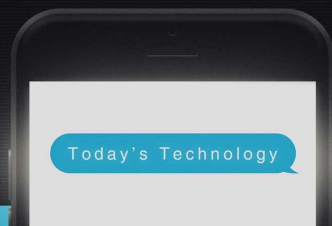


007

DANGER ZONE

Parenting In The Digital Age



FROM GUTENBERG
TO THE LITTLE SCREEN

THE STATISTICS
THE BRAIN
THE ACCESS
THE DAMAGE
THE FUTURE

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THE STATISTICS

Teenagers (Ages 13-17): A 2022 report indicates that 73% of teens aged 13 to 17 have watched pornography online, with more than half (54%) reporting multiple viewings.

Young Adults (Ages 18-29): Approximately 44% of men in this age group reported watching online adult content in the past month.

Adults (Ages 18-73): A study found that 91.5% of men and 60.2% of women reported consuming pornography in the past month.

By Gender: Men are four times more likely than women to report having watched pornography in the past month (44% vs. 11%). Up to 42% of women in the United States reported watching pornography within the last year.

By Consumption Medium and Consumption: In 2021, 98% of pornography accessed by young adults was internet-based, with a majority (69%) viewed on a cell phone. The United States leads in pornography consumption, followed by France, the Philippines, and Mexico. Every day, approximately 68 million search queries related to pornography—constituting 25% of total searches—are generated. The estimated number of individuals viewing pornography on the internet increased over threefold (310%) between October 2004 and October 2016.

THE BRAIN

The Child: *Distortion of Healthy Sexual Development:* Early exposure to pornography can create confusion about normal sexual relationships, as children may internalize the explicit, often unrealistic, portrayals of sex they see. This can shape their understanding of relationships in harmful ways (Source: American Psychological Association (APA), 2007, Report on Sexualization of Girls).

Increased Risk of Addiction: The novelty and hyper-stimulation of pornography can trigger the release of dopamine in the brain, which leads to repeated cravings for the content. This can result in compulsive use even at a young age (Source: Hilton, Donald L. Jr., "Pornography Addiction: A Supranormal Stimulus Considered in the Context of Neuroplasticity," Socioaffective Neuroscience & Psychology, 2013).

Emotional and Psychological Distress: Viewing graphic sexual content may lead to fear, confusion, or even trauma, as a child lacks the maturity to process these images. Early exposure has been linked to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and behavioral problems (Source: Owens, E. W. et al., "The Impact of Internet Pornography on Adolescents: A Review of the Research,"

The Teenager: *Altered Brain Development:* The adolescent brain is highly plastic and sensitive to dopamine. Pornography rewires neural pathways to associate pleasure primarily with pornography rather than real-life relationships. This can impair emotional bonding and intimacy (Source: Wilson, Gary, *Your Brain on Porn: Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction*, 2014). ***Desensitization and Escalation:*** Frequent exposure can reduce sensitivity to dopamine, leading teenagers to seek increasingly extreme or deviant content to achieve the same level of stimulation. This is linked to a higher tolerance for violence and objectification in sexual contexts (Source: Kühn, Simone, and Gallinat, Jürgen, "Brain Structure and Functional Connectivity Associated with Pornography Consumption," *JAMA Psychiatry*, 2014). ***Negative Impact on Relationships:*** Adolescents exposed to pornography are more likely to develop unrealistic expectations of intimacy and body image. This can lead to dissatisfaction in their future relationships and a lack of respect for partners (Source: Brown, Jane D. et al., "Mass Media as a Sexual Super Peer for Early Maturing Girls," *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2006). ***Impaired Academic and Social Functioning:*** Pornography use has been linked to lower academic performance, less motivation, and social withdrawal in teens (Source: Peter, Jochen, and Valkenburg, Patti M., "Adolescents and Pornography: A Review of 20 Years of Research," *The Journal of Sex Research*, 2016).

The Adult: *Addiction and Escalation:* Pornography consumption can become addictive, altering the brain's reward system. Adults may require increasing levels of novelty and extremity in content to achieve satisfaction, which can lead to compulsive behaviors (Source: Hilton, Donald L. Jr., and Watts, Clark, "Pornography Addiction: A Neuroscience Perspective," *Surgical Neurology International*, 2011). ***Decreased Relationship Satisfaction:*** Research shows that frequent pornography use is associated with reduced emotional intimacy, increased infidelity, and lower sexual satisfaction in relationships (Source: Perry, Samuel L., "Does Viewing Pornography Reduce Marital Quality Over Time? Evidence from Longitudinal Data," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 2016). ***Objectification and Dehumanization:*** Adults who consume pornography regularly are more likely to objectify their partners, associating intimacy with performance rather than emotional connection (Source: Bridges, Ana J. et al., "Aggression and Sexual Behavior in Best-Selling Pornography Videos: A Content Analysis Update," *Violence Against Women*, 2010). ***Mental Health Issues:*** Pornography use can exacerbate anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation, especially when it interferes with daily responsibilities or relationships (Source: Grubbs, Joshua B. et al., "Transgression as Addiction: Religiosity and Moral Disapproval as Predictors of Perceived Addiction to Pornography," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 2015).

DO WE SEE THE DANGERS CAUSED BY A PRODUCT
VOID OF MORALS, COMPASSION, & HUMANITY?

THE ACCESS

Children's access to pornography on the internet and smart devices is a growing concern due to the ease with which explicit content can be found online. Despite measures like parental controls and age verification systems, there are still significant challenges in fully preventing access to inappropriate material. Here are a few key aspects:

Search Engines and Social Media: Children can inadvertently or deliberately find explicit content on mainstream search engines and social media platforms, which often have limited filtering in place, especially if parental controls are not activated.

Free Pornography Websites: Pornographic websites are abundant, and many do not have robust age verification systems in place. While some use simple "are you over 18?" pop-ups, these can easily be bypassed by minors.

Smart Devices: Phones, tablets, and gaming consoles with internet access provide a portable, often unsupervised, means for children to browse online.

Pop-Ups and Advertisements: Many children encounter explicit content by accident, particularly through advertisements, malicious links, or pop-ups while visiting other websites or through apps with poor security measures.

Peer Sharing: Children may also be exposed to pornography through friends or peers who share content via messaging apps, file-sharing platforms, or even offline.

Unregulated Platforms: Some platforms, particularly those aimed at teenagers (TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, X), have struggled with moderating adult content. While these platforms do have policies against explicit content, inappropriate material still slips through, especially in private messaging or user-generated posts.

Messaging Apps: Children can access pornography through private messaging platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram, or Discord, where content can be easily shared.

Weak Age Verification Systems: Age verification systems on websites are often minimal, with children able to fake their age by entering a false birthdate or bypassing verification prompts.

Common Exposure: Studies show that a significant percentage of children and teens are exposed to pornography by their early teenage years. According to a 2016 study by the NSPCC, around 28% of children aged 11 to 12 had seen explicit material, and the percentage increases with age.

THE DAMAGE

Early Roots of Pornography in America (Pre-20th Century):

Imported Influence: Pornography as we recognize it today can be traced back to Europe, where sexually explicit art and literature were produced as far back as the Renaissance. Early American exposure came through imported materials.

19th-Century Obscenity: By the mid-1800s, the industrial revolution brought printing technologies that made the mass production of erotic literature and imagery possible. Explicit daguerreotypes (an early form of photography) and underground erotic novels like Fanny Hill circulated discreetly among wealthier classes.

Legal and Social Pushback: The Comstock Act of 1873: Named after Anthony Comstock, this federal law banned the distribution of obscene materials through the mail. The Act reflected widespread societal condemnation of pornography as a corrupting influence. Underground Persistence: Despite laws, pornography remained in demand, thriving in secrecy, especially in urban centers like New York City.

Technological and Cultural Shifts (Early 20th Century)

Photography and Film: Advances in photography and motion pictures during the early 20th century revolutionized pornography. Explicit films began to circulate in underground markets. Silent erotic films, often referred to as "stag films," were produced in the 1910s and 1920s.

Moral Liberalization: The Roaring Twenties saw a loosening of social norms, influenced by urbanization and the rise of jazz culture. While pornography was still largely underground, the era set the stage for more overt explorations of sexuality in art and literature.

Mainstream Emergence of Pornography (Mid-20th Century)

The 1950s: Post-War Foundations with Economic Growth and Leisure Culture: After World War II, increased prosperity and leisure time contributed to the demand for erotic materials.

Rise of Men's Magazines: The launch of Playboy magazine in 1953 marked a turning point. Founder Hugh Hefner marketed pornography as a lifestyle product, combining explicit imagery with articles and interviews to normalize it as part of "sophisticated" culture.

Playboy legitimized softcore pornography, pushing it into mainstream

American culture for the first time.

Obscenity Laws Challenged: Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, court cases began to redefine what constituted “obscenity.” The Roth v. United States (1957) Supreme Court case ruled that material must be “utterly without redeeming social value” to be deemed obscene, creating loopholes for pornographers to claim artistic or educational merit

The Sexual Revolution and Pornography Boom (1960s-1970s)

Sexual Revolution: The 1960s countercultural movement challenged traditional sexual ethics, promoting “free love” and personal liberation. Pornography became more socially acceptable during this time.

Widespread Availability: The 1970s saw the rise of X-rated theaters and major pornographic films such as Deep Throat (1972). These films were promoted as legitimate forms of entertainment, blurring the lines between obscenity and art.

Miller v. California (1973): This landmark case established the “Miller Test,” which gave local communities the power to define obscenity. However, it also allowed some pornographic materials to evade prosecution under the guise of artistic expression. With the VHS tape in the late 1970s technology allowed pornography to move into private homes.

The Digital Explosion (1980s-Present)

1990s Internet Revolution: The internet provided unprecedented access to pornography, eliminating barriers of cost, shame, and availability.

Key Milestones: The first online pornography websites appeared in the mid-1990s. By the early 2000s, high-speed internet enabled streaming videos, making pornography even more accessible.

Normalization through Media: Pornographic themes have increasingly permeated movies, television, and music, making them part of everyday culture.

Social Media: Platforms like Instagram and TikTok blur the lines between pornography and mainstream content, introducing younger audiences to sexually suggestive material.

Industry Growth: Pornography has become a multi-billion-dollar industry. In 2023, pornography sites were among the most visited websites globally, with billions of views per month.

The pornography epidemic would have never grown without the invention of digital technology and media transport streams.

THE FUTURE

For Young Children (Ages 5–10):

Teach God's Design for the Body and Purity: Use scripture like Psalm 139:14 ("I am fearfully and wonderfully made") to emphasize that their bodies are special and created by God. Explain that God created relationships and love to be something sacred and private within marriage (Genesis 2:24).

Introduce Boundaries: Teach children that not all pictures or videos are good, and some may harm their hearts and minds. Use simple language: "If you ever see pictures or videos of people without their clothes on, it's important to tell Mom or Dad right away."

For Pre-Teens (Ages 11–13):

Define Pornography Simply: "Pornography is pictures or videos of people showing their private parts or doing things that should only happen between a husband and wife."

Explain the Consequences: Discuss how pornography can create unrealistic expectations, lead to addiction, and harm relationships. Frame it in biblical terms: "God wants us to keep our minds and hearts pure (Philippians 4:8) because it helps us have healthy relationships with others and with Him."

Set Clear Boundaries for Technology: Install parental controls and explain their purpose: "I love you and want to protect you from seeing things that could harm you. That's why we're setting these boundaries for your phone/computer."

For Teenagers (Ages 14–18):

Teens are more likely to have encountered pornography, whether intentionally or accidentally. Conversations should be honest & open.

Acknowledge the Cultural Reality: Be honest: "I know it's common for people your age to see pornography online, but I want to talk about why it's harmful and how it affects you spiritually and emotionally."

Explain How Pornography Distorts God's Design: Use biblical principles: "Pornography turns people into objects instead of treating them as God's creation (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). It also creates false ideas about love and relationships."

Encourage Accountability: Equip teens with tools, like accountability software, and encourage them to talk to you or a trusted mentor if they're struggling.



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Jonathan is married to Kelley, and they have two sons, Charlie and Colson. He has served congregations in Tennessee and Mississippi.

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The Burns Family



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