

# Pornography

Pornography is the biggest concern among parents when it comes to their child's Internet safety.

In fact, parents are more worried about their children seeing pornographic material online than them watching terrorist videos or finding gambling websites, according to new research from ESET, an anti-virus software company.

"I find these figures quite astounding and it shows how scary a place the Internet has the potential to be," Mark James, a security specialist at ESET, said in a press release. "The Internet should be treated with caution, as there are a number of online threats which could also have a physical impact on their child."

Pornography has been linked to a number of issues for children and adults alike. The Telegraph reported in 2014 that pornography causes people's brains to shrink and work less productively. This is because the striatum — the part of the brain that identifies reward — overworks itself for people who view pornography, which causes them to find activities less rewarding.

And past studies have indicated that pornography encourages addiction and addictive behaviors much in the same way that alcohol and drug abuse does.

Pornography addiction has also been linked to a decline in marriage. Pornography viewers get instant gratification and are less likely to be intimate with their spouse, which can cause marital issues between spouses and hurt a child's development, our own Kelsey Clark reported back in January.

Some parents don't do enough to teach their children about those dangers, though, James said. In fact, many parents expect their children to only visit safe websites, when in reality pornographic material can surface anywhere, James said.

"Parents should be proactively encouraging their children to do Internet safety courses so they are aware of how to use the Internet responsibly," James said in a press release.

Some organizations have made an effort to teach families about the dangers of pornography to help children stay safe, which I've written about in the past. For example, Fight the New Drug, an anti-pornography company, holds presentations across the nation at different community centers and schools to educate people about the dangers of pornography.

But, as the ESET study suggests, parents may be the key to fighting pornography. Experts told our own Sara Israelsen-Hartley that parents have such strong influence over their children that the right message can help them understand the potential dangers they face.

Clayton Ostler, senior director of technology for ContentWatch, which creates parental control software, told the National that parents should also plan ahead and do their best to limit their child's access to pornography.

"We think a lot of times, with the Internet ... (our kids) are safe upstairs within their room; that's really not the case with technology anymore," Ostler told the National. "Create a family plan, things like ... Internet usage, time online, what your kids can ... (and) can't access. The sooner you have a plan in place, the easier your life will be.