sour’ scenario.”

RMIT’s Dr Anastasia Powell said a lack of proper legal and support responses made it incredibly difficult for victims to get justice.

“We need to rethink our approach both from a legal perspective but also as a community, to change attitudes that often blame the victims and play down the very real harm caused by image-based abuse,” she said.

The research by Henry, Powell and Monash University’s Dr Asher Flynn recommends a range of reforms, including improved support services for victims such as a dedicated helpline similar to the Revenge Porn Helpline established in the United Kingdom in 2015.

Legal reforms proposed include making image-based abuse a crime under federal telecommunications law, and addressing the piecemeal legislative approach across the states (only Victoria and South Australia have specific laws that criminalise the distribution of intimate or invasive images without consent).

Flynn said the prevalence and harms associated with image-based abuse warranted stronger action from social media and internet companies.

“Social media providers and internet companies need to introduce strong and proactive measures that take seriously the harms of image-based abuse, and seek to create safe online spaces for victims,” she said.

Flynn said it was also likely the survey findings underestimated the extent of image-based abuse.

“Our survey only captured those victims who had become aware their images had been distributed, so rapidly as an issue that inevitably our laws and policies are struggling to catch up,” Henry said.

“This isn’t just about ‘revenge porn’ – images are being used to control, abuse and humiliate people in ways that go well beyond the ‘relationship gone sour’ scenario.”

FIGURE 1. PREVALENCE OF IMAGE-BASED ABUSE BY AGE AND GENDER, MAY 2017

FIGURE 2. RELATIONSHIP TO THE PERSON WHO SHARED THE PHOTO/VIDEO, MAY 2017

% of those who experienced image-based abuse

Friend I know face-to-face 29%
Ex-partner 13%
Intimate partner 12%
Family member 10%
Someone else 10%
Acquaintance 10%
Work colleague or ex-work colleague 4%
Stranger/Unknown 4%
Prefer not to say/Unsure 9%
WHO ARE THE VICTIMS?
- Women (22 per cent) and men (23 per cent) were equally likely to be victimised
- 56 per cent of people with a disability and 50 per cent of Indigenous Australians had been victims of image-based abuse
- People who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual were more likely to be victims (36 per cent) than heterosexual people (21 per cent)
- 1 in 3 of people aged 16-19, and 1 in 4 aged 20-29, reported at least one form of image victimisation
- People who had shared sexual selfies were significantly more likely to have been victimised (37 per cent) than those who had never sent a sexual image (10 per cent).

HOW ARE THEY BEING AFFECTED?
- 23 per cent had experienced at least one form of image-based abuse victimisation
- 20 per cent had a sexual or nude image taken without their consent
- 11 per cent had an image sent onto others or distributed without consent, with 40 per cent of those reporting the images were distributed across multiple devices and platforms (including SMS, Snapchat, Facebook and ‘revenge porn’ sites)
- 9 per cent had experienced ‘sextortion’, or threats that an image would be shared without their consent.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT?
- 80 per cent of people who had experienced ‘sextortion’ reported high levels of psychological distress, consistent with moderate to severe depression and/or anxiety disorder, with 46 per cent also feeling highly fearful for their safety
- Moderate to severe depression and/or anxiety affected 75 per cent of victims whose images were distributed, and 67 per cent of those whose images were taken without consent
- 39 per cent of people whose images were distributed, and 28 per cent of those whose images were taken without consent, felt highly fearful for their safety.

WHO ARE THE PERPETRATORS?
- The majority (54 per cent) of victims reported the perpetrator was male, 33 per cent reported the perpetrator was female, 13 per cent were either unknown or a mixed group
- Women (39 per cent) were more likely than men (30 per cent) to be victimised by an intimate partner or ex-partner
- Women (12 per cent) were also more likely than men (5 per cent) to have had a stranger take a nude or sexual image of them without permission.

The report, *Not Just ‘Revenge Pornography’: Australians’ Experience of Image-Based Abuse*, is the first stage of research funded by La Trobe University, the Australian Criminology Research Council and the Australian Research Council. The next stage will extend the research beyond Australia, incorporating New Zealand and the UK.

whereas some victims may never discover that their images have been taken and distributed, particularly if they are circulated on sites located on the dark web.”

The study findings are from a national online survey of 4,274 people aged 16 to 49.
CHAPTER 2
Addressing harms of online pornography

Interventions and initiatives to address harms of online pornography

Following is a chapter extract from an Australian Institute of Family Studies research report by Antonia Quadara, Alissar El-Murr and Joe Latham

The most recent Australian Government intervention has been the Senate inquiry into the harm being done to Australian children through access to pornography on the internet, which released four recommendations in November 2016.

The Senate committee recommended:
• Dedicated research into the exposure of children and young people to pornographic material, mainly with regard to online pornography;
• The creation of an expert panel comprised of professionals from a range of fields to provide policy recommendations to the Australian Government;
• A review of state and territory government policies on responding to allegations of peer-to-peer sexual abuse in schools and training materials for teachers and others who work with children and young people; and
• An Australian Government evaluation of information available to parents/caregivers and teachers regarding online safety and risks, including a review of the website of the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner.

Other Australian Government and non-government services have taken steps to reduce children and young people’s exposure to online risks – including pornography – and enact harm minimisation strategies.

Three key types of intervention were identified:
• Legal and regulatory avenues to existing legislation regarding online pornography;
• Education for children and young people; and
• Education and resources for teachers and parents.

This section provides an overview of government and non-government interventions, paying particular attention to those aimed at parents/caregivers and teachers. The first section describes the three interventions listed above and looks at examples of each, including interventions pertaining to technology-facilitated sexual violence.

The second section focuses mainly on resources available to parents/caregivers and an overview of the advice put to them about mediation and communication – two of the key techniques used in negotiating children and young people’s experiences of online pornography.

The third and final section provides an overview of the resources available to teachers, and discusses the whole-of-school approach that sees schools as a key setting in ensuring the healthy sexual development of children and young people.

LEGAL INTERVENTIONS

The Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act 2015 (Cth) was implemented in Australia to oversee the management of issues regarding children and young people’s digital activities. Part of its function was to establish the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, an independent statutory office designed to provide “online safety education for Australian children and young people, a complaints service for young Australians who experience serious cyberbullying, and address illegal content through the Online Content Scheme” (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016). The Online Content Scheme restricts access to illegal and offensive material using the measures provided by the National Classification Scheme (RC, X18+, R18+, MA15+), and the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner has the power to remove illegal or offensive content under the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (Cth).

Technology-facilitated sexual violence

Some argue that “more needs to be done both within and beyond the law” to address the effects of technology-facilitated sexual violence (Funnell, 2015; Henry & Powell, 2016, p.398). The critique of legal interventions draws attention to the lag between technological developments and legislation to manage technology-facilitated sexual violence (Powell & Henry, 2016b). Indeed, in 2016, only Victoria and South Australia have specific legislation pertaining to the management of the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. New South Wales (Australian Associated Press [AAP], 2016), the Northern Territory (Poulson, 2016) and Western Australia (Government of Western Australia, 2016) have announced
plans to implement such legislation, while Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, and Queensland have not indicated their intention to enact such legislation (see Table 4).

In terms of Commonwealth legislation, s 474.17 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) pertains to telecommunication offences, which could potentially be used to charge offenders for crimes including the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. Further, Commonwealth legislation can also be used to charge perpetrators with offences related to child pornography, if the intimate image depicts an individual under the age of 18 (Attorney-General’s Department, Submission 28: the phenomenon colloquially referred to as ‘revenge porn’, 2015).

The Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act 2015 “has authority to communicate to websites or social media services that are hosting harmful material and require the removal of that material” (Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee, 2016, p.39). Researchers, legal experts and social service workers generally support more specific Commonwealth legislation to provide legal definition and federal management of this important issue (Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee, 2016).

Other legal strategies include the Australian Cybercrime Online Reporting Network, which has processed approximately 489 online complaints about the non-consensual sharing of intimate images since its establishment in 2014 (Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee, 2016).

In addition to legal interventions, the Commonwealth Government recently pledged an extra 10 million dollars to manage domestic violence in Australia, including the provision of support for victims of technology-facilitated sexual violence (Cash & Porter, 2016). The funding comes from the overall budget for the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022. The government funds are expected to “improve research and education to counter the risk of technology-facilitated abuse by ensuring women’s privacy and safety are protected and young people understand the impact of their actions” (Cash & Porter, 2016).

Specifically, the funds are intended to combat virtual violence by:

- Establishing a complaint and support line whereby victims can report revenge porn and access immediate and tangible support; and
- Providing young people with information and education about pornography and its social effects (Cash & Porter, 2016).

Specific training for those working in the criminal justice sectors is required to develop best practice management of technology-facilitated sexual violence and ensure legal remedies are effective. Ongoing professional development is important and has already been implemented in organisations specifically providing legal and/or support services to women (Powell & Henry, 2016; Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee, 2016). Specialist training to police officers is particularly important for their work in supporting victims to report and follow through with cases (Powell & Henry, 2016; Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee, 2016).

**EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

There are several key education resources in Australia aimed at primary and secondary school aged children and young people (listed in Table 5). The list includes some resources that may not directly refer to online pornography but could be adapted in different ways to provide such information to children and young people.

The national school curriculum begins teaching children about bodies, boundaries and relationships at a foundational level, prior to years 1 and 2 (i.e. 6 and 7 year olds). The national curriculum provides schools with teaching resources that cover a variety of topics relating to sexual health, developing bodies, respect, safety and identity (Australian Curriculum Assessment & Reporting Authority, 2016). The scope of that education expands at secondary school level to include sexual relationships, and encourages students to reflect on their experiences of the media and its influence on personal attitudes, beliefs, decisions and behaviours (Australian Curriculum Assessment & Reporting Authority, 2016).

The most recent resources are the Resilience, Rights, and Respectful Relationships materials for schools in Victoria.

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**TABLE 4: LEGAL APPROACHES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE/TERRITORY</th>
<th>Specific legislation for technology-facilitated sexual violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>The Crimes Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Act 2014 (Vic.) introduced new sections pertaining to the distribution or threat of distribution of an intimate image, extending the Summary Offences Act 1966 (Vic.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>Current: Summary Offences (Filming Offences) Amendment Act 2013 (SA) introduced a new section pertaining to the distribution of an invasive image into the Summary Offences Act 1953 (SA). Recently introduced: Summary Offences (Filming and Sexting Offences) Amendment Bill 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>Pending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>Pending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Pending</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This resource provides social, emotional and sex education for children and young people from foundation to year 12, covering the following eight topics in an age-appropriate manner:

- Emotional literacy
- Personal strengths
- Positive coping
- Problem-solving
- Stress management
- Help-seeking
- Gender and identity, and
- Positive gender relations.

**Foundation level up to level 6**: Gender, social and emotional skills education is provided but, as with other Victorian school curriculums, education regarding sexual relationships (including discussions about pornography) doesn’t start until levels 7 and 8.

**Levels 7-8**: The resource offers information and activities regarding gender, gender identity, gender-based violence and the use of technology and media platforms for gender ideologies, with a view to assist in the development of critical literacies and promote positive relationships.

Topics covered include:

- Health impacts of gender norms;
- Gender-based violence;
- Pornography, with a focus on critical readings of gender and power; and
- Sexting, with an emphasis on legal issues.

**Levels 9-10**: Activities are included to develop social and emotional skills, which are noted as providing an entry platform for positive gender relationships education, particularly with existing programs such as the Building Respectful Relationships: Stepping out against gender-based violence program (levels 8, 9 & 10).

**Levels 11-12**: Activities and detailed information for the topics of gender and identity and positive gender relations are included.

**TABLE 5: EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE</th>
<th>AUTHOR(S)/ORGANISATION</th>
<th>AGE GROUP(S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training (DET) (Vic.)</td>
<td>Foundation to level 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catching on Early: Sexuality education for Victorian primary schools</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training (Vic.)</td>
<td>Primary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catching on Later: Sexuality education for Victorian secondary schools</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training (Vic.)</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Practical Guide to Love, Sex and Relationships *Includes a video and lesson plan about pornography – Porn: What you should know – for students in year 8 and above</td>
<td>Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University (Vic.)</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Respectful Relationships: Stepping out against gender-based violence</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training (Vic.)</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Picture: Supporting young people in an era of explicit sexual imagery * Includes resources to support a whole school approach to addressing pornography’s influence</td>
<td>Crabbe, M./ Reality &amp; Risk Project</td>
<td>Secondary schools; community organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s Time We Talked, website</td>
<td>Crabbe, M. &amp; Corlett, D./ Reality &amp; Risk Project</td>
<td>Young people; parents; schools; community organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love and Sex in an Age of Pornography, broadcast documentary film</td>
<td>Corlett, D. &amp; Crabbe, M./ Reality &amp; Risk Project</td>
<td>General broadcast audience; rated MA15+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Porn Factor, broadcast documentary film</td>
<td>Crabbe, M. &amp; Corlett, D./ Reality &amp; Risk Project</td>
<td>Parents, teachers, youth workers and others; rated MA15+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fightback: Addressing everyday sexism in Australian schools</td>
<td>O’Keeffe, B. &amp; the Fitzroy High School Feminist Collective</td>
<td>Secondary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tackling Sexual Harassment</td>
<td>Australian Human Rights Commission</td>
<td>Levels 9 and 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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• Asserting standards and boundaries in relationships, and
• Pornography, gender, and intimate relationships.

The final subsection defines pornography as “a vehicle for communicating and shaping norms within gender relationships, particularly when that pornography also incorporates acts of violence against women” (Department of Education and Training, 2016, p.105).

The materials suggest to teachers that the following issues may be covered in group discussions:
• “Increased aggression on the part of the man and extreme acts causing discomfort to women partners
• Women partners having to please by these acts
• Women partners having to please men partners
• Forced viewing of pornography via texting or social media
• Influence of pornography on what men think should happen between them and their partner
• The belief that pornography reflects real life sexual situations
• Emotional manipulation to ensure compliance
• Lack of discussion and education options for young people
• Normalisation of pornographic acts
• Misrepresentation of what is enjoyable
• Access to pornography before access to trustworthy, quality sex education
• Potential effects on younger children, and
• Predominant use of pornography by men and boys.” (2016, p.105)

**Digital and sexual literacies**

Digital literacies and exposure to explicit online content may cause children to develop sexual literacies in different ways to previous generations, particularly in response to pornography as contemporary sex education for children and young people (Crabbe, 2016; Fileborn, 2016; Flood, 2016).

Two key reports are drawn on here to contextualise the role of parents/caregivers and teachers in children and young people’s digital and sexual literacies: The High-Wire Act report (2011) and the Talk Soon Talk Often guide (2012). The Talk Soon Talk Often guide, in particular, offers advice to parents/caregivers who may be unsure of how to communicate to their children about sex. It draws attention to the fact that although parents/caregivers may not broach such topics, children have already started “learning some important messages that will lay the foundation of their sexual development” from contexts other than the family environment (Walsh, 2012, p.6).

It suggests that there are four main contexts in which children and young people develop early ideas about bodies, relationships, sexualities and gender:
• Home
• School life
• Screen time, and
• Online relationships.

*Talk Soon Talk Often* encourages open communication between children and parents in a similar way to the *It’s Time We Talked* online resource, which states that, “young people say their parents, particularly their mothers, are their most trusted and used source of information regarding sexual matters” (Reality & Risk Project, 2016). Similarly, schools have been named a key setting with an important role to play in ensuring children and young people make sense of their exposure to online pornography in healthy ways. The High-Wire Act states: “Schools are optimally placed to support students to be cyber-safe. Raising the awareness of young people before, or as, computers are introduced into the curriculum can be a preventative step – ensuring young people are better equipped against the risks they are likely to encounter online” (Cyber-Safety, J. S. C. o., 2011, pp. 40-1).

**Critical thinking**

*It’s Time We Talked* specifically asks young people to question pornography, stating: “Seeing porn might seem normal. But what does porn say? Who makes it and why? And what does it all mean for you?” (Reality & Risk Project, 2016). Asking such questions encourages viewers to reflect on the messages contained in online pornography and works to foster discussion while respecting the agency of the young people involved. That is an important alternative to the construction of young people as passive actors in their consumption of online pornography.

Arming children and young people with tools to engage critically with media is important to their understanding of the differences between online pornography and their offline sexual relationships. *It’s Time We Talked* provides advice to that effect:

> We need to teach young people to “read” imagery and to develop the sorts of frameworks that allow them to understand and critique what they’re seeing. They need
to understand that media is often created to promote something as desirable and necessary and, at the same time, communicates a whole range of other messages – about, for example, power, gender, class and culture. (Reality & Risk Project, 2016)

RESOURCING PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

Parents/caregivers are encouraged to educate themselves about the internet and social media in order to be aware of the current online dangers and opportunities facing their children (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016; Think U Know, 2016). Parents/caregivers are less likely to be intimidated by online risks if they are informed and take an active role in their children’s digital lives (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016).

The Think U Know (2016) resource stated that “understanding how young people use the internet and what they enjoy doing will help you to recognise any suspicious or inappropriate behaviour. It will also help you to talk with your child about their online activities if they think you understand the online environment”.

The Office of the e-Safety Commissioner offers practical, technical advice for parents/caregivers to give their children, for example:

• Instructing children “to leave or close the page immediately or minimise the screen if they are worried about the material they have seen (hit Control-Alt-Delete if the site does not allow you to exit)”;
• Teaching children “not to open spam email or click on pop-ups, prize offers or unfamiliar hyperlinks in websites”;
• Advising children to “report offensive content to the site administrator (for example use ‘flag’ or ‘report’ links near content)” (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016).

Other advice for parents/caregivers generally falls into two categories of harm minimisation, mediation and communication. A combination of the two offers an effective strategy for ensuring minimal rates of exposure to online pornography, as well as assisting children and young people to make sense of their experiences (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016; Reality & Risk Project, 2016; Think U Know, 2016).

Mediation includes strategies such as installing filter software to reduce the likelihood of risk exposure (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016; Think U Know, 2016). Tools to support communication consist of ‘how-to’ guides for parents/caregivers to discuss online pornography with their children, in addition to frameworks for encouraging critical reflective skills in children (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016; Reality & Risk Project, 2016; Think U Know, 2016).

Such communication also strengthens the trust relationship between parents/caregivers and children, which has been described as a protective factor in children’s health and wellbeing (Katz, Lee & Byrne, 2015). Additionally, a trusting parent/caregiver-child relationship is key to supporting disclosures of negative online experiences should they occur (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016).

MEDIATION

The Office of the e-Safety Commissioner cautioned parents/caregivers, stating: “you can teach your child strategies about how to deal with offensive material but be vigilant, especially if your child is prone to taking risks or is emotionally or psychologically vulnerable” (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016). Parental controls are essential in harm minimisation strategies including risk exposure with regard to online pornography (Childnet Int., 2016). Listed below are the major mediation tactics that parents/caregivers employ to prevent risk exposure and ensure age-appropriate online activities.

Filtering

Parents/caregivers are encouraged to use filtering software as a way of managing children’s internet access (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016; Think U Know, 2016). Filtering is available through Internet service providers as well as through individual websites, and can be adjusted according to the user’s age. For example, websites such as Google and YouTube provide options for adults to enable filters in order to regulate searchable content.

Filtering works well on household computers as well as on sole-use computers belonging to children and young people. However, the changing nature of children and young people’s internet access from laptop or desktop computers to smartphones makes filtering online content much more challenging (Ofcom, 2015). The Think U Know (2016) resource offers links to information about parental controls, stating that they can “allow you to restrict what content can be accessed” on smartphones and tablet computers. Further, Think U Know states that limiting online access will “ensure that your children are only able to access age-appropriate material” as children require parental permission to access unknown websites.
Rule setting
Most resources encourage rule setting, and both schools and parents/caregivers are advised to sign contracts with children and young people that set out terms of their appropriate internet use (Think U Know, 2016). Think U Know (2016) offers parents a downloadable Family Online Safety Contract and states:

It’s important to remember that many of the behaviours and issues we experience online are no different to those we experience in the “real” world. This means our expectations around behaviours should also apply online. It’s a good idea to speak with your child about your family values and how this extends to behaviour online. One way to encourage this discussion is by creating a Family Internet Safety Contract together so that everyone knows what is expected of them when they’re online.

Other rules include public and timed use of the internet, as stated on the It’s Time We Talked website: “Young people’s access to pornography is mostly via technology, so limiting exposure will require limiting and managing their access to technology. For example, by keeping devices out of bedrooms and other private spaces and putting time limits on use” (Reality & Risk Project, 2016).

Involvement in social media
The Office of the e-Safety Commissioner and Think U Know both discuss the benefits of social media, and parents/caregivers are advised of a number of ways to lend support to their children in their engagement in social media. For example:

- Staying involved and supporting children to connect with friends and family online and in real life (IRL);
- Checking terms of use and age guidelines of social networking sites;
- Setting rules, such as that children inform parents that they are joining a new social network, and/or prior to sharing personal photographs or information;
- Assisting children to create an online alias that does not indicate their gender, age or location; and

Further, parents/caregivers are advised to create accounts of their own on social networking sites as a way of staying involved in their children’s social media activity and as a means of learning about social networking security. Think U Know also offers fact sheets for parents about popular social media such as Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Tinder and Facebook.

Communication
Parents/caregivers’ understanding and awareness of online pornography is central to how they communicate with their children about the associated risk of harm. The It’s Time We Talked website contains information, advice and practical tools ranging from research about the pervasiveness of online pornography to advice about how to initiate discussions. Importantly, that resource emphasises the key role of parents/caregivers in communicating about the new reality of online pornography and promoting healthy development in children and young people (Reality & Risk Project, 2016).

The It’s Time We Talked website, developed through the Reality & Risk Project, includes information specifically designed to educate young people about pornography. Another information hub, Think U Know, has developed a Cybersafety and Security guide to assist parents/caregivers in talking to their children about a range of online risks. The Office of the e-Safety Commissioner has compiled advice for parents/caregivers wishing to discuss online risks with their children.

Similarly, It’s Time We Talked offers tips sheets about how to have a conversation about online pornography and encourage critical thinking, as well as information for parents/caregivers about providing support and assisting their children in ongoing skill development. These are discussed in more detail below.

Advice and support
Parental support for children and young people who have been exposed to online pornography is extremely important to their ability to process their experience in healthy ways. Support is generally described as the ability of parents/caregivers to initiate open conversations about their experiences (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016). The e-Safety Commissioner offers advice about supporting children including:

- “Encouraging them to talk to a trusted adult if they have seen something online that makes them upset, disturbed or distressed;
- Reassuring them that access to the internet will not be denied if they report seeing inappropriate content;
- Telling them not to respond if they are sent something inappropriate.” (Office of the Children’s e-Safety Commissioner, 2016, ‘What can I do if my child sees content that’s offensive?’, para 2).

Further, the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner advises parents/caregivers of the potentially devastating consequences of sexting for children and young people, and encourages them to discuss sexting as a family. Much of the advice provided on the website, however, discusses sexting in terms of the child’s audience awareness and digital footprint. For example, it states that parents should:

- “Encourage them to think twice before they post sexualised photos and consider the fact that others might view what they post;
- Remind them to consider the feelings of others when taking photos and distributing any content by mobile phone or online.” (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016, ‘Encouraging thinking first’, para 1)

Digital footprint and context collapse
Rules about social media are largely conceptualised in terms of the digital footprint, and often referred to in terms of reputation management. For example, online resources offer the following information about social media and digital footprints:
• “Young people should be encouraged to stop and think before posting or sharing something online ... Many employers, universities and sporting groups will search for applicants or potential members online before giving them a job or contract” (Think U Know, 2016, p. 22).
• “Encourage your kids to think before they put anything online, even among trusted friends, and remind them that once shared, information and photos can become difficult or impossible to remove and may have a long-term impact on their digital reputation” (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016, ‘Encouraging thinking first’, para 1).

In this way, these resources draw on the importance of audience awareness in the collapsed context of internet spaces, particularly social media, which allow users a sense of symbolic control. Advising parents/caregivers to warn their children of context collapse and the digital footprint they create as a result of their online behaviour is a way of drawing attention to the wider problem of internet security/privacy and the impact that the sharing culture may have on future activities and identities.

**Ongoing skill development**

The *It’s Time We Talked* website offers practical advice for parents/caregivers to use in encouraging ongoing skill development in children and young people.

In a section called *Equip Them with Skills*, it suggests “talking through the types of situations they might face and exploring the options for how they could respond” (Reality & Risk Project, 2016, ‘Equip them with skills’, para 3). Additionally, it offers the following advice:

• Parents should talk through any challenges children face online, with regard to peer pressure, or web content that makes them feel uncomfortable, in a creative and collaborative way.

• Parents and children can develop strategies to address difficult situations, “for example, if they text you their name, you know to call them and ask them to come home, so they have an easy excuse to leave.” (Reality & Risk Project, 2016, ‘Equip them with skills’, para 3)

Further, the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner (2016) has developed *Chatterbox for Parents*, a “conversational how-to guide” informing parents/caregivers about “when to worry and when to celebrate the benefits the online world brings. Each conversation addresses the specific issues, behaviours and safety essentials to help you make sense of what’s happening behind the screens (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016).

**TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS**

State and territory education departments have developed specific policies regarding cyber safety management in schools. The Office of the e-Safety Commissioner recommended individual schools set up an Online Safety Team to create and implement policies that promote cyber safety (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016). Schools are encouraged to consult widely with the school community, including teachers and support workers, students and parents/caregivers about online risks and harm minimisation (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016). Schools are also encouraged to draw on the national *e-Smart Schools* resource to assist in the creation of cyber safety policies and strategies.

**Schools as a key setting**

Quality sex education for children and young people has been identified as a protective factor in minimising the harms caused by exposure to online pornography (Pratt, 2015). The *It’s Time We Talked* website observed that: “Schools increasingly are required to respond to incidents relating to explicit sexual imagery, including ‘sexting’ incidents, involving the circulation of sexual imagery of students” (Reality & Risk Project, 2016, Why is porn an issue for schools?, para 1).

Indeed, key resources for teachers and schools view schools as ideal settings to deal with the issue of young people’s exposure to online pornography:

• “Many schools are already familiar with health promotion frameworks and are already engaged in related and complementary work, such as programs on respectful relationships, cyber safety, violence prevention, and sexuality education” (Reality & Risk Project, 2016, ‘Why schools?’, para 4).

• “Schools can engage students about the influence of explicit sexual imagery as part of a comprehensive curriculum, with the input of highly skilled professionals and access to quality resources” (Reality & Risk Project, 2016, ‘Why schools?’, para 6).

• “Teachers and other staff in a school have a responsibility to take reasonable steps to protect students from risks of injury, including those that may be encountered within the online learning environment” (DET (Vic.), 2017, ‘Supervision’, para 1).

Schools are advised to:

• “Arrange for policies and codes of conduct to be sent home for parental signature or sighting;
• Establish a Cybersafety contact person or several people as a first point of contact for students, staff and parents if a cybersafety issue arises;
• Review policies and procedures annually as technologies, and their use, evolves rapidly.” (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016, ‘Policy development and implementation’, paras 4-6).

Additionally, the *High-Wire Act* recommended that schools implement policy frameworks and set up internet filters to meet the requirements of their state or territory governments (Cyber-Safety, J. S. C. o., 2011). It suggested that attentive supervision of students using computers at school worked well to provide additional support and protection (2011).
Sex education
There have been recent calls for more up-to-date and better quality sex education in schools. A recent national survey of 600 young Australian women found that “more than one third” of respondents wanted access to “more comprehensive education on sexuality and respectful relationships” (Plan International Australia & Our Watch, 2016, p.3). Further, young women wanted such education to “extend to the critique and discussion of pornography … and how violent and degrading pornography was negatively impacting on young Australians’ relationships and boys’ and young men’s attitudes towards sex in general” (Plan International Australia & Our Watch, 2016, p.3).

Whole-of-school approach
The whole-of-school approach to deal with the effects of online pornography is a collaborative framework that promotes healthy sexualities in multiple contexts and not solely through sex education classes (Reality & Risk Project, 2016). All members of the school community, including parents/caregivers, teachers and students, are involved in such an approach, as stated in It’s Time We Talked, the whole-of-school approach ensures that consistent messages are communicated at all levels of the school community (Reality & Risk Project, 2016). Schools have been named as key points of information about parental control of online risks and the associated harms of the internet (Office of the e-Safety Commissioner, 2016; DET (Vic.), 2016). The Catching On Everywhere (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [DEECD] 2008) resource for the Victorian school curriculum advocates a whole-of-school, health-promotion approach to sex education that incorporates multiple contexts.

It notes that a whole-of-school approach consists of “overlapping and interconnected domains: curriculum; teaching and learning; school organisation; ethos and environment; and community services and parent-partnerships” (DEECD, 2008, p.12). Similarly, leading Australian sex educator Maree Crabbe calls for a whole-of-school and community-based approach to deal with the effects of online pornography on children and young people and has co-developed the In the Picture resource for that purpose (Reality & Risk Project, 2016).

SUMMARY OF APPROACHES IN AUSTRALIA
At the primary prevention level, a key implication arising from the growing research and lessons learned is that treating the effects of pornography as a standalone issue disconnected from the broader contexts in which it is accessed, consumed and interpreted is unlikely to be effective in reducing its negative impacts/influence on children and young people.

It is likely to be more effective to firstly hook the issue of online pornography into existing and tested curricula and approaches to:
- Respectful relationships and quality sex education that is designed and delivered according to best practice principles; and
- Media and digital literacy education.

These curricula can provide children and young people with a holistic framework and set of tools regarding:
- What makes for respectful relationships; how power, gender and equality are interlinked, and strategies for challenging and reimaging dominant narratives about (hetero) sex, gender difference, sexual pleasure and sexual relationships;
- Mediated, mediatised representations, managing the context collapse between online and offline worlds, and the ability to critically engage with mass media representations.

Together these provide an important scaffolding to which strategies about online and cyber-safety can be added. It is also crucial is to build the capacity of parents and teachers to address gender, sex and porn with the children and young people in their care. Currently, this is an area of anxiety for many teachers and parents. There a number of resources available for parents in particular; however, as with children and young people themselves, having a broader scaffolding regarding gender, equality and sex is important.

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Strategies to address harms of online porn failing young people, educators say

Government strategies to address the harm posed to children by unfettered access to online pornography are failing, according to an Australian charity. Nour Haydar reports for ABC News

They argue weak and convoluted laws are leaving children with easy access to porn, leading to sexually aggressive attitudes and abusive behaviour.

Holly-ann Martin, who teaches schools and children about abuse prevention around the country, said a lot has changed in the last decade.

“Ten years ago I wasn’t having to talk to children about pornography, but more and more I’m coming across even very young children having witnessed porn,” Ms Martin said.

Incidents of child-to-child sexual abuse are increasing because children are acting out abusive behaviour they have seen on screen.

“It used to be four-year-olds in the playground – ‘You show me yours, I’ll show you mine’, which is in fact normal sexualised behaviour for four-year-olds,” she said.

“But now it’s unfortunately children caught in the toilet trying to get other kids to perform oral sex on them.”

She said instantaneous, unfiltered access to porn from a young age can leave lasting effects without proper intervention.

“My fear is the 14-year-olds growing up on this diet of pornography in 10 years are going to be our future police, doctors, nurses, teachers and parents.

“And they are just being so desensitised. And they openly admit to me that they’re watching at least two hours a week of porn.”

Early access to porn causing ‘traumatic experiences’

Last year, a Senate committee into the harm of pornography on children received hundreds of submissions.

The Federal Government supported the committee’s recommendations, including further research into the impact of graphic content on young people and providing parents and teachers with safety information.

Chair of charity Porn Harms Kids, Liz Walker, said teaching families and children about the harms of pornography is vitally important, but it is a mistake to focus all efforts on parents.

“You can’t educate a child out of trauma from seeing hardcore graphic content,” Ms Walker said.

“One of the things we’ve found is that even amongst state education departments, at the moment the policies aren’t in place to be able to
Age verification to protect children

Australian advocacy groups have called on the federal government to require pornography websites to install age-verification software to protect children from confronting sexual imagery, following the introduction of legislation in Britain that forces online porn users to prove they are adults.

- By the end of 2018, pornography sites in Britain will be required to verify users’ age via their credit cards to prove they are over 18, or face being banned or blocked. Internet service providers (ISPs) in the UK will have to offer network-level filters that block online porn.
- Advocacy groups in the UK and Australia welcomed the move, saying pornography contributes to sexist and unhealthy views of women and sex.
- Concerns raised in favour of mandated age verification are based on research which suggests a link between pornography use and the sexual abuse of children. Not every child would have a negative response to online pornography, however for some, exposure to it may be associated with trauma, mental health problems, confusion around sexual identity, normalisation of abusive behaviour, grooming by pedophiles, and child-on-child sexual abuse.
- Age verification could act as a digital child protection buffer with the potential to create a greater level of safety for children.
- Privacy campaigners have raised concerns about unintended consequences of the collection of users’ private information. For example, people’s porn surfing habits could be collected, and the data hacked and then used for malicious purposes such as blackmail.
- Electronic Frontiers Australia claims compulsory age verification would be an ineffective policy and the Australian public would not accept government intervention into what is actually a broader social problem.
- There was public backlash when the Rudd government tried to introduce an internet filter policy in 2007, which was ultimately withdrawn in 2012.
- In March 2017, the government supported senate references committee recommendations for more research into child exposure to online pornography and formed a working online consultation group to investigate options preventing the harms of pornography. To date, no action has been taken.

Sources
Kearney, J (3 August 2017), ‘Porn Harms Kids calls for online material to have age verification measures to protect children’, ABC News, www.abc.net.au.
THE PORN HARMS KIDS REPORT

Protecting our kids from online pornography harms is everyone’s business, according to this executive summary from a report by eChildhood

eChildhood was formerly known as ‘Porn Harms Kids’. The Porn Harms Kids Report: Protecting our kids from online pornography harms is everyone’s business was published in September 2017. The views and content of the Porn Harms Kids Report are those of eChildhood, http://echildhood.org

There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.

Nelson Mandela

In all areas related to child protection, it is the aspiration of every society to ensure children and young people are provided with safe and sustainable environments in which they can thrive. The Porn Harms Kids Report: Protecting our kids from online pornography harms is everyone’s business, releases to align with major calendar events in September 2017, such as National Child Protection Week and National eSmart Week 2017. However, the importance of addressing pornography harms as a matter of child protection, extends beyond a focussed week. Broad solutions must be urgently implemented so that online protection for our children can be achieved.

The Porn Harms Kids Report provides comprehensive opportunities to expand understanding of the scope of pornography’s impact on children and young people. Porn Harms Kids undertook a thorough investigation into past and present legislative, policy, digital and educational strategies that attempt to address the harms. The report presents our findings and reviews; includes comprehensive international research; and provides clear calls for action and recommendations, including the proposed 3-year Action Plan. This solutions-focused Action Plan was developed to respond to children and young people’s vulnerabilities to pornography, in consultation with experts around the world.

To gain a comprehensive picture of what children and young people in Australia currently face, please refer to our statement of research endorsed globally by over 50 experts and organisations. Empirically researched harms include poor mental health; sexism and objectification; sexual aggression and violence; child-on-child sexual abuse; and shaping sexual behaviours. Our Statement of Research relating to pornography harms to children, and reference list, is available online at www.echildhood.org/statement. The most current research is outlined in Section 2.2 of the report.

Current initiatives – in reply to the government response to the senate report: Harm being done to Australian children through access to pornography on the internet

Porn Harms Kids has investigated and reviewed the government recommendations and current approaches proposed in their response to the senate inquiry. We note that the government’s current strategies and recommendations do not comprehensively address the harms, or adequately propose robust preventative measures to protect our children.

Review of current actions being taken to address the issues

The main body of review and subsequent findings in this report focus on three key areas: current legislation and policy, digital, and education approaches. We believe these are foundational areas that must receive equal attention in order to effectively respond to this public health crisis that has remained in the shadows for too long.

The current legislation and policies need urgent attention. Weak and convoluted laws mean that children have unfettered access to pornography from any device connected to the internet without a filtering service installed. There are major disparities in how the government manages prohibited content hosted domestically, versus that hosted overseas.

The regulation of the internet service provider (ISP) industry, including codes of conduct and policies, need radical overhaul to ensure that key stakeholders address the harms of pornography nationally. The potential for technological intervention requires a demand to be placed on carriers to implement flexible and robust filtering solutions that support families to block Prohibited URL Content. These changes must be underpinned by updated legislation.

The current government focus is on further research
and education efforts targeted towards parents, children and young people. Whilst families are one of many vitally important protective initiators in their child’s life, it is a mistake to solely place education efforts here. There are many other sectors and stakeholders that surround and protect children, and support them to thrive within communities. It is imperative these entities are included in solutions that enable a public health approach.

Although some action is being taken to inform parents of pornography harms as a risk for children online, the seriousness of the current digital environment has not been clearly communicated and remains hidden under the litany of information about cyber safety. Harms associated with pornography such as grooming or sexting, are spoken about as if they are in isolation. Instead, there needs to be a focus on pornography’s role in facilitating a culture that normalises these behaviours, where exploitation and sexual abuse becomes the norm. The current approach leaves out discussion about how pornography is negatively impacting children’s ability to develop healthy relationships with themselves and each other.

With the dearth of research already available to inform a response, further studies should be directed instead towards measuring the pre- and post-effectiveness of any actions taken towards rectifying the current situation. What is also clear, is that education efforts will be undermined while ever legislation, policy and digital protection solutions are not implemented concurrently.

**Key findings and recommendations from Porn Harms Kids Investigation and Review**

**Current legislation and policy approaches**

Key calls to action relating to legislation and policy first require the recognition that online pornography is linked to an increase in harms to children and young people, including violence against women who are the primary caregivers of children. *Porn Harms Kids* calls for three main government responses that put the rights of our children to be protected in front of the rights of adults who want to watch online pornography.

These calls include:

1. Commission an inquiry into the economic and social costs incurred as a result of children and young people’s unfettered access and consequential harms of online pornography.
2. Update legislation and create binding codes of conduct that underpin digital solutions to block and manage prohibited content, regardless of the hosting location.
3. For the eSafety Office to continue to regulate online content by managing the ‘Prohibited URL List’, and to provide simplified processes to manage whitelisted sites.
4. In conjunction with state and territory departments of education, develop nationwide frameworks and policies that support education solution providers to effectively implement programs, curriculum and training to all sectors that support children and young people, so that the fallout and reversal of pornography harms can be effectively managed.

(More recommendations can be found under current legislation and policy approaches in the report.)

**Current digital approaches**

Whilst there are large divides and complicated factors to navigate, technology is a vehicle that has transported pornography into our everyday lives and is a key factor in the child protection issues we are currently faced with. Therefore, creating a robust national response requires the updating and implementation of digital protection buffers as outlined in the *Porn Harms Kids* 3-year Action Plan.
Supported by overhauled government legislation, key calls to action relating to digital protection include:

1. All providers of internet access to update or create filtering products and services (including mobile services), in preparation for the recommended legislation to implement default blocking of prohibited content, with opt-out age-verification access.

2. A Communications Alliance led implementation of Digital Child Protection Buffers to facilitate the most robust possible barriers between online hardcore pornography and our children through restriction of prohibited content on all digital devices that connect to Broadband/NBN, WiFi, Public WiFi, Mobile Data.

3. For the eSafety Office to explore initiatives that place pressure on social media companies to implement age-ratings consistent with those for films set by the Australian Classifications Board; supply of safe accounts and default settings for under-18 account holders; and penalties issued for non-compliance. (More recommendations can be found under current digital approaches in the report.)

**Current education approaches**

Whilst the government acknowledges its role in providing readily available educational materials for teachers, the programs currently provided by the government do not adequately address pornography. Schools are not supported and equipped by government-led curriculum or policies that address pornography harms, including exploitation, grooming, addiction and mental health vulnerabilities.

Key recommendations that arose from a review of current initiatives include:

1. In conjunction with state and territory departments of education, implementation of nationwide mandatory holistic sexuality and relationships curriculum, informed by a Critical Porn Analysis and public health approach to pornography harms.

2. For relevant stakeholders named in the Government Response to the Senate Inquiry, to update current education approaches, content and advice offered to educators, parents and students; more specifically, the iParent, Student Wellbeing Hub and ThinkUKnow programs and resources.

3. For the eSafety Office and government to implement a comprehensive nationally-mandated framework underpinned by preventative policies, education and restorative policies. This broadens the scope to sectors which include (but are not limited to) family, child and youth services; mental health and allied health professionals; universities and sporting and community groups.

(More recommendations can be found under current education approaches in the report.)

**Providing robust solutions with Porn Harms Kids Stage 1 Action Plan 2017-2020**

From our investigation, review and exploration of research pertaining to the issue, along with consultation with experts from around the world, *Porn Harms Kids* provides a robust Action Plan that incorporates legislative, digital, and education solutions. These are underpinned by a public health approach and informed by a critical porn analysis educational response.

The Stage 1 Action Plan presents positive frameworks and strategies in the spirit of working towards a collaborative, coordinated and integrative response to decrease children’s access, harms and vulnerabilities to online pornography, thereby, creating a safer digital future for our children and young people. (Refer to the diagram at the top of the executive summary for the Stage 1 Action Plan, and within the report for details.)

**Porn Harms Kids calls upon the Australian public and key stakeholders**

Stand with us, in unified voice for the protection of our children and young people, and bring this conversation out of the shadows as a matter of national urgency. By adding your voice through signing our pledge, it shows that there is widespread societal support to prevent access to, and protect children from pornography harms.

A unified voice underpins changes in legislation and policies, enables improvement to prevention in the digital environment, and affirms the need to build a national, robust educational strategy.

Learn more about the eChildhood pledge here: [www.echildhood.org/pledge](http://www.echildhood.org/pledge)

We welcome continued conversations and collaboration to assist government, key stakeholders and other decision makers to understand the scope of this issue, and implement effective solutions to deal with pornography as a form of online sexual abuse upon our children and young people.
Online safety for children and young people

RESOURCE SHEET FROM CHILD FAMILY COMMUNITY AUSTRALIA

This paper provides information about online safety for service providers and other professionals who work with families and children. It will help professionals to provide support to families and to discuss ways to keep children and young people safe online. Relevant resources are included to share with parents and carers.

INTERNET USE

Information technology is now used in virtually every home in Australia. Ninety-seven per cent of households with children aged under 15 years have access to the internet, with an average number of seven devices per household. Ninety-nine per cent of young people aged 15-17 years are online, making this age group the highest users. They spend an average of 18 hours per week online (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2016).

Social networking, entertainment and educational activities are the most popular activities online for children and young people, and there can be many positive outcomes of this use. Young people are increasingly exposed to an open and collaborative online culture, which allows them to access information, maintain friendships and relationships with family, and create and share content (Collin, Rahilly, Richardson, & Third, 2011).

However, children and young people are at a dynamic stage of development in which risk-taking behaviours and emerging decision-making can lead to negative outcomes (Viner, 2005). As a result, parents need to remain actively involved and vigilant regarding the nature of their children’s online activities, and to continue to communicate and negotiate with children and young people about their use of technology.

Parental involvement in the safe use of technology should start from a child’s first use, and parents continue to be a critical influence in children and young people being responsible digital citizens and engaging in online activities safely.

WHAT IS ONLINE SAFETY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Online safety is often used interchangeably with terms such as internet safety, cybersafety, internet security, online security and cyber security, although these terms can relate to different aspects of online engagement.

For example, the risk of using computers, mobile phones and other electronic devices to access the internet and social media is that breaches of privacy may lead to fraud, identity theft and unauthorised access to personal information. Other risks for children and young people include image-based abuse, cyberbullying, stalking and exposure to unreliable information or illicit materials.

Criminal offenders are highly skilled at exploiting new modes of communication to gain access to children and young people, and children and young people can easily access adults-only material if there are no protective mechanisms in place (Queensland Police, 2014).

These situations can place a child or young person’s emotional and physical wellbeing at risk. This is particularly the case where little or no attention has been paid to monitoring use, communicating with children or young people about use or securing the device being used. In these cases, and for the purpose of this paper, online safety is a child protection issue.

While online safety is important for protecting children and young people from dangerous and inappropriate websites and materials, this does not mean that parents should discourage their children from using digital technology. The challenge is to help children and young people enjoy the benefits of going online while having the skills and knowledge to identify and avoid the risks.

OFFICE OF THE ESAFETY COMMISSIONER

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner (the Office) is an independent statutory office that was created by the Enhancing Online Safety for Children’s Safety Act 2015. The Office was established in 2015 to coordinate and lead the online safety efforts across government, industry and the not-for-profit community.

The Office operates a world-first reporting scheme to deal with serious cyberbullying that affects Australian children. There is also a reporting function for Australians who come across illegal content online and the Office is taking the lead on tackling image-based abuse through an online portal and reporting tool.
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BEING 13 YEARS OLD
As part of their privacy policies, social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube specify that users must be at least 13 years old. Parents may be unaware of this requirement.

The minimum age stipulations are based on the requirements of the US Congress as set out in the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act. The act specifies that website operators must gain verifiable parental consent prior to collecting any personal information from a child younger than 13 years old (O’Keeffe et al., 2011). Many social networking sites avoid this requirement by setting a minimum age of use at 13 years old but there is no onus on website operators to verify the age of users.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PARENTS TO HELP CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE USE THE INTERNET
The following tips will help parents provide support and guidance for children and young people as they engage in online activities.

Monitoring and supervision
Monitoring a young person’s online activities includes checking that websites are appropriate for a child’s use and keeping an eye on the screen.

If parents are willing to provide children and young people with access to mobile phones and computers, then a responsibility to understand, model appropriate behaviour and communicate the basics of good digital citizenship should come with the access.

Advice on monitoring often focuses on keeping the device in a shared family area, yet in the age of wireless connections and internet-enabled smartphones this is increasingly difficult. Similarly, young people may control their own online details, such as passwords and web browser histories.

Parents can address these difficulties in the following ways:
• Develop a plan about internet use in partnership with family members. This can include:
  – Details of appropriate online topics
  – Privacy setting checks
  – Physical locations for internet use and parental monitoring (looking over the shoulder or line of sight supervision)
  – Limits on screen time
  – Limits on when wireless internet connections and/or mobile devices will be available, and
  – What may be identified as inappropriate posts on online profiles.
• An internet-use agreement may be useful to develop with older children. Many schools have internet-use agreements that can be replicated and Queensland Police have produced an example (www.police.qld.gov.au/programs/cscp/personalSafety/children/childProtection/).
• Take an active role in discussing the benefits of online activities with children and young people, and what strategies they may use to respond to cyberbullying, other negative online behaviours or if they unintentionally access adult content. Discussions can include how these rules apply wherever they are online, including at home in their bedroom and when they are outside the home, for example at a friend’s place.

Protection
Parents can be encouraged to:
• Find out whether their child’s school has an internet policy and how online safety is maintained. Inquiries should focus on the strategies used to educate children and young people about online safety and cyberbullying, whether parents are involved in cyberbullying initiatives and developing cyberbullying policies.
• Point out to children and young people that some websites on the internet are for adults only and are not intended for children or young people to see. Discuss what strategies a young person might adopt if they access this content.
• Use a family-friendly internet service provider (ISP) that provides proven online safety protocols. Filtering tools should not be solely relied on as a solution. Open discussion and communication with young people about monitoring and supervision is needed.
• Empower children and young people to use the internet safely by mutually exploring safe sites and explaining why they are safe. It’s also important to educate children and young people on why it’s not safe to give out any personal details online.

Engagement and communication
Parents can be encouraged to:
• Discuss with their children how they may recognise the difference between online information that is helpful or unhelpful, true or false, useful or not useful. For example, government or education websites may contain more accurate information than opinions that are posted on an unfamiliar person’s blog.
• Increase their own knowledge and become more adept at engaging in online activities and exploring social networking sites that are being used by their children. Learning alongside children and young people can be an effective way to achieve this – parents can be encouraged to let their children be the experts and help them to understand the tools they are using online.
• Focus on the positive aspects of the internet – spend time looking together at sites that are fun, interesting or educational. Find sites together that are age and stage appropriate for their children.
• Encourage their child to question things on the internet. When looking at a new site, their child could ask questions such as, “Who is in charge of this site?”, “Have I found information or is it just opinion?” or “Is this site trying to influence me or sell me something?”
Report
If you have found any material online that you believe is prohibited or inappropriate, you should contact the eSafety Hotline (www.esafety.gov.au/complaints-and-reporting/offensive-and-illegal-content-complaints). For further information, go to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner (www.esafety.gov.au) where a range of resources is available for parents and caregivers.


RESOURCES AND CAMPAIGNS
A number of education and awareness campaigns promoting online safety target children, young people and parents. Campaigns are most effective when they combine information with training and skill acquisition. Websites, leaflets and other information-only resources may have a limited effect when delivered in isolation.

Information provided through interactive training programs, online quizzes, video games and formal curriculum assessment are more likely to translate to more secure conduct online (Connolly, Maurushat, Valie, & van Dijk, 2011). For this reason, parents are encouraged to facilitate their children’s engagement with age-appropriate interactive learning materials related to online safety.

There are many online safety resources available. The following is a selection of these, including campaigns that provide targeted and interactive online learning opportunities for children, young people and parents.

Be Deadly Online: www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources/classroom-resources/be-deadly-online
Be Deadly Online is an animation and poster campaign about online issues such as bullying, reputation and respect for others. It was developed with indigenous writers and voice actors for Australians. There are resources for children and young people, as well as schools and communities.

This resource is a hub of information about e-safety issues, including how to protect yourself and your personal information, where and how to report risky online behaviour, cyberbullying and how to stay safe online.

This resource sheet provides information about safety and good practice when images of children and young people are displayed online. It contains information about legal issues and privacy laws, classifications of online images, good practices and emerging issues around images, and lodging a complaint about a website. It also has links to additional resources.

Raising Children Network – Pre-teens/teenagers entertainment and technology
Articles on entertainment and technology for pre-teens: http://raisingchildren.net.au/entertainment_technology/pre-teens_entertainment.html
Articles on entertainment and technology for teenagers:
The Raising Children Network provides information on common concerns such as cyberbullying, sexting and access to pornography, as well as practical advice for keeping pre-teens and teens safe online.

Technology and teenagers – ReachOut: https://parents.au.reachout.com/skills-to-build/wellbeing/technology-and-teenagers
This site provides information to help parents understand why young people use technology, the risks associated with being online, problems to look out for and ways to help their children use technology safely. The Things to try: Technology link on this page provides a series of practical tips on what parents can do to help young people manage technology use in a safe and balanced way.

The following is a selection of Australian websites that focus on different aspects of online content and online safety that may also be useful.

This guide assists Australian internet users to understand Australia’s co-regulatory framework for online content and the legal obligations of internet service providers and internet content hosts. The Communications Alliance is a non-profit, private sector industry body that (among other things) develops best practice rules for the industry in Australia in conjunction with the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

A collection of Australian Government sites with initiatives and resources focused on protecting Australian internet users.

This paper from the Child Family Community Australia information exchange outlines definitions and statistics related to cyberbullying. It explores the differences between cyberbullying and offline bullying, and parents’ roles and involvement in preventing and responding to cyberbullying incidents. The aim is to inform practitioners and professionals of ways to help parents clarify their roles, and to provide parents with the tools to help their teenaged children engage in responsible online behaviour.


The School A to Z website provides practical help for parents about keeping kids safe online. It includes Ten Cybersafety Tips Every Parent Should Know, and information from experts about cybersafety. Useful information is also provided for parents of children who are bullied.


This website provides advice for schools on cybersafety and the responsible use of digital technologies. It covers a range of topics including bullying, cybersafety strategies, and practical steps and actions relating to online incidents.

Stay Smart Online – Australian Government: www.staysmartonline.gov.au

This website is a one-stop shop for Australian internet users, providing information on the simple steps they can take to protect their personal and financial information online. The site has informative videos, quizzes and a free alert service that provides information on the latest threats and vulnerabilities.

Tagged: www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources/classroom-resources/tagged

Tagged is short film for young people about a group of high school friends who experience first hand the life consequences caused by cyberbullying, sexting and a negative digital reputation. Tagged has received acclaim for its realistic depiction of teenagers and the problems they can face in a digital world. Since its launch in September 2011, Tagged has become a popular resource for Australian teachers and parents and has attracted more than 645,000 views on YouTube.

ThinkUKnow – Internet Safety Program: www.thinkuknow.org.au

ThinkUKnow is an internet safety program delivering interactive training to Australian parents, carers and teachers. Created by the UK Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre, ThinkUKnow Australia has been developed by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and Microsoft Australia. Users will need to subscribe to the site to gain access to its tools and resources.


Published by the Queensland Police Service’s Task Force Argos, this brochure provides information for parents on internet safety for children and young people. It discusses social networking, mobile phones, webcams and online gaming, and it provides information about the types of things to look out for that may indicate children could be at risk.

Some of the more popular social networking sites provide information specifically tailored to help parents understand their child’s use of the site.

For example:

- Facebook: Help Your Teens Play it Safe: www.facebook.com/safety/groups/parents
- Instagram: Tips for Parents: https://help.instagram.com/154475974694511
- Twitter: Safety on Twitter: https://about.twitter.com/en_us/safety.html
- YouTube: Policies, Safety and Reporting: https://support.google.com/youtube/topic/2676378?hl=en&visit_id=1-636697265679505651-3408639241&rd=1

REFERENCES


NOTES


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ONLINE GROOMING
What is it?
Online grooming is when an adult makes online contact with someone under the age of 16 with the intention of establishing a sexual relationship. The offence occurs in the communication phase so no physical contact needs to occur for police to be involved.

Carly’s Law was introduced in 2017 and makes it a crime for an adult to use a carriage service to commit an act in preparation for, or planning to, cause harm to or engage in or procure sexual activity with a minor. Importantly, this will include people who misrepresent their age.

People who groom children and young people online may pretend to be another young person, while others are upfront and may manipulate them into thinking their relationship is okay.

In some cases an offender might start to build a gradual friendship and then introduce sexual concepts or they might raise requests for sexualised content including images or videos.

Many offenders are very good at manipulating children and young people and may be inappropriately communicating with many different young people at the same time.

And it doesn’t just occur on social media platforms. The rise of apps with direct message or ‘chat’ functions means that anyone, anywhere can start up a conversation.

Many apps don’t require identification to sign in so people can use fake names or ages to start an account – not everyone online is who they say they are.

Some apps are even designed to find people close by.

Check out our Resources page (www.thinkuknow.org.au/resources/factsheets) for factsheets on the most popular apps and our Protecting your accounts page (www.thinkuknow.org.au/protecting-your-accounts) for privacy information.

What can I do?
Here are our tips that can help with safer online interactions:

• We encourage children and young people to avoid talking to people online they don’t know offline.
• Ensure that contacts are people your child has met in real life, trust and are safe to communicate with on a regular basis.
• It is important young people understand what information isn’t okay to share with people online.
• Make children feel comfortable to approach you for help when something isn’t right and deal with the issue, rather than the technology.
• Nothing in life is free – warn your child about accepting gifts from people they don’t know.

• Parents and carers also need to be mindful that they themselves could be targeted by offenders through social media or other online interactions to get access to their child.

Online grooming is when an adult makes online contact with someone under the age of 16 with the intention of establishing a sexual relationship. The offence occurs in the communication phase so no physical contact needs to occur for police to be involved.

If you suspect online grooming ...
Keep an eye out for these signs from your child:

• Change in the use of sexual knowledge or language – as part of the grooming process, an offender may start by introducing adult sexual concepts into the conversation.
• Aggressive or secretive behaviour when questioned about their online activities – this may seem typical of young people but when it is outside their normal behavioural pattern, it may be an indication that they are engaging in behaviour online they don’t want you to know about. It is also possible they are being manipulated by an offender online.
• Unexplained gifts or cash – these could be both
tangible and virtual gifts sometimes given as a gesture of friendship or as payment for some behaviour on the child’s part.

Trust your instincts. If you are concerned about the possibility your child, or you know of a child, who is at risk from sexual abuse, report it (www.thinkuknow.org.au/report-online-child-sexual-exploitation).

It is never too late to report suspicions of online grooming, and the sooner it is identified, the less harm may occur. Find out more about how to report (www.thinkuknow.org.au/report).

Consider seeking further support from counselling services (www.thinkuknow.org.au/need-advice#further-support-services).

Be aware of how to block and report on the games, apps and sites your child is using so that you can take quick action if someone makes them uncomfortable online.

**ONLINE CHILD EXPLOITATION**

Research indicates that more and more child exploitation material is being shared via social media, and is being produced by children themselves.

Young people might think it’s OK to share images of themselves – but they don’t realise that this image could end up anywhere.

**What is it?**

Child exploitation material can be any material that shows someone under the age of 18 in sexual activity or posed in a sexualised way.

The online child exploitation process includes accessing, sending or uploading this material online. Online grooming can also be involved in this process.

Sometimes young people might search for pornography of people their own age. This material is illegal. It doesn’t matter how old you are, you can still be charged with producing, possessing or distributing it.

**Why should I be aware?**

Young people need to be aware of what messages they are sending about themselves that may appeal to online child sex offenders.

*Child exploitation material can be any material that shows someone under the age of 18 in sexual activity or posed in a sexualised way.*

You don’t know who is going to see your image and where it will end up.

As we’ve already outlined, sharing nude or provocative images of people under 18 is a criminal offence.
What can I do?
It is important to educate young people on how to recognise inappropriate or suspicious behaviour online, such as requests for sexualised material.

Viewing child exploitation material is not only illegal; it can have harmful psychological and emotional consequences.

Research shows that sexualised images and exposure to pornography shape young people’s notions of gender, sexual expectations and practices.

For this reason, we strongly encourage you to talk to young people about respectful relationships and direct them to ethical sources of information about sex and relationships. Visit our support page (www.thinkuknow.org.au/need-advice) for more information.

Read more about inappropriate content on our safe searching page (www.thinkuknow.org.au/safe-searching).

Top tips!
• Avoid inappropriate interactions or sexual requests online by blocking or reporting users
• Discuss ethical sexual relationships and appropriate online interactions with your child
• Reiterate that pornography does not replicate or promote healthy sexual relationships
• Be open to your child coming to you for help if someone online makes them feel uncomfortable
• Know what content your children might be accessing online
• You might consider filtering or other parental controls (www.thinkuknow.org.au/parents-portal#parental-controls) for your devices
• If you come across content that is inappropriate or illegal, report it (www.thinkuknow.org.au/report).

If you have seen something online that makes you or your child uncomfortable – think about contacting support or counselling services (www.thinkuknow.org.au/need-advice#further-support-services).

PERSONAL IMAGE SHARING (SEXTING)
Once you hit ‘send’, you never know where your personal images might end up. Read on to find out more about personal image sharing (sexting).

What is it?
Personal image sharing or ‘sexting’ is the creating, sharing, sending or posting of sexually explicit messages or images via the internet, mobile phones or other electronic devices. Other terms used to describe sexting include sending pics or nudes (‘Noodz’).

Young people may engage in this behaviour for various reasons including intimacy with their partner, in the hope to gain a partner, the belief that it is the ‘norm’ in young relationships gained from seeing other young people to it, the media, or through exposure to pornography.

Ghost, decoy or vault apps can be used to hide images on smartphones. Popular choices include the Secret Calculator, Hide It Pro and NQ Vault.

There is also a trend toward apps for sharing ‘erasable’ media, where young people send images believing that they ‘disappear’ after a short time (Snapchat is a popular example of this). However, entire deletion cannot be guaranteed.

From research conducted, there are varying statistics about the incidence of sharing personal sexual content, meaning issue is difficult to quantify. However, they suggest that most sexting behaviour is consensual and that young people don’t believe known consequences affect them.

Why should I be aware?
Once you’ve taken and shared an image, you lose control of who sees it and where it ends up. Not everyone will respect your privacy and keep your photos private.

Relationships can break down over time, so while you might be happy for someone to have your personal image or video today, tomorrow might be a different story.

If you share someone else’s content, you are breaking their trust. If the person is under 18, you might also be committing a crime.

Not only can the sharing of this content impact on relationships, it can also impact on reputation, future career prospects and may involve potential criminal charges (depending on the content – see Online child exploitation for more information).

Young people need to be aware of what messages they are sending about themselves that may appeal to online child sex offenders, potentially leaving them at risk of online grooming or unwanted contact.

What to do if you receive an image?
If you receive personal sexual content from someone, you need to respect them because it is not your:
• Picture – you have no ownership of the photo and no rights to storing, sending or copying it
• Body – you are not the one in the picture so you are not the one likely to be most hurt
• Decision – what you do with it. It is better not to have these photos at all, but if someone has sent it to you it is most likely because they trust you or because they expect you not to share that image on. By sharing the photo with others, you have violated that trust and are potentially committing a crime.

Once you hit ‘send’, you never know where your personal images might end up.

There are serious legal consequences if content is being shared with the intent to deliberately harm, embarrass or to humiliate someone. This includes threatening to do something with someone’s images which might cause them distress.

If you choose to share someone else’s personal content under the age of 18, you could even be registered as a sex offender which has implications for your future, including employment opportunities and the ability to travel overseas.
Need help? Here’s what to do ...
Don’t panic – everyone makes mistakes!
Nothing is so bad you can’t tell someone – speak to a trusted adult, counsellor or community health services.

Hopefully in most cases there are no serious consequences, but you should be aware that there is no guarantee that others won’t see your images in the future.

Here are some ways you can manage your content:

• Search for yourself online to find out what your ‘digital shadow’ looks like.
• If an image of yourself appears on a website or app, and you have not consented to the use of this image, you contact the administrator to seek its removal.
• Contact the person who has shared the photo or video and ask them to remove it and delete all copies.
• Keep evidence by taking screenshots and noting the web addresses of the content. You can also use another device to take photos of the content.
• Google can stop specific pages containing inappropriate images appearing in image search results. This will only help with Google searches. The videos and photos will still be searchable using other search engines such as Yahoo.
• Make sure webcams are covered when not in use.
• If you need support, talk to someone you trust or, seek help (Kids Helpline is a great resource).

If you find your child has been creating, sending or receiving sexual content ...

The first step is, don’t panic!

• Talk to your child and try to find out as much about the matter as you can.
• Use your discretion to manage the issue and avoid judgement and labelling.
• Research suggests that sexting can be a part of building relationships.
• Encourage open discussions with your child about what content they might be sharing, why they do it or why they would do it.
• Consider seeking advice from support services or your child’s school.

If you believe the incident is malicious or may be a result of grooming, contact your local police.

What to expect if the police become involved ...

Each state and territory police may deal with sexting cases differently.

However, under Commonwealth law, an image of someone under the age of 18 in which they are naked, in a sexualised pose or engaged in a sexual act may be considered child exploitation material.

The taking, sending and receiving of these images may be offences carrying a maximum penalty of 15 years’ imprisonment, even if it is an image of them.

Image-based abuse is also commonly referred to as ‘revenge porn’. Revenge porn is a term commonly used in the media, but it can be misleading as many cases of image based abuse are not about ‘revenge’.

These laws were designed to deal with adults who offend against children, but some instances of ‘sexting’ may also meet the requirements of these offences.

Police investigations will generally focus on the incidents of sexting where the image has been spread to external parties for malicious or exploitative reasons.

IMAGE-BASED ABUSE

Image-based abuse is when intimate, nude or sexual images are shared without the consent of those pictured. This includes real, altered (e.g. photoshopped) and drawn pictures and videos but can also be just the threat of an image being shared.

Image-based abuse is also commonly referred to as ‘revenge porn’. Revenge porn is a term commonly used in the media, but it can be misleading as many cases of image based abuse are not about ‘revenge’.

Image-based abuse may also include ‘sextortion’.

‘Sextortion’ occurs when someone threatens to share your private images if victims don’t provide images of a sexual nature, sexual favours or money.

You may be targeted by extortionists through social networking sites, dating, or adult sites. It might be
Someone known to you – or it could be stranger. It’s an evolving issue, so it is difficult to say how common it is in Australia.

However, it has been reported by international law enforcement agencies that there has been a significant increase in sextortion activity against children and young people, typically aged 10 to 17.

There are many complex motivations for committing image-based abuse and we must acknowledge that these situations of abuse can be very different and can be committed through various forms of communication, not just social media.


**Are you being threatened?**

- If someone is threatening you – talk to a trusted adult, even if you’re embarrassed or think you’ll get into trouble.
- Paying scammers or extortionists is not encouraged – once you have paid or complied with their demands, nothing stops them from targeting you again.
- Block their emails and their accounts so they can’t contact you.
- Consider getting the police involved – they’ll need as much information as possible to track the person down.
- Save any emails or conversations you might have had with the person.
- Seek help from support services, such as Kids Helpline.

**What if your image is online?**

Once an image or video is sent or posted online, it can be difficult to know where that content will end up – even when using seemingly private services.


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*Australian Federal Police. Protecting yourself from abuse online.*

TALKING TO TEENS ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY
ADVICE FOR PARENTS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE ESAFETY COMMISSIONER

It can be hard to always be there to help guide your teen as they navigate increasing independence, their identity, friendships and intimate relationships. Let’s face it, some teens may look to pornography as a way to learn about sex, without having to have an awkward conversation with a parent.

There is a risk that the messages pornography teaches can harm a teen’s sense of self, damage relationships, be unhelpful for positive relationships, affect their psychological wellbeing and cause (in some cases) dangerous experimentation leading to health risks and even medical emergencies.

HOW TO HAVE THE CONVERSATION
Maintaining trust between you and your teen is vital when discussing sensitive topics like pornography. When talking with your teen, remember that attempts to control their thinking or behaviour could result in them closing up and becoming defensive. They may ignore you, and possibly even do the opposite of what you suggest. The “My house, my rules” dialogue might squash trust.

Use the following conversation tips to get the ball rolling with your teen.

Ask: 1 want to talk with you about one of those awkward topics. Is that OK? (They rarely say “no”, but if they do, respect that, and then set up a time where you can talk.)

Ask: Are kids at school looking at pornography? Do they talk about it?

Ask: Have you ever seen it? If they answer yes, ask, “Did someone show it to you? Or did you find it yourself?” If they found it themselves, find out what made them seek it and ask how it made them feel. Focus more on feelings and less on what they actually saw.

Reassure your teen they are not in trouble, and then find out what you can about the circumstances. Also note that if you know they have been exposed to (or are viewing) pornography, it is best to tell them what you know rather than getting mad at them for lying. Any conversation is likely to be ineffective if you are upset and they are defensive.

Describe: If you think your teen has been viewing pornography regularly, help them understand their response to it. You could explain how the brain releases chemicals that make us feel good if we see something we like. Because we like how the chemical reaction in our brain feels, we might keep repeating the behaviour.

Ask: Have you seen your friends talking about wanting to copy things they have seen online?

You might also ask whether they have seen others being affected by viewing pornography. Some people experience lowered self-esteem, or have unhealthy relationships with their boy/girlfriend as a result of wanting to have ‘porn-inspired’ experiences.

Discourage them from viewing it. You may wish to help their understanding by using resources that focus on relationships recommended by their teacher or school counsellor.

Ask your teen how they feel about your request that they avoid viewing pornography, and then work together to find ways to reduce the chance of seeing explicit content online. Options might include asking them to avoid certain sites that are known to contain pornographic content, avoiding keywords in searches that might lead to explicit material, and avoiding certain searches on google images. Reduce temptation by, as far as practicable, using devices in open areas at home and keeping doors open.

You might wish to use technology to help restrict access, such as ensuring that safe-search options are selected on devices, setting rules for screen time and time of use and installing parental controls that can block access to adult sites. If you want to do this, talk to your teen first so that you maintain open lines of communication and trust.

Reassure: Let them know it’s always OK to talk with you if they have questions or concerns.
THE EVEN-MORE-SERIOUS STUFF

There are some additional, important topics you may wish to go over with your teen. Expand on them in your conversations based on your teen’s interest, responsiveness, maturity, and exposure to pornography.

Nudes/naked selfies

This is an important topic to discuss but quite a sensitive one. One great strategy to use is to discuss the impact of sending naked selfies in general, or related to another teen.

Ask your teen if they have been asked to send (or have sent) nude images. Ask how that has worked out for friends and others. Has it been shared beyond the trusted relationship? What would happen if it got out? How would it affect reputations?

Ask if they have ever received nude images. Find out if they regard this as pornography. Explain that while your concern for them is mostly about safety, reputation management, and protecting them from harm – there are also legal issues to consider. In most Australian states it is pornography. If it were found, your teen could be charged with the creation and distribution of child exploitation material and be charged with sex offences. They could also be placed on the sex offender register.

LESSONS FROM PORNOGRAPHY VERSUS REAL LIFE

What we see in pornography rarely represents what we’d like to experience in real life. The following topics can provide food for thought for your teen.

Consent, respect and safety

Talk to your teen about the importance of always having permission to touch, hug, or kiss another person. Pornography often provides graphic illustrations that teach the opposite. In short, pornography is not real life.

Help them understand that if someone says “no”, they should respect that decision. And if your child says “no”, they should make sure their “no” is heard and not argued with as a “perhaps” or a “yes”. Also let them know that consent can be removed at any time, so it is OK to say “no” after saying “yes” earlier.

Teach them that disrespect, violence and abuse are not OK, and that they are responsible for their own safety and being respectful towards others.

Pornography can sometimes portray violence and unrealistic notions of sexual relationships. It may teach that group sex and anal sex is what everyone wants. Important lessons about sexual safety (such as using condoms) are often absent. Help teens recognise that what they see in pornography is rarely safe, and intentionally pushes limits to offer increased arousal to viewers.

Intimacy in close relationships

Physical relationships are usually shared with someone special to us. Intimacy is about more than physical closeness. It is about emotional closeness, and building trust.

These factors are often missing in pornographic images and video material. Talk to your teen about what this means for them and in their relationships.

Don’t be pressured

Explain that the actors appearing in pornography are being paid to show they are enjoying the sex. If our teens are in an intimate relationship, they should only do what they feel comfortable doing and avoid being pressured to do otherwise.

Body image

Explain that many actors in pornographic images and films have surgically ‘enhanced’ bodies, such as breasts, vaginas, and penises. Drugs are sometimes used to maintain erections for abnormally long durations. Most people do not look like the actors in explicit videos, pictures or magazines.

Performance

Talk to your teen about the performance of actors. They are doing what they do for money. There are multiple takes of scenes and storylines are contrived. Most pornography is nothing more than fiction and make believe.

WRAPPING IT UP

Your conversation with younger teens will typically conclude with you asking your teen to avoid pornography, and discussing ways to ensure they do so.

Conversations with older teens are best if they are less about telling them what to do, and more focused on deferring to them. Sometimes, the harder you push, the more they might resist.

Consider asking:

“Where do you stand on viewing pornography?”

“What discussion changed the way you see it?”

It is a good idea to clearly set out your expectations and rules for the home. Reinforce that if they do see something they don’t understand, they can come and ask you about it – no topic is off limits.

Conversations around healthy sexuality set your teen up for more positive relationships, greater relationship satisfaction, and higher levels of wellbeing.

If we are not talking with our teens about sex (and pornography), they may seek information from friends or the internet – and they may get the wrong information. They are curious. They do want to know.

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Pornography and its Harms 41
WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO TO ADDRESS PORNOGRAPHY’S INFLUENCE?

Each school community is different, but there are some basic steps involved in creating an effective response to pornography’s influence in any school, according to this advice from *It’s time we talked*, the website of the Reality & Risk project.

The most effective approach to addressing porn’s influence – or any of the many other issues affecting students’ wellbeing – involves collaboration between schools, parents and the broader community. In this whole school approach, the key messages are reinforced across the school community, through the school’s policies, culture, staff, parents, community partnerships and student education.

Each school community is different, and it is important that these differences are taken into account – particularly on such a sensitive issue. However, there are some basic steps involved in creating an effective response to pornography’s influence in any school.

1. Get people on board

The first step in any school will be when someone recognises the importance of addressing porn’s influence, and becomes an advocate or driver. The driver in your school may be a sexuality or health teacher, but they may be a school nurse, counsellor, parent or principal. Or you may have more than one driver.

In this whole school approach, the key messages are reinforced across the school community, through the school’s policies, culture, staff, parents, community partnerships and student education.

**Why schools? It’s time we talked**

Porn is here and it’s here to stay. In order to equip students for a healthy, fulfilling life in the 21st century, schools must address porn’s influence, according to *It’s time we talked*.

Schools can play a significant role in addressing the influence of pornography for a range of reasons:

- Research identifies schools as an effective site for health promotion and a priority site for violence prevention education.
- Many schools are familiar with health promotion frameworks and are already engaged in related and complementary work, such as programs on respectful relationships, cybersafety, violence prevention and sexuality education.
- Schools contribute significantly to students’ sexuality education, a context in which many of pornography’s messages – about, for example, gender, body image, consent and sexual safety – can be appropriately addressed.
- Schools can engage students about the influence of explicit sexual imagery as part of a comprehensive curriculum, with the input of highly skilled professionals and access to quality resources.
- Schools can develop partnerships with parents and community organisations to address these issues.
- Principals and teachers have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to protect students from any harm that should have reasonably been foreseen, including harms that may be encountered within the online learning environment, and foreseeable harms now include the impact of explicit sexual imagery.
- Increasingly, schools are required to respond to incidents related to explicit sexual imagery – including incidents in which sexual imagery of students has been circulated – that can affect student wellbeing and school engagement, as well as potentially having legal consequences.
- Schools can themselves be sites of young people’s exposure to explicit sexual imagery.
- Most young people’s exposure to explicit sexual imagery occurs via technology. It is now common practice in many schools (and therefore homes) for individual students to own internet-enabled laptop computers or tablets, and in some instances this is compulsory. While there are many arguments for the value of student access to technology, schools’ promotion of the types of technology through which young people are exposed to pornography brings accompanying responsibilities to limit young people’s exposure and to support parents to manage this technology at home.

**NOTES**


Wherever the momentum begins, leadership support is an essential foundation to an effective whole school approach to addressing issues related to pornography. Informed and supportive principals and other decision-makers can facilitate the kinds of changes and access to resources required for a comprehensive approach. Without leaders’ support, any strategies implemented are likely to be limited in reach and impact. Ideally, a small team of people – a school leader, teachers, wellbeing staff, parents and students – will work together to develop a whole school plan.

Leadership support is an essential foundation to an effective whole school approach to addressing issues related to pornography.

2. Learn about the issues
A solid understanding of the issues is an important foundation to an effective school-based approach. Learn about how pornography has become mainstream, the nature of the material to which young people are exposed and how it is affecting their sexual understandings and experiences.

3. Review what your school is already doing
All schools will already address the influence of pornography at some level; for example, through policies addressing acceptable use of technology and students learning about respectful communication. But few schools have developed a considered, comprehensive approach to the issues.

   Review your school’s existing curriculum, policies, professional learning, parent engagement, community partnerships, culture and student education in order to learn what your school is already doing well, and identify any gaps.

4. Develop a whole school approach
Using the review results, develop and implement a plan to address pornography’s influence through:
- Professional learning and resources for relevant teachers and wellbeing staff
- Sequential, age-appropriate curriculum
- Parent engagement and education
- Relevant policies
- Partnerships with community organisations
- A school ethos, culture and environment that reinforces the key messages
- Regular evaluation.

FIND OUT MORE
www.itstimewetalked.com.au/schools/getting-support-schools/

Reality & Risk is a violence prevention project that supports young people, parents, schools, government and the community sector to understand and address the influence of pornography. Reality & Risk was designed and developed by Maree Crabbe and David Corlett.

It’s time we talked (Reality & Risk project).
What can schools do to address pornography’s influence?
UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH SEXTING AND IMAGE-BASED ABUSE

headspace explains what to do if you have experienced image-based abuse

It's never been easier to meet others, date and hook up online. Apps like Tinder, Bumble, Grindr, as well as private messaging apps like Snapchat and Peek, have made flirting online or on a phone much more common.

Sharing sexual messages and photos online or by phone is called 'sexting'. Sure, it can be harmless and fun – that's probably why almost 50 per cent of young Aussies do it. But sometimes things can go wrong.

Sexts might get sent to the wrong person by accident in the heat of the moment, or they may be shared privately or posted online to try to hurt or embarrass someone. It's important to know that if images are shared without your consent, it's not your fault. The person who shared it is in the wrong.

SEXTING AND THE LAW

Did you know that asking for, taking, having or sharing a sexual photo or video of someone under 18 can actually be child pornography in Australia?

Even if someone only takes a sexually explicit picture of themselves or their partner, it can be illegal. It may also have serious legal consequences, which can end up affecting lots of other parts of a person's life.

Sometimes images can end up in the wrong hands. Unfortunately, stories of 'image-based abuse' are becoming a lot more common. This can also be a crime. There are different laws about image-based abuse in different states. You can find out more about what the laws are in your state on the Lawstuff website (www.lawstuff.org.au).

What is image-based abuse?

Image-based abuse is when intimate or sexual photos or videos of someone are shared without their permission. Sometimes the person may have given permission for the photo or video to be taken or they’ve taken the photo themselves, but then it is shared without their consent. At other times the person isn't even aware that the images were taken. People may also get these kinds of images sent to them against their wishes.

Threatening to share images – even if the images are never actually shared – is also a type of image-based abuse. This is called 'sextortion' and for some people is even more distressing than having the images shared.
**How common is image-based abuse?**

One in five Australians have experienced image-based abuse, with females and males equally likely to experience image-based abuse. Young people aged between 16 and 29 are one of the most at-risk groups. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people living with a disability and people who identify as LBGTIQ, are also particularly vulnerable.

**SEXTING**

**Should I send a sext ...?**

While most young people decide to sext because they want to, others feel pressured into sexting.

It’s never OK for someone to pressure you into sending a sext – you can say no. Finding a way to say no can be tough, so you might want to think about saying something like:

- “You’ve got to be joking!”
- “In your dreams”
- “No way – who knows where those pics will end up!”
- “That’s not something I’m into”

If you are thinking about sexting, it’s worth remembering that relationships change. Someone you love or trust one day, might be someone you fall out with the next. Photos and videos can be forwarded on purpose or accidentally. Imagine what you would do if an image ended up in the hands of your boss, teacher, or even parents or grandparents. Once shared, these images can be in cyberspace forever.

Before sending a sext, it might help to ask yourself ...

- Would I be OK for that photo to be my profile picture?
- Do I feel pressured to send the image? Am I trying to impress someone?
- Am I worried about what could happen after I send it?
- Would I mind if the person I’m sexting showed my sext to other people? If it went viral?

**RESPECT**

**What can I do if I’ve experienced image-based abuse?**

Once photos or videos have been shared online without your consent, it can be very tricky to have them removed. But there are some things that you can do. To help you remember these steps, we’ve put them into the word ‘RESPECT’.

**R – Removal of images and video**

If you want an image removed from a website or app, you can contact the administrator and ask them to remove it. If you feel safe, you could contact the person who has shared the photo or video and ask them to remove it and to delete all copies.

**E – Evidence**

To help police and other services get the photos or videos taken down, collect evidence by taking screenshots and copying the web addresses. To find any other websites that might have your image/video, you can do a ‘reverse image search’. Having the support of a friend when searching for photos and videos can help. Try not to focus on any comments on the websites – they can be very hurtful.

**S – Service involvement and reporting**

If you are under 18: you can report image-based abuse to the Australian eSafety Office and they will help get the photo or video taken down. You can also report it to your local police. (Google ‘police’ along with your suburb and state for contact details). Make sure you take evidence with you.

If you are over 18: you can report the photo or video to the Australian Cybercrime Online Reporting Network. The report will be assessed and might be passed on to the police for investigation. To find out more about what the laws are in your state, visit the Lawstuff website. You can also ask for free, confidential legal support using Lawmail.

**P – Personal details**

Sometimes when images are shared, other personal details are shared at the same time, like the person’s phone number or online profile details. If you are receiving any online messages or calls that are nasty or just unwanted, keep records of these contacts and block them.

**E – Emotions**

Many young people feel a range of emotions when they’ve experienced image-based abuse: betrayal, embarrassment, shame, shock, a sense of loss of power or
control, fear and anger. Strong emotions can feel uncomfortable and distressing, but they are also natural. They will pass. It might help to share these feelings with trusted people in your life to help you get through.

C – Care for yourself
Be kind to yourself – remember it is not your fault. It can be helpful to give yourself some time off your phone and computer, and care for yourself. Think about what you would say to a good friend if they were going through this and try to say the same things to yourself.

T – Talk
Talk to friends and family who will be understanding. You may be feeling very vulnerable after having your trust betrayed, so surrounding yourself with people who you trust can be very comforting. Remember, what happened is not your fault and it doesn’t change you as a person ... You will be able to move past this.

WHEN SHOULD I GET HELP?
Image-based abuse can have a serious effect on someone’s mental and physical health. If you have been trying the ‘RESPECT’ tips for some time without improvement it’s really important to get the support of a professional – like your doctor or a mental health professional.

There are mental health professionals at headspace centres and eheadspace (online and phone support) who can help. If you are at school or uni, you may also be able to access a counselling or student wellbeing service.

What can I do if I see images being shared without a person’s permission?
If you see images being shared of another person without their permission, try to step in and speak up on their behalf (in an assertive but not an aggressive way). You could also let the person in the photo know you are there for them, as they may be feeling very alone.

Remember: Speaking up can be hard because there is often a fear about what might happen if you defend someone else. It’s important to think carefully about your safety before you try to stop the situation. If you cannot safely take action yourself, report it to a trusted adult and let them know you want to remain anonymous.

For more information or support, visit eheadspace (https://eheadspace.org.au) for online and telephone support or find your nearest headspace centre (https://headspace.org.au/headspace-centres).

OTHER USEFUL LINKS
- ESafety Office, www.esafety.gov.au – This is the Australian eSafety regulatory body. They can help with image-based abuse, cyberbullying, complaints about explicit or illegal content online and other safety issues online.
REVENGE PORN: WHAT TO DO IF YOU’RE WORRIED YOU COULD BE A VICTIM

What if you’ve shared a sensitive photo with an intimate partner in the past and you’re worried that it could get out; or you’ve heard rumours that a photo of you has been shared, but you don’t have proof; or you want to ensure a particular photo doesn’t turn up on Facebook. An interview with expert Dr Nicola Henry by Michael Collett for ABC News

If you know you’re a victim of image-based abuse, that’s one thing – you should take the steps recommended by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner. But if you’re not sure if you’re a victim, you might be confused about what to do.

Dr Nicola Henry, an expert in image-based abuse from RMIT University, has the following advice for people in these sorts of situations.

If you know someone has an image of you, can they be legally compelled to delete it? What if the photo was initially taken or shared with them consensually?

“In Germany, a court ruled that individuals can request that their intimate images be revoked at any time, even if the images had not been disclosed or distributed,” Dr Henry said.

“By way of comparison, currently in Australia a person is not legally compelled to delete intimate images from their mobile phone, computer or other personal devices unless the image has been taken without that person’s consent (e.g. as in ‘upskirting’ or using a surveillance device to capture a private act or a person’s private part), or if the person is under the age of 16 or 18, and deemed incapable of consenting to share a nude or sexual image.

“If the image has been shared without consent, some jurisdictions impose penalties for failure to remove those images from personal devices. For instance, New South Wales in August this year passed new image-based abuse laws, which among other things, empowers courts to impose a maximum sentence of two years and/or fines of up to $5,500 for failure to remove images.

“Another avenue for image-removal could involve intervention orders or apprehended violence orders where the order includes a requirement that a person delete images and/or refrains from sharing those images in the future.

“For instance, in Western Australia in 2016, the Western Australian government empowered the courts to restrain an individual from sharing intimate images.

“Overall, in many cases, if an ex-partner, partner, friend, colleague, family member or stranger has an intimate image of you, they are generally not required by law to delete it.”

Are there active steps you can take to find out if an image of you has been shared?

“Many social media and other internet sites have policies and practices prohibiting the sharing of non-consensual nude or sexual images,” Dr Henry said.

“For instance, victims can request through Google that search results including them are removed, but these reporting mechanisms are only effective when a person knows that images of them have been shared on these platforms.

“If a person suspects that an image of them has been shared, they can go onto various websites to search for those images and then make a request for the content to be removed from those sites.

“Another option is to do a Reverse Google Images Search where victims can discover where images of them are being hosted.”

What is your advice for people who suspect they might be a victim of image-based abuse but don’t have firm proof?

“If a person suspects a nude or sexual image (photo or video) of them has been shared without their consent, but they don’t have any proof, as a first step I’d suggest that they visit the image-based abuse portal of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner where they will find useful advice and support to help them take action and get those images removed,” Dr Henry said.

“Many social media and other internet sites have policies and practices prohibiting the sharing of non-consensual nude or sexual images.”
"Also, a new pilot initiative between the Australian eSafety Office and Facebook has been recently announced so that people who are worried that someone might share an image of them on Facebook (as well as Instagram, Messenger and WhatsApp) are able to contact the eSafety Office and complete an online form, before then being asked to privately send the image to themselves through Messenger.

"A community operations analyst from Facebook will then access the image and create what’s known as a ‘hash’ of the image, which essentially is a unique ‘digital fingerprint’. Then if a person does indeed attempt to upload or share the image on Facebook, they will be automatically blocked and the image won’t be able to be shared.

"Once the hash has been created, the person will be asked to delete the image from Messenger. Facebook will then go ahead and delete the image as well.

"The use of ‘digital DNA’ is not new – this technology was first developed by Microsoft in 2009 to prevent child exploitation material from being circulated on the internet.

"Alternatively, if someone knows that an image of them has been shared on Facebook, they can also make a report to Facebook, who will use photo-matching technology to prevent the image from appearing again on Facebook and its subsidiaries.

"It is important to note that these measures won’t prevent images being shared on other platforms. Also, some victims may feel uncomfortable sending the image to themselves and/or giving Facebook representatives access to the images.

"This could also be problematic if the victim is underage (owing to laws around sending and receiving child exploitation material), but I haven’t seen much mention of this in the media since the pilot was announced."

If you hear rumours of an image being shared, is that enough to go to police with? Or do you need further evidence?

“If you hear rumours that an image of you has been shared, but you don’t have any evidence, I would imagine that it would be difficult for police to do anything, although it will depend on the circumstances of the case,” Dr Henry said.

“For instance, if someone has threatened to share images of you, that is a criminal offence in a number of Australian jurisdictions, so police may be able to charge someone for these types of offences, even if the image doesn’t exist in the first place, and even if they do not go on to share the image.

“Evidence, however, is always going to be imperative for police to make an arrest and to proceed with a criminal trial, which is why it’s really important that victims take screenshots and preserve text messages and other evidence.”

How common is it that image-based abuse occurs without the knowledge of the person in the image?

“Our 2016 nationwide survey found that 1 in 5 respondents had experienced at least one form of image-based abuse,” Dr Henry said.

“We define that to include one of three behaviours: the non-consensual taking or creation of nude or sexual images; the non-consensual sharing or distribution of nude or sexual images; and making threats to take or share nude or sexual images.

“Our findings are likely to be an underestimate as they only capture those participants who were made aware that someone had taken or shared images of them.

“However, there is no way of knowing how common it is for people to be taking or sharing images without the knowledge of the person depicted in the image.

“We do have some insight into this problem owing to a recent investigation of the sites of distribution – a study that we recently completed in collaboration with the Office of the eSafety Commissioner. The results of this study will be released soon.”

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WORKSHEETS AND ACTIVITIES

The Exploring Issues section comprises a range of ready-to-use worksheets featuring activities which relate to facts and views raised in this book.

The exercises presented in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond. Some of the activities may be explored either individually or as a group.

As the information in this book is compiled from a number of different sources, readers are prompted to consider the origin of the text and to critically evaluate the questions presented.

Is the information cited from a primary or secondary source? Are you being presented with facts or opinions?

Is there any evidence of a particular bias or agenda? What are your own views after having explored the issues?

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Brainstorm, individually or as a group, to find out what you know about the harms of pornography.

1. What is pornography? If providing examples, be general and non-explicit in your descriptions.

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2. What is ‘sexting’, and is it legal in Australia?

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3. What does the term ‘online grooming’ mean, and who can it affect?

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4. What is ‘revenge porn’, and what can be done if it happens to you?

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Complete the following activities on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

“Schools increasingly are required to respond to incidents relating to explicit sexual imagery, including ‘sexting’ incidents, involving the circulation of sexual imagery of students.”

Reality & Risk Project, Why is porn an issue for schools?

Consider the above statement. In the spaces below write one to two paragraphs addressing each of the following sexting-related scenarios. Provide answers expressing your ideas and advice on dealing with the various aspects of sexting and how to manage various situations.

1. A friend comes to you in confidence and asks for your advice. She has received a direct message with a naked photo from her boyfriend and he is now asking her to send one back in response. She isn’t comfortable having received it and doesn’t want to send one back, but doesn’t know what to do. (Include in your answer advice for possible ways to manage both receiving and responding to the message.)

2. You have sent a sexy image to your new partner but are having second thoughts and really want them to delete it, but don’t know how to approach him/her about your wishes. (Include in your answer reasons why someone might consider sending a sexy image, and offer reasons why someone could rethink the action, along with possible ways to deal with the situation.)

3. A 15 year-old-girl at your school recently sent a sexually explicit photo to a boy she liked in her class. He didn’t delete the image and shared it on multiple social media platforms. He has also been showing it to his friends at school. She isn’t aware of what he has done. (Include in your answer whether you feel she should be told, who could help her, reasons why the boy may have shared the image of her, and also address how you think she might feel when she finds out.)
Complete the following activities on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

“Parents ... *need to explain that pornography is staged; it is fiction. Most people do not look like porn “stars” and most people do not behave as they do. Pornography is not a sex manual.*”

Campbell, M, *Kids who watch porn won’t necessarily turn into sex offenders.*

Consider the above statement and form into groups of two or more people to discuss pornography versus real life. Using the spaces below compile a list of points on each of the following topics to question how pornography differs from real-life behaviour and the impacts it can have. Include in your discussions the message you feel that porn expresses, and what it means for people in real-life situations. Discuss your ideas with other groups in the class.

1. **Body image**

2. **Respect and consent**

3. **Performance expectation**

4. **Sexual health**
Complete the following activities on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

“Many social media and other internet sites have policies and practices prohibiting the sharing of non-consensual nude or sexual images.”

Dr Nicola Henry, image-based abuse expert from RMIT University.

Use the internet to research policies relating to pornography for three (3) social media platforms. Identify each platform and describe how it is generally used; outline their policy, how it is implemented and the consequences of breaches. Also include information on their respective procedures for reporting images or videos that breach policy, and requests for removal of content. Include your sources and resource links.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM 1

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM 2

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM 3
Complete the following activities on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

In groups of two or more people, write design briefs for education and awareness campaign posters promoting ways for people to protect themselves from the following three (3) areas of online abuse. In your brief, explain the target audience, the size of the poster and where it could be displayed for maximum effect – also include possible images and content. Consider whether photos or illustrations would be more appropriate for the most effective educational impact on your topic. In your content proposal provide headlines and text that will explain clearly what each respective form of online abuse is, its negative impacts, and the ways in which your target audience can protect themselves from harm. Also include contact details of organisations for further help.

**ONLINE GROOMING**

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**ONLINE CHILD EXPLOITATION**

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**IMAGE-BASED ABUSE**

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Complete the following multiple choice questionnaire by circling or matching your preferred responses. The answers are at the end of the following page.

1. What is the minimum user age included in the policy for most social networking sites?
   a. 8 years old
   b. 10 years old
   c. 13 years old
   d. 15 years old
   e. 18 years old
   f. 21 years old

2. Introduced in 2017, what is the name given to the law making it a crime for an adult to groom minors online, including misrepresenting their age?
   a. Kevin’s Law
   b. The Grooming Law
   c. Carrie’s Law
   d. Danny’s Law
   e. The Creepers Law
   f. Carly’s Law

3. Which of the following are names are given to apps used to hide images on smartphones? (select any that apply)
   a. cloud
   b. decoy
   c. smart
   d. vault
   e. ghost
   f. secret
   g. invisible

4. What is the name given to the form of blackmail in which someone threatens to share another person’s intimate images with others, even if the images are not actually ever shared?
   a. nooning
   b. spamming
   c. pictortion
   d. ghosting
   e. ransomware
   f. sextortion

5. In what year was the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act implemented to oversee the management of issues regarding digital activities of children and young people in Australia?
   a. 1985
   b. 1990
   c. 1995
   d. 2000
   e. 2005
   f. 2010
   g. 2015
6. Image-based abuse is most commonly experienced by which of the following groups of people? (select any that apply)
   a. People aged 50 to 75 years
   b. People who identify as LGBTI
   c. Women aged between 30 to 45 years
   d. People with disability
   e. Young people aged 16 to 29 years
   f. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
   g. Young people aged under 16 years

7. Which of the following are considered examples of image-based abuse? (select any that apply)
   a. Taking a photo up a woman’s skirt without permission
   b. Filming sexual assault
   c. Sharing images of a woman playing sport
   d. Photoshopping a person into a sexually explicit photo
   e. Sharing ‘selfies’ of your friends
   f. Sharing a nude image of someone else without their permission
   g. Stealing intimate images from someone else’s digital device

8. Respond to the following statements by circling either ‘True’ or ‘False’:
   a. In Australia, a person is not legally compelled to delete intimate images from their mobile phone, computer or other personal devices unless the image has been taken without that person’s consent. True / False
   b. One in five Australians have experienced image-based abuse. True / False
   c. Asking for, taking, having or sharing a sexual photo or video of someone under 18 is not considered child pornography in Australia. True / False
   d. Pornography is the best way to learn about sex. True / False
   e. Once a nude photo is shared online it’s easy to remove. True / False
   f. Image-based abuse can have a serious effect on a person’s mental and physical health. True / False

MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS

1 = c ; 2 = f ; 3 = b, d, e, f ; 4 = f ; 5 = g ; 6 = b, d, e, f ; 7 = a, b, d, f, g ; 8 – a = T, b = T, c = F (It is legally considered to be child pornography), d = F (Pornography is nothing like real life and should not be used as a way to learn about sex), e = F (Removing shared images from online is a difficult and complex process with no guarantee they will be removed permanently), f = T.
Nearly half of children between the ages of 9-16 experience regular exposure to sexual images (AIFS, Online pornography: Effects on children and young people). (p.1)

Pornography is associated with unsafe sexual health practices such as not using condoms and unsafe anal and vaginal sex (ibid). (p.2)

Exposure to explicit online content may cause children and young people to develop different ‘sexual literacies’ to previous generations (ibid). (p.3)

Available evidence suggests that exposure to online pornography by children and young people increases harmful gender stereotypes; unhealthy and sexist views of women and sex; higher rates of acceptance of violence against women; sexually coercive behaviour by young men; and contributes to unrealistic understandings of sex and sexuality (Relationships Australia, Exposure of young people to pornography). (p.4)

Porn shows people having sex without a condom but it’s really unsafe as 50% of porn actors have a life-long sexually transmitted disease (Kids Helpline, Porn can be harmful). (p.7)

In real life when somebody says ‘no’ to sex you need to respect that – it’s not OK to pressure people into sex or try and convince them like they do in porn (ibid). (p.7)

A study has found around 80% of young men said they watched pornography weekly, and among the women who watched pornography, nearly two-thirds viewed at least monthly (Morgan, A, Pornography the norm for young Australians). (p.8)

Frequent users of pornography are more likely to be male and well-educated (ibid). (p.9)

Young people identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (GLBTIQ) watch pornography more frequently and from a younger age (ibid). (p.9)

Sexting is illegal when it involves anyone under 18 or to harass people of any age (Kids Helpline, Sexting and the impacts on young people). (p.13)

Young people can be charged and potentially registered as a sex offender if they create, receive or transmit a sexualised image or video of a person under 18 (ibid). (p.13)

1 in 5 Australians aged 16 to 49 have experienced some form of image-based abuse in their lifetime (1800RESPECT, Image-based abuse). (p.14)

People who experience image-based abuse are almost twice as likely as those who haven’t experienced image-based abuse to report experiencing high levels of psychological distress, including symptoms of moderate to severe depression and anxiety, and feeling very fearful for their safety (ibid). (p.14)

Under Australian federal law, it is a criminal offence to use a carriage service (such as the internet or a mobile phone) to menace, harass or cause offence (ibid). (p.15)

Research has shown that the most common types of image-based abuse are taking sexual or nude images without consent (20%), distributing images without consent (11%) and threatening to share images (9%) (RMIT, Not just ‘revenge porn’ – image-based abuse hits 1 in 5 Australians). (p.16)

The Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act 2015 (Cth) was implemented in Australia to oversee the management of issues regarding children and young people’s digital activities (AIFS, The effects of pornography on children and young people). (p.18)

Criminal offenders are highly skilled at exploiting new modes of communication to gain access to children and young people, and children and young people can easily access adults-only material if there are no protective mechanisms in place (AIFS, Online safety: CFCA Resource Sheet). (p.31)

As part of their privacy policies, social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube specify that users must be at least 13 years old (ibid). (p.32)

Carly’s Law was introduced in 2017 and makes it a crime for an adult to use a carriage service to commit an act in preparation for, or planning to, cause harm to or engage in or procure sexual activity with a minor. Importantly, this will include people who misrepresent their age (AFP, Protecting yourself from abuse online). (p.35)

Many apps don’t require identification to sign in so people can use fake names or ages to start an account – not everyone online is who they say they are (ibid). (p.35)

Research indicates that more and more child exploitation material is being shared via social media, and is being produced by children themselves (ibid). (p.36)

Child exploitation material can be any material that shows someone under the age of 18 in sexual activity or posed in a sexualised way (ibid). (p.36)

Sometimes young people might search for pornography of people their own age. This material is illegal. It doesn’t matter how old you are, you can still be charged with producing, possessing or distributing it (ibid). (p.36)

Pornography can sometimes portray violence and unrealistic notions of sexual relationships. It may teach that group sex and anal sex is what everyone wants. Important lessons about sexual safety (such as using condoms) are often absent (Office of the eSafety Commissioner, Talking to teens about pornography). (p.41)

Many actors in pornographic images and films have surgically ‘enhanced’ bodies, such as breasts, vaginas, and penises. Drugs are sometimes used to maintain erections for abnormally long durations. Most people do not look like the actors in explicit videos, pictures or magazines (ibid). (p.41)

In Australia a person is not legally compelled to delete intimate images from their mobile phone, computer or other personal devices unless the image has been taken without that person’s consent, or if the person is under the age of 16 or 18, and deemed incapable of consenting to share a nude or sexual image (Collett, M, ‘Revenge porn: What to do if you’re worried you could be a victim’). (p.47)
Age verification
An age verification system, also known as an age gate, is a technical protection measure used to restrict access to digital content to those to are appropriately aged, such as alcohol and tobacco advertising, internet pornography or other forms of adult-oriented content, video games with objectionable content, or to remain in compliance with online privacy laws that regulate the collection of personal information from children.

Cybersafety
Also referred to as ‘online safety’, ‘internet safety’, ‘e-safety’ or ‘digital safety’. It is defined as the safe and responsible use of information and communication technologies.

Grooming
Online grooming is the illegal act of adults making contact with a child online for the purpose of establishing a sexual relationship. Often this will be via a social networking site, but it may also be through other online services.

Harmful content
Refers to children accessing or being exposed to, intentionally or incidentally, age-inappropriate sexual or violent content, or content otherwise considered harmful to their development.

Image-based abuse
Image-based abuse occurs when intimate, nude or sexual images are distributed without the consent of those pictured. This includes real, altered and drawn pictures and videos.

Internet filter
Also called content-control software, it restricts or controls the content an internet user is capable to access, especially when utilised to restrict material delivered via the web, e-mail, or other means. Content-control software determines what content will be available or be blocked.

Offensive or illegal content
This material may include topics, images or other information that are prohibited in Australia or could be damaging to young people online, such as sexually explicit content.

Online child sexual abuse material
Material that shows or describes child sexual abuse or other offences against children is illegal under Australian laws. It is an offence to: access, possess, distribute, produce, advertise or make available child pornography or child abuse material; procure, groom or engage in sexual activity with a person under 16 years of age; or send indecent communication to a person under 16 years of age.

Parental controls
Parental controls are available for most devices, either through pre-installed settings that can be activated yourself on a device, or via the installation of free or commercial software. These tools help parents monitor and limit what their children do online.

Pornography
Often abbreviated as ‘porn’, pornography is the portrayal of sexual subject matter for the exclusive purpose of sexual arousal. Pornography may be presented in a variety of media, including books, magazines, postcards, photographs, sculpture, drawing, painting, animation, sound recording, phone calls, writing, film, video, and video games. It is most prevalent and freely accessible via the internet, where it is available to children and young people, in spite of legal age restrictions.

Prohibited online content
Some content that is considered inappropriate may also be prohibited or illegal in Australia. Prohibited content is defined with reference to the National Classification Code categories RC, X18+, R18+ and MA15+.

Prostitution
The business or practice of engaging in sexual activity in exchange for payment.

Revenge porn
The non-consensual sharing of intimate images which encompasses a range of behaviours including: images obtained (consensually or otherwise) in an intimate relationship; photographs or videos of sexual assault/s; images obtained from the use of hidden devices to record another person; stolen images from the ‘cloud’ or a person’s computer or other device; and pornographic or sexually explicit images that have been digitally altered (or ‘photoshopped’) to show the victim’s face.

Sexting
The sending of provocative or sexual photos, messages, or videos, generally using a mobile phone or webcam. It can also include posting this type of material online. Young people often consider sexting as a way of connecting in a relationship.

Sexualisation
Sexualisation occurs when: a person’s value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics; a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy; a person is sexually objectified (made into a thing for others’ sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making); and/or sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person, such as a child or young person.
Websites with further information on the topic

1800RESPECT – national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service  www.1800respect.org.au

Australian Institute of Family Studies  www.aifs.gov.au

eChildhood  www.echildhood.org

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation  https://headspace.org.au

It’s time we talked (Reality & Risk project)  www.itstimewetalked.com.au

Kids Helpline  www.kidshelpline.com.au

Lawstuff (National Children’s and Youth Law Centre)  www.lawstuff.org.au

Office of the eSafety Commissioner  www.esafety.gov.au

Think You Know (Australian Federal Police)  www.thinkuknow.org.au

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