

## THE CURRENT DILEMMAS OF ADOLESCENCE, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND PORNOGRAPHY

DAVID PRESCOTT, LICSW, ATSA-F  
&  
SETH WESCOTT, LMHP, ATSA-F

1

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### CAVEATS AND QUICK BACKGROUND

- NOTE: THIS TALK DOES NOT HAVE AN EXPLICIT FOCUS ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MEDIA (CSAM; FORMERLY KNOWN AS "CHILD PORNOGRAPHY")
  - WE'RE HAPPY TO ADDRESS IT BRIEFLY IF WE CAN. ☺
- WE USED TO BE MUCH MORE NON-COMMITTAL IN OUR VIEWS. RECENT RESEARCH SHOULD CAUSE ANYONE CONCERN.
- WE'VE BEEN INFLUENCED MORE BY THE RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA THAN BY THE RESEARCH ON PORNOGRAPHY'S EFFECTS

2

---

---

---

---

---

---

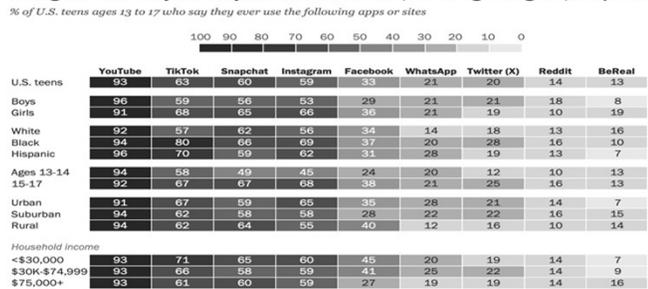
---

---

---

---

#### Teen girls more likely than boys to use several sites, including Instagram, Snapchat



3

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

SENDING, RECEIVING, AND NONCONSENSUALLY SHARING NUDE OR NEAR-NUDE IMAGES BY YOUTH  
 SETO, ET. AL. (2023)

TABLE 2 Prevalence of image-related behaviors across age and gender.

	9-12-year-old girls (n = 211)	9-12-year-old boys (n = 167)	13-17-year-old girls (n = 390)	13-17-year-old boys (n = 185)	Total (N = 996)
Self-sharing images	2.8% (n = 6)	5.4% (n = 9)	15.1% (n = 59)	8.6% (n = 16)	9.5% (n = 95)
Received images of others	8.1% (n = 17)	15% (n = 25)	30.3% (n = 118)	25.9% (n = 48)	21.6% (n = 215)
Nonconsensually reshared images of others	6.2% (n = 13)	12% (n = 20)	9.7% (n = 38)	10.8% (n = 20)	9.6% (n = 96)
Own images nonconsensually reshared	2.8% (n = 6)	6.6% (n = 11)	12.1% (n = 47)	13% (n = 24)	9.5% (n = 95)

Note: Sample sizes vary across variables and age-gender categories as some participants elected not to answer some questions or selected "prefer not to answer."

4

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH  
 THE U.S. SURGEON GENERAL'S ADVISORY 2023

SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY YOUTH IS NEARLY UNIVERSAL. UP TO 95% OF YOUTH AGES 13-17 REPORT USING A SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM, WITH MORE THAN A THIRD SAYING THEY USE SOCIAL MEDIA "ALMOST CONSTANTLY." ALTHOUGH AGE 13 IS COMMONLY THE REQUIRED MINIMUM AGE USED BY SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN THE U.S., NEARLY 40% OF CHILDREN AGES 8-12 USE SOCIAL MEDIA.

[https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK594761/pdf/Bookshelf\\_NBK594761.pdf](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK594761/pdf/Bookshelf_NBK594761.pdf)

5

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

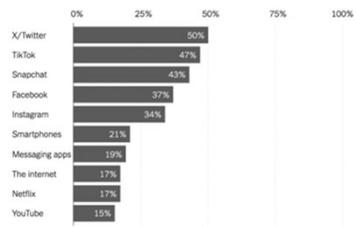
---

---

---

ARE WE TURNING THE CORNER?

Almost half of Gen Z wishes social media platforms like X and TikTok didn't exist  
 Percentage of Gen Z respondents who agree with the statement "I wish \_\_\_\_ had never been invented"



Source: Harris Poll/Zach Rausch

- JONATHAN HAIDT
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/17/opinion/social-media-smartphones-harm-regret.html>
- GEN Z: BORN BETWEEN 1997-2012
- CURRENT AGES: 12 - 27

6

---

---

---

---

---

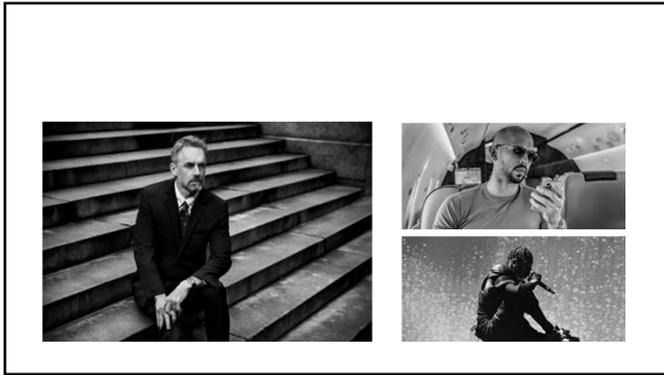
---

---

---

---

---



7

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### IMPACT OF PORNOGRAPHY ON YOUTH

- "THE PREDOMINANT HARM CAUSED BY EXPOSURE TO PORNOGRAPHY IS THE DESENSITIZATION AND NORMALIZATION OF THE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR DEPICTED IN THE PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL." (CAMPBELL 2019)
- IN 2017 THE UK PARLIAMENT MANDATED AGE VERIFICATION FOR ACCESS TO PORNOGRAPHY SITES. IF SITES FAIL TO COMPLY, THEY MAY BE FINED, DENIED ACCESS TO ANCILLARY SERVICES OR BLOCKED.
  - SOME STATES DEMANDING VIEWERS UPLOAD GOVERNMENT-ISSUED IDENTIFICATION
  - SOME DISCUSSION ABOUT VERIFYING DEVICES AND NOT INDIVIDUALS
- THE DETERIORATION OF IMAGINATION
- SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT POSSIBLE BENEFITS FOR EMERGING ADULTS COMING TO TERMS WITH SEXUAL IDENTITY
- FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY, YOUTH ARE LOOKING AT PORNOGRAPHY AND NOT MASTURBATING.

8

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### TAKE-HOME POINTS

- NO ONE IS SAYING THAT PORN IS GOOD FOR YOUTH
  - WE DO NEED TO UNDERSTAND IT AS A REALITY
- THE CURRENT STATUS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IS CONCERNING
  - SOCIAL MEDIA AND SEXUALIZED MEDIA ARE A DANGEROUS COMBO
  - POSSIBLE ACCESS POINT FOR SEXTORTION AND OTHER FORMS OF EXPLOITATION
- WHERE SEX EDUCATION ONCE TOOK PLACE IN FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS...
  - WE WERE THEN CONCERNED ABOUT "PORN-EDUCATED" YOUTH
  - NOW WE SHOULD BE CONCERNED BY THE INTERACTION OF PORNOGRAPHY WITH SOCIAL MEDIA.
  - THE "LORD OF THE FLIES" EFFECT

9

---

---

---

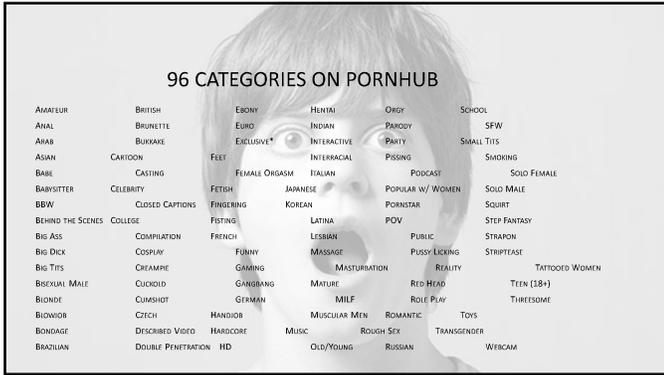
---

---

---

---

---



10

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### AFTER TEENS DISCOVER PORNOGRAPHY

- EXPECTATIONS SHOULD BE BASED ON THEIR REALITY, NOT OUR MORALITY
  - FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE IS A STRONG CONSIDERATION TO NAVIGATE.
- GOAL IS TO HELP THEM LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE PORN EXISTS, IS EASILY ACCESSIBLE, AND ALWAYS AVAILABLE – AND TO MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES AROUND IT.
  - SAVVY CONSUMERS OF MEDIA
- FOR ADOLESCENTS, ZERO-TOLERANCE IS A SHORT-TERM SOLUTION FOR A LONG-TERM ISSUE



11

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### POSITIVE RESOURCES

- JONATHAN HAIDT: *THE ANXIOUS GENERATION*
  - [HTTPS://JONATHANHAIDT.COM/ANXIOUS-GENERATION/](https://jonathanhaidt.com/anxious-generation/)
- DEBBY HERBENICK: *YES YOUR KID*
  - [HTTPS://WWW.DEBBYHERBENICK.COM/BOOKS-MEDIA/](https://www.debbyszerbenick.com/books-media/)
- SCARLETTEN: [HTTPS://WWW.SCARLETTEN.COM/](https://www.scarletteen.com/)
- SAFE HAVYNN: [HTTPS://SAFEHAVYNN.ORG/RESOURCES-FOR-TEENS/](https://safehavynn.org/resources-for-teens/)
- POWER TO DECIDE: [HTTPS://POWERTODECIDE.ORG/TEEN-TALK](https://powertodecide.org/teen-talk)
- TEEN HEALTH: [HTTPS://KIDSHHEALTH.ORG/EN/TEENS/SEXUAL-HEALTH/](https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/sexual-health/)
- AMAZE.ORG: [HTTPS://AMAZE.ORG](https://amaze.org)
- MAREE CRABBE: [HTTPS://ITSTIMEWETALKED.COM](https://itstimewetalked.com)



12

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---