

Easy access to web porn 'is making teen boys see girls as sex objects' and encouraging them to engage in risky sexual behaviour

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- **Study calls for urgent action by ministers, schools and parents to 'develop children's resilience to pornography'**

By Daniel Martin

Easy access to online pornography encourages teenage boys to see girls as sex objects and to engage in risky sexual behaviour, according to a major study.

It lifts the lid on the corrosive effect of hardcore porn on children, concluding that those who access adult images and videos are more likely to lose their virginity at a younger age.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner said there are even indications that boys who look at violent porn are more likely to become sexually aggressive.



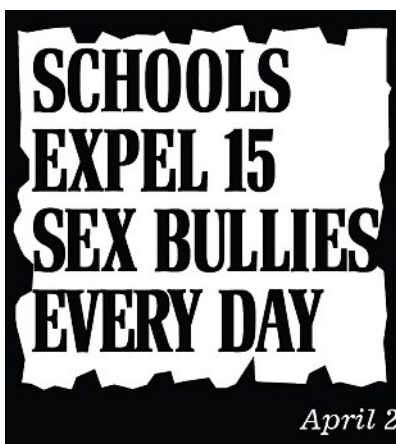
On tap: Easy access to online pornography encourages teenage boys to see girls as sex objects

The study called for urgent action by ministers, schools and parents to 'develop children's resilience to pornography' after finding that a significant number have access to sexually explicit images.

Secondary schools were criticised for concentrating on the mechanics of sex during sex education classes rather than the importance of loving relationships and the report called for primary school pupils to be taught about the difference between 'good' and 'bad' touching. Urging parents to discuss porn with their children to warn them of the dangers, it said that simply denying access to the internet can make them more curious and more likely to search for it.

The Daily Mail has been campaigning for an automatic block on online porn to protect children, with over-18s only able to access it if they go through a strict age verification check.





The report by the Office of the Children's Commissioner is entitled 'Basically ... porn is everywhere' after a comment given to researchers by a teenage boy to one set of researchers. It reviews 41,000 pieces of literature on the impact of porn.

Worryingly, it found that children are more likely to stumble across porn than to deliberately access it – bolstering the case for an online block.

But it also revealed that many are seeking out online porn as an alternative to the poor sex education they receive from parents and teachers.

Researchers concluded that the type of porn being accessed by children now is of a 'different order' to the sort seen by their parents in magazines.



Maggie Atkinson, children's commissioner for England, said: 'We are living at a time when violent and sadistic imagery is readily available to very young children ... for years we have applied age restrictions to films at the cinema but now we are permitting access to far more troubling imagery via the internet.

'It is a risky experiment to allow a generation of young people to be raised on a diet of pornography.'

The study found access to porn can lead to young people engaging in 'risky behaviours' such as unprotected anal sex and the use of drugs and alcohol during sex.

It also said porn can influence children's sexual beliefs, developing unrealistic attitudes about sex, bad attitudes towards relationships and a belief that women are sex objects.

A 'significant proportion' of children are exposed to or access pornography, which can occur both online and offline, the report said.

It called on the Department for Education to ensure all schools provide relationship and sex education. There was some research linking exposure to pornography with aggressive behaviour, although more research was needed, it said.

The authors concluded: 'Viewing pornography can lead to the development of antagonistic and unhealthy views towards women and sexuality and can contribute to creating environments of less disapproval of unwanted sex.

'Pornography has been linked to sexually coercive behaviour among young people and, for young women, viewing

pornography is linked with higher rates of sexual harassment and forced sex.' John Brown, of the NSPCC, said online pornography and related issues such as 'sexting' are 'major child protection issues for the current generation of young people'.



He added: 'Sadly, it's now possible to access hardcore, violent internet pornography on mobile phones and other devices out of sight of parents and teachers.'

'We know through calls to ChildLine that young people are being exposed to hardcore pornography online, and girls tell us they are being pestered, coerced and even forced into mimicking these videos.'

'We all need to do our bit to educate young people about what safe and appropriate relationships are, and the internet industry must help parents to block pornography from young eyes.'

A spokesman for the Department for Education said: 'Sex and relationship education is compulsory in maintained secondary schools – it is up to primary schools whether they teach SRE.'

'We are strengthening the curriculum ... from the age of five, children will be taught how to stay safe online.'