

TEEN ONLINE EXPOSURE: A SNAPSHOT OF DATA



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TEEN VIEWING OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL-RELATED VIDEOS ONLINE

Recent data from a special study conducted by Nielsen Online, on behalf of ONDCP, which monitored the online viewing habits of teens in June 2008, reveal that today's tech-savvy teens are exposed to dangerous, drug-related content through the Internet. The analysis also shows that viewer comments posted to drug-related videos overwhelmingly support or suggest acceptance of the video content.

- Teens who watched videos online in a one-month period were exposed to 1.2 million drug-related videos.
- Nearly one million teens, or 5 percent of teens who viewed video online, viewed drug-related videos in June.
- More than a third (35%) of teens who viewed drug-related video are younger than 16.
- Significantly more girls than boys watch drug-related videos. Fifty-seven percent of viewers were girls; 43 percent boys.
- Almost 40 percent of drug-related videos contain explicit use of drugs and/or intoxication.
- Eighty-five percent of videos containing explicit drug use or intoxication also have comments that promote substance abuse.
- Comments on drug-related videos with music or humor were overwhelmingly (87%) positive about the content of the video.

Source for all data on this page: "Teen Viewing of Drug and Alcohol-Related Videos Online: Custom Study Conducted on behalf of ONDCP." Nielsen Online, June 2008.

THE INTERNET IS NORMALIZING DANGEROUS TEEN BEHAVIOR

As a result of the Internet and image-sharing technologies available on cell phones, teens' exposure to and potential engagement in dangerous behavior has expanded exponentially. While online networks and social media provide many social and educational benefits, there is also a flood of content, images, and messages that are not "age, stage, or developmentally" appropriate or healthy, particularly without adults to provide a context or counter message.¹

- Eighty-two percent of all social-networking teens say they use the sites to stay in touch with friends they rarely see in person and almost half (49%) use the sites to make new friends.² On average, teens have 75 people they consider to be "friends," referring specifically to the number of people on their online profile or social networking site.³
- The Internet is a source of information, but also facilitates meeting potential partners; one third of teens claim to have met someone online with whom they ended up having intimate relations.⁴
- Even the youngest kids have access to dangerous online content. The top online video destination for 2- to 11-year-olds (by audience size) is YouTube.com, followed by DisneyChannel.com.⁵
- Many of the teens who post messages about drugs or alcohol often trade unreliable information about illicit substances or post stories about themselves or friends getting high or wasted.⁶
- The average age of first Internet exposure to pornography is 11 years old.⁷ Eighty percent of 15- to 17-year-olds have been exposed to hardcore porn multiples times.⁸
- Teen boys report that pornography, particularly Internet porn, is a significant source for sex education and information. And many girls say they worry about the way they look because of the standards set by porn.⁹
- More than one in eight (13%) teens say that someone has spread a rumor about them online. Nine percent of teens who use social networking sites say someone has posted an embarrassing picture of them online without their permission.¹⁰
- Overall, nearly one in five teens (19%) report they have been harassed or bullied online. Girls are more likely to be harassed or bullied online than boys (21% vs. 17%).¹¹
- There are more than 400 message boards connecting self-injurious adolescents. The majority of the postings about cutting are from girls between the ages of 12 and 20.¹²

Message boards may expose vulnerable youths to a subculture that normalizes and encourages self-injury behavior.¹³

- Thirty-six percent of eating disorder patients had visited pro-anorexia Web sites, and 96 percent of them learned new weight loss or purging methods from such sites.¹⁴
- In an analysis of the most popular songs of 2005, according to Billboard magazine, 42 percent of songs had a substance use reference of any kind (explicit, figurative, or place).¹⁵ The Billboard results suggest that the average adolescent is exposed to approximately 84 references to explicit substance use per day, 591 references per week, or 30,732 references per year.¹⁶
- Nearly a third (28%) of online discussions about drugs and alcohol among teens in blogs, public chat rooms, message boards, and other online venues that mention marijuana also discuss other destructive behaviors, such as drinking, smoking cigarettes, and cutting (self-mutilation).¹⁷
- In a survey of adolescents who had used the Internet to learn about psychoactive substances, 100 percent reported that Internet-based information had affected the ways in which they has used psychoactive substances.¹⁸

PARENTS ARE OBLIVIOUS TO THEIR TEEN'S EXPOSURE TO RISK ONLINE

Though many parents may be monitoring their child's offline activities, few are paying close attention to their teen's online activities. Many teens say their parents are unaware of the wide-ranging access they have to dangerous behaviors once they are in front of a computer screen.

- Thirty percent of parents say they do not think the Internet has had an effect on their children one way or the other.¹⁹
- Seventy-five percent of teens say their parents "almost never" monitor the Web sites they use or the time they spend online.²⁰
- Twenty-five percent of teens think their parents know "very little" or "nothing" about what they do online.²¹
- Nearly one-third (29%) of students say their parents would disapprove if they knew what they were really doing on the Internet.²²
- Drug use and underage drinking don't make parents' top 10 list of concerns, according to a survey of "Parents' Top Concerns About Children's Online Computer Use."²³ The list includes:
 - predatory behavior by strangers,
 - exposure to pornography,
 - giving out personal information,
 - inappropriate chat room or IM discussions,
 - downloading harmful files,
 - access to violent sites,
 - downloading music or video files illegally,
 - online bullying, making unauthorized purchases,
 - peer-to-peer gaming.

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