

Report calls for urgent action and further research to protect children from exposure to pornography

June 11 2013

Kristina Massey, Lecturer in the Department of Law and Criminal Justice Studies, is part of a research team, led by Middlesex University, calling for urgent action and further study on the effect pornography has upon the behaviour of children.

In a report for the Office of the Children's Commissioner, based on a review of published evidence, they found that a significant number of children access pornography and that it influences their attitudes towards relationships and sex; is linked to developing risky sexual behaviour; the use of alcohol and drugs during sex and becoming sexually active at a young age. There is also a [correlation](#) between holding violent attitudes and accessing more [violent media](#).

The report, titled "'Basically... porn is everywhere" - A Rapid Evidence Assessment on the Effects that Access and Exposure to Pornography has on Children and [Young People](#)', found that:

- Children and young people's exposure and access to pornography occurs both on and offline, but in recent years the most common method of access is via internet enabled technology
- Exposure and access to pornography increases with age
- Accidental exposure to pornography is more prevalent than deliberate access
- There are [gender differences](#) in exposure and access to

pornography with boys more likely to be exposed to pornography than girls.

The report also highlighted that there are many unanswered questions about the effect of exposure to pornography on children, and requires more research and urgent attention.

Maggie Atkinson, Children's Commissioner for England said: "This report is based on an assessment of the available evidence. It points out the gaps in our knowledge as well as providing compelling evidence that exposure to pornography influences children's attitudes to relationships and sex. We are living at a time when violent and sadistic imagery is readily available to very young children, even if they do not go searching for it, their friends may show it to them or they may stumble on it whilst using the internet. We all have a duty to protect children from harm – it is one of their rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - and the time has come for immediate and decisive action to do so.

"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. We do not fully understand the implications of this. It is a risky experiment to allow a generation of young people to be raised on a diet of pornography."

Kristina also commented: "We sourced over 41,000 journals and academic literature on the topic and found that children's sexual behaviour has, and is changing, however, we still do not know the full impact that this exposure is having upon our [children](#).

"We need to conduct further research to better protect young people from the effects of [pornography](#) and inform parents, professionals and the public of this issue and their responsibility to emphasize the

importance of developing healthy, positive and respectful relationships."

More information: [www.childrenscommissioner.gov. ...
ications/content_667](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publications/content_667)

Provided by Canterbury Christ Church University

Citation: Report calls for urgent action and further research to protect children from exposure to pornography (2013, June 11) retrieved 20 November 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-06-urgent-action-children-exposure-pornography.html>

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