



**REPORT ON INTERNET USAGE  
AND THE EXPOSURE OF PORNOGRAPHY  
TO LEARNERS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS**

Iyavar Chetty  
Antoinette Basson

---

This survey of Internet usage and the exposure of learners to pornography is part of the **Film and Publication Board's** response to concerns expressed by Government, teachers, parents and child protection practitioners about the exposure of children in South Africa to objectionable materials, particularly on the Internet. The aim of this survey, conducted among learners in the 13 to 17+ years age-group in randomly-selected schools in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg, to provide an informed basis for the establishment and implementation of public policy initiatives and other measures not only to minimise children's exposure to such materials but also to empower them with the necessary skills to cope with any distress that they might suffer from involuntary exposure to disturbing, harmful and objectionable materials both online and offline.

This report may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, without the prior written permission of the Film and Publication Board.

Film and Publication Board  
Private Bag X2205  
HOUGHTON  
2041  
Tel (011) 483 0971  
Fax (011) 483 1084



*".....the network society devours itself, as it consumes/destroys enough of its own children to lose the sense of continuity of life across generations, so denying the future of humans as a humane species."<sup>1</sup>*

## Personal Preface

Opinions, no doubt, will be sharply divided over the question of whether the risk of harm to children from the Internet comes from *people*<sup>2</sup> or from the *technology* itself. We believe, however, that in the context of protecting children from exposure to potentially disturbing, harmful and age-inappropriate materials, it may, in fact, be necessary to see the Internet itself as posing a risk to children. We are, in the words of Manuel Castells, a "network society". Central to the "network society" is the Internet. And the Internet has profoundly transformed *"the way we think, we produce, we consume, we trade, we manage, we communicate, we live, we die, we make war, and we make love.....A culture of real virtuality, constructed around an increasingly interactive audiovisual universe, has permeated mental representation and communication everywhere, integrating the diversity of cultures in an electronic hypertext...."*<sup>3</sup>

The extraordinary opportunities offered by the Internet for enhancing our lives do not come without risks. Although materials that may be unsuitable for children may constitute, relative to information that is useful, educational and entertaining, a small percentage of overall Internet-accessible content, the ease with which children may stumble across disturbing, harmful and age-inappropriate materials are too disturbing and real to ignore. The constitutional obligation to act in the best interests of the child imposes a duty on government, industry and civil society to develop mechanisms to protect children from exposure to materials which pose a risk of harm to their emotional and psychological well-being.

---

<sup>1</sup> Manuel Castells, *The End of Millennium*, Blackwell Publishers (1998)

<sup>2</sup> "The sexual abuse of children is a people problem, not a technology problem; people endanger kids, not computers...." Detective Inspector Terry Jones, Child Abuse or Computer Crime? The Proactive Approach in *Policing Paedophiles on the Internet*, Edited by Dr Allyson MacVean and Detective Superintendent Peter Spindler, New Police Bookshop (2003)

<sup>3</sup> Manuel Castells (1998)



And the risk comes not just from materials which may be illegal, such as child pornography, but also from materials which are legal but intended for adults. To the extent, therefore, that a child using the Internet for useful information can be drawn or coerced into viewing unsuitable and illegal materials by being directed to sites containing harmful materials, or through “pop-ups” and “mouse trapping”, it is not inappropriate to regard the technology itself – its architecture, the way it works and the “anything goes” mentality generally associated with the Internet – as posing a risk of harm to children.

This study is not concerned with the representation of children in pornography (child pornography), which involves the abuse and sexual exploitation of children but on the exposure of children to sexually-explicit materials and the consequential harm to their emotional and psychological well-being. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide an informed basis for the implementation of measures to minimise the risks that children are exposed to online.

The problem is not unique to South Africa. There is international consensus<sup>4</sup> that, as the Internet becomes an increasingly indispensable source of information, eventually replacing traditional libraries in schools; more and more children will be exposed to risk of exposure to objectionable materials. The problem is not that schools have introduced computers as part of a child’s learning environment but that many teachers lack sufficient knowledge of the possible risks to learners posed by the Internet. This general lack of awareness of Internet safety means many learners are vulnerable not only to Internet predators but to emotional and psychological distress from exposure to potentially disturbing, harmful and age-inappropriate materials on the Internet.

Our opinion that the Internet itself poses a risk of harm to children is not intended to suggest that the Internet should be “banned” for children. It is an opinion intended to highlight the need to ensure that children’s use of the Internet is regulated to minimise risks to their well-being.

---

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, the results of a “Representative Survey on Internet Concerns in Australia, Germany and the United States of America”, *Protecting Our Children on the Internet: Towards a New Culture of Responsibility*, Jens Waltermann and Marcel Machill (eds), Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers (2000)



Computers used by children to access the Internet should, at the minimum, be equipped with blocking and filtering software, even if such software is not a hundred percent effective, to minimise involuntary Internet exposure to disturbing, harmful and inappropriate materials. Parents and teachers should make themselves aware of the risks to children that the Internet poses and on what could and should be done to minimise such risks. Internet service providers must do their part to ensure that the Internet is a safe environment for children. It is also a reminder that the offence of failing to take reasonable steps to prevent access to illegal materials by persons under the age of 18 years<sup>5</sup> could, in appropriate circumstances, be extended to include those who have control over a child's access to the Internet.

The assistance and cooperation of headmasters, teachers, parents and learners in the schools sampled, the Departments of Education in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, as well as of colleagues in the Film and Publication Board, is gratefully acknowledged with sincere appreciation. While this report is the result of their collaborative effort, we take responsibility for any and all errors.

Iyavar Chetty  
Antoinette Basson  
November, 2006

---

<sup>5</sup> Section 27(3) of the *Films and Publications Act, No 65 of 1996*



## CONTENTS

### Part One

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2. How children are harmed by exposure to pornography</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 <i>Exposure to pornography and children as victims of sexual violence</i>	9
2.2 <i>Exposure to pornography leads to sexual illness and unplanned pregnancies</i>	10
2.3 <i>Exposure to pornography and children's imitative behaviour</i>	11
2.4 <i>Exposure to pornography and the shaping of attitudes and values</i>	11
2.5 <i>Exposure to pornography and the development of the child</i>	11
<b>3. Evidence of children's exposure to pornography on the Internet</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4. Availability of pornography in South Africa</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>5. The nature of the materials accessible to children</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>6. Legal, illegal and objectionable materials in South African law:</b>	
<b><i>Films and Publications Act, No 65 of 1996</i></b>	<b>18</b>
6.1 <i>The Films and Publications Act, No 65 of 1996</i>	18
6.2 <i>Illegal materials</i>	18
6.3 <i>Legal for adults but illegal for children</i>	19
6.4 <i>Legal for possession by adults but illegal for distribution to any person</i>	20
6.5 <i>Objectionable or age-inappropriate materials</i>	21
6.6 <i>Special provisions with regard to the distribution of 'X18' materials</i>	21
<b>7. Reporting laws</b>	<b>22</b>



## Part Two

<b>1. Executive summary</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>2. Background information</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1 <i>Research objective</i>	25
2.2 <i>Research methodology</i>	25
2.3 <i>Sample</i>	26
2.4 <i>Sampling procedures</i>	26
2.5 <i>Fieldwork</i>	28
2.6 <i>Research challenges</i>	28
<b>3. Summary of main research findings</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>4. Main research findings</b>	<b>33</b>
4.1 <i>Access to the Internet</i>	33
4.2 <i>Using the Internet</i>	34
4.3 <i>Monitoring Internet usage</i>	37
4.4 <i>Exposure to pornographic material</i>	38
4.4.1 <i>Films</i>	38
4.4.2 <i>Internet</i>	42
4.4.3 <i>Cellular 'phones</i>	45
4.4.4 <i>Magazines</i>	46
4.5 <i>Attitudes towards pornography</i>	47
4.6 <i>Effect of pornography</i>	48
<b>5. Comparative analysis</b>	<b>49</b>



## Part Three

6. Conclusions & Recommendations	53
6.1 <i>Conclusions</i>	53
6.2 <i>Recommendations</i>	54

Appendix A: Provincial research findings

Appendix B: Questionnaire



## PART ONE

### 1. Introduction

The sexual abuse of children occurs in various forms, which may differ in type and intensity but not in its effects on children. Exposing children to sexually-explicit materials is one form of child sexual abuse, more appropriately described as the non-contact abuse of children and may, in certain circumstances, constitute the offence of indecent assault<sup>6</sup>. *“Sexual touching is not the only kind of child sexual abuse. It is abuse to intentionally expose a child to pornography.”*<sup>7</sup>

“Pornography”, for the purpose of this report, means images or visual presentations of explicit sexual conduct, regardless of whether or not such images satisfy the definition of “pornography” for the purpose of obscenity laws<sup>8</sup>. In accordance with the principle that, in all matters concerning a child, the best interests of the child are paramount, premature exposure of children to adult experiences is an unacceptable invasion of every child’s right to childhood innocence. Given that a number of studies suggest that the exposure of children to pornography has adverse consequences on the normal development of children, and that exposing children to sexually-explicit materials is part of the process of “grooming” children into accepting that sexual activities with an adult is normal and acceptable, debates on issues such as *aesthetics v erotica* has no place in the context of the best interests of the child. Children have a right to be allowed to grow and develop in an environment that is not emotionally and psychologically toxic.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, the unreported case of *S v James McNeil* (No. 24/904/01, Magistrate’s Court, Cape Town),

<sup>7</sup> J Myers, *A mother’s nightmare – incest*, Sage Publications (1997)

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, *Case and Another v The Minister of Safety and Security and Others*, CCT 20/95; *Miller v California* 413 U.S. 15

<sup>9</sup> Exposing children to pornography is not just a moral issue. Recent research on the effects of pornographic images on the brain showed that pornographic images bypass certain safety centers in the brain. While photographic images, unlike real-life images, pass through a center in the brain that allows individuals to decide whether the image is real and should be stored as such or discarded, pornographic images shortcut this center and are stored in the brain like a real-life experience. This has a dramatic impact on the behaviour of people exposed to pornographic images and often remains embedded in their memories for long periods. Pornography does harm children. *The Psychopharmacology of Pictorial Pornography Restructuring Brain, Mind & Memory* by Dr Judith A Reisman, The Institute for Media Education and The “Doctors For Life” affidavit in the Tascoe Luc de Reuck case (Witwatersrand High Court Case No. 2000/27709)



## 2. How children are harmed by exposure to pornography

### 2.1 *Exposure to pornography and children as victims of sexual violence*

Research studies<sup>10</sup> suggest that exposure of children under 14 years to pornography is related to greater involvement in deviant sexual practice, particularly rape. Slightly more than a third of the child molesters in the study by W L Marshall, claimed to have been incited to commit an offense by exposure to pornography and 53% of them deliberately used the stimuli of pornography as they prepared to commit their crimes.

In a study of convicted child molesters<sup>11</sup>, 77% of those who molested boys and 87% of those who molested girls admitted to the habitual use of pornography, using pornographic images to demonstrate to their victims what they wanted them to do, as well as to lower a child's inhibitions ("grooming") and communicate to the child-victim that a particular sexual activity is normal, acceptable and pleasurable.

Gill and Johnson<sup>12</sup> describe the case of the father who subscribed to three pornographic magazines for his eight-year old son. *"When they (the magazines) arrive, the father would sit with his child (as if he was one of his peers) and read him the latest of sexually- explicit material while drinking ale. Ultimately, the eight-year old boy orally copulated a six-year old girl, covering her mouth with tape so her screams could not be heard. Although he was never overtly sexually abused by his father, he was over-stimulated by sexually explicit themes that often merge sex and violence.; he was subtly encouraged to behave in the ways depicted in the magazines and videotapes. At the same time, he was never provided with any guidelines or limits concerning his sexual responses, thoughts and fantasies or behaviours.*

---

<sup>10</sup> For instance, *The Use of Sexually-Explicit Stimuli by Rapists, Child Molesters and Nonoffenders* by W L Marshall in *The Journal of Sex Research* 25, No. 2, May 1988; Neil M Malamuth and Edward Donnerstein, eds *Pornography and Sexual Aggression*, Academic Press, 1984

<sup>11</sup> *Take Action Manual*, Washington, D.C. : Enough is Enough, 1995-96

<sup>12</sup> *Sexualised Children*, Launch Press (1993)



*The boy was conditioned to obtain sexual arousal through the use of force with the understanding and acceptance that men regularly behave in violent ways towards women."*

Dr Renee Potgieter<sup>13</sup> is the Director of the RP Clinic and the RP Training Institute and describes the following case handled at the RP Clinic: *"[A fourteen-year old boy} confessed to the rape of a three-year old girl. He finally, very reluctantly, disclosed that he had viewed pornographic material with explicit information regarding penetration of the penis into the vagina and he was so sexually stimulated by it that he kept on fantasizing about this information and finally decided to test it on the little girl. This boy finally also disclosed that he was sexually abused at the age of four years when he had been anally penetrated by an adult male....The overall picture that emerges is that, whatever the position taken, the effects of children watching pornography are closely related to and overlap with the effect of contact sexual abuse and very often cause sexual behavioural problems in the child."*

## **2.2 Exposure to pornography leads to sexual illness and unplanned pregnancies**

Children exposed to pornography are learning a dangerous message from pornographers: *sex without responsibility is acceptable and desirable*. Pornography, unlike genuine sex education, encourages sexual expression without responsibility, and therefore endangers the health of children. As Donna Hughes Rice observes: *"One of the grimmer consequences of adult-like sexual activity among children has been a steady increase in the extent to which youth are afflicted with venereal disease.....More children contract sexually transmitted diseases each year than all the victims of polio in its eleven-year epidemic 1942-1953. Another obvious result ..... is the increased rate of pregnancy among teenagers."*<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> *The Relationship Between Pornography and the Sexual Abuse of Children: View from Literature and Personal Experience* (2002)

<sup>14</sup> *Kids Online : Protecting Your Children in Cyberspace* , Donna Rice Hughes, Revell. 1998



### **2.3 Exposure to pornography and children's imitative behaviour**

Children often imitate<sup>15</sup> what they see, read or hear. The potential for children exposed to pornography to act out sexually against younger, smaller and more vulnerable children is real, as some studies have suggested. According to experts in the field of childhood sexual abuse, any premature sexual activity in children always suggests two possible stimulants: experience and exposure. "This means that the sexually deviant child may have been molested *or simply exposed to sexuality through pornography*".<sup>16</sup>

### **2.4 Exposure to pornography and the shaping of attitudes and values**

The efforts of parents to instill in children personal values about relationships, sex, intimacy, love and marriage is undermined by the irresponsible messages that pornography sends out to children on these very important life issues. Just as thirty-second commercials can influence whether or not we choose one popular soft drink over another, exposure to pornography shapes our attitudes and values and, often, our behaviour. "Photographs, videos, magazines, virtual games and Internet pornography that depict rape and the dehumanization of females in sexual scenes constitute powerful but deforming tools of sex education. *The danger to children stems at least partly from the disturbing changes in attitudes that are facilitated by pornography.*"<sup>17</sup>

### **2.5 Exposure to pornography and the development of the child**

According to developmental psychologists, during critical periods of childhood, a child's brain is being programmed for sexual orientation.

---

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, Professor Huesmann, *Imitation and the Effects of Observing Media Violence on Behaviour*, S Hurlley and N Chatter (Eds. 2004), *Perspectives on Imitation: From Cognitive Neuroscience to Social Science*, MIT Press, with thanks to Prof Huesmann for a pre-publication copy of the paper. See, also, Susan Blackmore's *The Meme Machine*, OUP (1999)

<sup>16</sup> Stephen J Kavanagh, *Protecting Children in Cyberspace*, 1997

<sup>17</sup> Donna Rice Hughes (ibid) and, see, also, Edward Donnerstein, Luis T Garcia, Zillman, Neil Malamuth and J Contii



During this period, the mind appears to be developing a “hardwire” for what the person will be aroused by or attracted to. “Exposure to healthy sexual norms and attitudes during this critical period can result in the child developing a healthy sexual orientation. *“In contrast, if there is exposure to pornography during this period, sexual deviance may become imprinted on the child’s ‘hard drive’ to become a permanent part of his or her sexual orientation.”*<sup>18</sup>

Young children are not neurologically ready to process sexually stimulating information. Gill and Johnson conclude that exposure of children to pornography can traumatize them to such an extent that they cannot fully comprehend or assimilate the material....“.....a frightened four-year old who is forced to observe or be part of sexual intercourse between two adults cannot fully understand what is happening...(his) memory of the event may not be intact, yet he may suddenly repeat phrases he heard during the experience, have intrusive flashbacks...may suddenly become terrified in the presence of a male adult or may refuse to go to bed, remembering on some level what occurred in bed...These are ways in which children re-experience fragmented aspects of trauma through behaviour, sleep disturbances, or post-traumatic stress symptoms such as intrusive flashbacks. This is a very typical reaction of children who have been exposed to pornography.”<sup>19</sup>

According to Araj<sup>20</sup>, the sexual behavioural problems of many children may be traced to their own sexual abuse and exposure to excessive sexual stimulation. *“Part of the sexual stimulation is watching television shows and pornographic material or observing sexual activities in their environment.”* Dr Renee Potgieter<sup>21</sup> observes that an excess of sexual stimulation often causes children to start behaving in a sexualised way, especially towards other children...*“as well as oppositional and behavioural problems in children. Such compulsive sexualised behaviour inhibits their normal development and functioning....children with sexually abusive behaviour should in all cases be evaluated for the possibility of having viewed sexually explicit material”*<sup>22</sup>.

---

<sup>18</sup> Kavanagh, *Protecting Children in Cyberspace*

<sup>19</sup> *Sexualised Children*, Launch Press (1993)

<sup>20</sup> S K Araj, *Sexually Aggressive Children*, Sage Publications (1997)

<sup>21</sup> *The relationship Between Pornography and the Sexual Abuse of Children : View from Literature and Personal Experience* (2002)

<sup>22</sup> See, also, S K Hewitt, *Assessing Allegations of Sexual Abuse in Preschool Children*, Sage Publications (1999)



### 3. Evidence of children's exposure to pornography on the Internet

Governments, law enforcement agencies, educators and child protection practitioners in many countries have expressed concern that children are being exposed to potentially disturbing, harmful and age-inappropriate materials on the Internet. Research in Australia, for instance, *"was motivated by a concern that young people are being exposed to a wide range of pornographic material, some of it of a violent and extreme kind, and that this exposure may be having long-lasting detrimental effects on some young people and society at large. In particular, the Internet has in recent years seen a proliferation of pornographic content of a disturbing kind. This material is easily accessible to children"*<sup>23</sup>. A number of other countries have been equally motivated to conduct similar research, providing clear evidence that children are routinely exposed to disturbing, harmful and objectionable materials on the Internet.

Ayiku, in a study conducted in 2004<sup>24</sup> among Internet cafes in Accra, Ghana, reported that *"young people between the ages of 12-17 years were exposed to internet pornography.....All the internet cafes were full of this age group. Most of them told me they use their pocket money to pay for browsing the internet and spend most of their break time and after close of school to visit these internet cafes.....Those would be young people with minds and morals still forming, kids so inexperienced at life that they begin to believe deviate pornographic behaviour is normal and acceptable....."*

According to an Australian study<sup>25</sup> of 16 to 17 year-olds, 84% of boys and 60% of girls were exposed accidentally to pornography on the Internet.

---

<sup>23</sup> *Youth and Pornography in Australia : Evidence on the extent of exposure and likely effects*, Michael Flood (Centre for Women's Studies, Australian National University) and Clive Hamilton, The Australia Institute (2003)

<sup>24</sup> *The Ghanaian Youth and Pornography*, Charles Nil Ayiku (2004)

<sup>25</sup> *Youth and Pornography in Australia : Evidence on the extent of exposure and likely effects*, Michael Flood (Centre for Women's Studies, Australian National University) and Clive Hamilton, The Australia Institute (2003)



A study conducted in the United Kingdom<sup>26</sup> concluded that *“Coming into contact with pornography is ..... a commonplace but often unwelcome experience for children and young people”*. The study found that, among 9-19 year-olds who go online at least once a week, 57 % have come into contact with online pornography, 38% have been exposed to pornography through “pop-ups” while doing something else, 36% accidentally found themselves on a pornographic website when looking for something else and 25% received pornographic junk mail by e-mail or instant messaging.

A number of studies in the United States provide disturbing evidence of unsolicited exposure to sexually-explicit materials on the Internet. Some of the key findings of a study<sup>27</sup> of 10-17 year-olds in 2003 were that 73% were exposed to sexual material while surfing the Internet, 27% were exposed to sexual material in e-mails and instant messages and 26% were “mouse trapped” into another sex site while trying to get out of the one they were in. An earlier study<sup>28</sup> found that of the 95% of 15 to 17 year-olds who went online, 70% had been accidentally exposed to pornography.

A French study<sup>29</sup> found that nearly half of French children had been exposed to pornography by age 11 years, while a Swedish study<sup>30</sup> found that 30% of boys and 3% of girls watched pornography at least once a week.

A survey of Canadian parents with children aged 6 to 16 years who owned computers suggested that 20% of their children have come across objectionable sexual material on the Internet, while a 2003 survey of 9 to 16 year-olds in five European countries found that between 25 and 33 percent of children had been accidentally exposed to *“violent, offensive, sexual or pornographic content”* on the Internet.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> *UK Children Go Online*, Sonia Livingstone and Magdalena Bober, Department of Media and Communications, The London School of Economics and Political Science, July 2004

<sup>27</sup> *The Exposure of Youth to Unwanted Sexual Material on the Internet: A National Survey of Risk, Impact and Intervention*, University of New Hampshire (2003)

<sup>28</sup> *Generation Rx.com*, Kaiser Family Foundation (2001)

<sup>29</sup> Reported in the *Guardian Weekly* May 30 – June 5

<sup>30</sup> *Children in the New Media Landscape: Games, pornography, perceptions*, C von Feilitzen, and Ulla Carlsson (eds) (2001)



Key findings of the study<sup>32</sup> involving learners aged 13 to 17 years in schools in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg reveals that 64% of learners reported that they have seen pornographic images on the Internet, with 70% reporting coming across pornographic sites, mainly through “pop-ups” and typing search words, while “surfing” the Internet.

The number of children exposed to disturbing, harmful and objectionable materials on the Internet would be substantially higher than the average 43% “accidental exposures” if the figures of those who, out of curiosity, deliberately sought out such materials were factored into the equation. Given those disturbing statistics, it is not unreasonable to recognise that the Internet itself poses a risk of harm to children. Research confirms that children all over the world are vulnerable to exposure to large quantities of *“offensive episodes, some of which are distressing and most of which are unreported. A comprehensive strategy to respond to the problem would aim to reduce the quantity of offensive behaviour, better shield young people from its likely occurrence, increase the level of reporting, and provide more help to youth and families to protect them from any consequences.”*<sup>33</sup> And as Linda Griffin noted<sup>34</sup>: *“As with all societal problems, this one too, seeps into the classroom. It can come in the form of inadvertently accessed sites while researching. It can come in the form of deliberately sought sites by a mischievous, misguided youngster. It can come in the form of a child that has disappeared. It can come in the form of a troubled child who suffers from unknown insecurities. As educators, we must be aware of these societal issues that can affect our students and learn ways to deal with them”.*

---

<sup>31</sup> *UK Children Go Online*

<sup>32</sup> *Exposure of Learners to Pornography on the Internet*, Film and Publication Board (2006)

<sup>33</sup> *Youth Internet Safety Survey*, Janis Wolak and Kimberly Mitchell (Crimes Against Children Research Centre, University of New Hampshire)

<sup>34</sup> Addendum to *Child Pornography on the Internet*, Linda Griffin, West Middle school, Rockford, Illinois



#### 4. Availability of pornography in South Africa

It is important to recognise that the Internet exists in cyberspace and is not subject to geographical boundaries. Everything that is accessible via the Internet is accessible by, and to, any person with a computer and a modem in any part of the world. The starting point in assessing the amount of sexually-explicit material accessible to children in South Africa is, therefore, the Internet.

According to Daniel L Weiss<sup>35</sup>, the number of pornographic Web pages jumped from 14 million in 1998 to 260 million in 2003 – an almost two thousand percent increase in just five years, with over 4.2 million adult-oriented sites. More than 80% of children using e-mail<sup>36</sup> receive inappropriate messages and 47% receive pornographic spam on a daily basis. A majority of adult-oriented sites display adult content on the first page, which anyone could see. Nearly two-thirds had no warning or indication of the adult nature of the site. Many adult sites hinder users from leaving (“mouse trapping”) and many offer “free tours” of adult sites as part of their marketing strategy.

*Family Safe Media* estimates the pornography industry to be worth \$57 billion worldwide and that revenue from pornography is larger than all combined revenues of all professional football, baseball and basketball franchises.<sup>37</sup>

Sexually-explicit films and publications are also available in South Africa. While there are no exact figures for the number of films and publications available, the Film and Publication Board has classified, to date, for distribution in South Africa, over 27 000 DVDs and videos containing sexually-explicit materials<sup>38</sup>.

---

<sup>35</sup> *Children and Pornography Online*, Daniel L Weiss, Media and Sexuality Analyst, Focus on Family (2005)

<sup>36</sup> In 2002, the US Federal Trade Commission created 150 e-mail addresses and posted them around the Web. Of those posted on child-oriented sites, 30% received spam for pornography.

<sup>37</sup> <http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/internet-pornography-statistics.html>

<sup>38</sup> Films and publications with sexually-explicit content may only be distributed by holders of licences to conduct the business of adult premises and only to adults and only from within premises forming part of a building. However, it is commonly known that many such DVDs are freely available in the streets of major South African cities and are therefore available to children



This figure represents DVDs and video cassettes which, in fact, were actually submitted to the Board for classification and excludes the thousands of DVDs and video cassettes being sold illegally – in the streets of all major cities in South Africa, as well as on the Internet, via mail-order and, increasingly via mobile cellular ‘phones. It would not be an exaggeration, therefore, to say that pornography is as easily available to South African children as are cigarettes, which is also prohibited by law for sale to children.

## 5. The nature of the materials accessible to children

Children surveyed among schools in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg (see Part 2) understood “pornography” as, generally, *adults engaged in sexual activities*. That is, perhaps, what most people would understand by the word “pornography”. That definition is a far cry from the actual nature of the images available on the Internet, on DVDs and in certain magazines.

Materials classified “X18” by the Board, and therefore approved for distribution to adults, would typically contain depictions of consenting adults engaged in non-violent<sup>39</sup> sexual activities, usually vaginal and anal sexual intercourse, mutual masturbation, fellatio, cunnilingus, ejaculations onto the body or face of, usually females, and often involving multiple participants. These materials – “X18” in South Africa and “R18” in most other jurisdictions – would comprise what is regarded as legally and commercially pornography available for adults only.

The Internet, however, includes all of the above and much more – all easily accessible to children. There are neither limits nor boundaries to what children may be exposed to on the Internet. “Fisting”, corprophilia, bestiality, incest, rape, explicit sexual conduct which is demeaning or degrading of human beings, depictions of women as nothing more than objects for the sexual gratification of men, the explicit infliction of extreme violence and the explicit effects of extreme

---

<sup>39</sup> For the purpose of classification, the Board does not regard *cruelty* in the “BDSM” *genre* of pornography as *violent sexual conduct* unless it is, clearly, non-consensual and involves the infliction of extreme violence. “Extreme violence” in this context would be acts that are seen as likely to result in serious, physical injury. “BDSM” includes bondage,



violence and, most disturbing, child abuse materials depicting the torture, maiming and the penetrative rape of children as young as 6 months, are all accessible on the Internet.

## 6. Legal, illegal and objectionable materials in South African law: *Films and Publications Act, No 65 of 1996*

### 6.1 *The Films and Publications Act, No 65 of 1996*

The *Films and Publications Act, No 65 of 1996*, (the Act) provides for the regulation<sup>40</sup> of the creation, distribution and possession of certain films and publications with the aim of preventing children from being exposed to disturbing, harmful and age-inappropriate materials. The Act not only distinguishes between adults and children but also between legal and illegal materials and between distribution and possession. It should be noted that the Act does not refer to “pornography” – except with respect to “child pornography” – but describes, in Schedules 1, 2, 6 and 7, and section 29, the kinds of materials which may be restricted and even prohibited from distribution.

### 6.2 *Illegal materials*

Child pornography<sup>41</sup>, in any form, is completely prohibited from creation, production, possession and distribution in South Africa, as it is in most, if not all, jurisdictions. In terms of section 27(1) of the Act, any person who “ (i) *is in possession of; (ii) creates or produces or in any way contributes to, or assists in, the creation or production of; (iii) imports or in any way takes steps to procure,*

---

domination, submission and sado-masochism and is part of the “pain-for-sexual-pleasure” activities practiced by some people.

<sup>40</sup> Section 2 of the *Films and Publications Act*

<sup>41</sup> Defined in the Act as including any image or description of a person who is, or is depicted or described as, under the age of 18 years engaged or participating in or assisting another person to participate in sexual conduct or showing or describing the body or parts of the body of a person under the age of 18 years in circumstances amounting to or for the purpose of sexual exploitation. “Sexual conduct” is defined as including male genitals in a state of stimulation, the undue display of genital, masturbation, bestiality, sexual intercourse, sexual fondling of intimate parts of the body and oral genital or anal contact. Section 1 of the Act



*obtain or access; or (iv) knowingly exports, broadcasts or in any way distributes or causes to be exported, broadcast or distributed, a film or publication which contains child pornography or which advocates, advertises or promotes child pornography or the sexual exploitation of children” will be guilty of an offence and liable, on conviction, to be sentenced to a fine or imprisonment for a period not exceeding 10 years or to both a fine and such imprisonment.*

### **6.3 Legal for adults but illegal for children**

Depictions and descriptions of explicit sexual conduct between consenting adults, not involving violence and not amounting to the violation of a person’s right to human dignity or to degradation of a person or which do not constitute incitement to cause harm, may be distributed only to adults and only by the holders of a license to conduct the business of adult premises, provided that such distribution takes place from within premises forming part of a building and provided that such materials have been classified (“X18”) by the Film and Publication Board (the Board). In terms of sections 25, 26 and 28 of the Act, it is an offence to distribute such materials to any person under the age of 18 years. The word “distribute”, for the purposes of sections 25, 26 and 28, includes, in addition to its ordinary meaning, *“to hand or exhibit a film or publication to a person under the age of 18 years, and also the failure to take reasonable steps to prevent access thereto by such a person.”* The mere handing or exhibition of any film or publication which contains materials depicting or describing:

- explicit violent sexual conduct,
- bestiality,
- rape,
- incest,
- explicit sexual conduct which violates or shows disrespect for the right to human dignity of any person or
- which degrades a person or
- which constitutes incitement to cause harm or



- the explicit infliction or
- explicit effect of extreme violence which constitutes incitement to cause harm or
- of visual presentations of explicit sexual intercourse which includes explicit visual presentations of genitals

to persons under the age of 18 years is an offence.

#### ***6.4 Legal for possession by adults but illegal for distribution to any person***

In terms of section 16(2) of the *Constitution*, expressions amounting to propaganda for war, incitement to imminent violence or the advocacy of hatred based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion and which constitutes incitement to cause harm is not protected under the right to freedom of expression. In terms of section 29 of the Act, the broadcasting or distribution or exhibition or presentation, in public, of a publication, film or play containing such expressions, judged within context, would be an offence.

Schedules 1 and 6 of the Act describes materials prohibited from distribution but not from possession by adults and which may not be exhibited or exposed to persons under the age of 18 years. Schedules 1 and 6 list visual presentations and depictions of:

- explicit violent sexual conduct,
- bestiality,
- rape,
- incest,
- explicit sexual conduct which violates or shows disrespect for the right to human dignity of any person or
- which degrades a person or
- which constitutes incitement to cause harm or
- the explicit infliction or



- the explicit effect of extreme violence which constitutes incitement to cause harm

as materials which are illegal for distribution to any person.

### ***6.5 Objectionable or age-inappropriate materials***

Films and publications which contain materials which are not illegal but may be potentially disturbing, harmful or age-inappropriate for children of and under a specified age-group are subject to classification by means of age ratings and consumer information. Such content is identified in Classification Guidelines<sup>42</sup> established by the Board in consultation with the public. In terms of sections 25(c) and 26(1)(f) of the Act, it is an offence to distribute a publication or exhibit a film in conflict with an age restriction imposed on that publication or film by the Board. Section 26(c) also provides that it is an offence to advertise a film without clearly indicating the age restriction and consumer information imposed on that film by the Board.

### ***6.6 Special provisions with regard to the distribution of "X18" materials***

Films and publications with content intended for adults only, and not amounting to prohibited expressions, are, unless amounting to works of a *bona fide* artistic, scientific, documentary, literary, dramatic or religious nature, are classified "X18". Materials classified "X18" are not only restricted for distribution only to adults but only by the holders of a license to conduct the business of adult premises and provided that such distribution takes place from within premises forming part of a building.<sup>43</sup> Any distribution in conflict with the provisions of the Act regarding "X18" materials would be an offence.<sup>44</sup> It is, therefore, an offence to distribute such materials via the Internet, mail-order or mobile cellular 'phones. Clearly, it was Parliament's intention to ensure that such materials do not fall into the hands of persons under the age of 18 years.

---

<sup>42</sup> Section 31(3) and Schedules 3 and 8 of the Act

<sup>43</sup> Section 24 of the Act

<sup>44</sup> Sections 25(b), 26(1)(b) and 28(2) of the Act



Since age-verification systems on the Internet may be manipulated by those under the age of 18 years, and since there is no way to establish the age of the actual recipient of a mail-ordered film or publication, Parliament concluded that only a “face-to-face” transaction between a distributor and a customer would ensure that the customer was, in fact, older than 18 years.

## 7. Reporting laws

In addition to laws that require certain persons, such as teachers, doctors and social workers, to report the maltreatment of children, the Act provides for the reporting of suspicion or knowledge of child pornography<sup>45</sup>. While the exposure of children to pornography is not included in the definition of child pornography, it is, in fact, a segment of child abuse that includes child prostitution, child trafficking, child sex tourism and child pornography and, as such, may, or should, be considered a legally-obligatory reportable act.

---

<sup>45</sup> Section 27(2) of the Act



## PART TWO

### 1. Executive Summary

The report of this research on the exposure of children to pornography in South African schools, as represented by randomly-selected schools in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg, aims to provide information in order to contribute to the development of policy frameworks for the protection of children from exposure to potentially disturbing, harmful and age-inappropriate materials on the Internet accessed via computers and mobile cellular 'phones.

**Access to the Internet:** More than half of sample (52%) reported accessing the Internet at home. Slightly more than a third (37%) also has Internet access at school. About a quarter (23%) access the Internet at public venues. There is a slight gender difference – more boys (56%) than girls (49%) access the Internet. In terms of age, children between 13 to 16 years (54%) tend to access the Internet more than those in the 17+ years age group (45%). The UK survey<sup>46</sup> reported 75% of children accessing the Internet at home and 92% at school. The substantial differences between the learners surveyed in this study and those in the UK may be attributed to the fact that more homes and schools in the UK have computers, as well as the fact that the UK survey involved children from 9 to 19 years, while this survey was restricted to learners in the 13 to 17+ years age-group.

**Time spent on the Internet:** Slightly less than half of the sample (48%) reported accessing the Internet less than once a week, with 53% reporting spending less than an hour. In the UK, 41% are daily users and 43% are weekly users, with 48% reporting between half an hour and an hour on the Internet.

---

<sup>46</sup> *UK Children Go Online (op.cit)*



**Reasons for accessing the Internet:** More than three quarters (78%) reported using the Internet mainly to gather information for school projects. The comparative figure for the UK is 90%.

**Perception of Internet dangers:** Most learners (73%) recognised that using the Internet can be dangerous.

**Using the Internet for purposes other than gathering information:** More than half of the sample (55%) reported that participating in chat rooms is a popular activity. Of those who participate in chat rooms, 49% claimed to frequently participate in online discussions. More boys (56%) than girls (43%) have participated in chat room discussions.

**Monitoring learners' Internet usage:** More than half (56%) reported that their parents do not discuss the Internet with them. Only slightly more than half (53%) responded that teachers discuss Internet safety and usage, and 61% reported that they use the Internet without adult supervision.

#### **Exposure to pornographic materials:**

**In films:** Most (67%) reported having seen a pornographic film, 65% out of curiosity, mostly on DVD. More boys (84%) than girls (54%) have watched at least one pornographic film. 45% reported watching pornographic films regularly.

**On the Internet:** Most (64%) have been exposed to pornographic images on the Internet. In the UK, 57% reported coming into contact with online pornography. Of those who have encountered pornography on the Internet, 70% reported coming across such materials accidentally. In the UK, 36% reported such involuntary exposure. More than half (60%) exchange addresses of pornographic websites with their friends.



**On mobile cellular 'phones:** Most children who participated in the survey (88%) have their own cellular 'phones. 81% reported knowledge of pornographic images on the phones of their friends and would, therefore, have seen such images.

**In magazines:** Less than half (43%) reported that they get and read pornographic magazines. Those who do read pornographic magazines mostly get the magazines from friends.

**Learners response to pornographic materials:** Less than half (42%) of those who watch pornographic films reported feeling uncomfortable when watching such films, with 51% reporting that watching such films made them more curious about sex. Of those who have come across pornography online, 52% reported looking at the images before exiting the site, and 38% reported that they were "not bothered" by the pornographic images they come across. However, 73% agreed that watching pornography does have harmful effects on people.

More children in the UK (54%) reported not being bothered by pornography encountered online, but 45% admitted that they were too young to have seen it when they did.

## 2. Background information

### 2.1 *Research objective*

The objective of the research study was to investigate the exposure of South African children to pornographic material on the Internet, on cellular 'phones, in films and in magazines. The study focused, however, on the Internet: investigating Internet access and usage patterns amongst children; accidental and intentional exposure to sexually inappropriate material on the Internet as well as adult monitoring and supervision of children's use of the Internet.

The aim is to provide information in order to contribute to the development of policy frameworks for the protection of children from exposure to potentially disturbing, harmful and age-inappropriate materials specifically on the Internet accessed via computers and mobile cellular 'phones.



## *2.2 Research methodology*

Although the research methodology consisted of both a quantitative and qualitative approach it may be regarded as mainly quantitative. A structured questionnaire (See Appendix B) was designed covering all relevant aspects and completed by selected high-school learners between the ages of 13 – 17+ years. Individual interviews were conducted with educators involved in computer education and training at selected schools. The two-phased approach was followed to provide a better understanding of how learners were using the Internet and the extent of their exposure to inappropriate material, such as pornography.

## *2.3 Sample*

The sample for the quantitative phase of the research study comprised of high-school learners in the age group 13 – 17+ years, of both genders and different ethnic groups. The sample was stratified according to the age groups; 13 - 14 years, 15 - 16 years and 17+ years. The Internet is more often used by children in this age group, increasing their likelihood of being exposed to pornographic material.

The target was 1000 questionnaires distributed across 3 provinces: Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. It was anticipated that conducting the survey in more than one province would provide information generally representative of South African learners.

## *2.4 Sampling procedures*

The sample was randomly drawn by means of lists containing names of schools provided to the Film and Publication Board (the FPB) by the Department of Education provincial offices in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. To increase fieldwork efficiency, schools were selected in areas which had more access to Internet, for example schools with computer labs and Internet cafes in surrounding areas.



Selected schools were contacted and permission requested to conduct research amongst the learners. After permission was granted, schools were fully briefed with regard to the number of learners required by age to ensure the required number of interviews to be conducted at each school.

Written permission was also sought from parents and guardians. Parents were informed about the research and asked to complete and sign a form indicating their approval for their children to participate in the research study.

A total of 934 questionnaires were completed to reach a sample large enough to allow for systematic analysis according to a range of demographic and other factors.

**Table 1: Sample breakdown**

PROVINCES	TOTAL	AGE GROUPS			GENDER	
		13-14	15-16	17+	MALE	FEMALE
Gauteng (JHB & Pretoria Area)	n=340	165	122	53	151	189
KwaZulu-Natal (Durban Area)	n=332	134	186	12	184	148
Western Cape (Cape Town Area)	n=262	74	79	109	85	177
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>n=934</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>514</b>



## 2.5 *Fieldwork*

The fieldwork was conducted by FPB staff members during an allocated time at each of the selected schools. Learners were briefed on the research study and how to complete the questionnaire. After the questionnaires were handed out, the respondents were left to read the questions carefully and complete the questionnaire in their privacy. Completed questionnaires were returned to the staff members supervising the process.

The average length of the questionnaire was around 20 minutes. All fieldwork took place between 1 August and 20 September 2006.

## 2.6 *Research Challenges*

During the execution of the research study a number of challenges were faced, including;

- **Approaching the Department of Education and gaining permission to conduct research within secondary schools:** To enable the FPB to conduct the research, it was necessary to contact the Department of Education's provincial offices in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape for permission. A copy of the research proposal and questionnaire was requested by authorities for approval. There was some delay in obtaining final approval from the Departments of Education, mainly for the reason that there was concern about possible disruption to students being prepared for approaching examinations. In the main, however, the FPB enjoyed cooperation and support from all three Departments.
- **Gaining permission form selected schools:** Schools were under no obligation to participate in the research study. In order to reach the required sample, a number of schools were randomly selected and contacted. Many schools did not respond to the request, while some who initially agreed, subsequently withdrew.



- **School activities:** During the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, many schools were involved in various activities, including preparing for examinations, which limited the participation of learners in the Grade 11 and 12 groups.
- **Research with children:** Research directly with children involve some distinctive requirements on the research process, with regard to informed consent, formulation of survey questions and research ethics.
- **Limitations of a quantitative survey:** It remains difficult, especially in a survey, to gauge the extent and consequences of exposure to a sensitive subject such as pornography.



### 3. Summary of main research findings

	All Total (n=934) %	All Males (n=420) %      Females (n=514) %		All 13-14 (n=373) %      15-16 (n=387) %      17+ (n=174) %			
Access to the Internet	<i>The Internet is mainly accessed at home</i>	52	56	49	54	53	45
	<i>The Internet is usually accessed less than once a week</i>	48	42	53	50	47	45
	<i>Less than 1 hour is usually spent using the Internet</i>	53	53	53	58	51	48
	<i>Most have computers at home</i>	81	86	77	80	83	80
	<i>Many have access to the Internet at home</i>	62	59	65	62	64	55
	<i>Children generally access the Internet at home with somebody else</i>	54	44	64	67	47	46
	<i>At home the Internet is usually accessed with a brother or sister</i>	48	38	55	53	37	34
Using the Internet	<i>The Internet is mainly used to gather information for school projects</i>	78	72	83	80	78	75
	<i>Children recognise that using the Internet can be dangerous</i>	73	74	72	76	72	66
	<i>Participating in chat rooms is a popular activity</i>	55	60	51	51	58	58
	<i>Children frequently participate in chat room discussions</i>	49	56	43	43	54	51
	<i>Most have not been approached by a stranger in a chat room for anything upsetting</i>	77	86	68	74	80	74
	<i>Most children do not give out any personal information about themselves to strangers in chat rooms</i>	78	77	80	81	76	77
	<i>Generally children do not give out personal information about friends to strangers online</i>	90	89	92	90	92	86
Monitoring Internet Usage	<i>Most parents do not discuss the Internet with their children</i>	56	55	57	54	54	66
	<i>Children think that their parents have sufficient knowledge about the Internet</i>	56	59	53	61	56	44
	<i>Teachers discuss Internet safety and usage at school</i>	53	56	51	49	58	51
	<i>Teachers have adequate knowledge about the Internet</i>	70	68	72	70	71	69
	<i>Most children use the Internet without adult supervision</i>	61	62	61	52	63	75

	All		All		All		
	Total (n=934)		Males (n=420)	Females (n=514)	13-14 (n=373)	15-16 (n=387)	17+ (n=174)
	%		%	%	%	%	%
Exposure to pornographic material - Films	<i>Many have seen a pornographic film</i>	67	84	54	56	73	78
	<i>Curiosity mainly motivates children to watch pornographic films</i>	65	63	67	61	65	70
	<i>Many regularly watch pornographic films</i>	45	58	29	30	50	61
	<i>Pornographic films are mostly watched on DVD</i>	53	61	44	41	57	64
	<i>Most watch pornographic films alone</i>	51	64	38	46	55	56
	<i>Many feel uncomfortable when they watch a pornographic film</i>	42	26	62	56	35	33
	<i>Most are concerned about their parents reaction if they find out that they have watched a pornographic film</i>	78	76	80	83	77	71
	<i>Watching pornographic films make children more curious about sex</i>	51	60	40	49	56	45
	<i>Many do not know if there are any pornographic films in their homes</i>	77	71	81	79	76	71
	Exposure to pornographic material - Internet	<i>Most have seen pornographic images on the Internet</i>	64	79	52	55	71
<i>When encountering pornographic images on the Internet, children look at them before leaving the website</i>		52	59	42	46	54	57
<i>Generally children are not bothered by pornographic images which they see on the Internet</i>		38	45	30	29	43	44
<i>Most do not intentionally visit pornographic websites</i>		62	51	75	66	62	55
<i>Friends distribute website addresses of pornographic sites between each other</i>		60	61	58	58	61	62
<i>Most accidentally come across pornographic websites while surfing the Internet</i>		70	76	63	62	72	80
<i>Most do not download pornographic images from the Internet</i>		77	63	92	80	77	71
<i>Most have not received an email containing pornographic images or information</i>		81	78	83	85	78	78



Exposure to Pornographic Material - Cell phones	<i>Most children have their own personal cellular telephone</i>	88	86	89	86	90	88
	<i>Many have not received any pornographic images on their cellular telephone</i>	67	54	78	73	64	63
	<i>Most children know of friends who have pornographic images on their cell phones</i>	81	90	73	74	88	80
Exposure to pornographic material - Magazines	<i>Most have not read a pornographic magazine</i>	57	44	68	65	51	54
	<i>Those who do read pornographic magazines get them from friends</i>	75	77	71	76	74	75
Effect of pornography	<i>Most children felt that watching pornography does have a harmful effect on a human being</i>	73	65	80	80	68	70

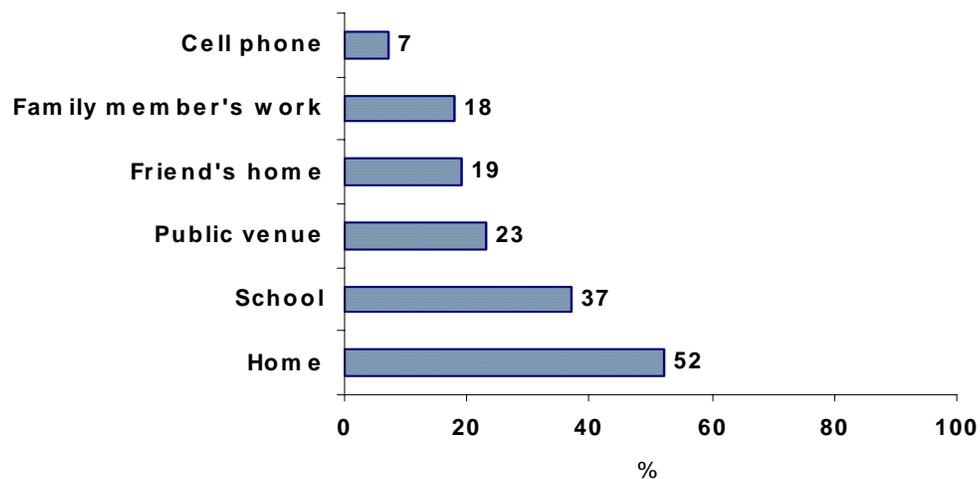
## 4. Main research findings

### 4.1 Access to the Internet

An increasing number of households in South Africa have computers with access to the Internet. 81% of the sample reported that they have a computer at home, with 62% having Internet-access at home.

As indicated below (Figure 1) respondents mainly access the Internet at home. However, children also access the Internet at schools, public venues, such as an Internet Cafés, a friend's home, family member's place of work and cellular 'phones. It is important to recognise that these different places vary with regard to private use or with peers, adult supervision and information filtering and blocking systems.

Figure 1: Where the Internet usually is accessed (n=934) Multiple mentions possible



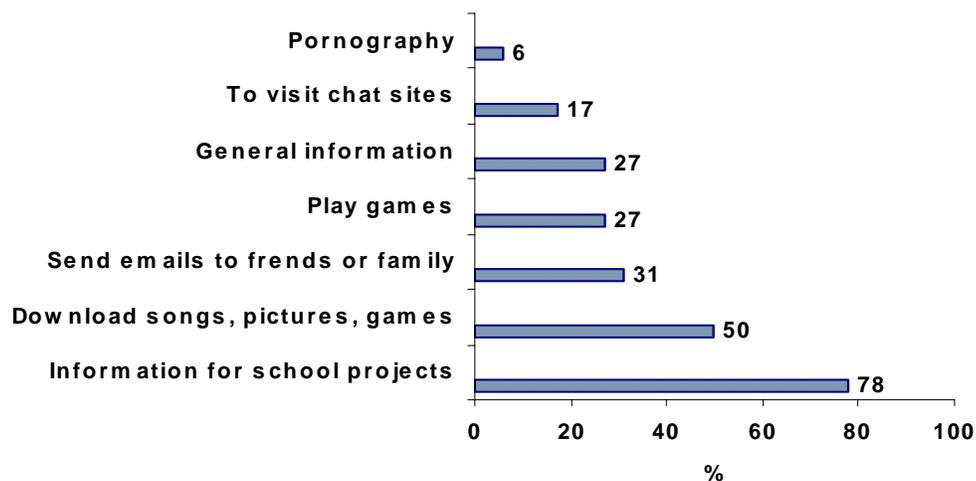
The research findings suggest that children generally access the Internet at home with somebody else: a brother/sister (48%), parent (46%) or friend (44%). Accessing the Internet at home with family members or friends can be regarded as a social activity through which individuals interact with each other by playing computer games, searching for information or listening to music.

Although children increasingly have access to the Internet, few access it frequently for longer-time periods. Almost five in ten (48%) reported that they usually access the Internet less than once a week, with most (53%) spending less than an hour. Although the Internet has become familiar technology amongst children, time spent online is still less in comparison to other activities children engage in.

#### 4.2 *Using the Internet*

The Internet is used by children for a variety of reasons: to gather information, for communication with friends and for entertainment, usually to play games or download music. In some instances, however, children do use the Internet for less wholesome reasons. Based on the research findings, children between the ages 13 – 17 years mainly use the Internet for educational purposes to assist them with school assignments (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Reasons for using the Internet (n=934) Multiple mentions possible



The research findings suggest that children are aware that technology is becoming more sophisticated and that they need to be cautious when using the Internet. 73% of the sample shared the feeling that using the Internet can be dangerous. This was mainly ascribed to coming into contact with strangers, easy accessible sexually explicit material and computer viruses.

Verbatim responses: Why do you think using the Internet is dangerous? (All respondents 13 - 17+ years)

*"It is very easy to get information and sometimes bad information. You can also download illegal things"*

*"Advertisements inviting you to pornographic sites are displayed"*

*"It can be dangerous if one goes on chat rooms and give out personal details"*

*"It is dangerous because many children can be exposed to things that they are not supposed to be exposed to, such as pornography"*

*"There are crazy people out there that could trace you if you give out information in a chat room"*

*"Your computer might get a virus from the Internet"*

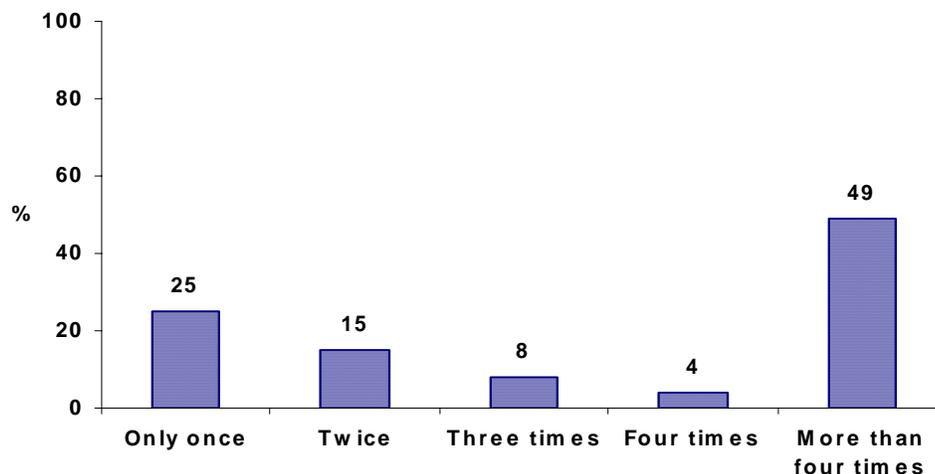
*"In a chat room, you don't really know who you are talking to and can get into trouble"*

*"There are too many explicit and degrading sites on the Internet"*

*"You can access porn by a click of your finger"*

Participating in chat rooms is a popular activity amongst children. 55% reported that they participate in chat room discussions either on computers or cellular 'phones. Those who participate in chat room discussions tended to do so more frequently; 49% claimed that they participated in chat room discussions more than 4 times (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Number of times participated in a chat room (n=535)





Recently a lot of media attention has been devoted to the giving out of personal information to people one meets online and 'stranger danger'. More than three quarter of the sample (77%) claimed that they have not been approached by a stranger in a chat room for anything that was distressing. It is noteworthy that online communication is not always a positive experience for children. 23% have found themselves in uncomfortable situations during which strangers made sexually explicit suggestions or requested intimate information. This was more evident amongst girls than boys.

**Verbatim responses: What made you upset or uncomfortable? (All respondents 13 - 17+ years)**

*"When they start to talk about sex and asking questions about me and sex"*

*"They wanted to have phone sex and a picture of me"*

*"He asked me what I was wearing and how I look without my clothes on"*

*"The person talking to me said he want to meet me"*

*"The person I was chatting to said she is watching porn and she was horny"*

*"He asked how big my breasts are and that I must send him a photo"*

*"He said I must come to his house naked"*

*"I was asked to meet someone somewhere and I did not know them"*

*"He send pictures of his private parts. Disgusting!"*

*"When someone ask in the chat room, what clothes am I wearing? Do I have a boyfriend? And for my numbers"*

Although 78% claimed that they have never given out any personal information about themselves in online chat rooms, it is alarming that 22% reported that they have given out personal information about themselves, and 10% reported passing on information about a friend to strangers.

As the Internet develops, more children are encountering risky, unwelcome experiences online. Often adults participating in chat room discussions seek out individuals who then become victims of sexually-related Internet crime including online sexual harassment, cyberstalking and pedophilic 'grooming' of children.



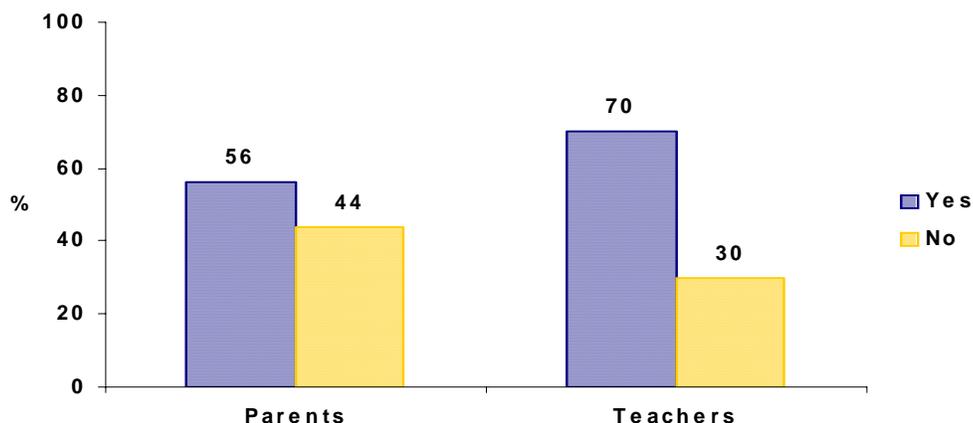
Children online are vulnerable not only to exposure to objectionable materials but also to becoming victims of Internet predators who use the Internet to identify and seek out children for offline meetings. Children need to be educated by parents and educators on how they can protect themselves from being targeted and abused.

### 4.3 *Monitoring Internet usage*

The research investigated the involvement of responsible adults, such as parents and teachers, with children's Internet education and usage. Based on the research findings, it is teachers and parents who primarily support the learning process. Schools represent the most appropriate location for training and teachers seem to play a central role in children's online behaviour. 70% of the sample claimed that their teachers have enough knowledge about the Internet and most (53%) reported that their teachers have discussed the Internet with them at school. This raises key issues of teacher training and curriculum content.

Parents seem to be more reluctant to become involve in their children's online learning experience and rely on workplace experience. Most (56%) reported that their parents have never discussed the Internet with them or warned them against any possible dangers when using the Internet. This is despite the fact that more than half of the sample (56%) shared the opinion that their parents have enough knowledge about the Internet (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Do parents and teachers have enough knowledge about the Internet? (n=934)





Adults take supervision roles, such as keeping an eye on the screen and asking the child what he/she is doing, in different ways, resulting in varying outcomes. 61% of the sample reported that they use the Internet without any adult supervision. Amongst those who are supervised, it is usually a parent at home (46%), teacher at school (41%) or family member (31%) who monitors their online activities. In many instances, adults assume that certain safety rules are being followed when in fact they are not.

The Internet is becoming central to the learning process. It is a popular tool used by children to gather information, for communication and entertainment. Parents and teachers have a key role to play in guiding their children towards safer use of the Internet.

#### 4.4 Exposure to pornographic material

##### 4.4.1 Films

The research investigated children's exposure to pornographic material through different means including films, Internet, cellular 'phones and magazines. The survey pursued the incidence, response to and possible effect of such exposure.

For the purpose of this research, the definition of what constitutes 'pornography' was left to the respondents themselves. Generally 'pornography' was understood by respondents as *'films in which adults engage in sexual activities'*.

Verbatim responses: In your own words, what is pornography? (All respondents, 13 - 17+ years)

*"Explicit sex, nude pictures and sexual contact displayed in disrespectful manner"*

*"Movies showing people having sexual intercourse"*

*"Adult images and videos not suitable for people under the age of 18"*

*"Is when people have sexual intercourse with others for money or fun. It is recorded or captured and distributed to the public"*



*“Sexual material either in writing, sounds or picture that depicts one or more people naked and involved in sexual activities”*

*“Pornography is pictures or movies which are age restricted and bad for your health”*

*“Over exaggerated shows of sex, explicit unrealistic ways of engaging in sexual entertainment”*

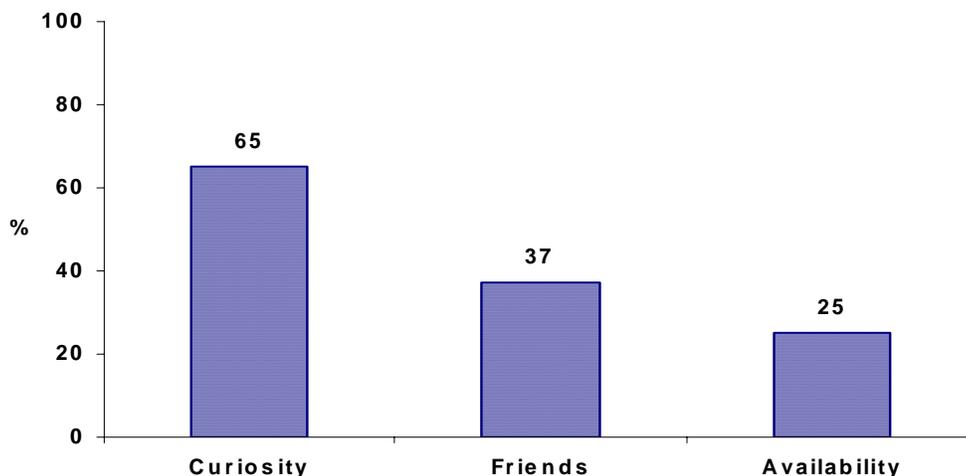
*“Sexual images of woman. I think it is ugly and disturbing. Many guys have porn pictures on their phones that their girlfriend know about”*

*“Very ugly stuff that children see in their daily lives”*

The extent to which children between the ages of 13 - 17+ years are exposed to pornographic films are often underestimated. 67% of the sample reported that they have watched a pornographic film.

Based on the research findings, children mainly watch pornographic films due to curiosity, peer pressure and the easy availability of pornographic material (Figure 5). Other mentions included pressure from a boyfriend or girlfriend, influence from a family member and boredom.

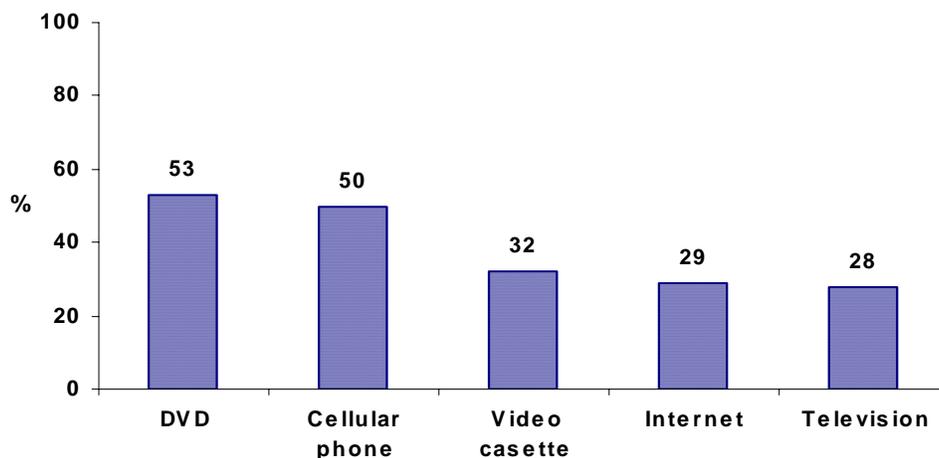
Figure 5: Reasons for watching pornographic films (n = 661) Multiple mentions possible



Amongst those who watched pornographic films, 45% have watched pornographic films more than four times. Older boys (15 years and older) who participated in the survey tend to watch pornographic films more regularly than girls.

As shown below (Figure 6) pornographic films are mostly watched on DVD (53%) and cellular 'phones (50%). It is noteworthy that 28% reported that they watched pornographic films on television. Closer investigation revealed that respondents referred to movies that are broadcasted on national television late at night.

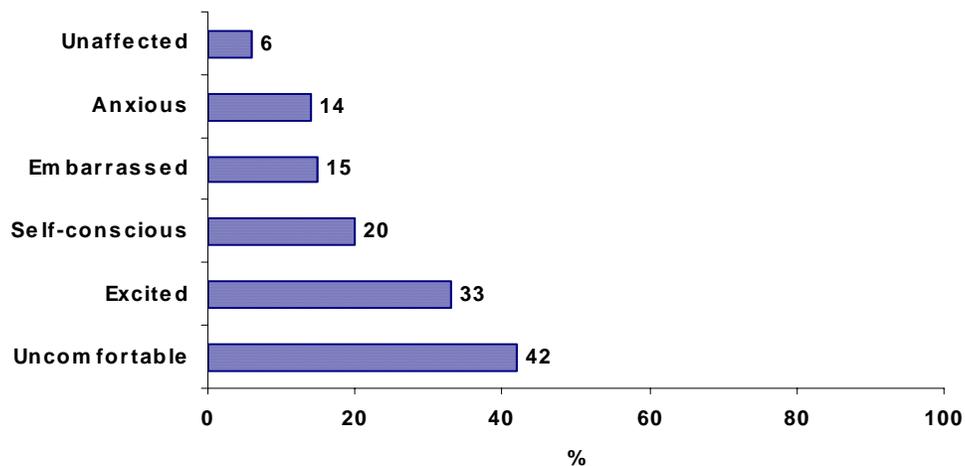
Figure 6: Where pornographic films are watched (n=641) Multiple mentions possible



Respondents either watch pornographic films alone (51%) or with their friends (49%). Evidently, peer pressure plays a significant role amongst children between the ages of 13 - 17+ years. There is a tendency amongst the girls who participated in the survey to watch pornographic films with friends, whilst boys are more likely to watch pornographic films alone and share information about pornographic material with friends.

To determine the possible effect of pornographic films on children it is necessary to explore their feelings. As indicated below (Figure 7), children mostly feel uncomfortable when watching a pornographic film. Boys tend to be more excited by pornographic films than girls.

Figure 7: Feelings when watching a pornographic film (n=658) Multiple mentions possible



More than half (51%) stated that they feel more curious about sex after they have watched a pornographic film. This was more evident amongst boys than girls.

Since it is illegal for children under the age of 18 years to be exposed to or be in possession of pornographic material, the question arises: where do children get pornographic material? Based on the research findings it is clear that sexually-explicit material is distributed within 'close circles' of friends or family members. 24% of learners knew there were pornographic films at their homes and some have access to these films. It is very important that adults take adequate measure in keeping sexually-explicit materials out of reach for children. In terms of the *Films and Publication Act* it is an offence *"to hand or exhibit a film or publication to a person under the age of 18 years"* as well as *"the failure to take reasonable steps to prevent access thereto by such a person"*.

78% of the respondents reported that they are concerned about their parents' reaction if they find out that they have seen pornography.

#### 4.4.2 Internet

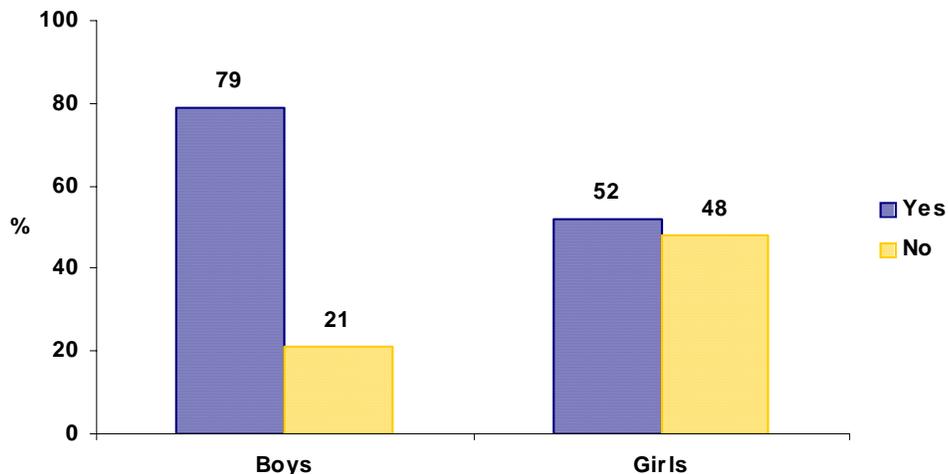
The anonymity and convenience of the Internet makes it attractive to be used by children for sexually-related purposes. The Internet can be used for a number of diverse activities including;

- Seeking out sexually-related material for educational use. It was found that children visit pornographic websites to answer questions they have about sex.
- Seeking out sexually-related material for entertainment purposes.
- Engaging in online relationships via chat rooms or email.

Internet pornography is not difficult to access especially with the development of powerful yet easy-to-use search engines. Based on the research findings, most schools have strict mechanisms in place to prevent children from accessing sexually-explicit material on the Internet. These include, blocking and filtering software, educator supervision and monitoring systems.

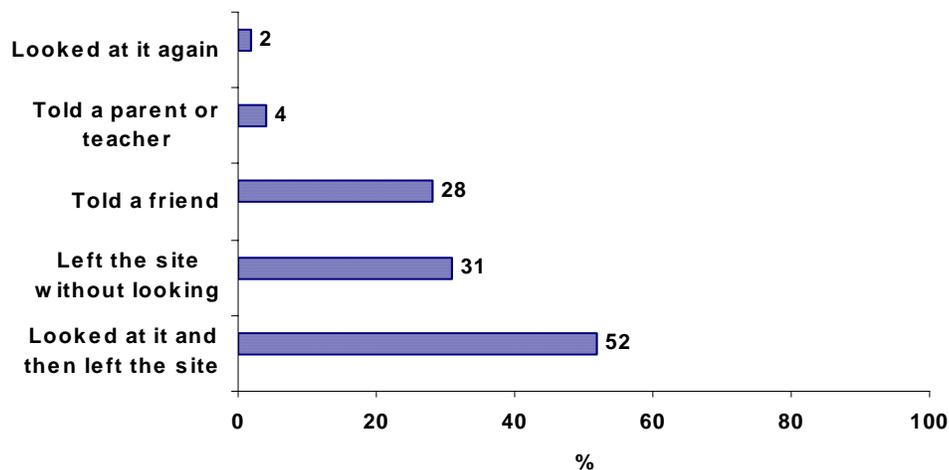
Despite such measures, the research results suggest that seeing pornography online is common amongst children. 64% reported that they have seen pornographic images on the Internet. More boys who participated in the survey reported that they have seen pornography on the Internet than girls (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Seen pornographic images on the Internet (n=922) Multiple mentions possible



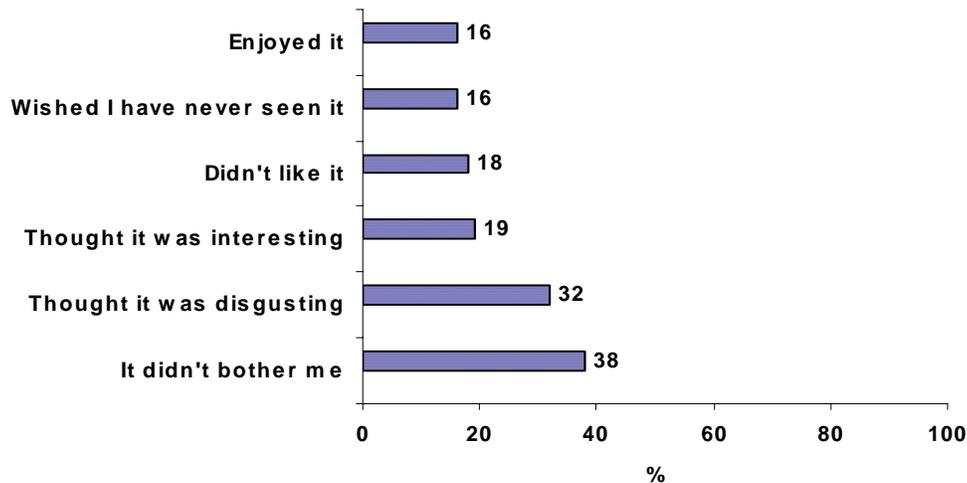
When encountering pornography online, children are likely to take a look at it or leave the website as quickly as possible. As indicated below (Figure 9), 52% reported that they looked at it and then left the site, whilst 31% left the site immediately without looking. A small proportion of the respondents (4%) told a parent or teacher about it.

Figure 9: Reaction when encountering pornography online (n=647) Multiple mentions possible



Findings suggest that children experience mixed feelings when encountering pornographic images online. It is noteworthy that 38% claimed that they are not bothered by pornographic images on the Internet. While more boys claimed not to be bothered by pornography they encounter online, most girls felt disgusted.

Figure 10: Feelings when encountering pornography online (n=658) Multiple mentions possible



Exposure to online pornography could either be deliberate or accidental. Most sites that contain objectionable materials, usually of a sexually-explicit nature, do not provide sufficient safeguards to ensure that children do not have access to such sites. Most sites will merely indicate that the site may contain sexually-explicit pictures that may be offensive to some viewers. A notice to the effect that any person under the age of 18 years should “exit” the site does not help much either. Mere curiosity may encourage a child to view the pictures on offer since all that the child needs to do is “point and click” to enter the site.

38% reported that they have intentionally searched for and visited an online pornographic website. More boys than girls have intentionally accessed pornographic sites, mostly from information about pornographic websites exchanged among friends.

However, almost three quarters (70%) reported accidental online exposure to sexually-explicit materials, which many found disturbing or upsetting. Accidental exposure often occurs where pornographers use website names that do not even suggest that the site contains pornography, reducing the efficacy of blocking and filtering software.

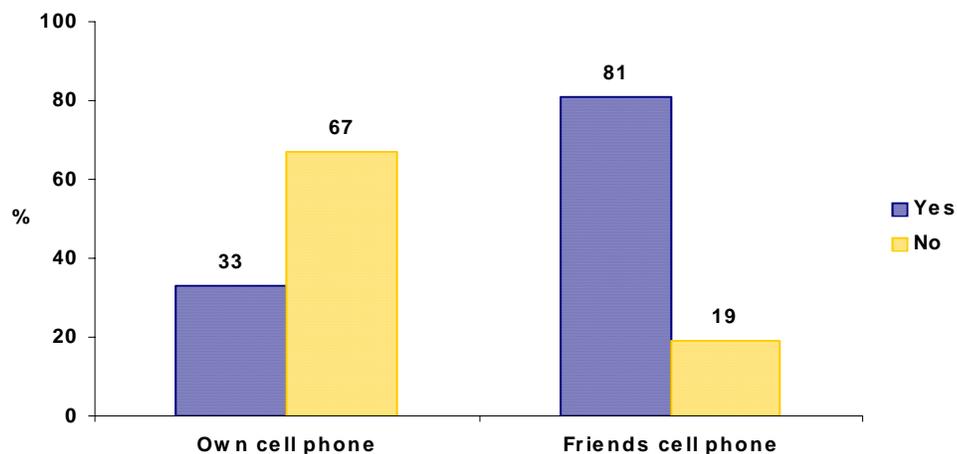
23% reported that they have downloaded pornographic images from the Internet, with more boys than girls likely to do so.

#### 4.4.3 Cellular 'phones

Most children (88%) who participated in the survey reported that they have their own personal cellular telephones. As mobile devices become Internet enabled, the complexity of controlling Internet access increases.

33% reported that they have received pornographic images on their cellular 'phones and 81% reported knowledge of pornographic images on their friends' cellular 'phones (Figure 11). This highlights the extent to which pornography on cellular 'phones exist and circulate amongst friends.

Figure 11: Pornographic images on cell phones (n=934) Multiple mentions possible

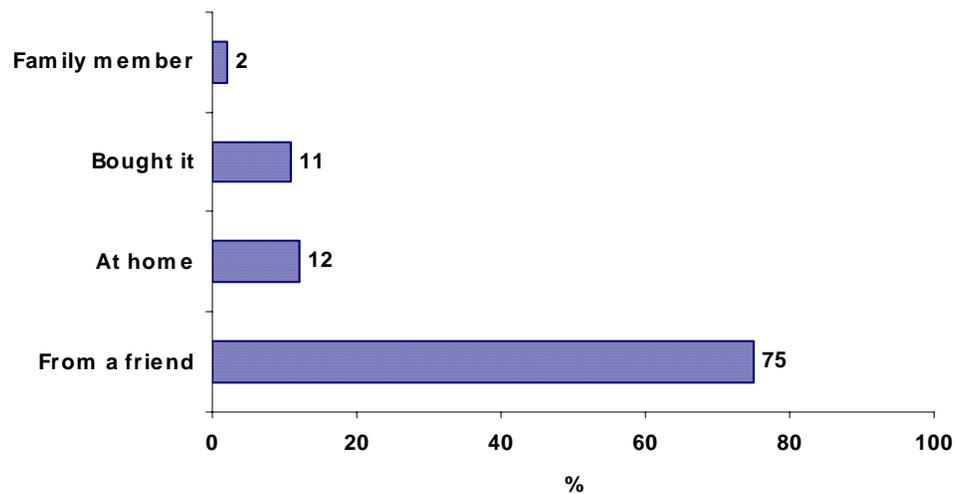


#### 4.4.4 Magazines

More than half of the sample (57%) reported that they have not read a pornographic magazine. The assumption can be made that pornographic images through technological means such as DVD's, Internet and cellular 'phones are more popular amongst children than traditional means, such as magazines.

As indicated below (Figure 12), those who do read pornographic magazines mostly get them from friends.

Figure 12: Where pornographic magazine was found (n=409) Multiple mentions possible



#### 4.5 Attitudes towards pornography

Respondents were asked to rate a number of statements with regard to pornography, by using a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is “do not agree at all”, 2 is “do not agree”, 3 means “agree” and 4 “definitely agree”.

Table 2: Statements (n=934)

Statement	Rating scale			
	Do not agree at all	Do not agree	Agree	Definitely agree
It is acceptable to watch pornographic films at home	50%	25%	18%	7%
It is wrong to watch pornography	17%	24%	21%	37%
It doesn't bother me to look at pornographic images on the Internet	36%	25%	24%	15%
I look at pornographic images on the Internet because my friends are doing it	71%	16%	8%	5%
The government is doing a good job protecting children against pornography	48%	15%	12%	25%

While the majority of learners (75%) agreed that watching pornography is *unacceptable*, only 58% agreed that it was *wrong* to do so. Whether or not the respondents saw a distinction between *wrong* and *illegal* is not clear but the assumption may be made that *wrong* has more to do with moral or social values than illegality in their minds. Only 37% agreed that government was doing a good job protecting children from pornography.



#### 4.6 Effect of pornography

73% of the sample claimed that being exposed to pornography can be harmful. Respondents were of the opinion that pornography exposes children to something which they are not emotionally ready for and indirectly encourages them to become sexually active at a very young age. Younger children (13 -14 years) felt more strongly about the possible harmful effects, while older children who participated in the survey think that they have sufficient maturity and skills to handle exposure to pornography and therefore were less concerned. 27% claimed that being exposed to pornography does not pose any harm.

Verbatim responses: Why do you think watching pornography is harmful? (All respondents, 13 - 17+ years)

*"It is harmful, because some children go and try it and think it is cool when they are doing it"*

*"It is harmful because you can get obsessed about sex and start forcing people to have sex with you"*

*"It affects your schoolwork and you can't stop thinking about it"*

*"Teenagers tend to do what they see on TV which lead to pregnancy and HIV/AIDS"*

*"It leaves images in your heads and leaves you curious especially when you're with your partner"*

*"If you watch it excessively then it can be addictive and take your focus off other areas of your lives"*

*"Because kids try it at home and they see girls in a weird way"*

*"It put thoughts and images in our minds. It gives ideas and intentions of doing those acts"*

*"It encourages a immoral society and does nothing for the prevention of Aids"*

*"The young children see the clips and then also want to try it. They become aggressive and they force their girlfriends or boyfriends to try and have sex"*



5. Comparative analysis: UK Children Go Online, Livingstone and Bober, April 2005

It would appear that the trend among children in South Africa is, even allowing for the slight variations in the age-groups surveyed in Australia, the UK and the USA, is not so different from the trend found in other countries that South Africa cannot share and exchange “best practice” models from countries with a longer tenure in protecting children online. The Table below is a comparison with the study conducted in the United Kingdom (*UK Children Go Online*<sup>47</sup>) to illustrate this conclusion:

Table 3: Comparative analysis

SA Study (n=934) 13 - 17+ year olds	UK Study (n=1511) 9 - 19 year olds
<b>Access to the Internet</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 81% have access to a computer at home</li> <li>• 62% have access to the Internet at home</li> <li>• 37% have accessed the Internet at school</li> <li>• 10% access the Internet everyday</li> <li>• 53% spent less than 1 hour</li> <li>• 4% spent more than 4 hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 87% have a computer at home</li> <li>• 71% have access to the Internet at home</li> <li>• 92% have accessed the Internet at school</li> <li>• 4% are daily users of the Internet</li> <li>• 67% spent less than 1 hour</li> <li>• 5% spend more than 3 hours</li> </ul>
<b>Using the Internet</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 78% information for school projects</li> <li>• 31% send emails</li> <li>• 17% participate in chat room discussions</li> <li>• 27% play games</li> <li>• 50% download music, pictures and games</li> <li>• 23% have received sexually explicit suggestions in chat room discussions</li> <li>• 22% have given out personal information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90% to do work for school</li> <li>• 71% send and receive emails</li> <li>• 21% participate in chat room discussions</li> <li>• 70% play games</li> <li>• 46% download music</li> <li>• 31% reported having received unwanted sexual comments</li> <li>• 46% have given out personal information</li> </ul>

<sup>47</sup> *op.cit*

Exposure to pornographic material: Internet	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 64% have seen pornography on the Internet</li> <li>• 38% have intentionally visited a porn website</li> <li>• Most exposure is accidental</li> <li>• 38% were not bothered</li> <li>• 18% did not like it</li> <li>• 32% felt it was disgusting</li> <li>• 31% left the site immediately</li> <li>• 52% looked and then left the site</li> <li>• 28% told a friend about it</li> <li>• 4% told a parent or teacher about it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 57% have come into contact with online pornography</li> <li>• 10% visited a pornographic website on purpose</li> <li>• Most exposure is accidental</li> <li>• 54% claim not to be bothered by porn on the Internet</li> <li>• 14% did not like it</li> <li>• 28% was disgusted</li> <li>• 56% leave the website as quickly as they can</li> <li>• 31% look at it</li> <li>• 7% told a friend</li> <li>• 6% told a parent or a teacher</li> </ul>

Demographics: Gender	
Research Study (n=934) 13 - 17+ year olds	UK Study (n=1511) 9 - 19 year olds
<p><b>Boys (n=420):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More boys use the Internet daily</li> <li>• Boys participate more in chat room discussions than girls</li> <li>• Boys are more likely to have come into contact with pornographic material than girls</li> <li>• They are more likely to intentionally visit pornographic websites and come across pornographic material accidentally</li> <li>• Boys are more likely to share information about pornographic material with friends</li> </ul> <p><b>Girls (n=514):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls are more likely to receive unwanted sexually explicit suggestions in chat rooms</li> <li>• Girls have encountered less pornography online than boys</li> <li>• Girls are more concerned about the possible harmful effect of pornographic material than boys</li> </ul>	<p><b>Boys (n=668):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boys spend more time online per day</li> <li>• They experience more online risks than girls</li> <li>• They are more likely to seek out pornographic websites on purpose and to come across online porn by accident</li> <li>• Boys take up slightly more peer-to-peer opportunities</li> </ul> <p><b>Girls (n=842):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls encounter less pornography online but are more likely to experience content risks</li> </ul>

Demographics: Age	
<p><i>13 - 14 years (n=394):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Younger children play more games and download music and pictures</li> <li>• Parents are more likely to monitor and control access for younger children</li> <li>• Younger children were more concerned about the possible harmful effect of pornography</li> </ul> <p><i>15 - 17+ years (540):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More exposed and less bothered by pornography online.</li> <li>• Older children use the Internet more for information and communication purposes</li> <li>• Strong influence from friends</li> <li>• Less concerned about parental regulation</li> </ul>	<p><i>12 - 15 years (n=605):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are experimenting with and expanding their use of the Internet to pursue their interest in games, music etc.</li> <li>• Still focus on parental anxieties but concerned to maintain their privacy, they no longer easily subject to parental regulation</li> </ul> <p><i>16 - 17 years (n=274):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older teens are absorbed by the culture of their peer group</li> <li>• They are still at risk from inappropriate contact and other risks</li> <li>• Much to gain from the Internet</li> </ul>

The local survey and UK study found almost similar results. Both studies reported a high incidence of computer and Internet access at home, although the UK study reported significantly higher Internet access at schools. This can be attributed to the fact that more schools in the UK have computers with Internet access.

Although more children in the UK have access to the Internet, it was found that children tend to use the Internet less frequently for shorter time periods.

Both studies found that the main purpose for using the Internet amongst children was to gather information for educational purposes. The UK study reported higher use of the Internet for communication (emails, chat rooms) and entertainment (playing computer games) purposes. While both studies showed the occurrence of unwelcome sexually-suggestive expressions from strangers online, the UK study indicated a higher percentage of children giving out personal information about themselves to strangers online.



Both studies confirmed that children using the Internet are at risk from being exposed to pornographic material. Both studies reported that most online exposure to pornographic material was accidental and that children claimed not to be bothered by the sexually explicit images that they see on the Internet.

With regard to gender and age differences, the results were somewhat similar. Boys are more likely to have come into contact with pornographic material than girls and tend to be less bothered about the harmful effect of pornographic material. Girls receive more unwanted sexually-explicit suggestions online and are more concerned about the harmful effect of pornography. Both studies found that older children, especially boys, are influenced by peers when it comes to sexually-explicit material.



## PART THREE

### 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

#### 6.1 *Conclusions*

- Coming into contact with pornography seems to be common amongst South African children. In many instances this is an unwelcome experience which causes feelings of discomfort.
- The extent to which children come into contact with pornography is often underestimated. With the evolution of technology, cellular 'phones are mirroring many functions of the computer which enable the youth to have greater access to information including sexually-explicit material.
- For children the Internet is multipurpose and used not only for information but also to a greater extent for entertainment and communication. Children use the Internet for a wide range of purposes, not all of which are socially approved.
- Children do recognise the possible harmful effect of being exposed to pornography, although they are often motivated by factors such as curiosity to explore sexually-explicit material. For this reason, the question can be asked whether sex education at homes and in schools are sufficient and effectively address the needs of the youth.
- Pornographic material is easily accessible and distributed between individuals who often underestimate the negative experience and impact pornography might have on them. Exposure to sexually-explicit material can disrupt children's emotional well-being and have lasting harmful consequences.
- Parents face several challenges. It is parents' responsibility to educate their children about the Internet and online dangers. A lot of media attention has been devoted to giving out personal information and 'stranger danger' although it seems that this is neglected by parents. Parents need to be actively involved and aware of their children's online activities.
- A multi-stakeholder approach is proposed between parents, caregivers and teachers in an effort to combine their knowledge and skills in guiding children with regard to Internet usage.



- The ideal will be children using the Internet to its full potential with minimum risks. This can be achieved through stricter regulation of online services. Laws over online pornography need to be effectively implemented and enforced.
- There is a need for information relevant to the South African context. Parents often lack knowledge and are reluctant to intervene in their children's activities.
- Children are often exposed to pornography within their immediate environment through friends or family members. Within families the necessary precautions need to be taken to protect children from unnecessary exposure to sexually-explicit material. Parents need to be concerned about children's exposure to pornographic material and aware that their children might seek access to this kind of information.

## 6.2 Recommendations

In so far as children are concerned, no distinction should be admitted between illegal and legal content. What matters is whether or not the material is of a nature that may be potentially disturbing, harmful or unsuitable for children. This study confirms that South African children using the Internet are at risk of unwanted exposure to objectionable material to the same extent as children in other countries. And as more and more schools move towards establishing the Internet as part of a school's learning environment without adopting strategies to minimise the risks of unwanted exposure, even more children will be placed at risk. The often-heard argument that the very nature of the Internet as *a global and borderless medium of communication* makes the Internet "unregulable" is not relevant where the aim is not the regulation of the Internet but the *regulation of children's access to objectionable materials* by adopting strategies and measures that would minimise the risks of unwanted exposure<sup>48</sup>. Parents, educators and Internet/cellular 'phone service and content providers must all be involved in devising and implementing strategies to ensure the protection of children online.

---

<sup>48</sup> See, for instance, *Regulating Youth Access to Pornography*, Discussion Paper Number 53, The Australian Institute



It is important to recognise that any policy aimed at the elimination of the source of objectionable material by making it illegal to post such materials on the Internet is not an option when considering strategies for the protection of children from unsolicited exposure. Apart from any other consideration<sup>49</sup>, the fact of the matter is that most of the objectionable materials accessible on the Internet originate from sources outside the jurisdiction of South African law. Technology-based tools, such as blocking and filtering software, are important options but only as measures additional to social, educational and industry strategies. It is also important to recognise that policies regarding children's use of the Internet must also aim at maximising the benefits of the Internet while minimising the risks.

Educational strategies should not only aim to empower children to avoid unwanted exposure but also to teach children to think critically about what they see, read or hear and how to maximise the potential of the Internet for education and entertainment with minimum risks of stumbling across objectionable materials.

Focusing on educational strategies is not to suggest that technology-based measures are unimportant, especially in combination with educational strategies. Blocking and filtering software that only respond to keywords do have limitations. The problem with using keywords is not only that keywords would also block access to useful information<sup>50</sup> but that pornographers do not always use generally-known and obvious keywords. A child looking for information on "slavery", for instance, could be directed to "sex slave" sites. In addition, a misplaced letter in a keyword search, such as "legs" instead of "lego", would expose a child to sites containing sexually-explicit materials. Since it is more than likely that, even with blocking and filtering software, a child will be confronted with objectionable materials, educational strategies to equip children with knowledge on how to deal with and respond to such materials should be the focus of strategies to protect children online.

---

<sup>49</sup> Such as the constitutional right to freedom of expression. No government will ever consider a policy that even remotely suggests that all content on the Internet should be of a nature and level suitable only for children

<sup>50</sup> A keyword such as "sex", for instance, would block access to all sites containing the word "sex", including useful sex education sites. And Middlesex or any other city with "sex" as part of its name! Of course, the use of keywords is not the only blocking or filtering option. For instance, "first-party" rating (rating by content providers themselves) could allow for the blocking of all sites rated "adult"



Educational strategies, subsumed under “media literacy”, would also help children cope with disturbing and inappropriate materials offline, such as films and television. Children, in an age in which the Internet is all-pervasive, must be trained to become “street smart” with respect to electronic media.

- The development of the most appropriate combination of educational strategies and technology-based measures is a priority<sup>51</sup>. Educational strategies should be aimed at equipping parents, teachers, librarians and others concerned with the welfare of children, with sufficient knowledge not only to understand and appreciate the benefits and risks of electronic media, and especially the Internet and mobile cellular ‘phones, but also to be able to teach children in their care how to use the Internet safely and how to deal with involuntary exposure to objectionable materials. One of the advantages of appropriate education, awareness and training programmes is that it empowers children to take control of their use of the Internet and learn how to cope with any unwholesome exposures online.

Children who are equipped with the necessary skills to cope with exposure to unsolicited and objectionable materials and how to avoid such situations will be able to use the Internet with more confidence and less apprehension about the “big-brother-watching-over-my-shoulders-and invading-my-privacy” syndrome. Children will learn, both from such educational programmes and their own experience, not only how to cope with any emotional and psychological distress from being confronted with disturbing materials and how to avoid such unwanted exposure but also what to do with respect to reporting such incidents to appropriate authorities<sup>52</sup>.

---

<sup>51</sup> For an authoritative discussion on social and educational strategies and technology-based tools for protecting children online, see *Youth, Pornography and the Internet*, Dick Thornburgh and Herbert S Lin (Eds), National Academy of Sciences, Washington, USA (2002). See, also, “Filtering the Internet – A Best Practice Model” in *Protecting Our Children on the Internet*, Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers (2000)

<sup>52</sup> The Australian Institute (*op.cit.*) supports the development of nation-wide programmes to teach learners strategies “to understand and critically evaluate pornographic images and messages and to encourage the development of ethical norms and practical skills that will help protect them from inappropriate and disturbing material.... Media literacy also enables children to take a more detached and evaluative view of the material. Studies find that individuals shown violent pornography can be ‘inoculated’ against its negative effects through prebriefing or ‘cured’ afterwards through



Technology-based initiatives, in combination with education and training, will help minimise children's inadvertent exposure to objectionable materials. To be really effective, blocking and filtering of objectionable Internet sites at source is a better option than end-user blocking and filtering. ISPs should be persuaded to apply filters to all content, with adult end-users given the option of requesting unfiltered access through reliable age verification and password systems. In addition, any person providing child-oriented services, including chat-rooms, on the Internet or mobile cellular 'phone, should, by law, be required to take adequate measures to ensure that such services are not abused by those distributing objectionable materials.<sup>53</sup>

- While this study provides evidence that children are being exposed to potentially disturbing, harmful and inappropriate materials, and while there is general consensus that it is not in the best interests of children that they should be exposed to such materials, further research is needed to establish the impact of such exposure on children. While there is no scientific research consensus that children exposed to sexually-explicit materials suffer adverse cognitive or emotional or psychological consequences, there is no consensus that there is no negative impact either. If children are to be equipped with the skills necessary to cope with exposure to objectionable materials, and there is every reason to believe that almost every child using the Internet more than just occasionally will be stumble across such materials, it is important to know how such materials impact on children.
- Internet content providers should be required to provide ratings for all Internet websites. This requirement, of course, can only be imposed on domestic content providers, which still leaves the problem of the substantial amount of materials that originate from sources outside South African jurisdiction.

---

*debriefing. School curricula...provide an excellent framework in which to locate the teaching of skills and values that can minimise the harmful impact of pornography."*

<sup>53</sup> See section 24C of the proposed amendments to the *Films and Publications Act*



The Internet Content Rating Association (ICRA)<sup>54</sup>, for instance, is an independent non-profit organisation whose mission is to direct users to content they want and to avoid content that they would prefer not to see, both for themselves and their children. Content providers check which of the elements from an ICRA questionnaire are present in their websites and labels are then generated and linked to the content. Broadly, the ICRA questionnaire covers the following topics:

- nudity
- sexual content
- violence
- strong language, and
- other potentially harmful content, such as gambling and substance abuse.

The decision on whether or not to allow access to that content is made by the end-user. Parents, teachers and librarians, for instance, can then use blocking and filtering software to disallow access to websites based on the information provided by the labels.

- Given that more than half the learners surveyed admitted to having watched a pornographic film, with only slightly less than half regularly, there should be more effective enforcement of the laws prohibiting the distribution of sexually-explicit films to children. Efforts of the Board to monitor compliance with the Act with regard to the distribution of adults-only films must be complemented by a more vigorous response from the police. Parents and others in charge of children should be encouraged to take a more active interest in the viewing habits of children.
- Schools and libraries should make available to all children a directory of websites with useful, educational and entertaining content, including websites which encourage Internet literacy.

---

<sup>54</sup> [www.icra.org](http://www.icra.org)



It is important to draw a distinction between *regulating the Internet* and *regulating children's access to the Internet*. Many believe that the Internet is, by its very nature, unregulable. However, there is general consensus internationally that the Internet can and must be made a safer place for children. The United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, to name but a few countries, have established programmes and projects aimed at making the Internet a safe environment for children<sup>55</sup>. In many countries, Internet-safety is part of the school curriculum. Given the online risks that children are exposed to, regulating access to and use of the Internet must become part of every child's learning environment.

Internet service, access and content providers must complement Government and end-user programmes aimed at the protection of children by developing, implementing and enforcing codes of conduct as part of vigorous self-regulation. But for self-regulation to work there must be effective Government support. Ultimately, however, children themselves must be the focus of Internet safety programmes. Parents and teachers, therefore, must accept final responsibility for ensuring that children are equipped not only with technical skills for competent and safe use of the Internet but *".....above all, the ability to handle media content critically."*<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> See, also, the European Commission's "Safer Internet Forum"

<sup>56</sup> *Protecting Our on the Internet* (op.cit)



## Appendix A: Provincial research results

		All Total (n=934) %	Western Cape (n=262) %	All KwaZulu Natal (n=332) %	Gauteng (n=340) %
Access to the Internet	<i>The Internet is mainly accessed at home</i>	52	44	61	49
	<i>The Internet is usually accessed less than once a week</i>	48	52	38	55
	<i>Less than 1 hour is usually spent using the Internet</i>	53	58	54	50
	<i>Most have computers at home</i>	81	77	91	75
	<i>Many have access to the Internet at home</i>	62	60	70	54
	<i>Children generally access the Internet at home with somebody else</i>	54	61	50	55
	<i>At home the Internet is usually accessed with a brother or sister</i>	48	51	42	52
Using the Internet	<i>The Internet is mainly used to gather information for school projects</i>	78	82	83	71
	<i>Children recognise that using the Internet can be dangerous</i>	73	68	82	67
	<i>Participating in chat rooms is a popular activity</i>	55	55	59	53
	<i>Children frequently participate in chat room discussions</i>	49	53	50	46
	<i>Most have not been approached by a stranger in a chat room for anything upsetting</i>	77	76	76	79
	<i>Most children do not give out any personal information about themselves to strangers in chat rooms</i>	78	73	78	84
	<i>Generally children do not give out personal information about friends to strangers online</i>	90	88	94	89
Monitoring Internet Usage	<i>Most parents do not discuss the Internet with their children</i>	56	57	53	58
	<i>Children think that their parents have sufficient knowledge about the Internet</i>	56	49	59	58
	<i>Teachers discuss Internet safety and usage at school</i>	53	52	58	49
	<i>Teachers have adequate knowledge about the Internet</i>	70	72	68	70
	<i>Most children use the Internet without adult supervision</i>	61	62	64	58

	All Total (n=934) %	Western Cape (n=262) %	All KwaZulu Natal (n=332) %	Gauteng (n=340) %	
Exposure to pornographic material - Films	<i>Many have seen a pornographic film</i>	67	70	63	70
	<i>Curiosity mainly motivates children to watch pornographic films</i>	65	73	69	56
	<i>Many regularly watch pornographic films</i>	45	50	54	35
	<i>Pornographic films are mostly watched on DVD</i>	53	58	52	51
	<i>Most watch pornographic films alone</i>	51	45	61	50
	<i>Many feel uncomfortable when they watch a pornographic film</i>	42	42	36	47
	<i>Most are concerned about their parents reaction if they find out that they have watched a pornographic film</i>	78	72	80	79
	<i>Watching pornographic films make children more curious about sex</i>	51	51	60	44
	<i>Many do not know if there are any pornographic films in their homes</i>	77	74	78	77
Exposure to pornographic material - Internet	<i>Most have seen pornographic images on the Internet</i>	64	71	65	59
	<i>When encountering pornographic images on the Internet, children look at them before leaving the website</i>	52	52	54	49
	<i>Generally children are not bothered by pornographic images which they see on the Internet</i>	38	37	46	31
	<i>Most do not intentionally visit pornographic websites</i>	62	62	60	64
	<i>Friends distribute website addresses of pornographic sites between each other</i>	60	60	53	66
	<i>Most accidentally come across pornographic websites while surfing the Internet</i>	70	68	77	64
	<i>Most do not download pornographic images from the Internet</i>	77	82	72	79
	<i>Most have not received an email containing pornographic images or information</i>	81	81	79	82



Exposure to pornographic material - Cell phones	<i>Most children have their own personal cellular telephone</i>	88	88	93	83
	<i>Many have not received any pornographic images on their cellular telephone</i>	67	68	67	66
	<i>Most children know of friends who have pornographic images on their cell phones</i>	81	78	82	82
Exposure to pornographic material - Magazines	<i>Most have not read a pornographic magazine</i>	57	58	60	54
	<i>Those who do read pornographic magazines get them from friends</i>	75	77	72	76
Effect of pornography	<i>Most children felt that watching pornography does have a harmful effect on a human being</i>	73	74	74	72



## Appendix B: Questionnaire

The Film and Publication Board (FPB) is conducting a survey amongst the South African youth with regard to Internet usage and exposure to pornographic material. The information that you give us is confidential, it will only be seen by us. **Your participation in this study is very important.**

### INSTRUCTIONS

Please read the questions carefully and answer them as thoroughly and honestly as possible. Circle the correct answer.

SECTION A: ABOUT YOURSELF			
A1	Gender	• Male	1
		• Female	2
A2	In which age group do you fall?	• 13-14 years	1
		• 15-16 years	2
		• 17+ years	3
A3	In which province do you live?	• Gauteng	1
		• Kwazulu Natal	2
		• Western Cape	3
A4	What is the name of your school?		
A5	What is your home language?	• English	1
		• Afrikaans	2
		• Sotho	3
		• Xhosa	4
		• Zulu	5
		• Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	
A6	In what grade are you this year?	• Grade 8	1
		• Grade 9	2
		• Grade 10	3
		• Grade 11	4
		• Grade 12	5



SECTION B: ACCESS TO THE INTERNET			
B1	Where do you usually access the Internet? <b>MORE THAN ONE ANSWER POSSIBLE</b>	• Home	1
		• School	2
		• Public venue (Internet café, library etc.)	3
		• Friends home	4
		• Family member's place of work	5
		• Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	
B2	How often do you access the Internet during the week?	• Less than once a week	1
		• 1-2 times during the week	2
		• 3-4 times during the week	3
		• 5-6 times during the week	4
		• Every day	5
B3	How many hours do you more or less spend each time when you surf the Internet?	• Less than 1 hour	1
		• 1-2 hours	2
		• 3-4 hours	3
		• More than 4 hours	4
B4a	Do you have a computer at home?	• Yes (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION B4b to B4d)	1
		• No (DO NOT ANSWER QUESTION B4b to B4d – GO TO SECTION C)	2
B4b	<b>IF YES IN B4a:</b> Do you have access to the Internet on your computer at home?	• Yes (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION B4c)	1
		• No (DO NOT ANSWER QUESTION B4c & B4d – GO TO SECTION C)	2
B4c	<b>IF YES IN B4b:</b> Do you usually access the Internet at home alone or with somebody else?	• With somebody (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION B4d)	1
		• Alone (DO NOT ANSWER QUESTION B4d – GO TO SECTION C)	2
B4d	<b>IF WITH SOMEBODY IN B4c:</b> With whom do you usually access the Internet at home? <b>MORE THAN ONE ANSWER POSSIBLE</b>	• Parent	1
		• Brother/Sister	2
		• Friend	3
		• Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	



SECTION C: USING THE INTERNET			
C1	What do you usually use the Internet for? <b>MORE THAN ONE ANSWER POSSIBLE</b>	• Information for school projects	1
		• General information	2
		• To visit chat sites	3
		• Send emails to friends/family	4
		• Play games	5
		• Download songs, pictures, games	6
		• Pornography	7
		• Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	
C2a	Do you think using the Internet can be dangerous?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
C2b	Why do you think using the Internet is/is not dangerous?		
C3a	Have you ever visited a chat room?	• Yes (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION C3b to C3f)	1
		• No (DO NOT ANSWER QUESTION C3b to C3f – GO TO SECTION D)	2
C3b	<b>IF YES IN C3a:</b> How many times have you participated in a chat room?	• Only once	1
		• Twice	2
		• Three times	3
		• Four times	4
		• More than four times	5
C3c	Have you ever been approached by anyone in a chat room for anything that upset you or made you feel uncomfortable?	• Yes (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION C3d)	1
		• No (DO NOT ANSWER QUESTION C3d – GO TO QUESTION C3e)	2
C3d	<b>IF YES IN C3c:</b> What made you upset or uncomfortable?		
C3e	Did you ever give out any personal information, such as your real name or address to anyone in a chat room?	• Yes	1
		• No	2



C3f	Did you ever give out any personal information of a friend to anyone in a chat room?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
<b>SECTION D: MONITORING INTERNET USAGE</b>			
D1	Have your parents ever discussed the Internet with you?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
D2	Have your teachers at school, ever discussed the Internet with you?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
D3a	Do you think that your parents have enough knowledge about the Internet?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
D3b	Do you think that your teachers have enough knowledge about the Internet?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
D4a	When using the Internet, does anybody ever supervise or monitor your activities?	• Yes (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION D4b)	1
		• No (DO NOT ANSWER QUESTION D4b – GO TO SECTION E)	2
D4b	<b>IF YES IN D4a:</b> Who usually supervise or monitor you, when surfing the Net? <b>MORE THAN ONE ANSWER POSSIBLE</b>	• Parent	1
		• Teacher	2
		• Family member	3
		• Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	
<b>SECTION E: INFORMATION ON PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL</b>			
E1	In your own words, what is pornography?		
E2a	Have you ever watched a pornographic film?	• Yes (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION E2b to E2i)	1
		• No (DO NOT ANSWER QUESTION E2b to E2i GO TO E3a)	2
		• Unsure (DO NOT ANSWER QUESTION E2b to E2i GO TO E3a)	3
E2b	<b>IF YES IN E2a:</b> Have you watched a pornographic film during the last month?	• Yes	1
		• No	2



E2c	What motivated you at first to watch a pornographic film? <b>MORE THAN ONE ANSWER POSSIBLE</b>	• Friends	1
		• Curiosity	2
		• Availability	3
		• Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	
E2d	How many times have you ever watched pornographic films?	• Only once	1
		• Twice	2
		• Three times	3
		• Four times	4
		• More than four times	5
E2e	Have you watched pornographic films on...? <b>MORE THAN ONE ANSWER POSSIBLE</b>	• DVD	1
		• Video cassette	2
		• Internet	3
		• Cellular phone	4
		• Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	
E2f	Do you usually watch pornographic films alone or with somebody else?	• Alone	1
		• With friends	2
		• With a family member	3
		• Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	
E2g	How do you feel when you are watching a pornographic film? <b>MORE THAN ONE ANSWER POSSIBLE</b>	• Self-conscious	1
		• Excited	2
		• Embarrassed	3
		• Anxious	4
		• Uncomfortable	5
		• Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	
E2h	Are you concerned about your parents' reaction if they found out that you are watching pornographic films?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
E2i	After watching a pornographic film, do you feel more curious about sex?	• Yes	1
		• No	2



E3a	Do you know if there are any pornographic films in your home?	• Yes (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION E3b)	1
		• No (DO NOT ANSWER QUESTION E3b - GO TO QUESTION E4a)	2
E3b	<b>IF YES IN E3a:</b> Do you have access to these films?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
E4a	Have you ever seen pornographic images on the Internet?	• Yes (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION E4b)	1
		• No (DO NOT ANSWER QUESTION E4b - GO TO QUESTION E8)	2
E4b	<b>IF YES IN E4a:</b> Have you seen any pornographic images on the Internet during the last month?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
E4c	What <u>did you do</u> when you first saw pornographic images on the Internet? <b>MORE THAN ONE ANSWER POSSIBLE</b>	• Left the site immediately without looking	1
		• Looked at it and then left the site	2
		• Told a friend about it	3
		• Told a parent or a teacher	4
		• Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	
E4d	How <u>did you feel</u> when you first saw pornographic images on the Internet? <b>MORE THAN ONE ANSWER POSSIBLE</b>	• Didn't like it	1
		• Thought it was disgusting	2
		• Wished I have never seen it	3
		• Thought it was interesting	4
		• Enjoyed it	5
		• It didn't bother me	6
E5a	Have you <u>intentionally</u> visited a pornographic website, while surfing the Internet?	• Yes (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION E5b)	1
		• No (DO NOT ANSWER QUESTION E5b - GO TO QUESTION E6)	2
E5b	<b>IF YES IN E5a:</b> How did you manage to get the address of the pornographic website that you visited?	• From a friend	1
		• From a family member	2
		• In a magazine or newspaper	3
		• From another website	4
		• Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	



E6	Have you accidentally come across a pornographic website, while surfing the Internet?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
E7	Have you ever downloaded pornographic images from the Internet?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
E8	Have you ever received an email containing pornographic images or information?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
E9	Do you have your own personal cellular telephone?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
E10	Have you ever received any pornographic images on your cellular telephone?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
E11	Do any of your friends have pornographic images on their cellular telephones?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
E12a	Have you ever read a pornographic magazine?	• Yes (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION E12b)	1
		• No (DO NOT ANSWER QUESTION E12b - GO TO QUESTION E13)	2
E12b	IF YES IN E12a: Where did you find the pornographic magazine?	• Bought it	1
		• Got it from a friend	2
		• At home	3
		• Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	
E13	Please read the following statements carefully. Using a scale from 1 to 4, where <b>1 is do not agree at all, 2 do not agree, 3 agree and 4 definitely agree</b> rate each statement.		
	It is acceptable to watch pornographic films at home		
	It is wrong to watch pornography		
	It doesn't bother me to look at pornographic images on the Internet		
	I look at pornographic images on the Internet because my friends are doing it		
	The government is doing a good job protecting children against pornography		
E14a	Do you think that watching pornography is harmful?	• Yes	1
		• No	2
E14b	Why do you think watching pornography is / isn't harmful?		