

Age
Rating

13+

Online Pornography:

Young people's
experiences of seeing
online porn and the
impact it has on them



Middlesex
University

NSPCC

Children's
Commissioner

Age rating

This report includes information and discussion that is not suitable for children under the age of 13.

What is this report about?

How does online porn affect young people? Do they choose to watch it or just see it by accident? How is it different for different age groups? Do boys and girls have different experiences? Do young people want any help or support?

This report helps to answer these questions. It is produced by The Children's Commissioner for England, NSPCC and Middlesex University.

The information in this report comes from research conducted by Middlesex University and it shows what young people have said about porn. The report will be used to help government, schools, parents and others understand what young people experience and how they feel about online porn.

What is online porn?

When we say 'porn' in this report this is what we mean:

Images and films of people having sex or behaving sexually online. This includes semi-naked and naked images and films of people that you may have viewed or downloaded from the internet, or that someone else shared with you directly, or showed to you on their phone or computer.

Who did we speak to?

1001 young people aged between 11 and 16 years old completed an online survey. They came from all over the UK and were invited to take part in this research by ResearchBods. Smaller groups of young people joined in with online focus groups and forums. Everyone who took part in the research had permission from their parents/carers and no one's personal details were shared.

What we found out:

Lots of young people, particularly younger ones, have never seen porn.

Those who have seen porn mostly saw it for the first time by accident (e.g. by a pop-up ad).

Sometimes young people are shown porn by others and some young people look for porn themselves.

At **11** most young people haven't seen any porn.

By **16** most young people have seen some porn.

Once they have seen porn, young people are likely to see it more often. Some older children actively search for it, but very few younger children deliberately look for porn.

When they first see porn, 27% of young people feel shocked by it.

Young people who are repeatedly exposed to porn feel less negative and less anxious or disgusted by the porn that they see.

Most children and young people have never taken or shared a naked picture of themselves.

Children and young people want information, advice and support about porn that is suitable for different ages and genders. They want to be able to easily get safe, reliable and private information that is fun and relevant to them.

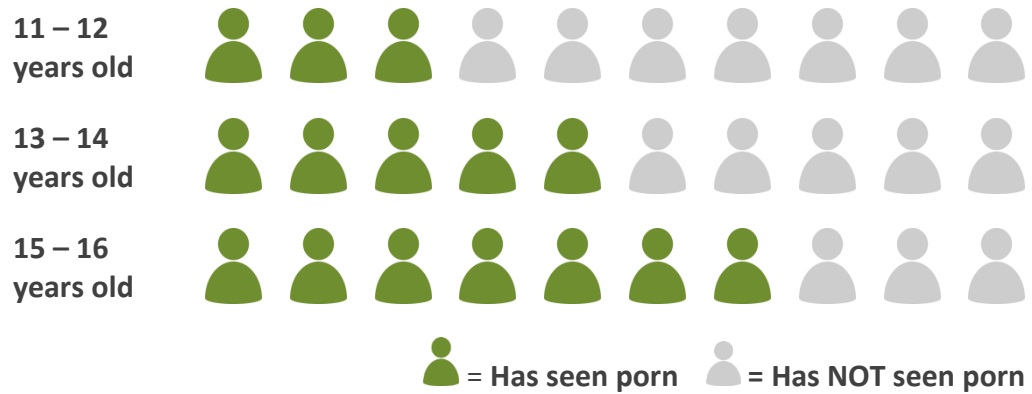
What do young people think about porn?



Young people who said that they had seen online pornography were asked whether they agreed with a number of possible statements about it. These are the top 6 options that they chose. Please note that "arousing" and "exploitative" were options for 13-16 year olds; all other options mentioned here were given to 11 -16 year olds.

Who has seen porn?

Differences between age groups

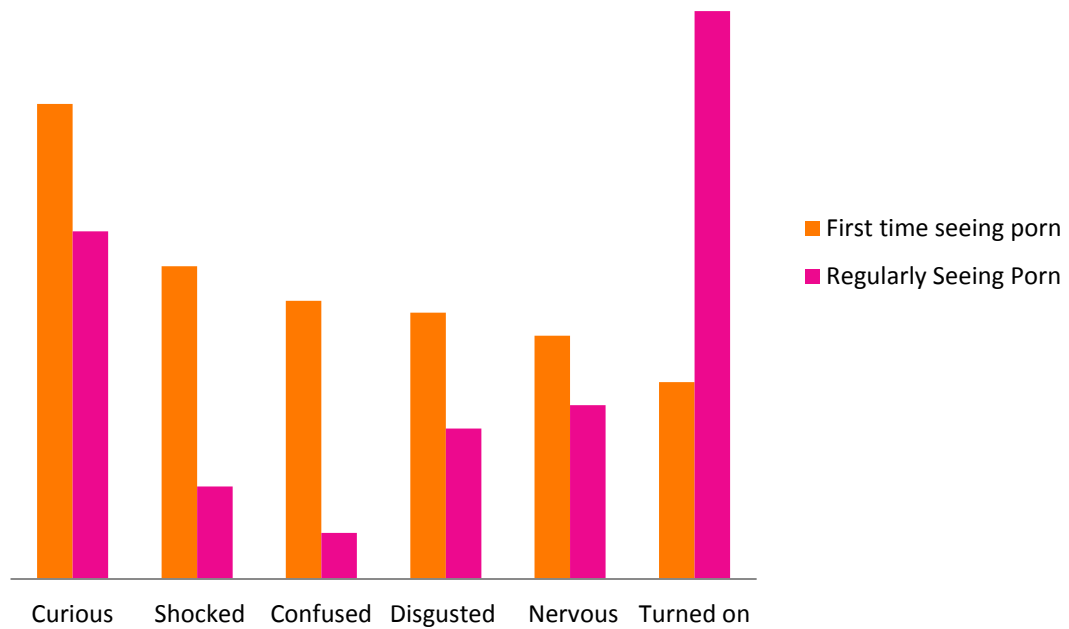


Differences between boys and girls

Older boys are more likely to have seen porn and to watch it more often than girls or younger boys.

- 25% of girls who have seen porn say they have searched for it.
- Just over half of boys who have seen porn say they have searched for it. (59%)
- More boys feel positive about porn than girls.
- Older children, particularly boys, are more likely to say they want to copy what they have seen in porn.

How do young people feel when they see porn online?



First time seeing porn:

41%

Curious

27%

Shocked

24%

Confused

23%

Disgusted

21%

Nervous

17%

Turned on

Regularly seeing porn:

30%

Curious

8%

Shocked

4%

Confused

13%

Disgusted

15%

Nervous

49%

Turned on

What young people said:

(Please note that these quotes are copied here, exactly as typed by the young people who took part in the research)

How young people feel when seeing porn

"Sometimes [I feel] disgusted - other times alright" (Boy, 13);

"Often when on Tumblr, someone would have reblogged a post, or a post leading to recommendations of pornographic .gifs. Normally, these take me by surprise and make me feel quite uncomfortable" (Girl, 13-15).

"I didnt like it because it came on by accident and i dont want my parents to find out.." (Girl, 11-12).

"1st time was strange - I didn't really know what to think. But now it's kinda normal; sex isn't as taboo" (Boy, 13-14);

"Bad for watching it. Like i shouldnt really be seeing it" (Girl, 14);

"At first I wasnt sure it was normal to watch it, my mates have talked about watching it so I dont feel bad watching it now" (Boy, 15-16);

"Because young people are now open to seeing this kind of stuff you get used to it so it's not as shocking but is still think it's disgusting and degrading" (Girl, 13-14);

"Before I was confused about how and why, but now I understand more as my friends have told me, sex ed classes. So I know why" (Girl, 15-16).

Why young people watch porn

"Sometime accidentally you type in something and it takes you somewhere else" (Girl, 14)

"Young people are curious about sex - and they are probably influenced by older people to view it" (Girl, 15);

"to have a better understanding of things" (Boy, 14)

"Well - they sort of want to seem more grown up than they are" (Girl, 16);

"Wonder what other peoples bodies look like" (Boy, 11)

Porn V real life...

Five out of ten boys, and four out of ten girls, think porn is realistic.

More boys than girls want to copy what they see in porn.

75% of young people say that porn has not taught them about safe sex or positive relationships.

More boys than girls think that porn has taught them about relationships and safe sex.

"It teaches people about sex and what it is like to have it - but I think it teaches people a fake understanding of sex - what we see on these videos isn't what actually happens in real life" (Girl, 14);

"If me and my partner like it then we did more but if one of us didn't like it we didn't carry on" (Boy, 15-16).

Photos and messaging

Sexting

Young people say 'sexting' is when you write and share explicit or intimate words with others – usually a boyfriend or girlfriend.

'Naked selfies'

A 'naked selfie' is a photo or video someone takes of themselves which includes a naked body, an intimate body part or a sexual act.

Most young people have never taken or shared a naked selfie.

A small proportion of young people (13%) have taken a topless selfie, and even fewer have taken a fully naked selfie (less than 3% of all the young people asked about it).

Not all of the young people who had taken a naked selfie said that they had wanted to do it, and some of them said that they had been pressured to take the picture or video by someone else.

Sharing with others

Just over half (55%) of young people who have taken a naked selfie have shared it with someone else – sometimes they shared it with people they didn't know at all.

Boys shared naked selfies more often than girls, but more girls shared naked selfies after being asked to send them on. More boys sent naked selfies to other people without being asked. Most young people, especially younger children, don't know how to get a photo taken down from websites or apps.

Things that will be helpful

Here are some of the things young people said that would make a difference:

Information

Most young people want advice on sexual health and relationships, not just the biology of sex.

Most young people would like more information on how to get a photo taken off a website or app.

School

Most young people think that more relevant relationships and sex education in school, that includes discussion about the effects of seeing porn, would help them to deal with the feelings and behaviour that porn can lead to, even though lessons can be awkward.

Parents

Some young people think it is good to talk with parents, especially with something that is upsetting you – but... awkward!

Age checking on websites

Most young people think it would be good to have better checks on people's ages before they can see porn online – especially to protect younger children.

Online help

Most young people think videos and online help would be good, but they would have to be safe, trustworthy and private.

Not everything should be done online – talking with others in person, or on the phone can help too.

Include everyone

Young people think that help about porn must be right for different age groups and genders and it should include information for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Help for you

If you want to talk to someone about porn or anything that is upsetting you:



Childline

ChildLine is a private and confidential service for children and young people up to the age of 19. You can contact a ChildLine counsellor about anything - no problem is too big or too small.

Telephone: 0800 1111

Web: www.childline.org.uk



The Mix / Get Connected

Get Connected is the UK's free, confidential helpline service for young people under 25 who need help, but don't know where to turn.

Telephone: 0808 808 4994

Web: www.getconnected.org.uk

More Information about us

The logo for NSPCC, consisting of the letters "NSPCC" in a large, bold, green, sans-serif font.

www.nspcc.org.uk

The logo for the Children's Commissioner, featuring the words "Children's Commissioner" in a multi-colored, sans-serif font.

www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk



www.mdx.ac.uk

