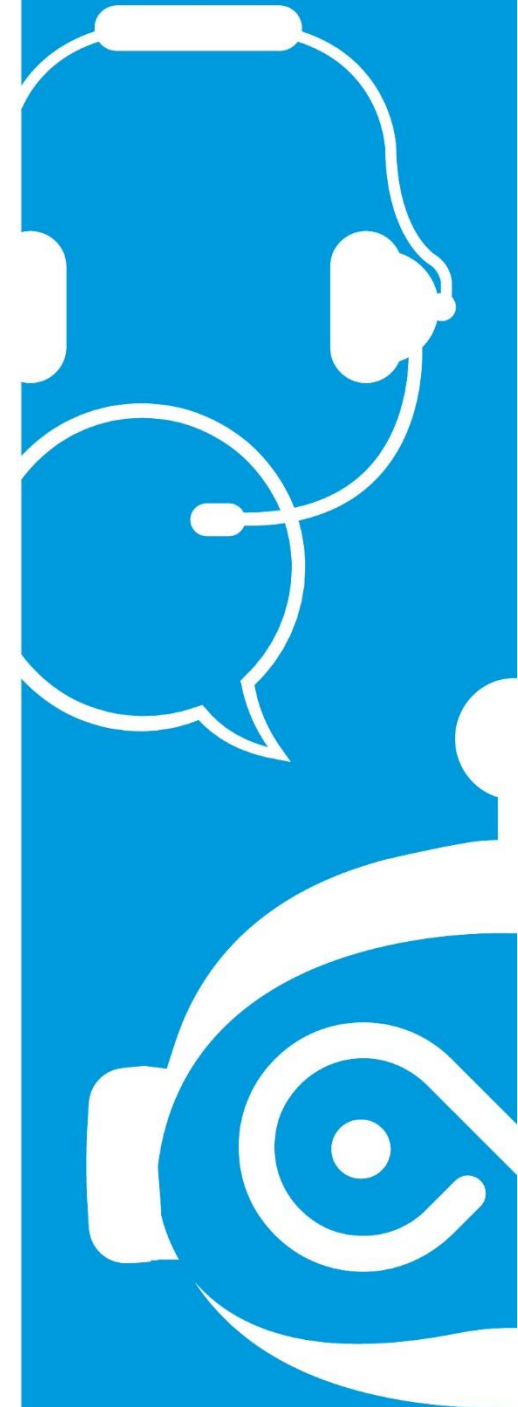




# SEXUALLY EXPLICIT CONTENT: PORNOGRAPHIC WEBSITES

## What is it?

Pornography is a **digital phenomenon** in which the explicit depiction of erotic and sexual subjects is carried out through various forms: literary, pictorial, cinematographic and photographic. Following the entry into the digital age, films, novels and other forms of representation stepped aside, to make room for pornography spread via web pages.



### How can it impact the sexual and reproductive health of youth?

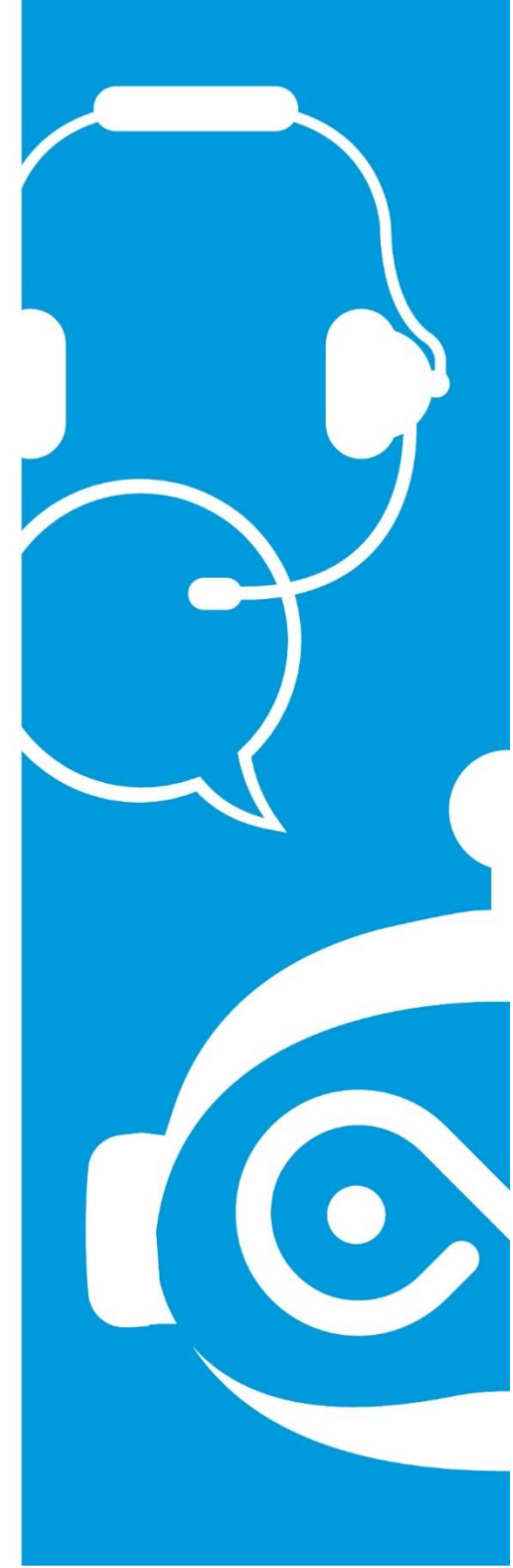
Despite the fact that access to pornographic web pages is forbidden to minors, compliance with this rule is not checked or verified, except with a simple question addressed to the user to confirm that they are 18 years or older to freely access the content contained within. This lack of thorough monitoring or management exposes this content to the most vulnerable populations.

Exposure to pornography at a young age can have negative effects on physical, emotional, and social development. It can distort one's understanding of healthy relationships, normalise harmful sexual behaviours, and lead to unrealistic expectations about sex. Most young people with internet access say they started watching porn at age 11<sup>1</sup>. The consequences of this relationship with adult content at an early age has negative impacts on mental health, self-esteem and knowledge of one's sexuality and future relationship with a partner.

To this point, a study by the University of Nebraska reports that exposure to porn as a very young person can seriously affect relationships with women, as well as create sexual performance anxiety during maturity<sup>2</sup>. The research also shows that viewing pornography has a concrete effect on heterosexual men, especially in regards to how they view gender roles. Understanding this effect better could help prevent dangerous behaviour towards women, helping men to better manage their emotional and social experiences.

<sup>1</sup> Davies, "Growing up with Pornography."

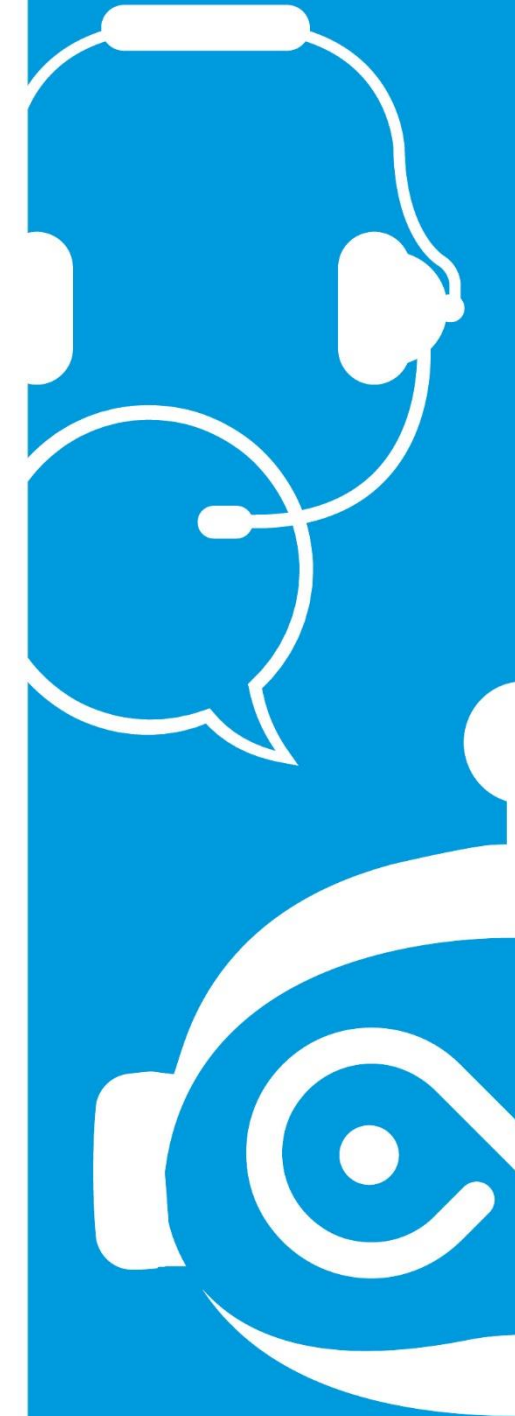
<sup>2</sup> Swaddle and Goecker, "Study: Age of First Exposure to Pornography Predicts Sexist Attitudes."



## Supporting youth's sexual & reproductive health in the digital age: BEST PRACTICES

When it comes to its impact on women, until recently, pornography was seen as something created primarily for men. The analysis of how pornography affects women mainly refers to consequences due to participation (as a sex worker) in the creation of pornographic scenes, which is a complex and controversial issue. Some argue that pornography exploits women and promotes harmful stereotypes, while others believe that it can be a form of sexual expression and empowerment for women.

Furthermore, another consequence of exposure to pornography is its addictive element: porn addiction is spreading as a fairly common pathology involving individuals of any age and gender, regardless of their social or relationship status.



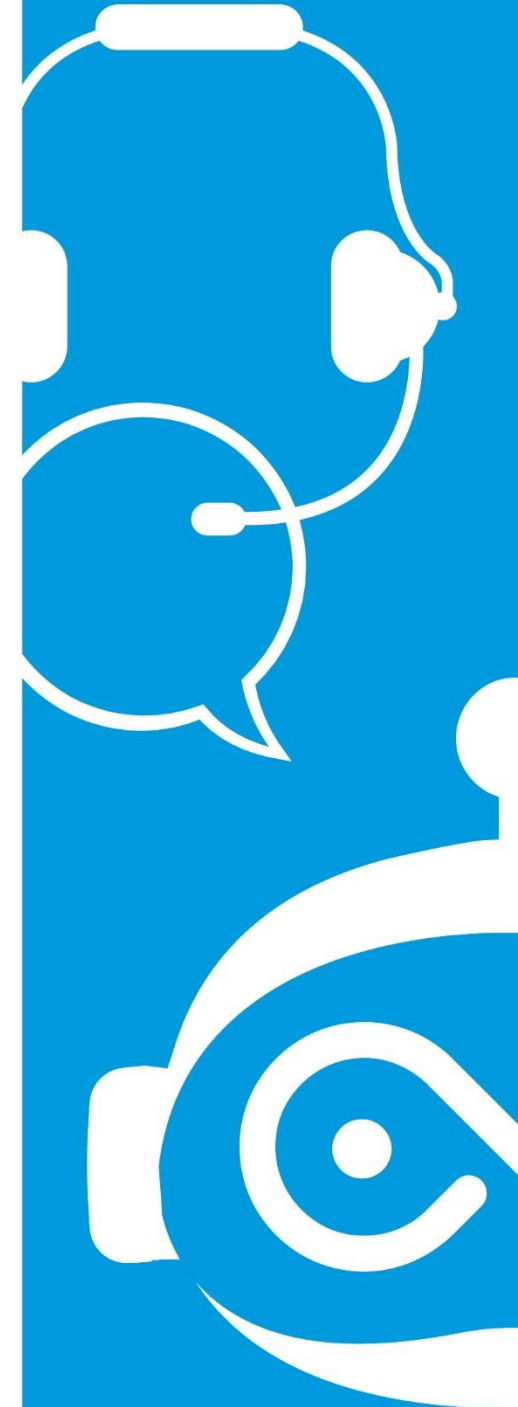
### What are some ways in which youth can be supported?

- Refer youth to speak to a professional if they have an unhealthy habit of watching pornography.
- Suggest the use of mobile applications, through which youth can inform themselves on sex acts or request advice from industry experts anonymously (rTribe, Victory, Covenant Eyes).
- Offer sexual education sections of some pornography websites as alternative media, open to youth under 18 and created by experts to discover sex and sexuality.

### Related digital phenomena/tools:

See sheets:

- Misconceptions and misinformation: Emotional effects of sex
- SRH material online: Expert opinions
- SRH material online: Opening a dialogue between parents and youth



### Further reading:

- Davies, Scout. "Growing up with Pornography: Advice for Parents and Schools." Children's Commissioner for England, 2023. <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/blog/growing-up-with-pornography-advice-for-parents-and-schools/>.
- Swaddle, The, and Liesl Goecker. "Study: Age of First Exposure to Pornography Predicts Sexist Attitudes." *The Swaddle* (blog), 2017. <https://theswaddle.com/exposure-to-pornography-sexist-attitudes/>.
- Weiss, Robert. *Sex Addiction 101: A Basic Guide to Healing from Sex, Porn, and Love Addiction*. Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications, Inc, 2015.
- Wilson, Gary. *Your Brain On Porn: Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction*. Kindle Edition: Commonwealth Publishing, 2014.

