

NEWS

Rising Porn Use among Teens Contributes to Increasing Transgenderism, Say Experts

**Dan Hart****January 19, 2025**

As new reports confirm the startlingly pervasive exposure of pornography among children and teens, a growing number of experts and parents are pointing out that the increasingly deviant, violent, and traumatizing content depicted in pornography is likely contributing to the rise in minors identifying as transgender.

In a newly released report from Brigham Young University's Wheatley Institute, the authors note that upwards of 90% of teens have been exposed to online pornography. They also note a recent study finding that "almost 1 in 4 teenage boys reported that they view pornography every day — a rate of habitual use that is more than twice as high as 10 years earlier."

But the issue is hardly limited to boys. The report highlighted an extensive international survey that found while over 97% of boys had been exposed to porn, so had 78% of girls. At the same time, the rate of young people who identify as transgender has doubled in recent years.

One personal testimony written by an anonymous parent of a 13-year-old girl recounted how the young teen had begun identifying as a transgender male after getting involved in a friend group at school, which included a trans-identifying older girl who sent the 13-year-old highly explicit videos depicting masturbation. The parent then described how the young teen became embroiled in pornographic content on her phones and other connected devices that was so grotesque and violent that it made the

parent “physically ill.”

Trauma experts like Dr. Jennifer Bauwens say that early exposure to pornography has traumatic effects on young minds.

“It is traumatic for young children to be exposed to sexual content that their minds are not prepared for,” she told The Washington Stand. “They don’t have a concept of that. And then for it to be portrayed in such a vile way — increasingly, the porn has become more aggressive and bizarre and grotesque. Children just don’t have the emotional, neurological capacity to fully understand these things. And it makes such a hard-wired imprint on the brain. Not that it can’t be dealt with or altered, but it does make a substantial change to the brain.”

Bauwens, who serves as the director of the Center for Family Studies at Family Research Council, spent years practicing as a clinical psychologist and has studied the effects of trauma on children. She has observed that a high percentage of young people who identify as transgender have previously experienced trauma, such as sexual or emotional abuse. As she noted during Wednesday’s edition of “Washington Watch,” “exposure to sexual material at an early age is a type of trauma” as well.

In addition, as highlighted by the Wheatley Institute report, almost 40% of online pornography depicts traumatic violence against women.

“[Y]ou hear some of the anecdotal stories of young girls [who identify as transgender] talking about hating their vulnerability, and then you have porn depicting violence against women,” Bauwens commented to TWS. “Maybe that connection isn’t at a conscious level, but it’s certainly out there and a reasonable line of logic.”

Bauwens went on to urge parents to stave off their children’s access to internet-connected for as long as possible in order to avoid experiencing trauma. “[With] modern parenting, you can’t divorce yourself from understanding technology,” she emphasized. “You have to understand how to put safeguards on your child’s digital devices and delay offering a smartphone as long as possible. I do think that these age verification laws are a good step. They’re certainly not the be all, end all.”

Bauwens concluded by encouraging parents to form strong bonds with their children, which she highlighted as the strongest deterrent against porn exposure and harmful ideologies.

“The quality of the parent-child relationship is very much a predictor of a child’s well-being,” she underscored. “The stronger the bond you can have with your child and the more open you are with these discussions, the better. If a child runs across this stuff, then talk about, ‘How do we deal with it? How do we prevent that from happening again?’ These are the kinds of discussions that we need to have with our kids and not shy away from it. We’ve got to be really open and vulnerable. Even if they’re not directly exposed to it, they’re going to hear about it from their peers. We can’t be shocked or appear shocked. Yeah, it’s horrifying, but we have to talk to them and say, ‘Okay, what’s our plan?’”

Topics: Gender Identity, Gender Ideology, Parenthood, Children, Pornography

Dan Hart is senior editor at The Washington Stand.



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