

## The Social Costs of Pornography

Pornography is tearing apart the fabric of our society. You may think this is an overstatement. After reading, [“The Social Costs of Pornography”](#) by the Witherspoon Institute, I think it may be an *understatement*.

In 2008, the Witherspoon Institute sponsored the first multidisciplinary exploration of the social costs of pornography. Scholars from various fields including philosophy, psychology, and medicine were included in the forum. Every major shade of religious belief was represented, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, agnosticism, and atheism. And both the left and right in American politics were present. They all agreed that there is a substantial multidimensional, empirical record of the harms pornography brings to society. Obviously, such agreement is rare.

Today’s pornography is different from any in the past in three ways. (1) *Accessibility*. The Internet has made porn ubiquitous. (2) *Quality*. Today’s porn is much more hardcore. (3) *Consumption*. Porn consumption has increased radically with the advent of the Internet. 69% of men and 10% of women report viewing pornography more than once a month. 87% of men admit using it in the past year. The researchers conclude, “In sum, there is evidence that more people—children, adolescents, and adults—are consuming pornography—sporadically, inadvertently, or chronically—than every before” (15).

How does pornography actually harm people? The researchers list a plethora of ways. Each of these points is supported with empirical evidence in the report. Keep in mind that these are *objective* facts about pornographic consumption, not my subjective opinions.

- Those who view pornography overestimate how frequently certain sexual acts are actually practiced, which increases one’s willingness to do unconscionable things (18).
- Porn viewers physically map their brains based on the images they see. Pornographic consumption re-maps the physical structure of the brain (19).
- Many men who view porn lose the ability to relate to or be close to women (20).
- Porn viewers become de-sensitized to the barrage of imagery, and as a result, child pornography and violent pornographic images often lose their ability to shock and disgust (20).

- Women often report distress and harm when discovering that their husbands view porn. They typically feel betrayal, loss, mistrust, devastation, and anger as a result of their partner's behavior.
- Porn users have an increased likelihood of divorce and family break-up (23-24).
- Those who had an extramarital affair were three times more likely to have used Internet pornography than those who had not.
- Porn leads men to place less value on marital fidelity and more value on casual sex (24).
- Therapists report seeing fourteen- and fifteen-year-old boys addicted to porn (29).
- An Italian study reported that boys who view porn were more likely to report having sexually harassed a peer or having forced someone to have sex (30).
- Adolescent girls who report using pornography are more likely to report being victims of passive violence such as sexual harassment and rape (31).
- Today's consumption of pornography encourages sexual exploitation such as trafficking (33).
- Adolescents who view pornography are more likely to view women as sexual objects (35).
- Porn consumption raises the risk of sexually risky behavior (35).
- Men who use pornography are less attractive to potential female partners (37).
- Exposure to pornography decreases sexual satisfaction with one's partner for both men *and* women (38).
- Chronic pornography use is associated with depression and unhappiness (38).
- Users often report disgust and shame at finding themselves stimulated by images that would have once repulsed (39).

What do we do? For starters, can you help spread the word about the dangers of pornography? Please consider getting a copy of the report, "The Social Costs of

Pornography,” and study it. Talk to your friends about it. Share it with your family and church. Blog about it. Or forward this blog to as many people as you can. There needs to be a renewed conversation about how pornography is damaging this generation. We can no longer ignore the most dangerous health hazard to this generation. Our kids deserve better.