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Healthy Conversations on Pornography

For the Department of
Families, Fairness and Housing

Family Safety Victoria

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Executive summary

Project Background

Family Safety Victoria engaged Where to Research to undertake market research exploring both parents and children's knowledge, understanding and attitudes towards pornography. To complement the emerging research around young people and the effects of pornography, there is an interest in exploring options to support parents/carers of primary and secondary school-aged children and to help them understand the impacts of pornography and how to constructively engage with their children on the topic.

This research project has focused on three key research objectives:

1. Explore parents'/carers' knowledge, understanding and attitudes towards pornography and its influence on their children.
2. Explore children's attitudes towards pornography and their preferences for how their parents talk to them about pornography.
3. Inform an effective approach and/or programmatic response to enable parents/carers to constructively engage with pornography, the barriers they may face and how to address backlash and resistance.

This works to highlight potential topics and communications approaches to prevent family violence. This project will gain from the wisdom of a Steering Group made up of subject matter experts in each area. This group provides high level strategic contribution to the overall project direction.

The Healthy Conversations on Pornography project was designed and implemented using an exploratory qualitative phase which informed a quantitative study. The qualitative phase included n=9 group discussions and n=14 in-depth interviews amongst parents, young Victorians, culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians, members of the LGBTIQ+ communities, First Nations parents, people with a disability, key influencers and government stakeholders. The quantitative phase surveyed a sample of n=1976 Victorian parents and n=818 of their children aged 12-17.

Key contextual findings (from the qualitative and quantitative research)

Parents have a long list of concerns for their children and pornography is lower on their list

This research has found that while parents generally strive to build strong relationships and connect with their children, they also have a long list of worries about them – from mental health concerns right through to eating disorders and vaping.

For most parents, pornography is lower on the list of top-of-mind parental concerns. More parents are focused on mental health, bullying, internet safety, drugs, alcohol, and screen time, which they see as more immediate dangers to their child's health and safety. However, as their exposure to the potential issues with pornography grows, so does their concern.

Parents recognise that pornography is increasingly accessible and have some understanding of how it is problematic

Many parents acknowledge that pornography has evolved significantly over their lifetime. Today, pornography is seen as more accessible than ever, with online content far surpassing the availability of magazines and VHS tapes.

Parents generally agree that the nature of the content in pornography has shifted quite dramatically, but really only have a vague understanding of the problems associated with it and the implications for their children. Many are aware of some of the more common aggressive behaviours but don't know the full extent of the harms depicted. Instead, parents tend to focus on the unrealistic expectations young people might get from pornography

Parents recognise that pornography is increasingly accessible and have some understanding of how it is problematic

Many young people have seen pornography. It's highly accessible, easy to find, and they usually encounter it by accident.

Many young people are exposed to pornography during their primary school years. Of the Victorians aged 12–17 surveyed in the quantitative phase, 13% had seen pornography by the age of 10, and nearly half (46%) by the age of 12. By the time they reach high school, pornography becomes a more normalised part of life for many, with 95% having encountered it by the age of 15.

One in six young people (15%) are watching pornography at least weekly and many believe their parents underestimate the extent to which pornography is part of their life.

Pornography is highly accessible through smartphones and desktop computers. However, its accessibility extends beyond merely being searchable and free; nearly half of young people encounter pornography accidentally, often through advertising and through social media.

Most parents underestimate the likelihood that their child has seen pornography

Despite acknowledging the increased accessibility of pornography, the average parent still underestimates the likelihood of their child encountering it at a young age. 17% of parents surveyed believe their child (aged 6-17) has viewed pornography, yet 57% of their surveyed children (aged 12-17) who were surveyed have viewed pornography.

The majority of parents of children who have watched pornography believe their child views pornography less than other children and a small minority believe their child views it more than others.

Almost all parents have at least some concerns about pornography, but most are not alarmed, as these concerns do not feel immediately threatening to their child's wellbeing

Across both the qualitative and quantitative research, once parents are prompted to think about pornography, most identify that there are issues with children viewing pornography. Only a small minority (5%) don't see any issues with young people viewing it. However, their concerns are only minor and unalarming as they don't believe their child's immediate wellbeing is at risk.

The primary concern for the greatest number of parents is that pornography creates unrealistic expectations about sex. They worry that pornography will expose their children to inaccurate and exaggerated sexual practices, leading them to have incorrect beliefs about sex. While still a concern, most see this as an issue relating to their child's future happiness and fulfilling sexual relationships, not as an urgent or immediate issue for their current wellbeing.

Some parents are most concerned about pornography displaying violence and aggression or that it is degrading to women. Some believe it is psychologically damaging for young children to witness such behaviours, while others worry that their child may feel compelled to reenact the violence they see in pornography or develop views of women as sexual objects.

Young people see some benefits to pornography but mostly see pornography as negative

The majority of young Victorians do not see significant benefits to pornography, though many find it somewhat enjoyable, entertaining, educational, and a means of learning about sex. Boys are more likely than girls to see pornography as enjoyable and entertaining.

The overwhelming majority recognise issues related to pornography. They identify several negatives associated with pornography, viewing it as degrading and violent towards women. Qualitative findings demonstrate that while both boys and girls acknowledge these concerns, girls are likely to see pornography as more problematic.

While concerns around violence and degradation are recognised, the primary concern about pornography for many young people is the same as their parents – that pornography is unrealistic and creates unrealistic expectations about what sexual relations look like.

Qualitative findings show that young people feel informed about the negative aspects of pornography through school education and social movements advocating respect for women. They feel they can apply their own judgment to recognise these issues.

Girls tend to be more concerned about pornography than boys

Girls are highly concerned regarding pornography's impact on boys' treatment of women. During the qualitative research, many spoke about their worries that pornography creates unhealthy expectations of girls' bodies and promotes transactional and fleeting relationships.

Boys are concerned about pornography, but generally to a lesser extent than girls. They worry about its unrealistic nature and unrealistic body depictions, although some feel that having the knowledge that pornography is unrealistic means they can consume it responsibly. However, given the ease of access, they are also concerned about its impact on younger children who may not understand pornography's lack of realism.

Despite a recognition that pornography can be violent and degrading to women, qualitative findings reveal that some do not feel personally concerned and are confident they wouldn't be motivated to reflect the same behaviours. This indicates a potential gap in their understanding of how pornography might influence their views on women and relationships.

Parents intend to speak with their child about pornography, but conversations are typically reactive after finding out their child has viewed it. Few have ever spoken to their child proactively about pornography

Most parents recognise the need for a conversation about pornography with 73% intending to talk to their child about the topic at some point. Additionally, the predominant course of action upon finding out that their child has viewed pornography would be to have a conversation with them (47%).

The overwhelming majority of conversations between a parent and their child occur once the child has viewed pornography, 10% initiated the conversation to educate their child. Parents have reactive conversations either because they delay their intended conversation until it is too late and their child has viewed pornography, or they purposefully wait until the time when they know their child has viewed pornography.

But given many parents do not know that their child has viewed pornography, a substantial proportion have never had a conversation. Fewer than half of all parents of children aged 6-17 have ever had a conversation with their child about pornography. Among the children surveyed who have viewed pornography, 53% have not had a conversation with their parent.

Barriers to conversations about pornography

Parents face numerous barriers that prevent them from discussing pornography with their children, with most parents encountering at least one of the following barriers:

1. **Discomfort:** The main barrier to conversations about pornography is that parents find it uncomfortable to discuss sex and pornography with their child. This sense of discomfort underpins nearly all the other barriers.
2. **Not my child:** Some parents believe their child has the moral sense to avoid pornography or that their child wouldn't view it regularly or see it as acceptable. They can't imagine their child having a problem with pornography and therefore aren't worried about it.
3. **Otherwise addressed:** Some parents avoid discussing pornography with their children and believe the issue has already been addressed by implementing parental controls and internet restrictions. Others rely on rules, threats, and monitoring to prevent pornography use, also avoiding direct conversations. Some parents believe schools adequately address sexual and pornographic education.
4. **Not yet:** Most parents don't believe their child has viewed pornography. Many postpone these uncomfortable conversations believing their child isn't ready to process or understand the topic. They want to maintain their child's innocence and avoid unnecessarily piquing their interest, assuming the child does not currently know what pornography is.
5. **Not that harmful:** A minority of parents see no issues with pornography. While more recognise issues, some don't believe they are severe enough to warrant a conversation, especially if it's going to make them or their child uncomfortable.
6. **Hasn't brought it up:** Some would only talk about pornography when their child brings it up. They believe the right time to discuss pornography is when their child initiates the conversation, trusting their child's judgment about the appropriate time or whether a conversation is required at all.
7. **Not knowing how/when to have the conversation:** Many parents feel they lack the knowledge and resources to discuss pornography with their children. They see it as a sensitive topic and fear handling it poorly. The discomfort of not knowing how to approach it constructively concerns them, as they worry about the risks and consequences of such discussions.

Young Victorians also face numerous barriers to conversations with their parents about pornography.

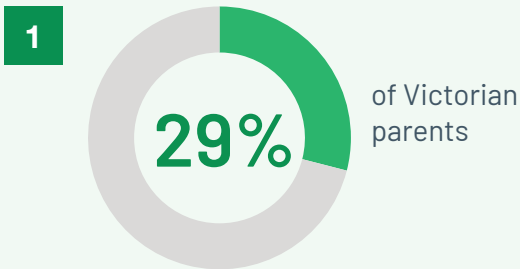
1. **Discomfort:** The most significant and common barrier is the awkwardness of discussing pornography with one's parents. Young people feel uncomfortable sharing what they watch and are uneasy about discovering their parents' use of pornography or sexual interests.
2. **Only when parents bring it up:** Many feel as though their parents would either be uncomfortable or unwilling to have a conversation. They feel that it is not a conversation they could initiate.
3. **Not knowing how to have the conversation:** Many don't know how to have the conversation. They feel that it is a delicate and sensitive topic they don't know how to navigate without embarrassment.

4. **Pornography does not feel like an issue:** Some do not believe there are any harms or concerns about pornography, or they think that despite potential harms, the issues are not significant enough to warrant a conversation with their parents.
5. **Concerns about parents' reactions:** Some are concerned about their parents' reactions. The risk of negative consequences, such as ruining their relationship or being punished, outweighs the benefits of a conversation such as ruining their relationship or being punished.

Key Audiences

While there is a need for almost all parents to be more proactive in speaking with their children about pornography, there are a range of drivers and barriers that work differently for parents of varying attitudes and beliefs. Four key segments have been identified: two that need support in overcoming the awkwardness of having a

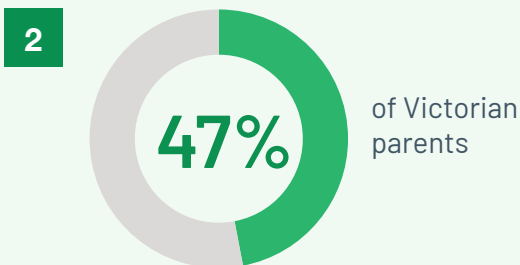
conversation ('Awkward reluctance' and 'Willing but uncomfortable' segments), and two that need help in understanding the need to talk to their children about pornography ('Head in the sand' and 'Blissful ignorance' segments).



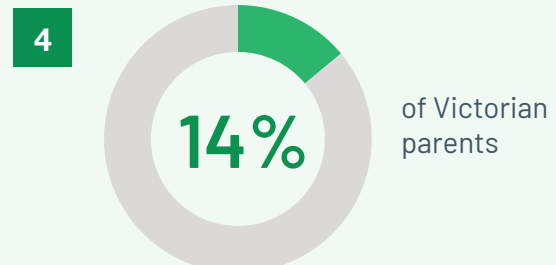
Head in the sand: This segment is least likely to perceive harms, from watching pornography and therefore don't believe conversations are necessary.



Awkward reluctance: This segment believes pornography is an awkward topic to talk with their children about. They do not know how to have these conversations and hope they can avoid having to discuss pornography altogether.



Blissful ignorance (for now): This segment does not believe they need to worry about pornography just yet. They assume their child has not seen it or does not have access to it. They feel confident they will be able to have the conversation when the time comes but feel it is not a concern at present.



Willing but uncomfortable: This segment is very aware that they should be talking to their children about pornography. They are highly concerned about pornography but feel awkward and uncomfortable about having conversations about it.

Communications recommendations

An above-the-line awareness campaign and/or other education program or awareness raising initiative is required

The research findings point to significant awareness gaps around accessibility to pornography, as well as the extent of the harms of pornography. Additionally, despite an awareness of some harms, many parents still aren't having conversations with their children due to feelings of awkwardness and discomfort.

The research also indicates that after exposure to information about the increased harms and likelihood of exposure to pornography, parents become significantly more concerned about it. They become more open to discussing the topic with their children, as pornography emerges as an issue more likely to immediately impact their child's health and wellbeing than initially thought.

This suggests a mainstream media above-the-line awareness campaign is required to effectively address the awareness gaps and sense of discomfort, ultimately increasing the likelihood of proactive conversations.

Campaign objective

The campaign objective is to elevate the importance of parents knowing the prevalence of exposure and harms of pornography, thereby increasing the urgency to act. There is a need to raise awareness that pornography is a significant issue for parents to address early on, alongside other concerns they have for their children. This includes initiating discussions at a younger age than they might expect.

Framing the message for a broad range of audiences

The quantitative survey suggests there are various target audiences for the campaign, each with their own underlying beliefs on the topic. There is a need to consider these differences when determining the most effective approach to communications.

A number of communications framing messages were tested in the quantitative phase, and it is evident that messages about safety concerns (frame 3) will have the greatest impact for the largest proportion of parents. The campaign will also benefit from introducing additional messages about unintentional viewing and unrealistic expectations

Introduction

Family Safety Victoria is undertaking market research to engage parents and carers in discussions about pornography.

This project supports the delivery of the Victorian Government's 10-year strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women. The Free from Violence strategy was developed in response to Recommendation 187 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence (2016). Free from Violence is part of the Victorian Government's broader family violence system reform outlined in the 10-year Plan for Change: Ending Family Violence. In seeking to end family violence and all forms of violence against women before it starts, Free from Violence acknowledges that preventing violence against women is complex and requires generational change. Through sustained effort and investment, Free from Violence seeks to address the societal attitudes, beliefs, norms, and behaviours that drive and perpetuate gender inequality, family violence and all forms of violence against women.

While Victoria has made substantial progress in primary prevention since the Royal Commission, this is an emerging and evolving field. Further research and testing is required to understand and refine approaches with priority cohorts. This project will contribute to that critical evidence base, and aligns with several deliverables in the Free from Violence Second Action Plan.

Engaging parents and carers in discussions about pornography

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) engaged Where to undertake market research to determine the target audience, determine appropriate messaging, and test communications approaches for engaging parents and carers in discussions about pornography with their children.

Deliverable 1.2.2:

Explore developing tailored prevention activities that address sexual violence as a specific form of violence against women.

Deliverable 1.3.1:

Deliver innovative prevention programs for young people outside of school settings that address the underlying drivers of sexual violence and coercive control.

Deliverable 1.1.1:

Engage men and boys in grassroots community programs that promote healthier masculinities and gender equality to strengthen respectful relationships.

Research Objectives

There are three key research objectives for the Healthy Conversations on Pornography phase of the project:





1.0 Methodology

The project was designed and implemented using an exploratory qualitative phase which informed a quantitative study. The project gained approval from the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee.

The overall project staging is depicted below.

1.0 Overview

STAGE	 Inception workshop	 Conversation on Pornography
GOAL	Ensure alignment	Effective approach to healthy conversations
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Inception Meeting • Project Plan • Formation of Steering Committee • Ethnic Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid Review • Stimulus Workshop • n=4 group discussion with parents/carers of primary and secondary school kids • n=3 mini group discussions with CALD communities • n=5 in-depth interviews with indigenous pairs • n=6 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders • n=5 in-depth interviews with influencers (education, sport, religious leaders) • n=3 day online bulletin board community • n=1,500 online survey amongst parents of childrens aged 6-18 years • Draft and final reporting, Communication Strategy and Activation Workshop

The Healthy Conversations on Pornography component of the project encompassed both qualitative and quantitative fieldwork, outlined below:

Qualitative research

A total of n=9 discussion groups and n=14 in-depth interviews were conducted. Groups ran for 90 minutes, and interviews for 60 minutes. Participants were segmented by gender, socio-economic status and location as shown in the table below.

Qualitative fieldwork was conducted in February and March 2024.

Table 1: Discussion group and in-depth interview profiles

#	Specification	Gender	Location
FG 1	Parents/carers of primary school aged children	Men	Online – Metro & Regional Victoria
FG 2	Parents/carers of primary school aged children	Women	Online – Metro & Regional Victoria
FG 3	Parents/carers of secondary school aged children	Women	Melbourne Metro – South Melbourne
FG 4	Parents/carers of secondary school aged children	Men	Online – Metro & Regional Victoria
FG 5	CALD parents/carers of primary school aged children – born in India	Women	Melbourne Metro – South Melbourne
FG 6	CALD parents/carers of secondary school aged children – born in China	Men	Online – Metro & Regional Victoria
FG 7	CALD parents/carers of secondary school aged children – born in Vietnam	Men	Online – Metro & Regional Victoria
PG 1	Peer group triad with 2-3 members of same 15-16-year-old social group	Boys	Metro Melbourne – Box Hill
PG 2	Peer group triad with 2-3 members of same 15-16-year-old social group	Boys	Metro Melbourne – Carnegie
PG 3	Peer group triad with 2-3 members of same 15-16-year-old social group	Girls	Metro Melbourne – Frankston
IDI 1-2	Indigenous parents/carers of primary school aged children	Mix	Metro Melbourne
IDI 3-5	Indigenous parents/carers of secondary school aged children	Mix	Metro Melbourne
IDI 6-10	Influencers – teacher, head of house, sports coaches	Mix	Metro Melbourne
IDI 11-14	Key government stakeholders	Mix	Mix
Online Bulletin Board	Mix of parents/carers and their children	Mix	Online – Metro & Regional Victoria

Quantitative research

The quantitative research stage comprised a 15-minute online survey of n=1,976 Victorian parents with a child aged 6-17, and a 15-minute online survey of n=818 young Victorians aged 12-17 (completed together with their parent). Included in this total sample were:

- n=1,508 parents who completed the survey, and,
- n=468 parents who completed a reduced version of the survey

The reduced version of the survey was used to boost the young people sample and included only four key questions for parents to complete, before their child aged 12-17 completed the survey.

Each chart in the report specifies the number of parents that completed that particular question in the survey.

The survey data was collected from 13 June to 22 July 2024. Survey participants were provided a Plain Language Statement, which outlined the details of the project, and signed a consent form before completing the survey. Young people aged 12-17 were recruited through their parents, who completed the survey and provided consent for their child to participate. Young people were also provided a Plain Language Statement and signed a consent form prior to completing the survey.

Demographic data of the survey sample is outlined in the table below.

Table 2: Quantitative sample frame

Demographic breakdown		n	%
TOTAL			
Victorian parents with a child aged 6-17		1976	
Gender	Male	802	41%
	Female	1160	59%
	Other/non-binary	9	<1%
	Prefer not to say	5	<1%
Age	18-24	12	1%
	25-34	147	7%
	35-44	1055	53%
	45-54	656	33%
	55-64	99	5%
	65+	7	<1%
Region	Metro	1566	79%
	Regional	410	21%
Other demographics*	Speak a language other than English	456	30%
	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people	54	4%
	Living with disability	68	5%
	Born overseas	356	24%

Young Victorians aged 12-17		818	
Gender	Male	461	57%
	Female	343	42%
	Other/non-binary	14	1%
Age	12 years old	128	16%
	13 years old	123	15%
	14 years old	127	16%
	15 years old	129	16%
	16 years old	137	17%
	17 years old	166	20%

*Data not collected in reduced version of the survey. Figures are a proportion of parent sample of n=1508.

Confidence interval

Analysis reporting in this report allows for a confidence interval of 95%. This indicates a 95% level of confidence that the true value within the population lies within a specific range around the survey estimate. For example, if 60% of the sample agrees with a given statement, and the confidence interval is between 55% and 65%, we can assert with 95% certainty that the actual percentage of agreement in the entire population falls within this range.

The maximum margin of error for our sample of n=1,508 parents is +/- 2.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. That means that, for any estimate based off this sample of n=1,508 parents, we can be 95% confident that the true value (i.e., in the population) is within 2.5 percentage points of this reported estimate.

Statistical significance testing

Tests of statistical significance have been undertaken at the 95% confidence level. For each figure that compares data between two cohorts (e.g. men and women), numbers highlighted green indicate a result for that cohort that is significantly higher than the result for the rest of the sample. Numbers highlighted in red indicate a result for that cohort that is significantly lower than for rest of the sample.

For each figure that compares data between multiple cohorts (e.g. segments), significance testing has been conducted against the average (NET) result. Numbers highlighted green indicate a result for that cohort that is significantly higher than the average, and numbers highlighted red indicate a result for that cohort that is significantly lower than the average (NET) result.

Rounding

Throughout the report, percentages are generally rounded to whole numbers. Therefore, figures (%) that are a sum of multiple data points may not reflect the values presented in charts.

Coding

Some survey questions required respondents to provide an open-ended text response. These responses were analysed and assigned to one or more categories (i.e. codes) based on the content/theme/sentiment of the response.

Labelling

Throughout this report, the terminology 'masculinity' and 'masculinities' has been used.

2.0 Detailed Findings

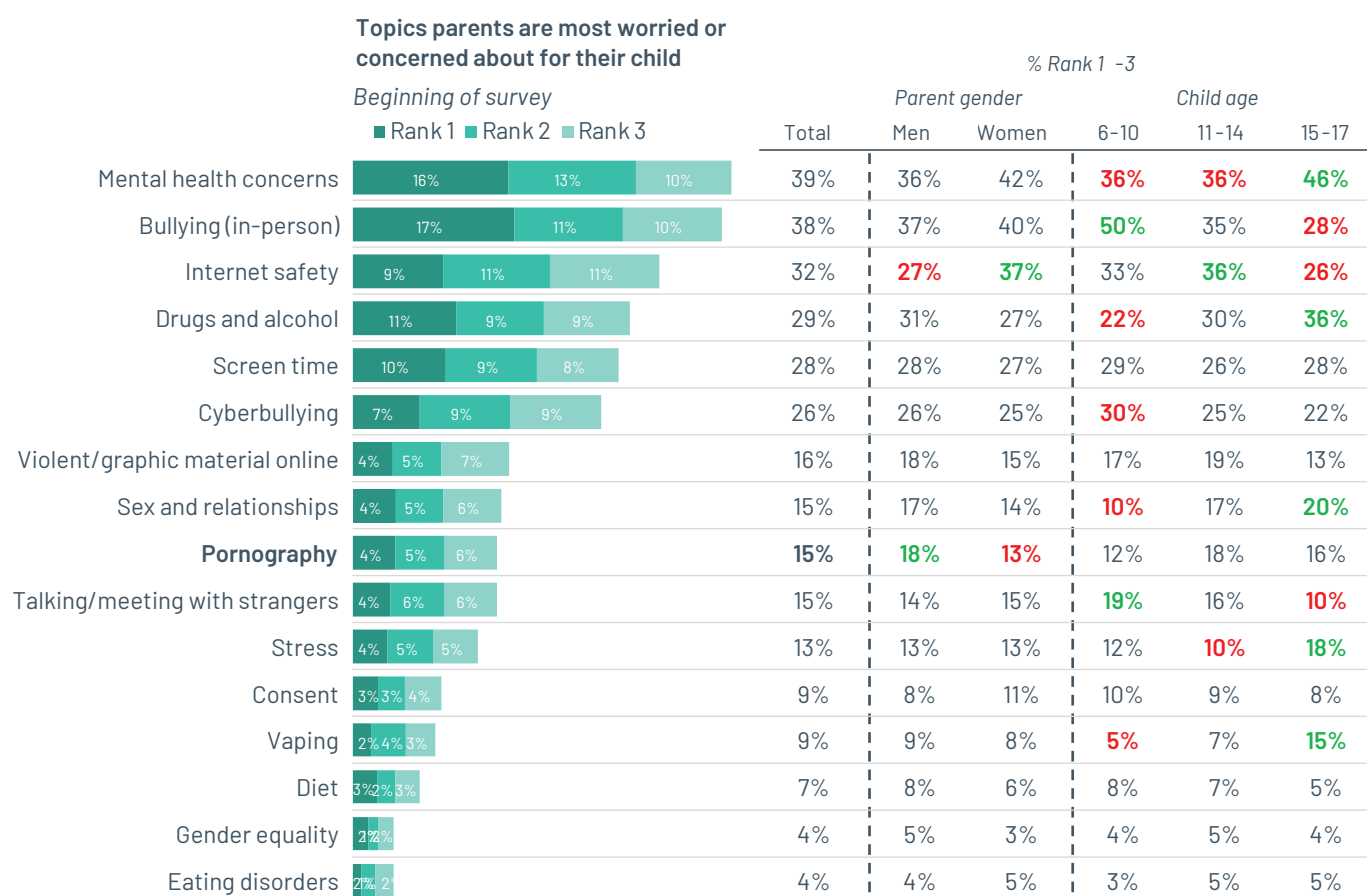
2.1 Parenting today

Parents have a long list of concerns when it comes to their children

Whilst parents strive to build strong relationships and connect with their children, many also have a long list of worries about them – from mental health concerns right through to eating disorders and vaping. The top concerns amongst Victorian parents are:

- Mental health concerns – 39% rank it in the top 3 issues they worry about for their children,
- Bullying (in-person) – 38% rank it in the top 3 issues,
- Internet safety – 32% rank it in the top 3 issues,
- Drugs and alcohol – 29% rank it in the top 3 issues,
- Screen time – 28% rank it in the top 3 issues.

Figure 1: Topics parents are most concerned about for their child



Source: A13. As a parent there are a lot of things that we worry about for our children. Which of the following topics are you most worried or concerned about when it comes to your child/children?
 Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1508. Male, n=718; Female, n=776; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=565; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=460; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=483.

Pornography is lower on the list of concerns

It is important to note that pornography is lower on the list of concerns, and without prompting in the qualitative research, few parents would mention pornography as a top-of-mind concern regarding their child. For many, pornography simply isn't on the radar as an immediate harm. More parents are concerned with issues like mental health concerns, bullying, internet safety, drugs and alcohol and screen time, which they perceive to present a more immediate danger to their child's health, wellbeing and safety.

When parents hear the word pornography, most think of sex. Some reflect on the negatives or harms of pornography, but most perceive it as videos showing sexual and/or graphic content – it is not something they need to immediately worry about.

Only 11% of Victorian parents associate pornography with negative connotations such as “dirty”, “disturbing”, “disgusting”, or “filthy” when asked what comes to mind when prompted.

Whilst pornography is lower on the list of concerns for many Victorian parents, it is still in the top 10 list of issues when prompted. Pornography is still considered somewhat concerning – although 15% rank it in their top 3 concerns, there are other, more pressing issues. The risk from pornography is not perceived as obvious or immediate; it is not something that might physically harm their child, and there is a sense that ‘no one will die from it’.

Figure 2: Top of mind thoughts about pornography

	When you hear the word pornography, what comes to mind?	Parent gender		Child Age		
		Men	Women	6-10	11-14	15-17
Sexual content, e.g. sexual behaviours	47%	47%	47%	45%	50%	46%
Photos/videos	23%	21%	25%	22%	22%	25%
Explicit/graphic content/illegal content	16%	13%	19%	15%	17%	17%
Nudity/naked	12%	13%	12%	11%	13%	13%
Negative connotations, e.g., dirty/ disturbing/ disgusting/ filthy	11%	11%	12%	11%	10%	11%
Online/on the Internet	11%	11%	11%	13%	8%	10%
Adult content	7%	9%	6%	8%	8%	5%
Content that are unrealistic/staged	7%	5%	10%	8%	6%	7%
Degrading/disrespecting women, e.g., abuse, misogyny	4%	2%	6%	5%	3%	3%
Content that are inappropriate	4%	2%	6%	4%	3%	5%
Worrying/harmful content for children/ young people	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	3%
Website that contains the content, e.g., Pornhub	3%	5%	2%	4%	3%	3%
Readily available/easy to access	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%
Pleasure seeking/arousing	2%	2%	1%	1%	3%	2%

Source: A14. When you hear the word pornography, what comes to mind?

Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1508. Male, n=718; Female, n=776; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=565; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=460; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=483.



Visual material where people can be seen having sex-
Victorian parent

Actors acting out sexual acts
- Victorian parent

**Stylised or extreme sexual content that is not healthy for
developing children or adults**
- Victorian parent

**Inappropriate content that is only legal for people above the
age of 18th**
- Victorian parent

Sex & nudity
- Victorian parent



We have to raise pornography for it to make it onto the list of conscious concerns. It is not on the radar. Out of sight, out of mind.

2.2 Teenage life & relationships

Being a young person today is a complex experience shaped by rapid technological advancements in a fast-paced world. In the qualitative research, we heard that social media and smartphones are a big part of life, offering benefits such as connection with others but also challenges such as privacy concerns.

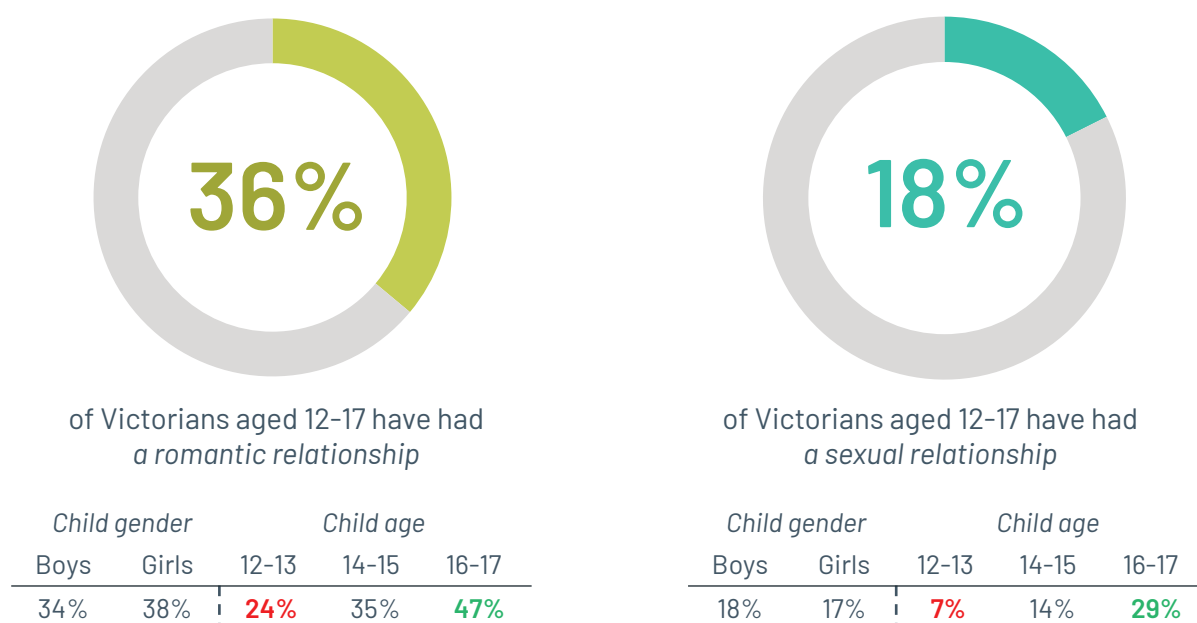
Young people are exploring relationships

The qualitative findings indicate that the relationships of young people are dynamic, sometimes fleeting and often intense. Romantic relationships can bring joy and a sense of connection, but also pose challenges. Romantic relationships are important for personal growth and help young people learn about love, trust, and intimacy (physical and emotional).

Many young people strive for independence and self-expression, while seeking support and understanding from their parents and peers.

Just over a third of Victorians aged 12-17 have had a romantic relationship, and 18% have had a sexual relationship. Predictably, the proportion for both increases as young people get closer to adulthood.

Figure 3: Young person romantic and sexual relationship experience



Source: B1. Have you ever had any kind of romantic relationship with another person? B2. Have you ever had any kind of sexual relationship with another person?
Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, n=818. Male, n=461; Female, n=343; 12-13, n=251; 14-15, n=256; 16-17, n=303.

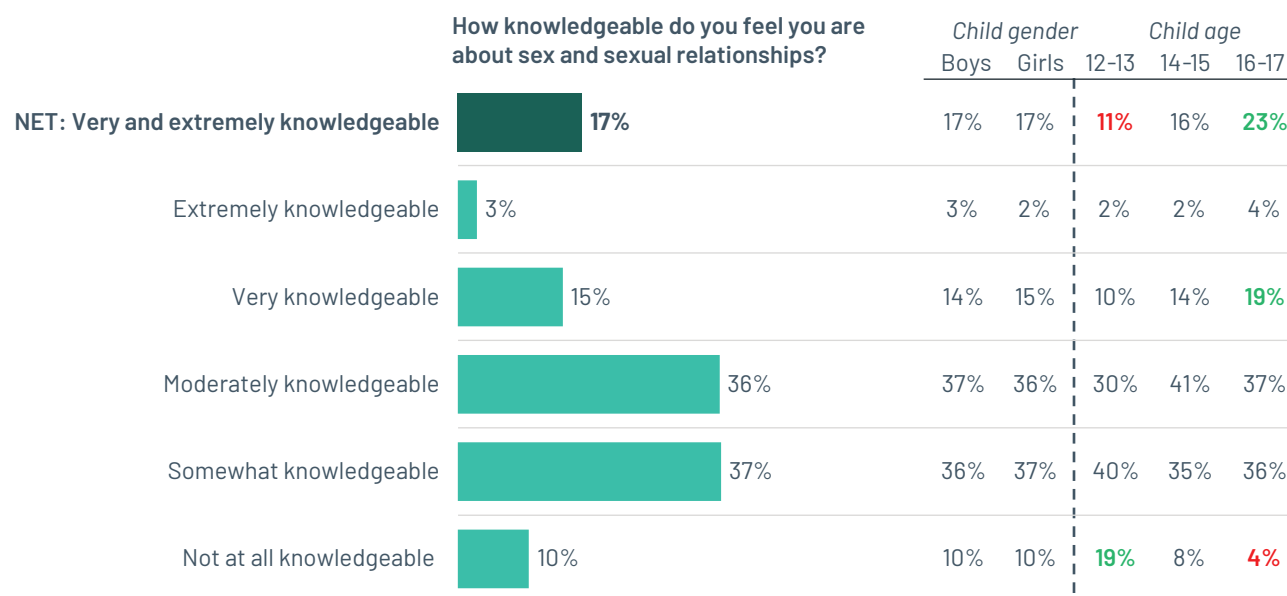
Young people generally have some knowledge about sex and sexual relationships, and turn to their friends or the internet when they want to know more

Young Victorians are fairly confident when it comes to their knowledge about sex and sexual relationships. 17% of Victorians aged 12-17 feel very or extremely knowledgeable about sex and sexual relationships, and again this proportion increases as young people approach adulthood. Only 10% of Victorians aged 12-17 feel they have no knowledge at all about sex and sexual relationships.

Friends are the top source of information on sexual relationships, with 73% of Victorians aged 12-17 having discussed these topics with friends at least once in the last 12 months.

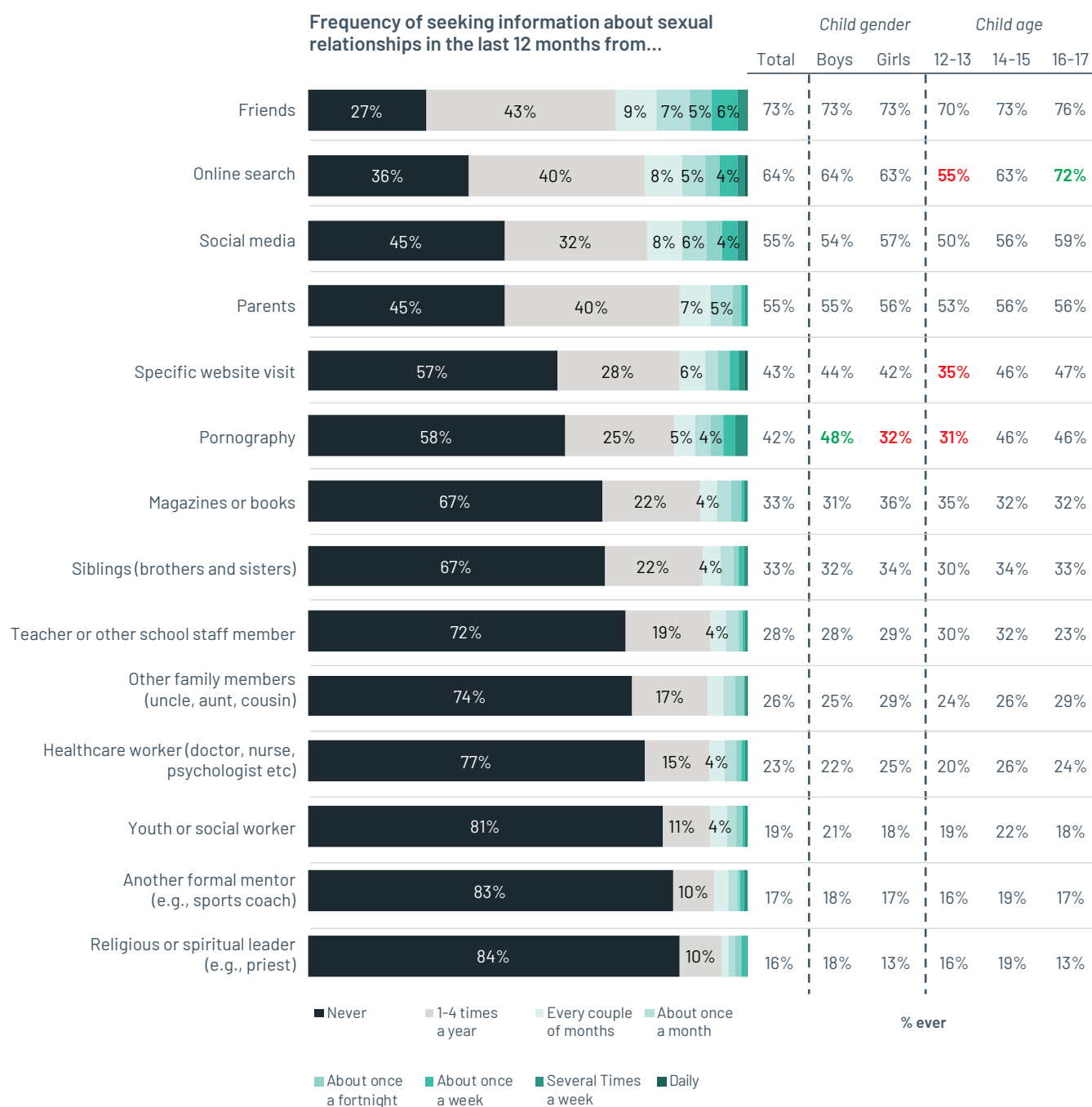
Older teenagers over 16 are most likely to seek information online – through online search or social media. Some young people are talking to their parents, but for many this is out of the question. Only 9% of Victorians aged 12-17 have talked to their parents about sexual relationships in the last month, whereas almost half have not talked to their parents about sexual relationships in the last 12 months. 7% of Victorians aged 12-17 have never sought any information about sexual relationships.

Figure 4: Knowledge of sex and sexual relationships



Source: B3. How knowledgeable do you feel you are about sex and sexual relationships?
Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, n=818; Male, n=461; Female, n=343; 12-13, n=251; 14-15, n=256; 16-17, n=303.

Figure 5: Information sources for sexual relationships



Source: B4. How often have you sought information about sex and sexual relationships – from each of the following sources?
 Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, n=818; Male, n=461; Female, n=343; 12-13, n=251; 14-15, n=256; 16-17, n=303.
 Note: Labels less than 4% have been removed for clarity.

2.3 Pornography – access and usage



Parent's Perspective

While pornography isn't high on the list of concerns for most parents, it is still something many feel they need to think about in their parenting. They are able to recognise that it has changed in terms of accessibility and content, and they are able to identify a number of potential harms that could impact their children.

Pornography – then and now

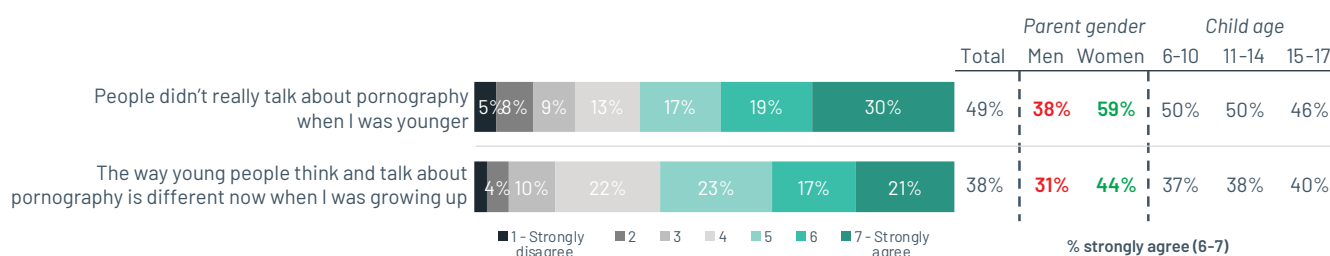
Pornography before had basic, less hardcore content, and accessibility was limited.

Parents agree that pornography is 'just part of life', but also recognise that it has changed in their lifetime. For most, access to pornography and the content is very different now compared to when they were growing up.

- **Accessibility:** Growing up, pornography was found in a magazine or perhaps a VHS. For some younger parents, limited video content might have been available online using dial-up internet on a desktop computer. While Australia's classification system has banned a range of fetish pornography, this content is now freely available in vast quantities on the internet.

- **Content:** There was also a lack of extreme content, which was less explicit and less 'hardcore'. While parents agree that pornography set unrealistic expectations, this was limited by the nature of the content. In the qualitative research, parents agreed that while pornography wasn't a great introduction to sex, the content was relatively 'basic'.
- **Openness:** Pornography was also seen as much more taboo when today's parents were growing up, with almost half of Victorian parents (49%) agreeing that people didn't really talk about pornography when they were younger. They also recognise that the way people talk about pornography now has changed, with 38% of Victorian parents strongly agreeing that the way young people think and talk about pornography is different compared to when they were growing up.

Figure 6: Pornography then



Source: A28. On the scale below, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.
 Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1508; Male, n=718; Female, n=776; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=565;
 Referenced child aged 11-14, n=460; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=483. Note: Labels less than 4% have been removed for clarity.

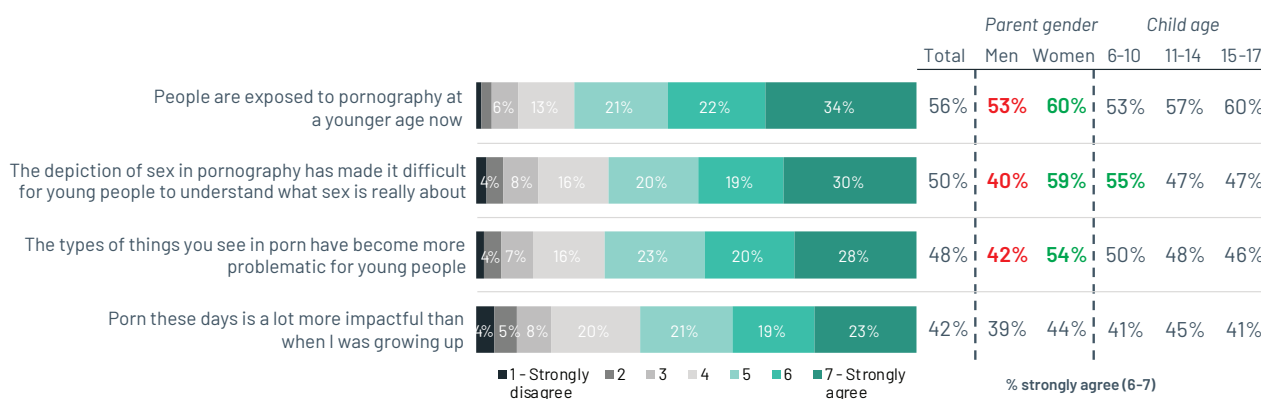
Pornography today is seen as easier to access, more graphic, and can influence expectations about sex.

Parents generally agree that today, pornography is more accessible than ever, and the nature of the content has changed.

- **Accessibility:** Parents realise that young people have their own devices where they can access anything – including pornography – from anywhere. They see the video format of pornography as having significantly more impact than the still images of nudity in magazines. The quantitative survey found that 56% of Victorian parents agree that people are now exposed to pornography at a younger age.

- **Content:** Parents have a vague understanding that pornography now contains problematic behaviours and worrying content. Although they are aware it includes some aggressive behaviours, they don't always know the true extent to the harms depicted. Almost half of Victorian parents (48%) agree that 'the types of things you see in pornography have become more problematic for young people'.
- **Unrealistic expectations:** 50% of Victorian parents agree that 'the depiction of sex in pornography has made it difficult for young people to understand what sex is really about'. They agree it is now more unrealistic in a number of ways, including depictions of physical appearance, what sex looks like, what sex is like in a relationship, consent, and more.

Figure 7: Pornography now



Source: A28. On the scale below, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements...
 Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1508. Male, n=718; Female, n=776; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=565; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=460; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=483. Note: Labels less than 4% have been removed for clarity.

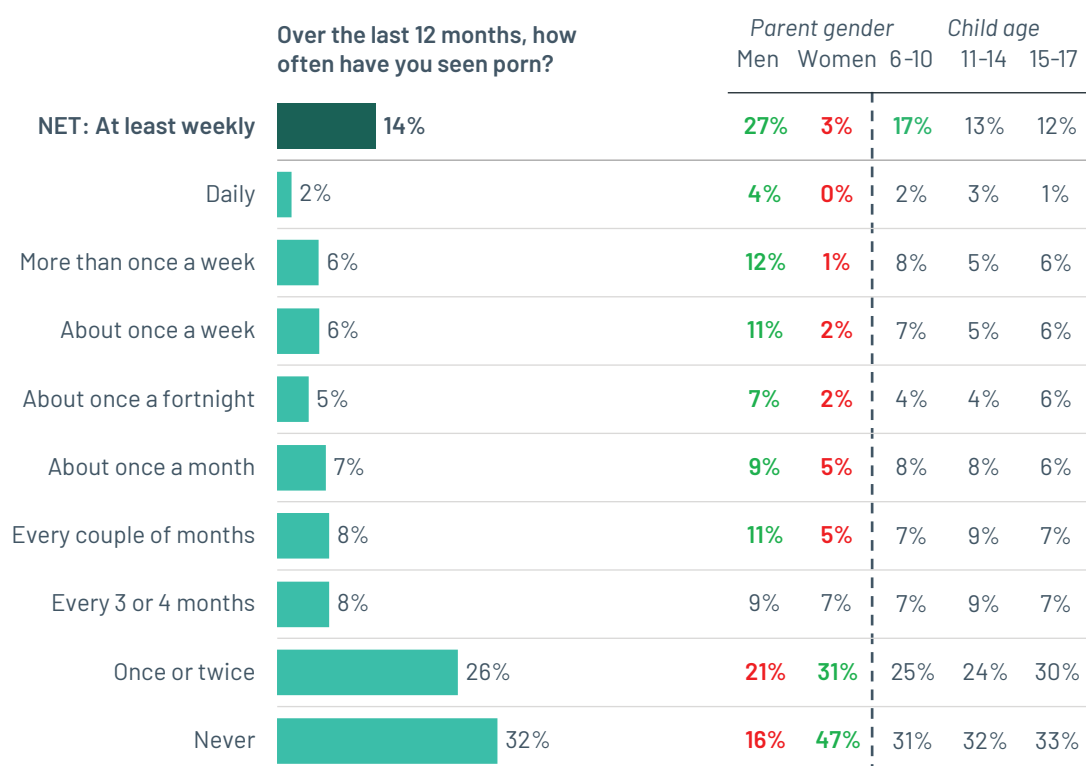


Parents are aware of the changing nature of pornography and some of the harms, but don't know the full extent of the problem.

A high proportion of parents watch pornography frequently

Whilst parents are concerned about pornography when it comes to their children, it is important to note that many Victorian parents, especially men, are watching pornography relatively frequently. 27% of Victorian fathers watch pornography at least weekly, with almost 1 in 6 saying they watch pornography more than once a week.

Figure 8: Frequency seeing pornography (parents)



Source: A15. Over the last 12 months, how often have you seen porn?

Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1508. Male, n=718; Female, n=776; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=565; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=460; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=483.



Children's Perspective

Pornography presents itself at a critical time for adolescents

Qualitative findings reveal that exposure to pornography often comes into young people's lives at a critical time in their development. At this stage, their understanding of sex extends beyond the biological aspects to encompass more complex and nuanced ideas. Young people are easily influenced and pornography can play a critical role in their thoughts and understanding of sex. This includes unrealistic portrayals of sexual activity, such as aggressive behaviours like choking, and pressures to engage in sex sooner than they might otherwise. Young people may come to view pornography as a model for what an adult relationship should look like, often missing out on important emotional elements such as love, care and support.

Many young people are conscious of how they look and how they behave, especially with the added pressure of meeting the standards set on social media. This research indicates that some are also comparing themselves to what they see in pornography. This comparison contributes to unrealistic expectations about how they should look and behave. As a result, pornography can influence young people's perceptions and behaviours in relationships.



I'm afraid to do anything with boys because they [have] always got videos judging girls. You hear the way the boys talk about girls you're kind of like, check yourself

- Young Victorian

And they just like expect it to always be like that. They see a picture and think that it's normal

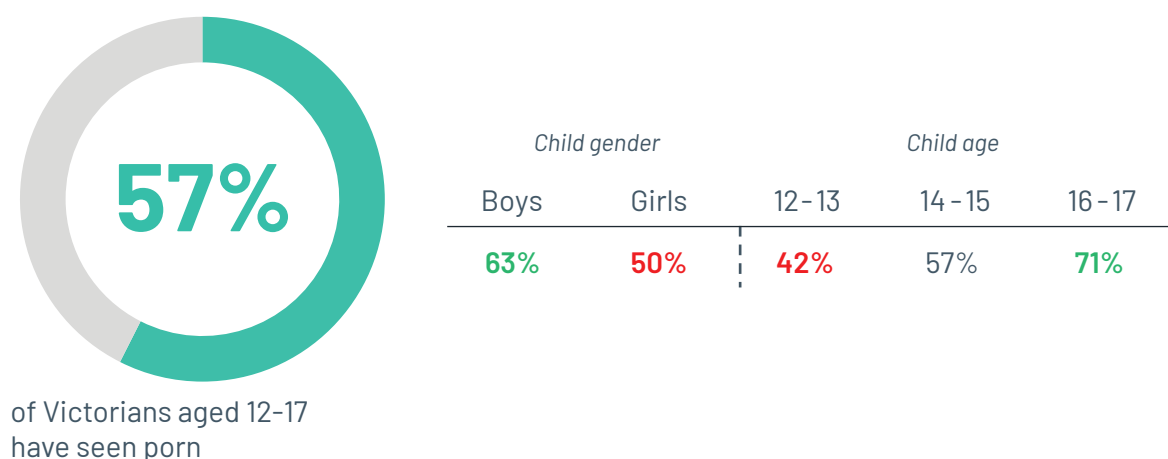
- Young Victorian (Girl, aged 15-16)

Pornography is part of everyday life for many young people

Once young people reach high school, pornography is a frequent part of life for many. 42% of Victorians aged 12-13 have seen pornography, with this percentage increasing as young people approach adulthood. The qualitative research found that some are exposed even earlier, during their time at primary school.

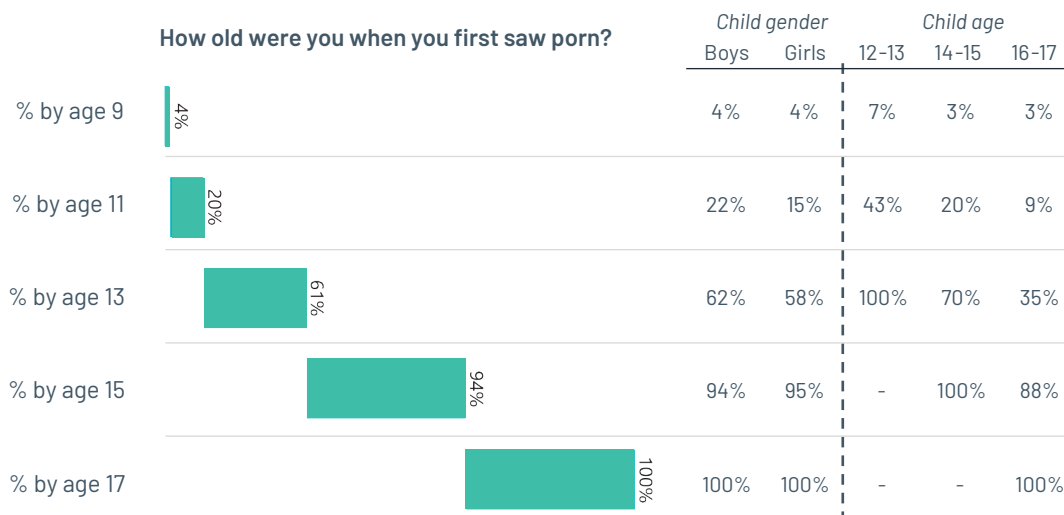
20% of Victorians aged 12-17 saw pornography by the time they were 11, 61% by the time they were 13, and 94% had seen it by the time they were 15.

Figure 9: Exposure to pornography



Source: B17. Have you ever seen porn (sexually explicit images or videos)?
Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, n=818. Male, n=461; Female, n=343; 12-13, n=251; 14-15, n=256; 16-17, n=303.

Figure 10: Age first seen pornography



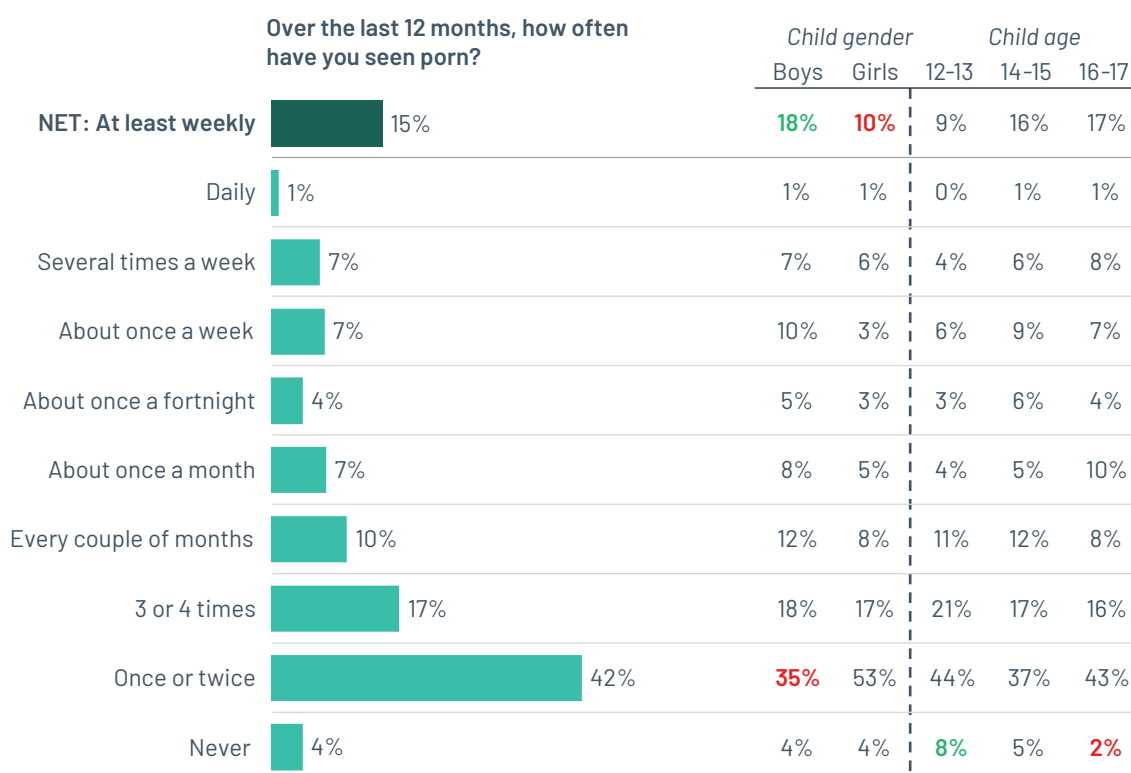
Source: B8. How old were you, approximately, when you first saw porn?
Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, has seen porn before n=406; Male, n=255; Female, n=146; 12-13, n=91; 14-15, n=128; 16-17, n=187.

Once exposed to pornography, Victorians aged 12–17 view it relatively frequently. As shown in Figure 11, 15% of Victorians aged 12–17 watch pornography at least once a week, which is slightly higher than the 14% of Victorian parents who report doing the same. Weekly viewing is higher among boys (18% of Victorian boys aged 12–17) compared to girls (10% of Victorian girls aged 12–17). It is also higher amongst those who are aged 14 and older, with 16% of those aged 14–15 and 17% of those aged 16–17 watching it weekly, compared to 9% of younger Victorians aged 12–13.

In contrast, younger Victorians aged 12–13 are significantly more likely to have never seen pornography compared to those aged 16–17.

Many young people admit that their parents are unaware of the extent to which pornography is part of their daily lives. Some believe their parents might have a general idea, but they do not know the extent of their viewership. Young people also think that parents are unaware that pornography is commonly viewed among children in Year 7 or 8, and even in late primary school years.

Figure 11: Frequency seeing pornography



Source: B17. Have you ever seen porn (sexually explicit images or videos)?

Base: Victorian young people aged 12–17, unweighted, n=818. Male, n=461; Female, n=343; 12–13, n=251; 14–15, n=256; 16–17, n=303.



So, I reckon they have a clue, a little bit, but not the whole extent
– Young Victorian

Pornography is very accessible

Smartphones are a big part of young people's lives, so it's not surprising that they have access to pornography through their phones. 58% of Victorians aged 12-17 who have seen pornography in the last 12 months have watched it on their smartphone. A further 22% viewed it on a desktop or laptop computer. A further 22% viewed it on a desktop or laptop computer.

Figure 12: Channel to watch pornography

	And how do you normally see or watch porn?	Child gender		Child age		
		Boys	Girls	12-13	14-15	16-17
	On a smartphone	57%	60%	57%	58%	59%
	On a desktop or laptop computer	23%	20%	16%	22%	24%
	On a tablet (e.g., iPad)	11%	6%	14%	9%	7%
	On TV	1%	3%	2%	1%	2%
	Magazine	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%
	Somewhere else (specify)	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
	Prefer not to answer	5%	9%	8%	7%	5%

Source: B16. And how do you normally see or watch porn?

Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, has seen porn in the last 12 months, n=447; Male, n=276; Female, n=166; 12-13, n=98; 14-15, n=139; 16-17, n=210.

Young people's first encounter with pornography is often accidental, whether they came across it by mistake or someone showed it to them without being asked

The first encounter with pornography for most young people is usually accidental exposure, rather than something they actively seek out. Almost half (47%) of Victorian 12-17-year-olds came across pornography by mistake or accident, while another quarter (28%) were shown it by someone else without having asked to see it.

Figure 13: Sought or accidental pornography exposure

	When you first saw porn, did you seek it out or come across it accidentally?	Child gender		Child age		
		Boys	Girls	12-13	14-15	16-17
	I sought it out	29%	16%	22%	25%	24%
	I came across it by mistake, or by accident	42%	55%	53%	48%	43%
	Someone else showed it to me without me asking	28%	27%	23%	24%	32%
	Prefer not to answer	2%	2%	3%	3%	0%

Source: B12. When you first saw porn, did you seek it out or come across it accidentally?

Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, has seen porn before, n=470; Male, n=289; Female, n=173; 12-13, n=106; 14-15, n=147; 16-17, n=214.



The first time I saw pornography was in year 1 or year 2. The older kids showed it to us as a joke

- Young Victorian

I'm glad I discovered pornography on my own. It was really empowering to kind of figure out what I liked and figure out what I am into

- Young Victorian

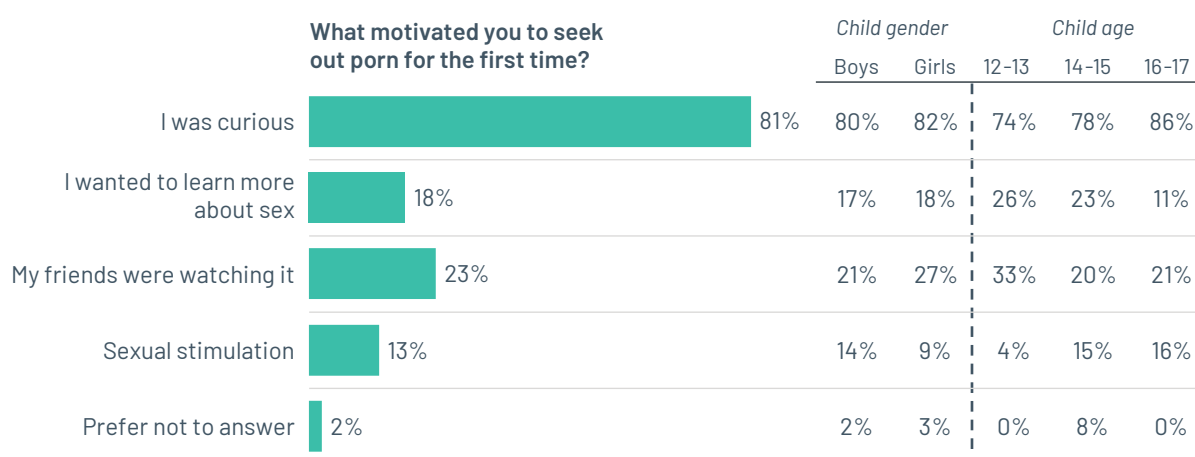
It was on Facebook, I saw a funny video and followed the page and pornography videos started showing in the story

- Young Victorian

Young people are curious about pornography, but also feel embarrassment

Curiosity drives the majority of Victorians aged 12-17 to seek out pornography, with 4 in 5 agreeing that their motivation to seek out pornography for the first time was that they were curious. Some watched pornography because their friends were watching it (23%), while others wanted to learn more about sex (18%).

Figure 14: Motivators for seeking pornography



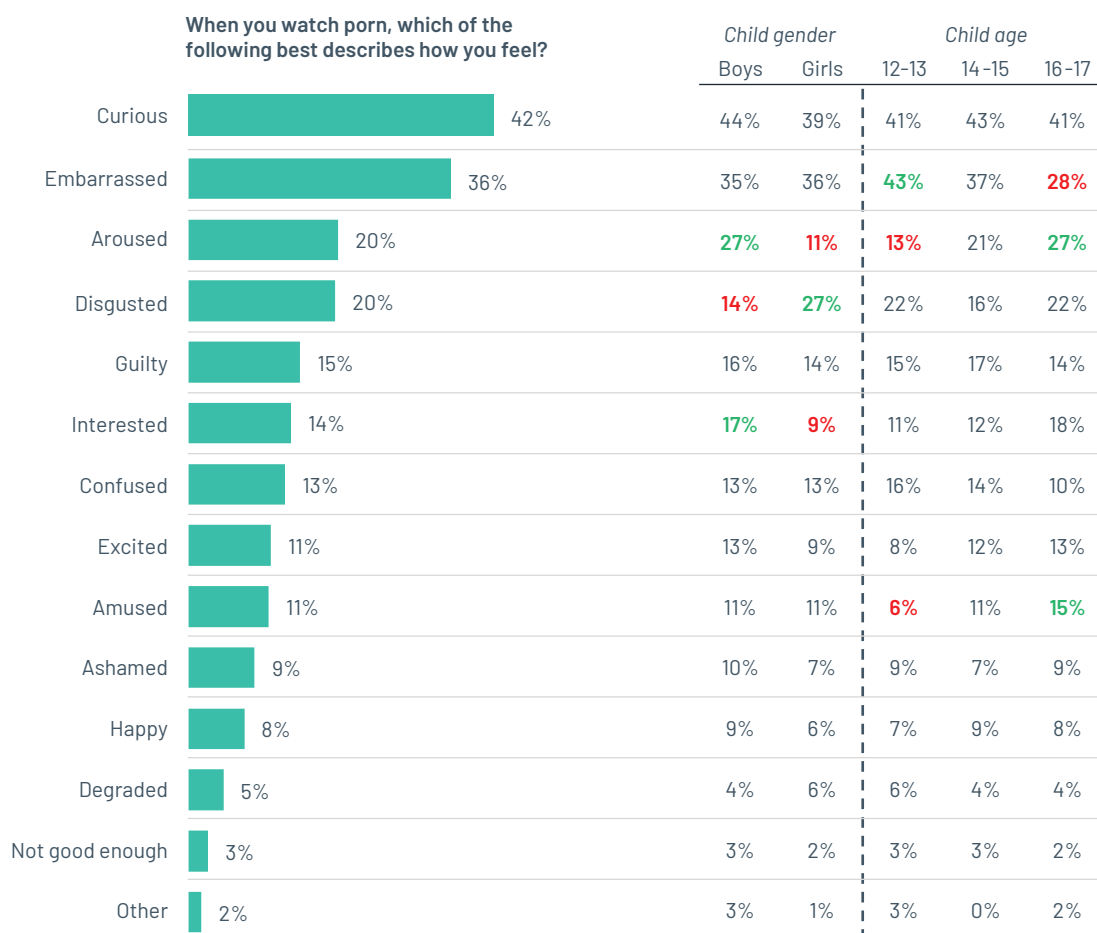
Source: B13. What motivated you to seek out porn for the first time?

Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, sought out porn when first saw it, n=125; Male, n=90; Female, n=30; 12-13, n=27; 14-15, n=40; 16-17, n=57.

Curiosity about pornography is often accompanied by embarrassment for young people. Younger children in particular feel embarrassed – 43% of Victorians aged 12–13 said they feel embarrassed when watching pornography, compared to 28% of Victorians aged 16–17.

Young men were significantly more likely to feel aroused when watching pornography (27%), whereas young women were more likely to feel disgusted (27%).

Figure 15: Feeling when watching or thinking about pornography



Source: B21. When you watch porn, which of the following best describes how you feel?
 Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, n=1508; Male, n=438; Female, n=321; 12-13, n=237; 14-15, n=242; 16-17, n=286.

There are several key motivations that drive young people to look at pornography

The qualitative research identified several significant motivations that drive young people to watch pornography beyond pleasure seeking. These motivations play a role in personal discovery and deepening social bonds.

Personal discovery:

- **Epiphanic experience:** At a young age, discovering pornography and learning about sex can be an eye opening and illuminating experience. It opens up new perspectives and ideas about sex, identity and self-expression.
- **Identity formation:** For some, exploring different genres and subcategories of pornography offers a significant moment of self-discovery. It provides insights into what they like and who they are as an individual. Additionally, many turn to pornography if they have questions about their sexuality.
- **Empowering sense of independence:** For some, discovering and exploring pornography is a personal journey outside of parental control. It can be empowering and liberating, as they have the freedom to choose what to search for and watch without parental oversight.

Deepening social bonds:

- **Excitement and humour:** For many young people, sexual themes are often seen as humorous and something to joke about. Sharing pornographic content can become a moment of shared humour. Additionally, the thrill of engaging with content they know they should not be viewing adds to this excitement, and doing this collectively deepens social bonds.
- **Shared connection:** For some, talking about pornography with friends can create a sense of connection through shared experiences and interests. Viewing and talking about pornography is a way for some people to feel a 'part of the club' and ensure a sense of social standing with peers.



When we were young, watching pornography and sharing it and talking about it with your mates was kind of how you figured out what's out there... by talking about it with mates you kind of got a sense of what's normal. For me and my friends, sneaking around and talking about it... you almost felt like you're in a secret brotherhood.

- Victorian parent

2.4 Initial concerns about pornography

During the research, parents and young people were provided with statistics and further information about pornography and its potential harms. Prior to disclosing this information, the research explored the initial concerns that parents and young people have about pornography.



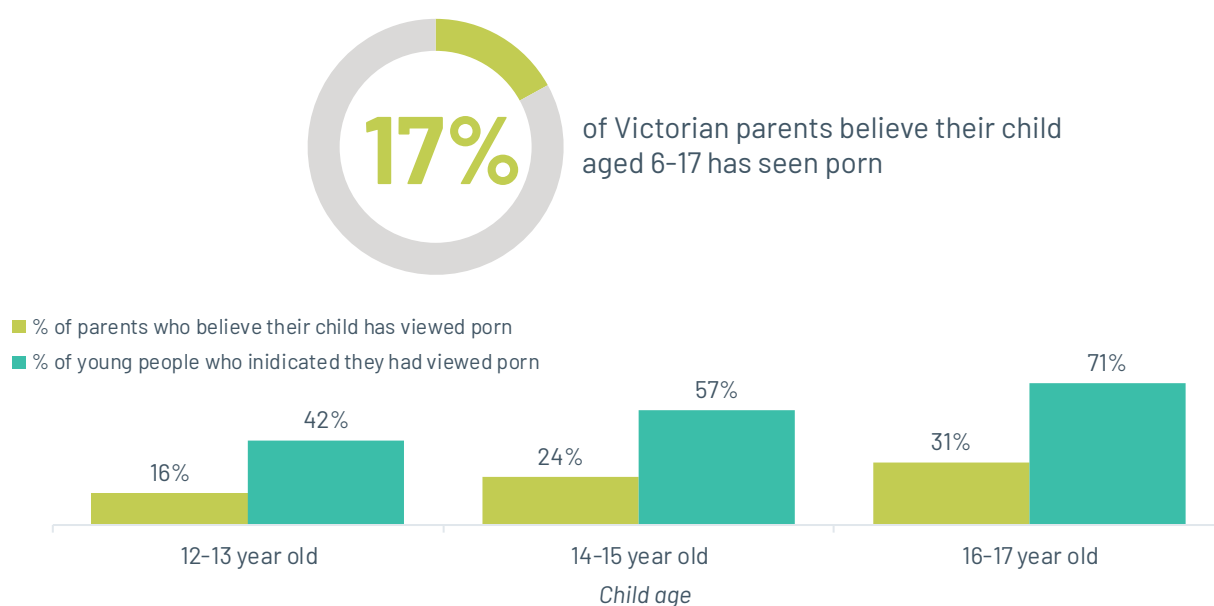
Parent's Perspective

Most parents do not believe their child has ever viewed pornography

Despite most parents acknowledging the increased accessibility of pornography, the majority still underestimate the likelihood of their child encountering it at a young age. The data reveals a significant gap between parents' perceptions and reality: only 17% of Victorian parents believe their child has viewed pornography, despite 57% of their surveyed children having encountered it. Additionally, just 40% of parents of children who have seen pornography know their child has viewed it.

While it is expected that parents of younger children would be more confident that their child hasn't viewed pornography, only about one-third (31%) of Victorian parents of children aged 16-17 believe their child has viewed pornography. In reality, 71% of 16-17-year-olds have seen pornography.

Figure 16: Parent awareness of child seeing pornography vs child seeing pornography



Source: B21. When you watch porn, which of the following best describes how you feel?
Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, n=1508; Male, n=438; Female, n=321; 12-13, n=237; 14-15, n=242; 16-17, n=286.

When parents find out, it is usually because their child tells them

When parents find out that their child has viewed pornography, it is most often because their child tells them directly. Specifically, 47% of parents who are aware of their child's exposure to pornography learned about it through their child's disclosure.

However, many parents discover this information through other means: just over a third of Victorian parents found pornography in their child's room or on their computer or phone, and 19% caught their child while they were watching it.

Figure 17: How parents were made aware that their child had viewed pornography

	How did you find out that your child had viewed porn?		Parent gender		Child age		
			Men	Woman	*6-10	11-14	15-17
	My child told me	47%	48%	47%	50%	46%	47%
	I found porn in their room / on their computer or phone	34%	38%	30%	25%	36%	33%
	I saw or walked in on them watching porn	19%	23%	16%	33%	22%	16%
	My child's teacher or school told me	4%	4%	4%	0%	6%	3%
	Someone else told me	3%	1%	3%	0%	0%	4%
	Other	10%	8%	12%	8%	7%	12%

Source: A19. How did you find out that your child had viewed porn?

Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, aware child has viewed porn, n=240. Male, n=105; Female, n=132; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=12; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=72; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=156.

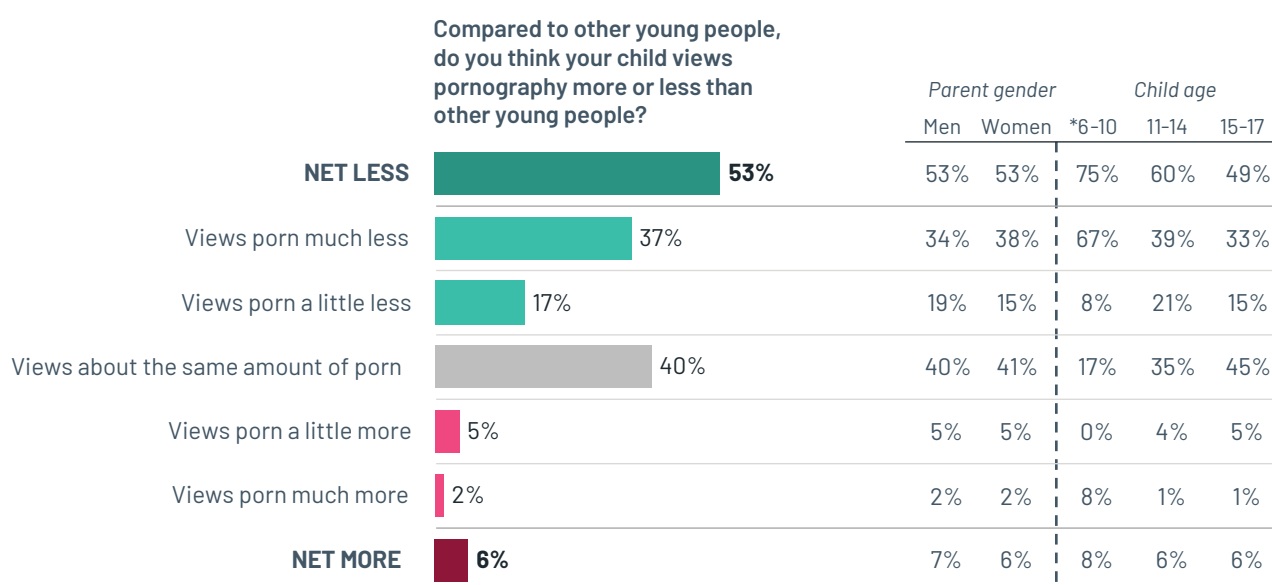
*Low sample size, n=12.

Parents strongly believe that their child views pornography less than other young people

Among parents who believe their child has seen pornography, many have a strong bias towards believing their child views it far less than other young people. 53% of parents who believe their child has viewed pornography believe their child views pornography less than other young people, and just 6% believe their child views pornography more than others.

Even among parents of older teenagers (15-17), only a small minority (6%) believe their child watches pornography more than other young people.

Figure 18: Perceived level of access compared to other children – Parents who believe their child has viewed pornography



Source: A19. How did you find out that your child had viewed porn?

Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, aware child has viewed porn, n=240. Male, n=105; Female, n=132; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=12; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=72; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=156.

*Low sample size, n=12.



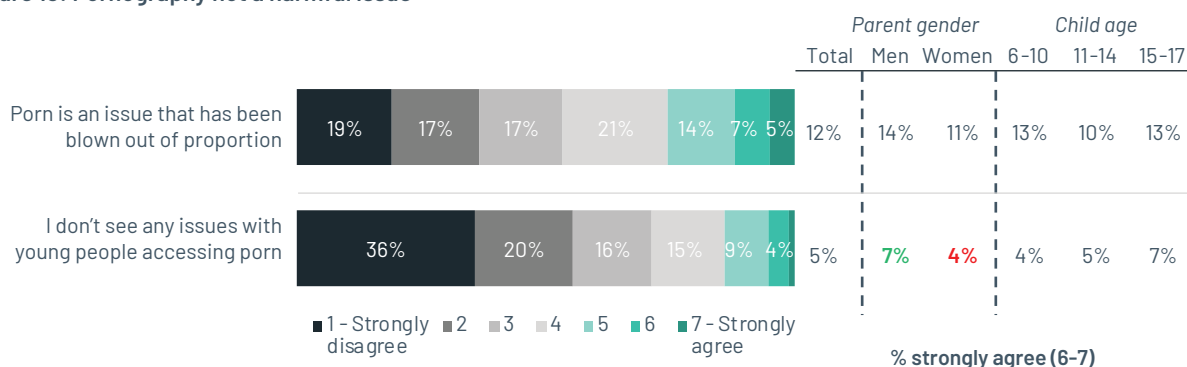
Parents underestimate the likelihood of their child having seen pornography, including compared with other children. There is a need to raise parents' awareness of the likelihood of their child being exposed to pornography.

Although pornography is lower on the list of concerns, most parents can identify some issues with it, but they do not see them as urgent or alarming

Across both the qualitative and quantitative research, once parents are prompted to think about pornography, most identify that there are issues with young people viewing pornography. Only a very small minority of parents (5%) see no issues with young people accessing pornography, and just 12% believe that the issue of pornography has been blown out of proportion.

However, while parents acknowledge concerns, they generally consider them to be minor, with little immediate impact on their child. As a result, issues such as mental health and bullying ranked higher on their list.

Figure 19: Pornography not a harmful issue



Source: A28. On the scale below, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements...?
 Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1,508. Male, n=718; Female, n=776; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=565; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=460; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=483. Note: Labels less than 4% have been removed for clarity.

There are a number of concerns about pornography that parents identify:

Unrealistic expectations: More than one third of Victorian parents (34%) feel that the most concerning aspect of pornography is that it sets unrealistic expectations. Some feel that pornography can negatively affect their child's perceptions of what is normal, highlighting its unrealistic depictions of body image and sexual activity. Parents are especially concerned that their child might develop wrong ideas about how normal sexual relationships function and that pornography promotes transactional relationships. While unrealistic expectations are the main concern for both mothers and fathers, a higher proportion of mothers are concerned about this issue than fathers (39% vs 29%).

Violence and physical/emotional harms: Fewer Victorian parents are concerned that pornography is violent (14%), harmful to watch (12%), or degrading to women (11%). 6% feel that the main harm is that some sexual behaviours may not be consensual. While some believe that it is psychologically damaging for children to be exposed to acts of violence and harm in pornography, others worry about their child feeling compelled to try these practices in their own sex life. Fathers and mothers are generally equally concerned about most issues, but mothers are more concerned about pornography being degrading to women (13% vs 9%) and displaying non-consensual behaviour (8% vs 4%).



Having multiple partners, perfect bodies and having sex for hours are not real

- Victorian parent

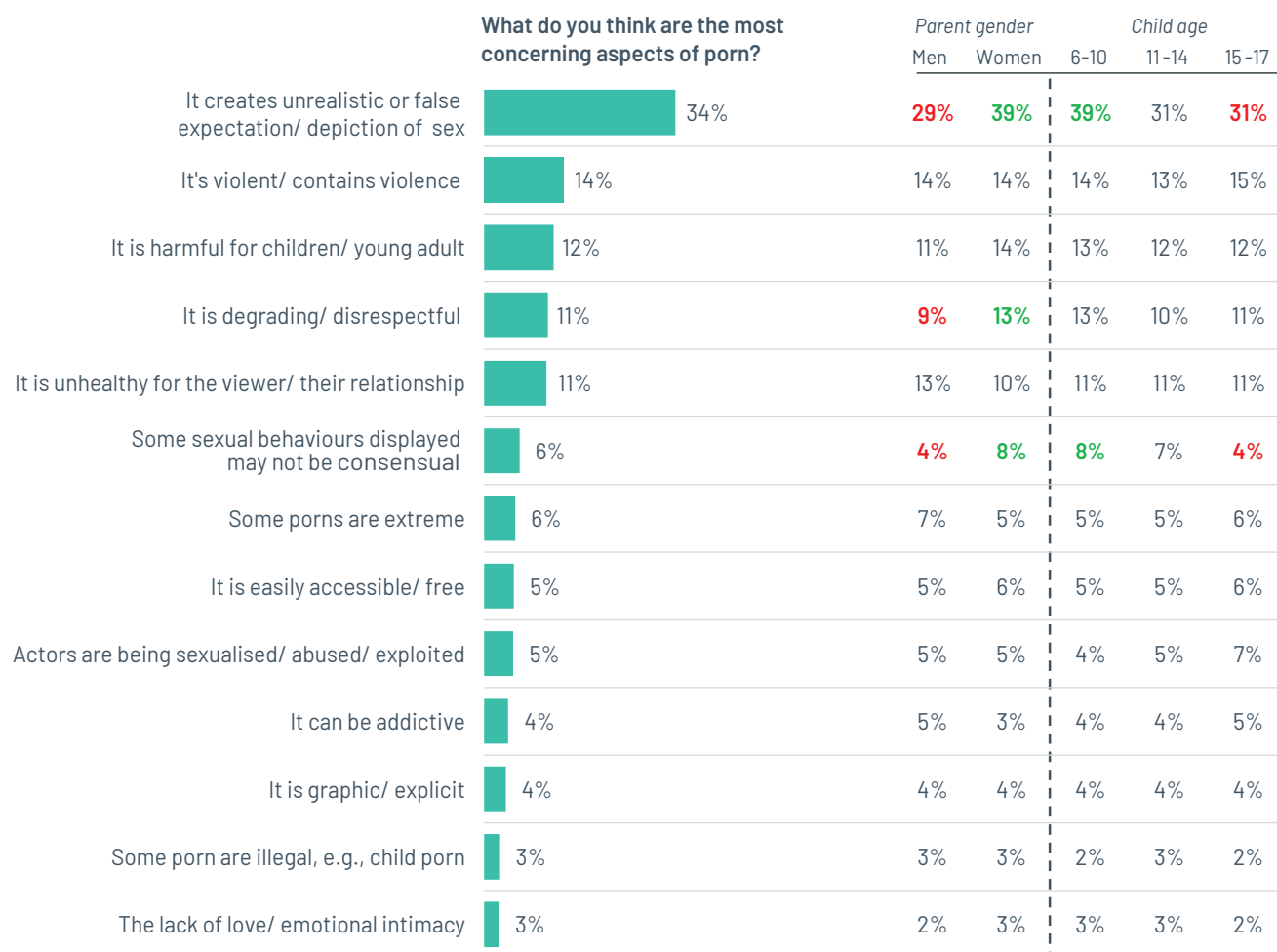
*What do you think are the most concerning aspects of porn?]
The degrading acts some girls are forced to do and kids these days think are normal*

- Victorian parent

*[What do you think are the most concerning aspects of porn?]
Lack of consent, violence, focus on activities that women may not find pleasurable like anal and oral sex, focus on men's pleasure, unrealistic bodies (especially vulvas, breasts and body hair), objectification and commodification of women, nonconsensual/rape story lines*

- Victorian parent

Figure 20: Most concerning aspects of pornography (parents)



Source: A29. What do you think are the most concerning aspects of porn?
 Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, aware child has viewed porn, n=1508. Male, n=718; Female, n=767;
 Referenced child aged 6-10, n=565; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=460; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=483.



It comes back to unrealistic expectations. Whether you're male or female, or whether straight, gay or have other interests, if you don't fit their definition of worthy – physically, emotionally, stamina etc – you're left feeling less of a person

- Victorian parent

It is just fully physical contact without understanding the emotional effect on [relationships]

- Victorian parent

That children will think that what they see is normal and may affect future partners

- Victorian parent



We need to raise the level of concern associated with pornography. While parents believe there are concerns, the initial main concern is about unrealistic expectations which is not seen as an immediate issue to resolve via conversation.



Children's Perspective

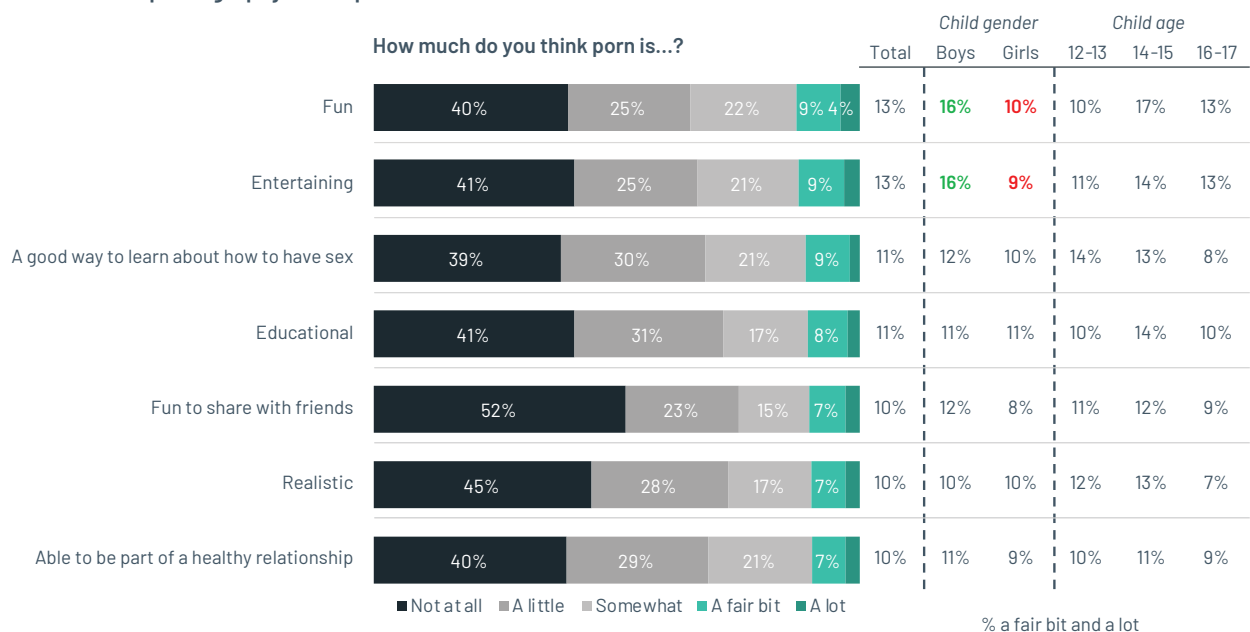
Young people can see the negatives (and some positives) when it comes to pornography

The majority of young Victorians don't see significant benefits to pornography. 13% of Victorians aged 12-17 feel that pornography is fun, only 1 in 10 feel that pornography can be part of a healthy relationship, and 11% feel that pornography is a good way to learn about sex. Young men are more likely to find pornography at least a fair bit fun (16% vs 10%) and entertaining (16% vs 9%) compared to young women.

This aligns with the finding that young men are more likely to feel aroused while watching pornography, compared to young women who are more likely to feel disgusted (Figure 15).

While most young Victorians don't see significant benefits to pornography, there is a large proportion who can see some benefits. 60% of Victorians aged 12-17 find pornography fun to some extent, and 59% believe it has some educational value.

Figure 21: Positive pornography descriptions



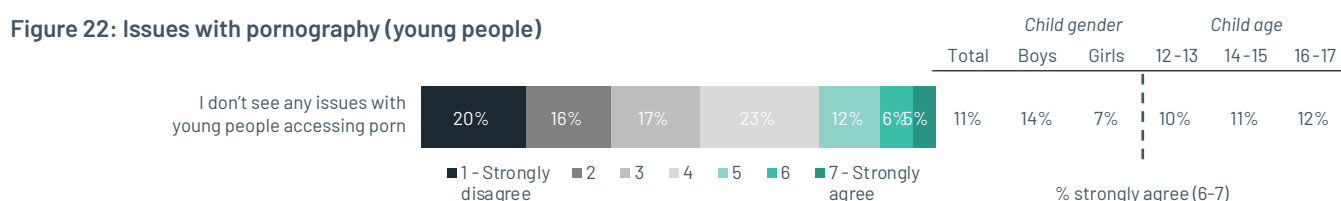
Source: B22. On the scale below, where 1 means 'not at all' and 5 means 'a lot', how much do you think porn is...?
Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, n=818; Male, n=461; Female, n=343; 12-13, n=251; 14-15, n=256; 16-17, n=303.
Note: Labels less than 4% have been removed for clarity.

Young people mostly consider pornography to have negative consequences

The majority of young people recognise issues related to pornography. Just 11% of Victorians aged 12-17 don't see any problems with young people accessing pornography. This sentiment is reflected in the qualitative data showing that many young people feel well-informed about the negative aspects of pornography through school education and social movements advocating for respect for women. Many also feel they can apply their own judgment to determine these negative aspects.

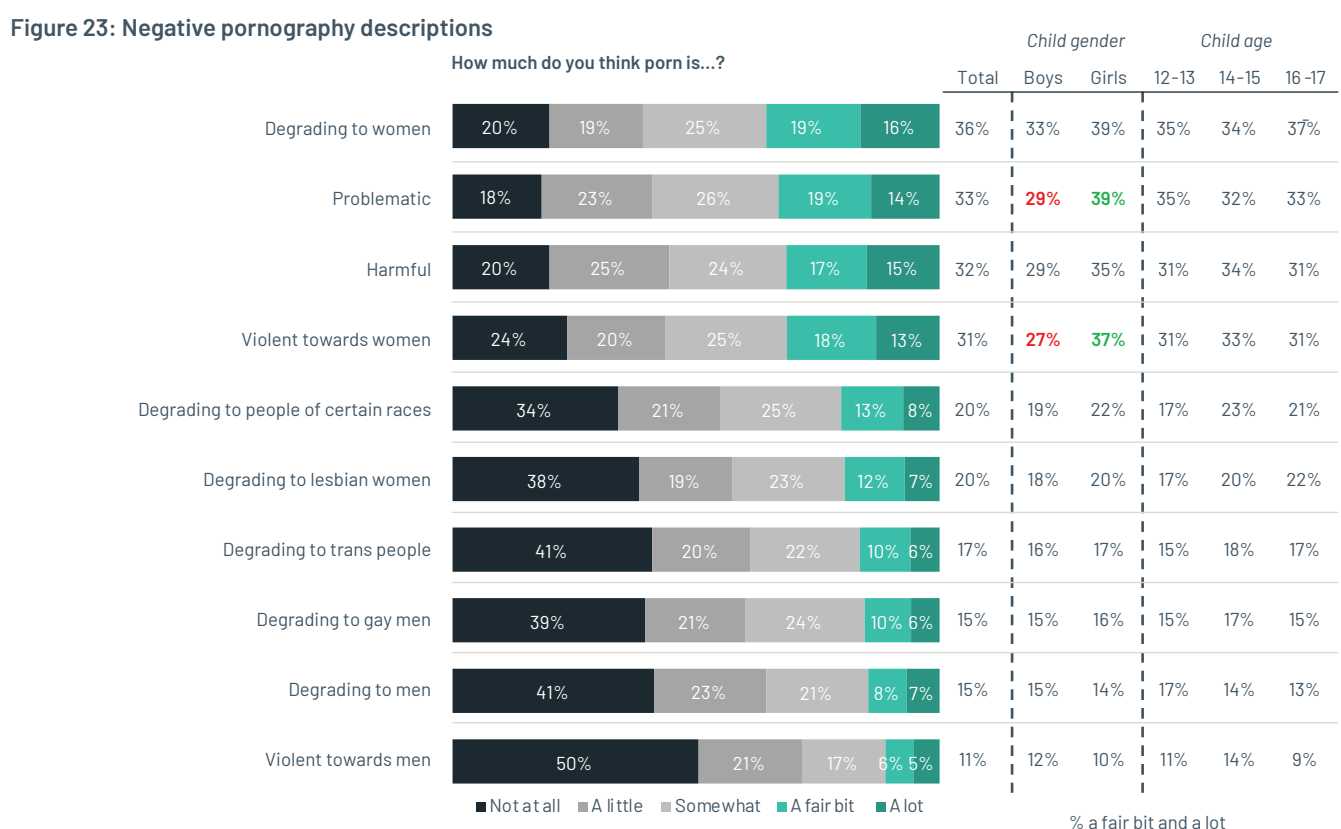
Young Victorians identify several negative aspects associated with pornography. Over a third of Victorians aged 12-17 (36%) view it as degrading to women, 33% see it as problematic, 32% find it harmful, and 31% consider it violent towards women. While both young men and women acknowledge these concerns, young women are more likely to see pornography as problematic (39% vs. 29%) and violent towards women (37% vs. 27%).

Figure 22: Issues with pornography (young people)



Source: B23. On the scale below, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements...
Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, n=818; Male, n=461; Female, n=343; 12-13, n=251; 14-15, n=256; 16-17, n=303.

Figure 23: Negative pornography descriptions



Source: B22. On the scale below, where 1 means 'not at all' and 5 means 'a lot', how much do you think porn is...?
Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, n=818; Male, n=461; Female, n=343; 12-13, n=251; 14-15, n=256; 16-17, n=303.



Young people are aware of the harms that are exhibited in pornography

The most concerning aspect of pornography for the greatest number of young people is that it creates unrealistic expectations of sex

Similar to parents, young Victorians can recognise a range of issues with pornography, and their perceptions of the most important concerns vary significantly. The aspect that most concerns the greatest number of Victorians aged 12–17 (20%) is that pornography sets unrealistic expectations or depictions of sex.

Following this are concerns that pornography can be violent (10%) or degrading to women (8%). Boys and girls rate these concerning aspects similarly, with one exception: young girls are slightly more likely to believe that pornography is harmful to children and young adults (8% vs. 5%).

Figure 24: Most concerning aspects of pornography (young people)

	What do you think are the most concerning aspects of porn?	Child gender		Child age		
		Boys	Girls	12-13	14-15	16-17
It creates an unrealistic expectation/depiction of sex	<div></div> 20%	18%	21%	17%	21%	21%
It's violent/contains violence	<div></div> 10%	8%	12%	8%	9%	13%
It is degrading/disrespectful	<div></div> 8%	7%	9%	7%	8%	9%
It is easily accessible/ free	<div></div> 7%	6%	8%	6%	7%	7%
It is unhealthy for the viewer/ their relationship	<div></div> 7%	7%	6%	6%	7%	8%
It is harmful for children/ young adults	<div></div> 6%	5%	8%	7%	5%	6%
It can be addictive	<div></div> 6%	7%	5%	6%	6%	6%
It is graphic/explicit	<div></div> 5%	4%	7%	5%	4%	6%
Some porn is extreme	<div></div> 5%	5%	4%	6%	4%	5%
Actors are being sexualised/abused/exploited	<div></div> 3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%

Source: B24. What do you think are the most concerning aspects of porn?

Base: Victorian young people aged 12–17, unweighted, n=818; Male, n=461; Female, n=343; 12–13, n=251; 14–15, n=256; 16–17, n=303.



BDSM can seem quite violent, and some videos make it seem that women want sex without consent

- Young Victorian

Not realistic and can be violent and degrading to women -
Victorian parent

I think boys my age are worried about being as good as the people in the videos and also that they have to look a certain way and look cool

- Victorian parent

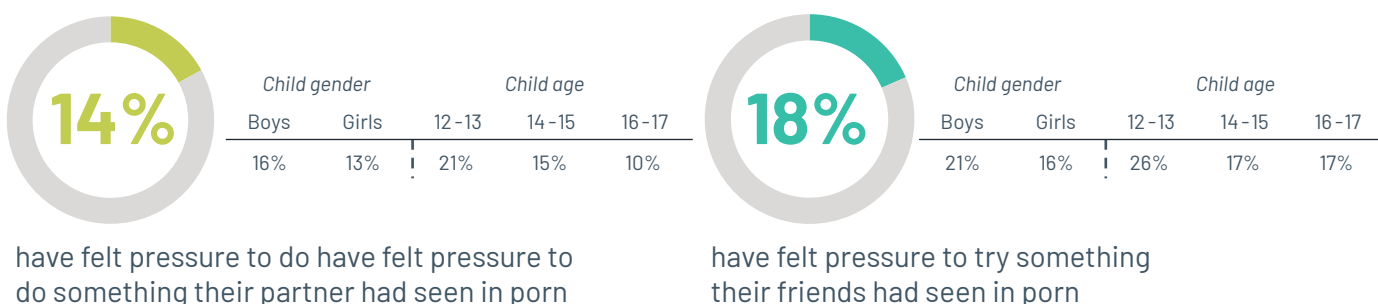
Some young people have felt pressure to try things seen in pornography

While not mentioned explicitly as an issue of pornography, a sizeable proportion of young people who have had previous romantic or sexual relationships report that they have felt pressured to do something as a result of pornography.

14% of Victorians aged 12-17 have felt pressure to try something their partner had seen in pornography, and 18% have felt pressure to try something their friends had seen in pornography. These pressures are felt relatively evenly across gender and age groups.

Figure 25: Felt pressure to do/try something from a partner or friends (among young people who have had a romantic or sexual relationship)

Among Victorians aged 12-17 who have had a romantic or sexual relationship



Source: B18. Have you ever felt pressure to do something that a partner has seen in porn and wanted to try? B19. Have you ever felt pressure to try something that friends have seen in porn and told you about?
Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, ever had a romantic or sexual relationship, n=303. Male, n=159; Female, n=135; 12-13, n=62; 14-15, n=93; 16-17, n=143.

Girls tend to be more concerned about pornography than boys

Qualitative findings reveal that girls have stronger concerns about pornography overall than boys. Some express concern about how pornography affects boys' treatment and perception of women and relationships. They point out that boys develop unhealthy expectations of girls' bodies, making them feel judged and self-conscious about their physical appearance. Some also feel that pornography promotes transactional relationships and increases the pressure to have sex due to the frequency with which pornography and sex are spoken about among young people.

Some girls mention the struggle with balancing being a virgin (perceived as 'embarrassing') and having too much sex (perceived as 'being a whore'). Some young girls find it hard to navigate the expectations of what it means to have sex and also the connotations that having too much sex adds to the notion that they might be seen as promiscuous. Some girls are also troubled by how boys often treat pornography as a joke.



I think women are usually degraded in porn. It's also unrealistic and creates a negative body image for young people

- Young Victorian

Boys are mostly concerned about pornography's impact on younger people, not on themselves

The qualitative findings demonstrate that boys also have concerns about pornography, but generally to a lesser extent than girls. During peer group discussions, boys noted concerns about pornography being unrealistic; they feel that if young people know this, they can apply common sense to consume it responsibly. Boys are highly concerned about younger children viewing pornography, who may not know it is unrealistic. Concerns are elevated given their perception of the ease of accessibility with pornography appearing on social media and advertising for pornographic websites appearing on children's gaming sites. Additionally, boys consider it unlikely that they could become addicted to pornography – although they are aware it can happen and find this concerning.

While some boys acknowledge that pornography can be violent and degrading to women, few find this highly concerning at a personal level due to their confidence that they would never act out what they see. However, this overconfidence suggests that many may not fully grasp the broader complexities and ramifications of pornography in terms of how they view and treat women, their expectations of women, and the potential impact on personal and sexual relationships.

From our qualitative and quantitative research amongst young people, we have summarised the following:

- Many young people realise that pornography depicts unrealistic sexual experiences → but young people are using pornography to learn about sex and may not know which parts of the sexual encounter are unrealistic or exaggerated.
- Many young people realise that pornography depicts unrealistic sexual experiences → but may not realise the subtle or subconscious ways it can shape their own expectations, desires, or unhealthy behaviours.
- Some appreciate that pornography can be addictive and can take away from other healthy activities → but may not realise the impacts it can have on their capacity for healthy sexual relationships at later stages of life.
- Some know that pornography lacks displays of consent in sexual relationships → but don't feel personally likely to act on what they see.



Pornography feels like it's actually targeted at kids. As in, there's ads for it on social media where young people spend time so it feels like it's trying to get young people's attention. And when you're young you might not know its fake

- Young Victorian

It was an ad on a gaming website, then I entered the ad to see more of it, it was kinda fun and exciting

- Young Victorian

2.5 Conversations about pornography



Parent's Perspective

Most parents intend to talk to their child about pornography

A majority (73%) of Victorian parents of children aged 6-17 intend to discuss pornography with their child at some point in the future. Notably, 83% of parents of younger children (aged 6-10) also intend to have this conversation at some point in the future.

Figure 26: Intend to have a conversation with child about pornography (among those who have never had a conversation)



Parent gender		Child age		
Men	Women	6-10	11-14	15-17
70%	76%	83%	73%	52%

Source: A38. Do you intend to have a discussion with your child about porn at some stage in the future?
Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, never talked to their child about porn before, n=1334.

Additionally, upon finding out that their child has viewed pornography, the main course of action for many is to talk with them. Almost half of Victorian parents (47%) would have this conversation. Mothers are more likely to take additional actions, such as telling their child that pornography is an unrealistic depiction of a relationship or sex (12%), and that pornography is inappropriate for their age (7%).

Mothers are more inclined than fathers to want to know how their child accessed pornography (mothers 7%, fathers 4%) and to ask their child's opinions about it (mothers 8%, fathers 4%).

Figure 27: Action taken/would take if found out child had seen pornography

	What did/would you do when/ if you found out that your child had been viewing porn?	Parent gender		Child age		
		Men	Women	6-10	11-14	15-17
I would educate them about porn/ relationship/consent	47%	44%	50%	48%	49%	43%
I would have/had a conversation with my children	12%	12%	13%	15%	12%	9%
I put/would put restrictions in place (e.g., limit screen time, confiscate devices)	10%	10%	10%	14%	10%	6%
I would tell my children that porn is an unrealistic/ unhealthy depiction of a relationship/sex	9%	6%	12%	5%	9%	13%
I would want to know why they viewed it	6%	5%	7%	7%	6%	5%
I would tell them that watching porn is inappropriate for their age	6%	4%	7%	9%	5%	3%
I would want to know how they found/access porn	6%	4%	7%	12%	3%	2%
I would ask for my children's opinion on porn	6%	4%	8%	8%	5%	4%
I would tell my children that viewing porn is harmful for them	5%	6%	5%	4%	7%	6%
I would be worried/upset/seek external help	5%	4%	6%	7%	5%	3%
I wouldn't do anything	4%	5%	3%	1%	3%	7%
I would tell them that it is okay/normal to view porn	4%	4%	4%	2%	4%	5%
I told/ would tell my children not to view porn again	4%	5%	3%	4%	4%	3%

Source: A23. And what did/would you do when/if you found out that your child had been viewing porn?
Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1508. Male, n=718; Female, n=767; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=565; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=460; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=483.

Parents have reactive conversations after finding out their child has viewed pornography

Among Victorian parents who have spoken to their child about pornography, the conversation was usually triggered by discovering that their child has viewed pornography, rather than through proactive discussion. The most common reasons include:

- Catching their child viewing pornography or discovering it on their device (21% of Victorian parents)
- Learning that another child showed pornography to their child (15% of Victorian parents)
- Their child informing them about viewing pornography (14% of Victorian parents)

10% of parents initiated the conversation about pornography to educate their child about sex, 5% because their child reached puberty, and 2% to educate about internet use. These findings suggest that parents either delay pre-emptive discussions until they are forced to address the issue or wait until it becomes evident that their child has encountered pornography and then decide that a conversation is necessary.

Figure 28: Reason for first conversation with child about pornography (coded)

	And what led you to first discuss porn with your child?	Parent gender		Child age		
		Men	Women	6-10	11-14	15-17
I caught my child or found porn on their device	21%	22%	21%	11%	18%	24%
Another child showed them porn/talked about porn	15%	11%	18%	14%	20%	12%
My children asked me/brought it up	14%	14%	15%	23%	14%	13%
I wanted to educate my children regarding sex	10%	7%	14%	11%	9%	11%
My children came across porn on social media/Internet	7%	3%	11%	6%	9%	6%
They heard about porn at school, e.g. sex education	7%	6%	7%	9%	8%	6%
It came up during a conversation	5%	9%	2%	0%	7%	5%
It came up on TV/the news	5%	6%	5%	11%	4%	5%
My children reached puberty/old enough to have the discussion	5%	6%	4%	3%	5%	5%
I wanted to educate my children about internet use	2%	2%	3%	6%	3%	2%

Source: A35. And what led you to first discuss porn with your child?
 Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, had conversation with child about porn, n=417. Male, n=195; Female, n=219;
 Referenced child aged 6-10, n=35; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=132; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=250.



We found Pornography Hub had been accessed on our family PC. And believed our son would be better off not watching these videos

- Victorian parent

Looked through his browser and noticed he had watched pornography and wanted to educate him on it

- Victorian parent

They had friends over and I walked in on them watching it on a friend's

- Victorian parent

Few parents talk to their children about pornography because they aren't made aware that their child views it

Four in ten (40%) Victorian parents of children aged 6-17 have ever talked to their child about pornography, with the likelihood increasing as their child gets older. While parents estimate the average age at which children first view pornography to be 12.4, almost two thirds (60%) have never spoken to their 13-year-old about it.

Even among parents of children aged 15-17, more than a third (38%) have never discussed pornography with their child. Culturally and linguistically diverse parents are significantly less likely to have spoken to their child about pornography (31%) compared to non-CALD parents (37%).

Figure 29: Ever talked to their child about pornography



40% of Victorian parents with a child aged 6-17 have talked to their child about porn

	Parent gender		Child age		
	Men	Women	6-10	11-14	15-17
Spoken to child	38%	41%	11%	41%	62%
Not spoken to child	62%	59%	89%	59%	38%

Source: A30. Have you ever talked to your child about pornography?
Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1976.

When parents do have the conversation, they are generally pleased with the result

Parents who have had conversations reflect positively on the quality of the conversation. Roughly two thirds (63%) of Victorian parents believe that their first conversation about pornography with their child went either somewhat well or very well, and just 5% say it went poorly.

Figure 30: How well first conversation with child about pornography went

		How did the first conversation with your child about porn go?	Parent gender		Child age		
			Men	Women	6-10	11-14	15-17
NET SOMEWHAT & VERY WELL		<div></div> 63%	58%	68%	63%	69%	60%
	Very well	<div></div> 27%	21%	33%	20%	28%	28%
	Somewhat well	<div></div> 36%	37%	35%	43%	41%	32%
	OK	<div></div> 32%	37%	26%	29%	26%	35%
	Somewhat poorly	<div></div> 4%	4%	4%	3%	5%	3%
	Very poorly	<div></div> 1%	1%	2%	6%	1%	1%

Source: A35. And what led you to first discuss porn with your child?
Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, had conversation with child about porn, n=417. Male, n=195; Female, n=219; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=35; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=132; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=250.

Roughly two in three Victorian parents (62%) also feel that there is nothing that they would have done differently, indicating that they are content with the quality of the conversation and their approach. However, some parents identified a range of alternative actions that they would have taken in hindsight.

These results suggest that most parents feel they have the capacity for what they perceive as productive conversations about pornography. However, it is important to note that this data only includes parents who have actually had such conversations. There may be a selection bias, as parents who are willing to have the conversation might also be more likely to report positive outcomes.

In contrast, CALD Victorians are less likely to have a conversation with their child porn (34% CALD compared to 42% non-CALD).

Parents from a CALD background are also less likely to see aspects of porn as acceptable (15% CALD compared to 22% non-CALD) and a greater proportion would be embarrassed if they found out their child watches porn (28% CALD compared to 15% non CALD). In qualitative discussions, mothers from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds suggested that they were very unlikely to raise the topic of pornography with their children, citing embarrassment and shame as the main reasons. Discussion highlighted that this is largely driven by cultural norms, tradition or religion which forbid watching pornography. In particular, these mothers could not see themselves discussing pornography with their sons and felt that their husbands would be equally unlikely to engage their children on the taboo topic.

Figure 31: Would do anything different in the future (coded)

	And looking back, is there anything you would have done differently?	Parent gender		Child age		
		Men	Women	6-10	11-14	15-17
No-I wouldn't have done anything differently	62%	61%	62%	57%	59%	64%
I would be more calm/ less reactive, e.g., being less angry/upset	3%	2%	5%	0%	7%	2%
I would have follow-up/another discussion	3%	2%	5%	3%	5%	3%
I would be more open minded/less judgemental	3%	3%	2%	0%	2%	4%
I would be better prepared, e.g., learn how to have the conversation	3%	2%	3%	0%	2%	3%
I would have the conversation earlier	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%
I don't know/I'm not sure	3%	4%	3%	3%	4%	3%

Source: A37. And looking back, is there anything you would have done differently?
 Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, had conversation with child about porn, n=417. Male, n=195; Female, n=219; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=35; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=132; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=250.

First Nations parents may face barriers, including trauma, that prevent them from talking to their children about these issues

Overall, First Nations parents face similar parenting challenges as non-First Nations parents. They have a long list of concerns for their children and pornography is lower on the list. They have some understanding of the harms of pornography and have concerns about their children watching pornography but underestimate the likelihood that their child has seen it. Like all parents, First Nations parents intend to speak with their child about pornography, but these conversations are often reactive in nature. However, many First Nations parents who have experienced trauma, especially sexual trauma, face additional barriers to talking to their children about the topic.

During the qualitative discussions with First Nations parents, it was uncovered that the topic of pornography can be especially challenging for some First Nations parents because of sexual trauma they may have experienced in their own lives. This trauma can be a significant barrier, making it difficult for them to have conversations about pornography with their children.

First Nations people of the Stolen Generations face additional barriers that may affect their ability and desire to talk to others about certain topics, especially their children. This trauma can prevent many First Nations people from talking to their children about a range of topics due to the risk of causing further trauma to themselves or their children.

However, the qualitative research also identified that there are strong advocates within the community who are actively using their knowledge and voices to protect children. These advocates recognise the potential harm pornography can cause to young people and are committed to addressing the issue, despite the challenges.

2.6 Barriers preventing parents from having conversations



Parent's Perspective

Numerous barriers prevent parents from discussing pornography with their child, and most parents (83%) feel they face at least one such barrier. Notably, mothers are less likely than fathers to feel they face barriers to conversations (79% vs 87%, respectively). While parents cite various reasons why they don't have these conversations, the primary and most significant

reason is discomfort in discussing the topic, especially among CALD parents who are more likely to feel embarrassed to find out their child watches pornography. However, some parents genuinely misunderstand the harms and the likelihood of their child viewing pornography, which leads them to underestimate the need for a conversation.

Figure 32: Barriers to having conversations with child about pornography

	Which of the following are holding you back from having conversations with your child about porn?		Parent gender		Child age		
			Men	Women	6-10	11-14	15-17
	My child is too young, they're not ready for it yet	31%	27%	34%	57%	24%	7%
	My child hasn't seen it yet, so I'm not ready to talk to them about it	19%	17%	22%	35%	16%	5%
	Nothing would stop me from having a conversation with my child about porn	17%	13%	21%	6%	20%	27%
	My child doesn't have access to porn	17%	17%	17%	33%	10%	4%
	It is an awkward topic to talk about with my child/children	17%	16%	16%	12%	15%	23%
	I would talk to them, but only when they bring it up	15%	17%	14%	12%	16%	19%
	I'm worried of exposing them further to porn	12%	12%	11%	9%	15%	11%
	I don't know how to have these conversations	9%	11%	8%	6%	11%	12%
	Having these conversations might make it feel like I'm attacking/interrogating my child	9%	10%	7%	3%	11%	13%
	Having these conversations might cause my child to hide things from me	8%	9%	7%	3%	11%	12%
	There are more important issues out there to talk about	7%	9%	6%	6%	7%	10%
	I'm worried that talking to my child about porn will lead to them asking questions that I won't be able to answer	7%	7%	7%	6%	7%	8%
	Porn does not feel like an issue	7%	8%	6%	6%	5%	10%
	I'm worried that my child might know more about porn than I think they do	6%	8%	5%	4%	8%	7%
	I'm worried about what my child actually knows about porn	6%	7%	5%	3%	7%	8%
	Having these conversations might negatively impact my relationship with my child	4%	6%	2%	2%	5%	5%
	My child would never look at porn	4%	5%	3%	5%	3%	2%
	These topics are not interesting to talk about	3%	4%	2%	2%	3%	4%
	Someone else has already spoken or might speak to my child about porn	3%	4%	1%	1%	3%	3%
	Porn is just sex, so it's fine for them to see it	1%	3%	0%	1%	1%	2%

Source: A33. Which of the following would you say are holding you back from having conversations with your child/children about pornography?
 Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1,508. Male, n=718; Female, n=776; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=565; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=460; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=483

Primary barrier: Parents mostly avoid conversations because they are uncomfortable

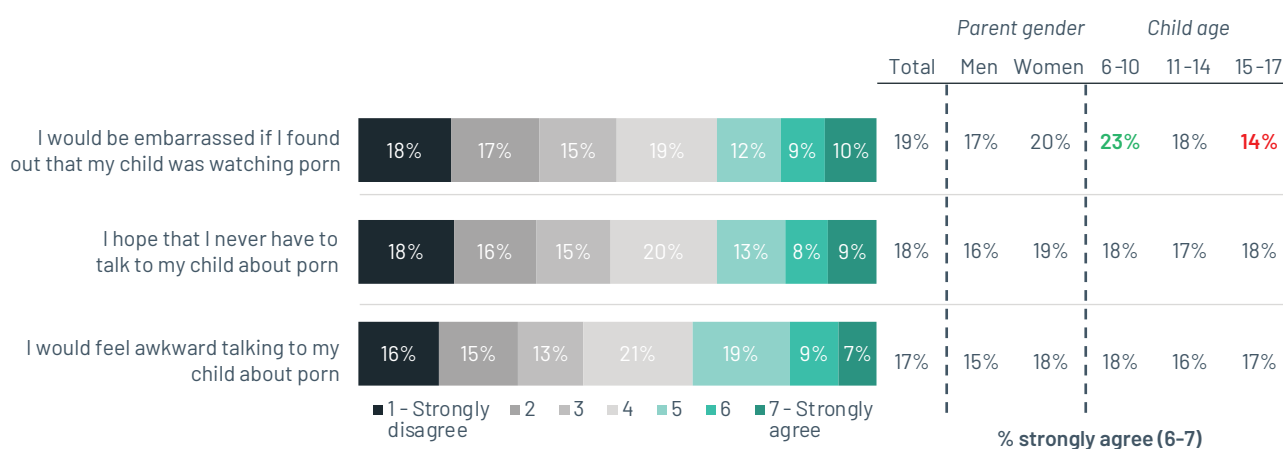
Conversations about pornography, sex life, pleasure, and bodies are uncomfortable for many parents. The general taboo and awkwardness around discussing matters related to sex and sexual pleasure are magnified by the parent-child relationship, adding an extra layer of discomfort. 19% of Victorian parents would be embarrassed if they found out their child watches pornography. A similar proportion (18%) hope they never have to talk to their child about pornography, and 17% would feel awkward talking to their child about it, acknowledging this discomfort as a barrier to conversations. This is exacerbated for CALD families.

Despite the widespread concerns that parents have about pornography and the majority intending to discuss it at some point, the feeling of discomfort often overrides the need for a conversation.

For comparison, topics like screen time or a healthy diet are typically addressed with less effort, awkwardness, and mental strain on parents. In contrast, discussions about pornography are much less common.

It is worth noting that there is a significant difference in embarrassment levels between culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) parents and non-CALD parents. CALD parents are significantly more likely to agree that they would be embarrassed if they found out their child was watching pornography (28%) compared to non-CALD parents (15%). They are also significantly more likely to agree that they would feel awkward talking to their child about pornography (24%) compared to non-CALD parents (14%).

Figure 33: Level of comfort in talking with child about pornography



Source: A28. On the scale below, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements...?
 Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1,508. Male, n=718; Female, n=776; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=565;
 Referenced child aged 11-14, n=460; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=483.

Additional barriers that prevent parents from having conversations

- 1. Not my child:** Some Victorian parents (4%) believe their child has the moral sense and/or the decency to avoid pornography, making a discussion seem unnecessary. This includes many CALD parents, whose culture or religion may forbid pornography. However, more parents believe that while their child may have viewed pornography, their child is not the type to watch it regularly or consider it acceptable behaviour. They can't imagine their child could have a problem with pornography, and therefore don't feel the need to be worried about it.
- 2. Otherwise addressed:** Some parents avoid discussing pornography because they believe the issues are addressed through other means, eliminating the need for a direct conversation. Roughly one in six (17%) Victorian parents of children aged 12-17 say their child doesn't have access to pornography, and therefore a conversation is not required. These parents feel they have addressed the issue by using parental controls on televisions and computers, effectively blocking access to pornography. Some parents rely on explicitly prohibiting the use of pornography, threats of punishment, and regular checks of phones and internet history as strategies to prevent their child from consuming pornography. For some, these actions are seen to negate the need for a conversation.



I've set up blockers so that my children can't access that stuff

- Victorian parent

I've told my kids that I get notified every time they look at porn. I also check their phone and internet search history regularly

- Victorian parent

3. Not yet – most parents don't believe their child has ever viewed pornography: As established, most parents don't believe their child has viewed pornography and, therefore, don't see a need for a conversation. Almost a third of Victorian parents (31%) said that a barrier for them is that their child is too young and not ready yet, and 19% said their child hasn't viewed pornography yet and therefore isn't prepared for the discussion. This barrier is strongest for parents of younger children (57% of Victorian parents of children aged 6-10), some of whom have a firm belief that at 6 or 7 years old, their child is not exposed to pornography, is unlikely to be exposed, and is not psychologically ready to discuss it yet. This is also a frequent barrier for parents of children aged 11-14 (24%), whereas only 7% of parents of children aged 15-17 feel the same. Mothers are also more likely than fathers to feel that their child is both too young (34% vs 27%) and hasn't viewed pornography yet, and therefore don't see the need to have a conversation (22% vs 17%).

Parents often postpone these uncomfortable conversations, believing their child isn't ready to process or understand the topic. They want to maintain their child's innocence and avoid unnecessarily piquing their interest if they don't yet know what pornography is. Additionally, there is a fear of being judged for introducing the subject to their child too early. Mothers, especially, want to make sure they are having the conversation at the same time as other parents, rather than departing from social protocol by discussing it too soon.

They fear that bringing it up too soon will reflect poorly on them as a parent, especially if other parents aren't having the same conversations at an early age, or if their child shares their knowledge of pornography with peers. Finding the right time to have the conversation is challenging, as parents are also hesitant to disclose to other parents that their child might be looking at pornography, fearing judgement and embarrassment.

4. Not that harmful: A minority of parents (7%) don't see an issue with pornography, so feel there is no need for a conversation about a topic they perceive as inconsequential. Additionally, while many more parents feel that there are potential harms, these harms are not seen as severe enough to warrant a conversation, especially if it would make them or their child uncomfortable. 7% of Victorian parents believe there are more important topics to discuss. Qualitative discussions reveal that parents of older children, are more likely to see their child as mature and capable of handling their own beliefs and behaviours regarding pornography.

5. Hasn't brought it up: One in six Victorian parents (15%) say they would talk about pornography only when their child brings it up. These parents prefer a reactionary approach over a proactive one. They believe the right time to discuss pornography is when their child initiates the conversation, trusting their child's judgment about appropriate timing. In their view, discussions are necessary only if their child feels the need or desire to have them.



I'm perfectly comfortable to talk to my child about pornography but it's not my conversation to start. If and when he wants to talk about it, he will come to me. I don't need to approach him about it. He is a smart kid and can figure things out on his own. If he feels he needs to talk about it, I'll have a chat with him"

- Victorian parent



*I think he is far too young to be interested in porn.
Plus, his internet usage is heavily restricted and monitored.*
- Victorian parent, child aged 6-10

*I feel like he is too young and have not found any evidence
on his devices etc that suggest he has seen any.*
- Victorian parent, child aged 11-14

6. Not knowing how/when to have these sorts of conversations: Almost one in ten (9%) parents feel they lack the knowledge, capability, and resources to have a conversation about pornography. Just 27% of Victorian parents feel very or extremely confident discussing the topic with their child. These parents view conversations about pornography as highly sensitive, delicate, and consequential, fearing they might handle it poorly. The discomfort of not knowing how to approach the topic effectively weighs heavily on them. There are various concerns that arise from not knowing how to have these types of conversations with one's child:

- 12% worry about exposing their child to further pornography,
- 9% feel they may come across as attacking their child,
- 8% worry that their child may try to hide things from them. Fathers are slightly more likely to feel hesitant than mothers (9% vs 7%),

- 4% worry that a conversation may negatively impact their relationship with their child. Fathers are slightly more likely to feel hesitant than mothers (6% vs 2%).

Additionally, parents worry about the risks and undesirable consequences, and are unsure how to have discussions that are constructive, safe, and ultimately reduce harm. This is especially the case for CALD parents.

7. Some First Nations parents with their own trauma may find it difficult to engage in conversations with their children about pornography: Many First Nations parents who have experienced trauma, especially sexual trauma, face additional barriers to talking to their children about the topic. As previously mentioned, the topic can be especially challenging for some First Nations parents due to personal experiences of sexual trauma. This can create significant barriers that may make it difficult or impossible to have these conversations with their children.



I'd want to have a conversation, but I [am] careful about discussing it too early. They might be too young to handle the information.

- Victorian parent

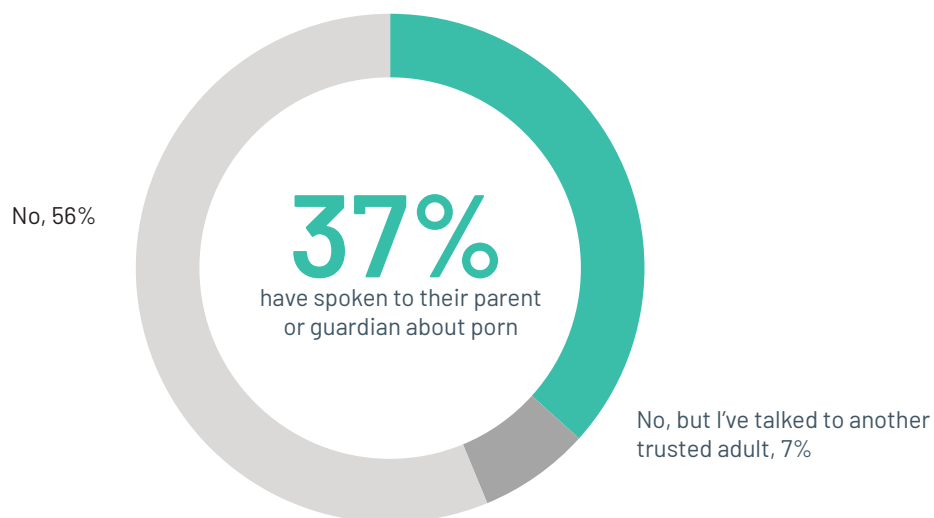


Children's Perspective

Young people are also worried about talking about pornography

Young people face a range of significant barriers when it comes to engaging their parents in conversations about pornography. Nine out of ten (90%) Victorians aged 12-17 feel they face at least one barrier to these conversations, and only 37% have ever spoken to their parents about the topic.

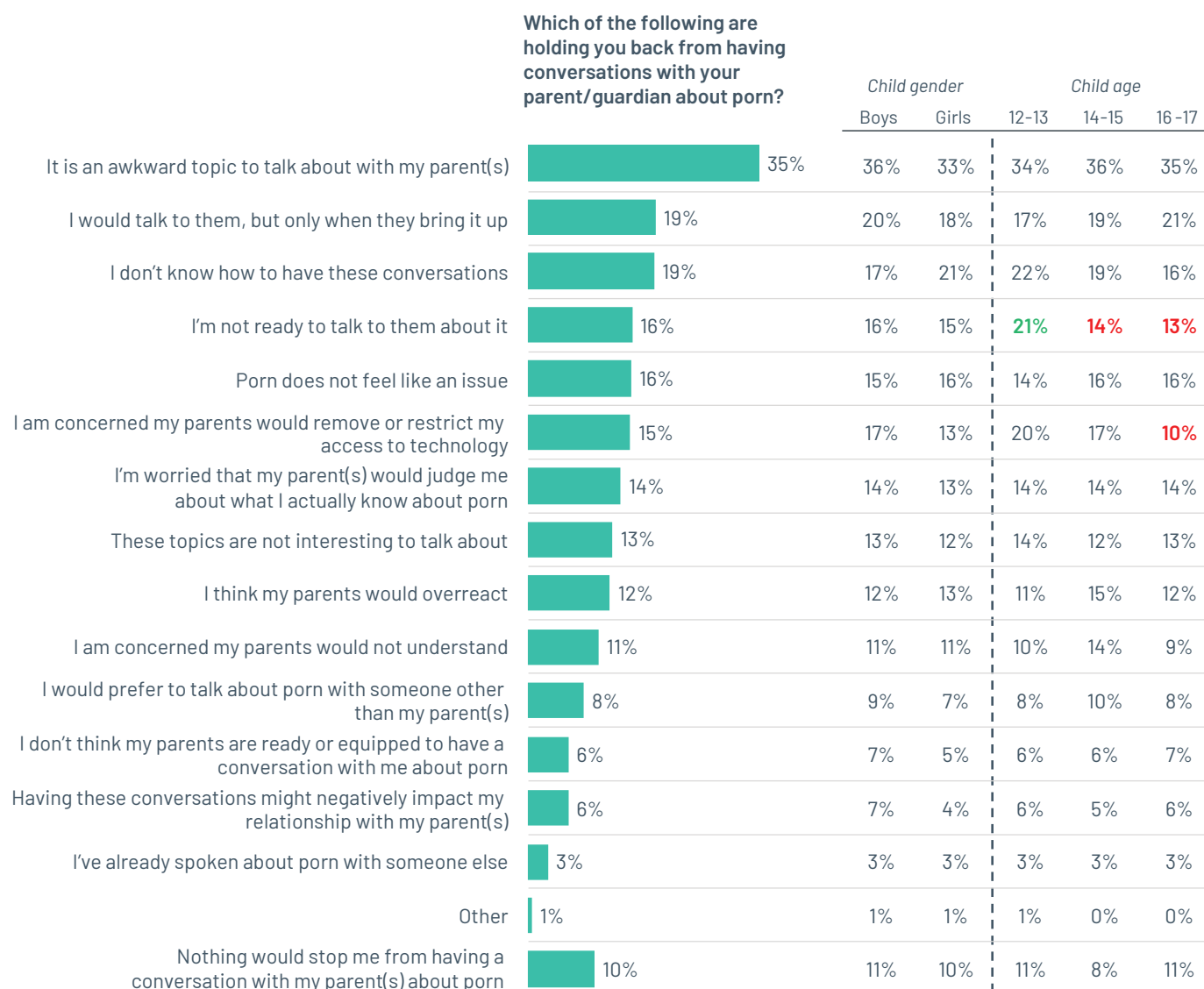
Figure 34: Ever talked to parent about pornography



Child gender		Child age		
Boys	Girls	12 - 13	14 - 15	16 - 17
39%	34%	28%	40%	41%

Source: B25. Have you ever talked to your parent(s) or guardian(s) about pornography?
Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, n=818. Male, n=461; Female, n=343; 12-13, n=251; 14-15, n=256; 16-17, n=303.

Figure 35: Barriers to conversations



Source: B28. Which of the following would you say are holding you back from having conversations with your parent(s) or guardian(s) about pornography?
 Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, n=818. Male, n=461; Female, n=343; 12-13, n=251; 14-15, n=256; 16-17, n=303.

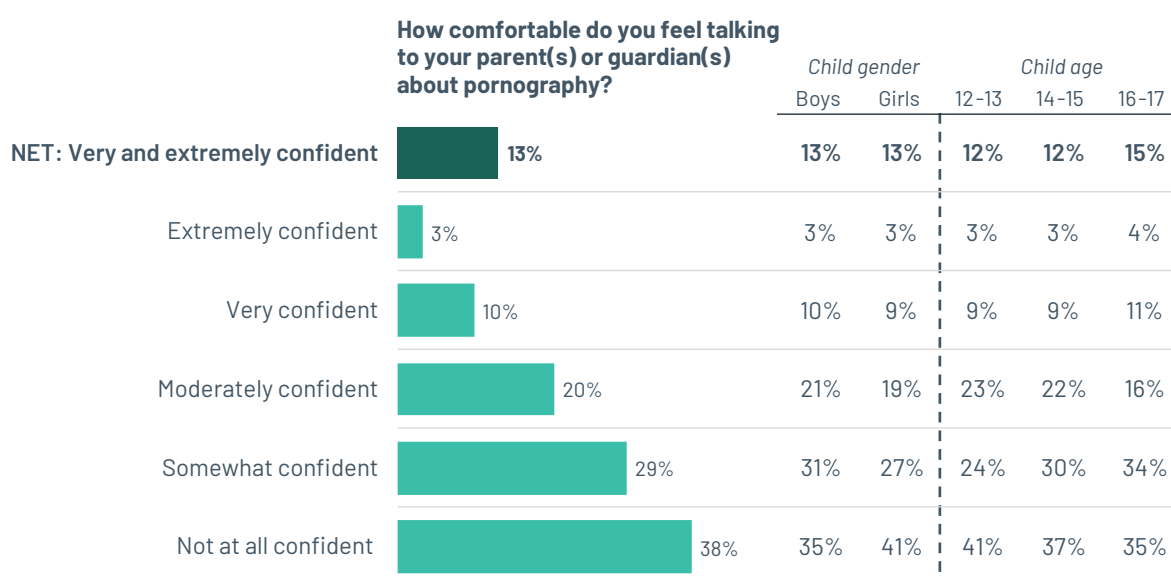


I can talk about anything with my parents, but I don't really wanna find out about their sex life or their thoughts on the topic. When we had the chat, I just agreed with everything and nodded and tried to end the conversation as quickly as I could - Young Victorian

There are a number of barriers for young people

1. **Awkwardness:** The most significant and widely felt barrier is the awkwardness of discussing pornography with one's parents. This sentiment is mirrored in the discomfort parents feel when having these conversations with their children. 35% of Victorians aged 12-17 cite awkwardness as the primary reason they avoid such discussions with their parents (Figure 35), and just 13% say they feel very or extremely confident talking with their parents about pornography (Figure 36).
2. **Only when parents bring it up:** One in five (19%) of Victorians aged 12-17 feel they could never initiate such a heavy and awkward conversation unless their parents bring it up first. This barrier stems from the discomfort young people feel about the topic, compounded by the sense that their parents may also be uncomfortable discussing it. Some perceive their parents' lack of conversation and avoidance of the subject as a sign that they don't want to talk about it, making them hesitant to initiate the conversation.

Figure 36: Comfort in talking to parent about pornography



Source: B26. And How comfortable do you feel talking to your parent(s) or guardian(s) about pornography?
Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, n=818; Male, n=461; Female, n=343; 12-13, n=251; 14-15, n=256; 16-17, n=303.



I don't know if they would want to talk about it. They've never brought it up and I don't think my mum would want to chat about it
- Young Victorian

3. Not knowing how to have the conversation: One in five (19%) Victorians aged 12-17 say they don't know how to have the conversation. Qualitative findings reveal that some feel it is a very delicate and sensitive conversation, and they don't know how to traverse the topic with their parents. Some also do not know if their parents have the knowledge to have the conversation. Some feel they lack the insight and ability to ask the right questions or even understand what they hope to gain from the discussion. This is exacerbated for CALD families who are more likely to hold conservative beliefs around sexual relationships and pornography stemming from cultural or religious norms.

4. Pornography does not feel like an issue: For some Victorians aged 12-17 (16%), pornography does not feel like an issue. They either do not believe there are any harms or concerns, or they think the potential harms are not significant enough to warrant a conversation with their parents.

5. Concern about parents' reactions: Some young people are concerned about their parents' reactions and believe that the potential negative consequences of having the conversation outweigh the benefits. Specifically, 15% of Victorians aged 12-17 worry their parents would restrict or remove their access to technology, 14% worry about being judged for watching pornography, 12% feel their parents would overreact, and 6% fear the conversation might negatively impact their relationship with their parents. For some, there is a lack of trust that their parents can have a conversation without resulting in punishment or judgment, while others feel that a conversation may not even be possible.



I don't really know what I would want to ask. Like I would talk about it and there's some stuff that I might want to learn about and hear about from them, but I don't really know what to ask or what to say

- Young Victorian

I just don't really feel like I need to speak about it. I know what pornography is and I probably know more about it than my parents. I don't think a conversation is really necessary

- Young Victorian

2.7 Triggering the conversation



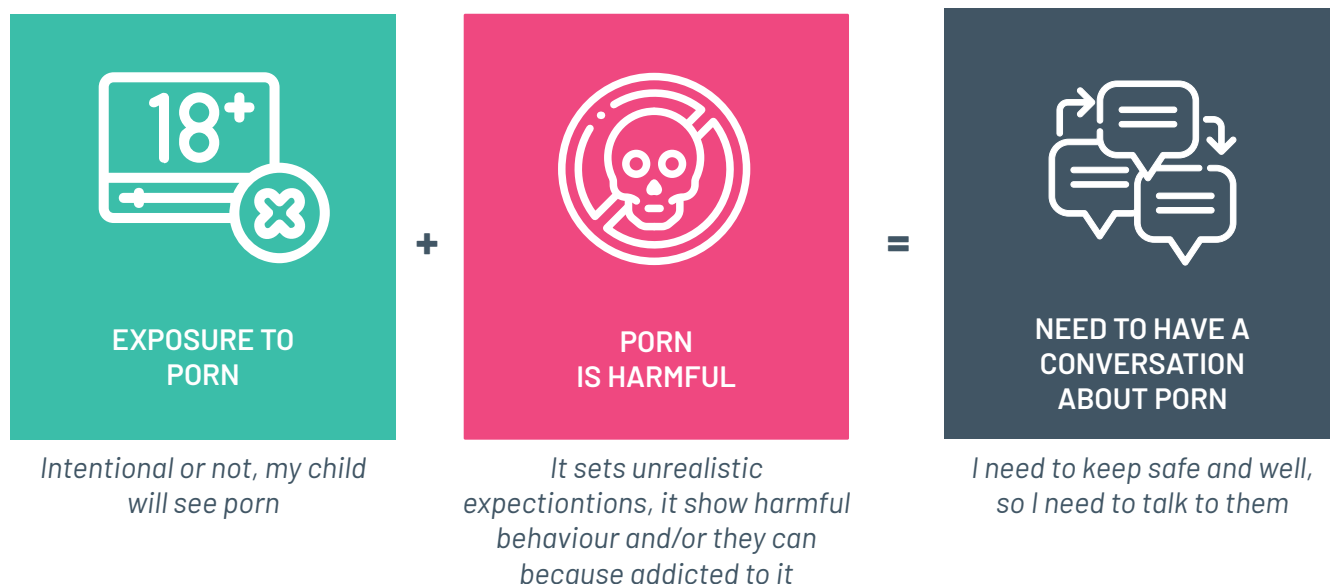
Parent's Perspective

Most parents do not initially identify the extent of the harms of pornography, and many are not talking to their children about it. However, once they are made aware of the extent of these harms, more parents are willing to engage in proactive conversations. There are several effective triggers that can facilitate this shift.

To create a need for a conversation, parents must think pornography is both sufficiently harmful and that their child is likely to be exposed to it

If parents believe their child will not be exposed to pornography, they do not see a need for the conversation since the harms would not affect their child. Conversely, if they think their child will be exposed but that there are no significant harms, they also do not feel a conversation is necessary.

Therefore, to prompt discussions among parents who currently see no need for one, it is crucial to emphasise both the high likelihood of exposure and the potential harms of pornography.

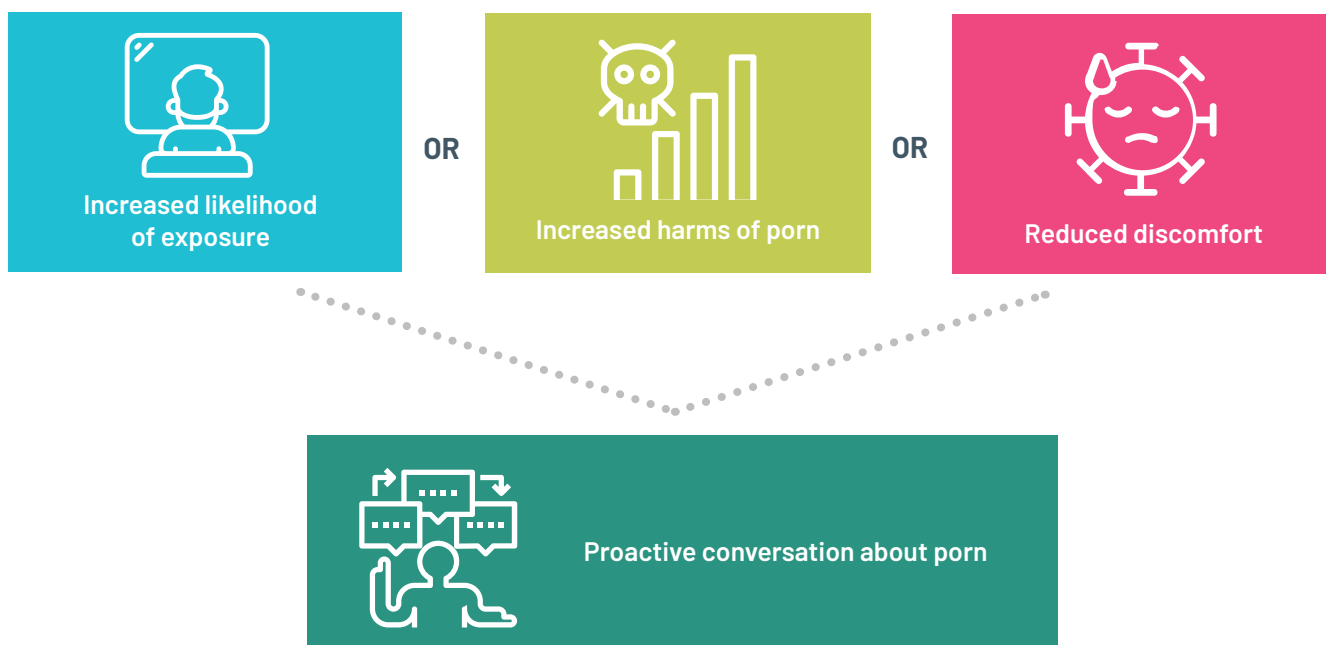


But a need for a conversation is not enough. Parents need help overcoming the barriers to engage in proactive conversations

Even among parents who recognise the need for a conversation about pornography, discomfort remains the primary barrier to initiating the discussion. However, there are three levers which could encourage more parents to have proactive conversations.

- Firstly, parents are more likely to start these conversations earlier if they believe their child is increasingly likely to be exposed to pornography, particularly at a younger age when parents do not anticipate their child will encounter it.
- Secondly, parents are more inclined to engage in these discussions if they perceive the harms of pornography as more severe than they currently understand them to be. If parents perceive significant risks to their child's health and wellbeing, they are more inclined to have these conversations.
- Thirdly, providing parents with tools, training, and resources to facilitate more comfortable and confident conversations can increase the likelihood of proactive discussions about pornography. Even the most reluctant parents (such as those in CALD families) feel there is a chance they might bring up the topic of pornography with their children, if they have some support on how to have these conversations and guidance on what to say.

Figure 37: Proactive conversations about porn



The qualitative research uncovered a number of potential triggers that might encourage parents to **proactively** discuss pornography with their child.

1. **Unintentional viewing:** Many young people do not actively look for pornography but are instead exposed to it accidentally. This gives parents a way to address the issue without their child feeling accused of intentionally viewing porn, and without parents having to confront the possibility that their child deliberately sought it out.
2. **Concerns about safety:** Physical violence and nonconsensual behaviour are regularly portrayed in pornography, risking normalisation. The figures about the frequency of violence are startling, far higher than anticipated – and ultimately parents want to keep their child safe. This concern about physical safety is especially true for parents of daughters.
3. **Unrealistic expectations:** Pornography sets unrealistic expectations around sex, body image, and relationships. Parents want to support their child in entering healthy relationships that are not influenced by these distorted views.
4. **Impact on wellbeing:** Pornography can be addictive, and this addiction can have a long-term impact on their child's health and wellbeing. The risk of this happening is younger than many expect.
5. **There are resources to help:** Parents may be more willing to have these discussions if they know they have resources available to them to help them through the conversations with their child.



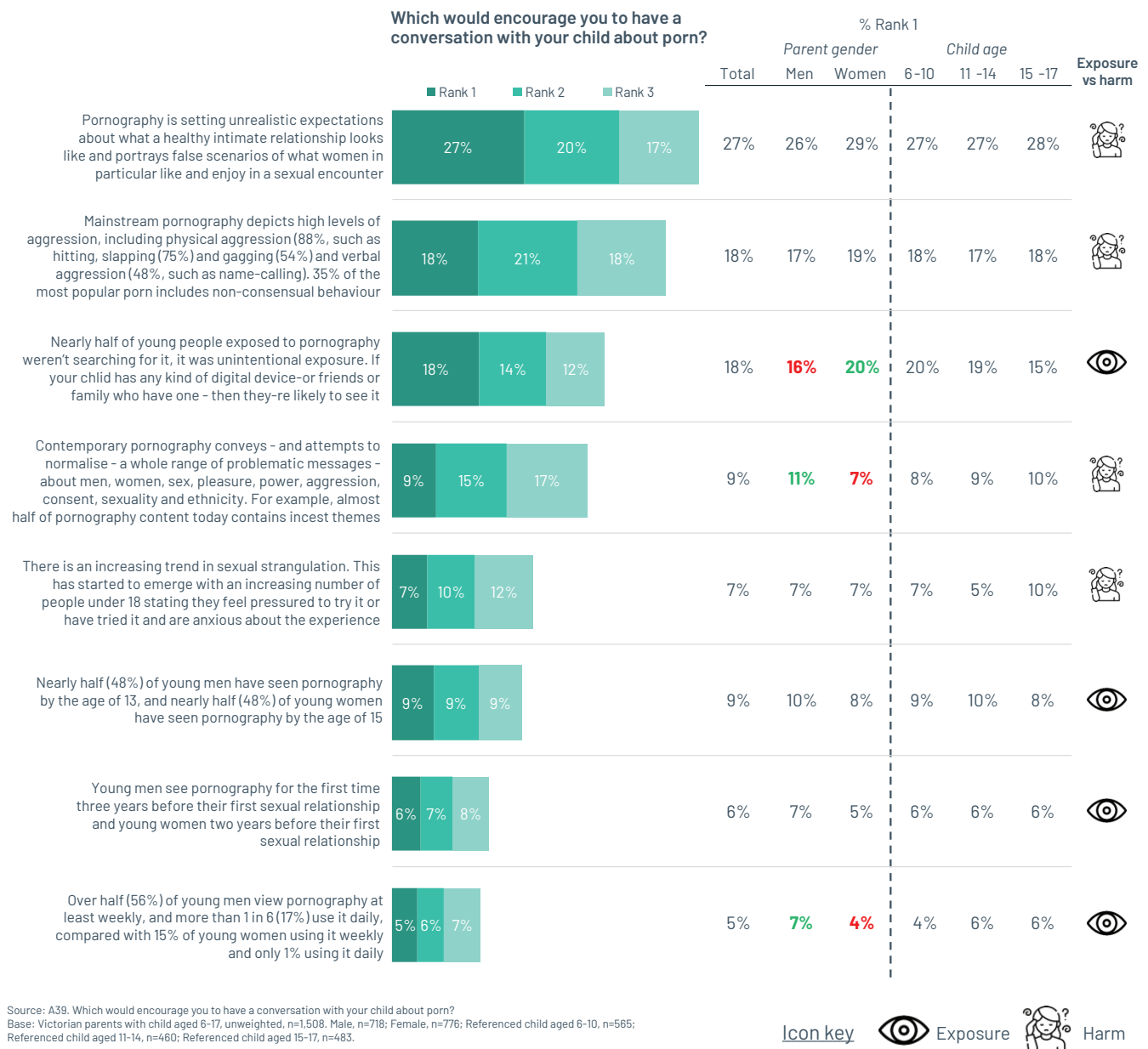
If parents buy into one of these triggers, they might instigate a conversation with their children about pornography

Statistics about the harms of pornography are most likely to encourage parents to have a conversation

Parents were shown various statistics about the harms and likelihoods of exposure to pornography. They were asked to rank the top three statements that would encourage them to have a conversation with their child. The most highly ranked statistics were:

- **Unrealistic expectations:** Just over a quarter of Victorian parents (27%) are most encouraged to have a conversation by the statement, *"Pornography is setting unrealistic expectations about what a healthy intimate relationship looks like and portrays false scenarios of what women, in particular, like and enjoy in a sexual encounter"*. This is the most widely recognised and believed harm stemming from pornography and is most effective at highlighting the need for a conversation. However, qualitative insights suggest that while this fact is concerning to parents, it is not immediately alarming.
- **Aggression and non-consensual behaviour:** 18% of Victorian parents are most encouraged to have a conversation by the statement, *"Mainstream pornography depicts high levels of aggression, including physical aggression (88%, such as hitting, slapping (75%) and gagging (54%)) and verbal aggression (48%, such as name-calling). 35% of the most popular pornography includes non-consensual behaviour"*. This statement is particularly concerning for many parents due to the high likelihood of their child being exposed to such imagery and its stark contrast to the behaviour they want their child to exhibit. The issue of non-consensual behaviour, in particular, stands out as a significant risk for their child, whether as a perpetrator or a victim.
- **Unintentional exposure:** 18% of Victorian parents are most encouraged to have a conversation by the statement, *"Nearly half of young people exposed to pornography weren't searching for it; it was unintentional exposure. If your child has any kind of digital device—or friends or family who have one—then they're likely to see it"*. This message resonates with parents who believe their child wouldn't intentionally search for pornography, highlighting the importance of having a conversation regardless of the child's intentions or behaviour. Additionally, it is particularly effective with parents of children aged 6–10, who may assume their child is not likely to see pornography yet.

Figure 38: Stats that would encourage a conversation



Parents concerns vary based on the gender of the child

Qualitative findings from this study show that parents' concerns about pornography differ depending on the gender of their child, especially after exposure to statistics about its harms. Parents of boys are primarily concerned about its portrayal of what women desire. They worry that their sons will mistakenly believe that women want to be treated with aggression and violence, including behaviours like choking or slapping.

Meanwhile, discussions reveal that parents of girls are primarily concerned that their daughters' sexual encounters will be dangerous, as pornography normalises behaviours they consider problematic.

2.8 Roles and responsibilities



Parent's Perspective

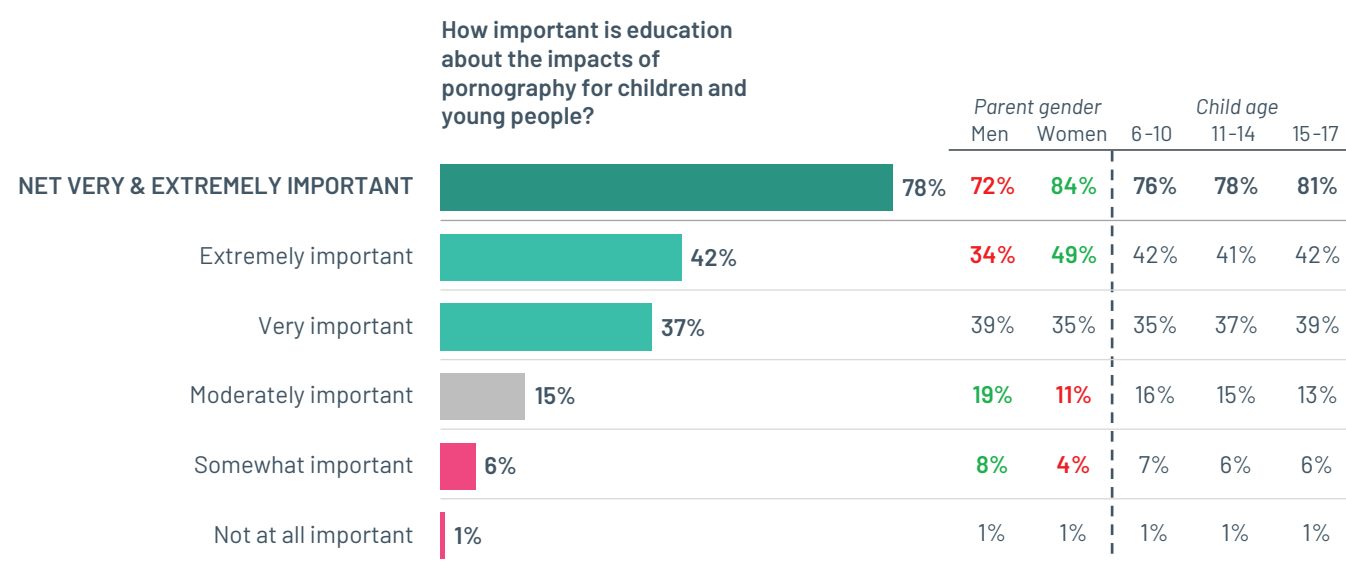
Importance and need for an education program or campaign

Educating young people about the impacts of pornography is considered important for most parents. Almost all Victorian parents (99%) believe that educating young people about pornography is at least somewhat important, including 78% who believe that it is very or extremely important to do so.

Victorian mothers (with a child aged 6-17) are significantly more likely to find it extremely important to educate young people about the impacts of pornography (49% compared to 34% of Victorian fathers with a child aged 6-17).

On the other hand, Victorian fathers are significantly more likely to find the need to educate young people about pornography as moderately or somewhat important (19% compared to 11%, and 8% compared to 4%, respectively).

Figure 39: Importance of pornography education



Source: A41. In your opinion, how important is education about the impacts of pornography for children and young people?
 Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1,508. Male, n=718; Female, n=776; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=565;
 Referenced child aged 11-14, n=460; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=483.

Parents are supportive of a program or campaign that addresses the impacts of pornography. Around three-quarters of Victorian parents (76%) believe that there is a need for a campaign or program that addresses the impacts of pornography.

Whilst young people (aged 12-17) are less likely to support a program or campaign that would help manage the harmful effects of pornography on young people, more than half say they agree that there is a need.

Figure 40: Need for a program or campaign



76%

of Victorian parents with a child aged 6-17 believe there is a need for a program or campaign that addresses the impacts of porn

Parent gender		Child age		
Men	Women	6 -10	11-14	15 -17
74%	77%	72%	79%	76%



56%

of Victorians aged 12-17 believe there is a need for a program or campaign that could help manage any harmful effects of porn on young people

Child gender		Child age		
Boys	Girls	12 -13	14-15	16 -17
56%	56%	58%	59%	54%

When asked about the topics that they think a pornography education program or campaign should focus on, many parents emphasise the unrealistic depiction of sex, including how it is performed and how people look.

- 51% of Victorian parents mentioned that an education program or campaign should focus on how pornography paints an unrealistic picture of what happens during sex.
- 43% of Victorian parents mentioned that an education program or campaign should focus on the unrealistic expectations of bodies.

A significant proportion of Victorian parents also believe that a campaign or program should focus on the use of violence in pornography, including how pornography can make some forms of violence seem acceptable (46%), and how there are links between pornography and violence against women in real life (16%). Additionally, some parents believe that an education program or campaign should highlight how pornography sets expectations on certain sexual behaviours.

This includes:

- How pornography can make people feel pressured to perform certain acts (47%),
- How pornography can make people think they don't always need to get consent (28%),
- How pornography often pushes stereotypes of what is expected of men and women in sex (25%),
- How pornography impacts the way women in real life are viewed (19%), and
- How pornography can make people think that using protection isn't that important (10%).

Focusing on the long-term impacts of pornography was less of a priority for a small number of parents. Less than one in six felt that a pornography education program or campaign should focus on how addictive pornography is (14%), and how it affects mental health (11%) and future relationships (11%).

Figure 41: Topics of focus for a campaign or education program

	Topics of focus for a campaign or education program		Parent gender		Child age		
			Men	Women	6-10	11-14	15-17
How porn often paints an unrealistic picture of what happens during sex	51%		51%	51%	53%	48%	50%
How porn can make people feel pressured to perform certain sexual acts	47%		42%	51%	47%	46%	47%
How porn can make some forms of violence seem acceptable	46%		40%	52%	45%	48%	45%
How porn often portrays unrealistic expectations of bodies	43%		42%	43%	44%	40%	43%
How porn can make people think they don't always need to get consent	28%		25%	31%	29%	28%	27%
How porn often pushes stereotypes of what is expected of men and women in sex	25%		27%	22%	22%	28%	24%
How porn impacts the way women in real life are viewed	19%		23%	16%	19%	18%	21%
How there are links between porn and violence against women in real life	16%		13%	18%	14%	18%	17%
How addictive porn is	14%		17%	11%	13%	13%	15%
How porn affects mental health	11%		12%	10%	12%	10%	11%
How porn affects future relationships	11%		12%	9%	11%	13%	9%
How porn can make people think that using protection isn't that important	10%		11%	9%	12%	10%	9%
Other	2%		2%	3%	2%	3%	2%

Source: A44. If a campaign or education program could address the effects porn could have on children, what topics do you think it should focus on?
Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1,508. Male, n=718; Female, n=776; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=565;
Referenced child aged 11-14, n=460; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=483.

Victorian mothers are significantly more likely than fathers to suggest that a campaign or education program should focus on:

- How pornography can make some forms of violence seem acceptable (52%, compared to 40% of fathers),
- How pornography can make people feel pressured to perform certain sexual acts (51%, compared to 42% of fathers),
- How pornography can make people think they don't always need to get consent (31%, compared to 25% of fathers), and,

The good news is that almost all parents see themselves as responsible for educating children

Most (88%) Victorian parents believe that they have a responsibility in educating children and young people about the impacts of pornography. Subject matter experts (75%), schools (73%) and health professionals (68%) are also widely considered by parents to be responsible for educating young people about the impacts of pornography.

Victorian mothers generally consider more groups to have responsibility in educating children on pornography compared to fathers.

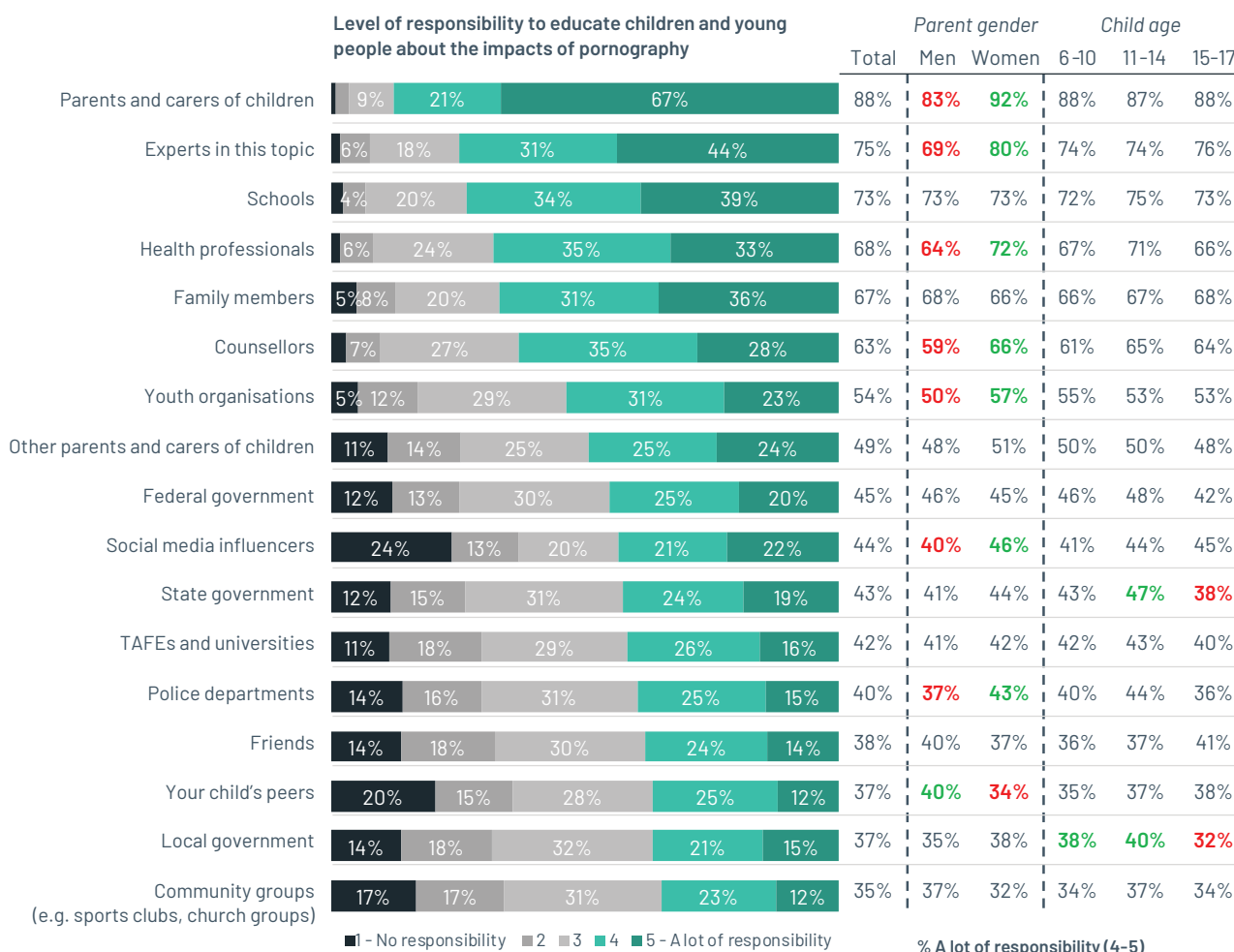
- How there are links between pornography and violence against women in real life (18%, compared to 13% of fathers).

Conversely, fathers are significantly more likely to suggest that a campaign or education program should focus on how pornography impacts the way women in real life are viewed (23%, compared to 16% of mothers) and how addictive it is (17%, compared to 11% of mothers).

The greatest disparity is seen when it comes to the following groups:

- 92% of mothers believe parents are responsible compared to 83% of fathers,
- 80% of mothers believe experts in the topic are responsible compared to 68% of fathers,
- 2% of mothers believe health professionals are responsible compared to 64% of fathers,
- 66% of mothers believe counsellors are responsible compared to 59% of fathers,
- Fathers, however, are more likely to believe that their child's peers are responsible (40% compared to 34%).

Figure 42: Level of responsibility to educate children and young people about the impacts of pornography



Source: A42. How much responsibility do you think the following groups have in educating children and young people about the impacts of pornography?
 Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1,508. Male, n=718; Female, n=776; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=565; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=460; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=483.
 Note: Labels less than 3% have been removed for clarity.

Victorian mothers generally consider more groups to have responsibility in educating children on pornography compared to fathers. The greatest disparity is seen when it comes to the following groups:

- 92% of mothers believe parents are responsible compared to 83% of fathers,
- 80% of mothers believe experts in the topic are responsible compared to 68% of fathers,
- 72% of mothers believe health professionals are responsible compared to 64% of fathers,

- 66% of mothers believe counsellors are responsible compared to 59% of fathers,
- Fathers, however, are more likely to believe that their child's peers are responsible (40% compared to 34%).

There is a wide range of locations for messaging about the impacts of pornography

Parents expect to see government messaging about the impacts of pornography in a wide range of places. Firstly, just over one-third (36%) of Victorian parents expect this messaging through educational institutions such as schools or universities. Qualitative findings from this report suggest that this result is unsurprising, given that many parents already expect schools to provide education by contextualising sex and pornography, and offering a structured support system for young people.

Following schools, parents expect to see advertising on digital platforms, with 35% anticipating social media advertising, 32% expecting messaging on websites, and 28% expecting online videos, such as those on YouTube.

Traditional media is also an expected avenue for messaging about pornography, either via free to air television (28%) or radio ads (16%).

Figure 43: Where you would expect to see government messaging about the impacts of pornography

	Where would you expect to see messaging from the government?	Parent gender		Child age		
		Men	Women	6-10	11-14	15-17
Educational institutions (i.e. schools, universities)	36%	31%	41%	35%	37%	36%
Social media advertisements	35%	32%	38%	30%	38%	39%
Online websites	32%	33%	30%	34%	29%	31%
Online videos (e.g. YouTube)	28%	26%	30%	26%	32%	27%
Free to air television (ABC, SBS, Channel 7, 9 and 10)	28%	28%	28%	29%	28%	27%
Government authority website	23%	25%	21%	25%	24%	19%
Free to air catch up television	16%	18%	15%	21%	16%	12%
Radio ads	16%	17%	15%	17%	13%	16%
On demand platforms (Netflix, Stan, Binge, Apple, etc.)	12%	13%	12%	10%	13%	15%
Digital audio (Spotify, Apple Podcasts iHeartRadio, etc.)	12%	13%	11%	12%	12%	12%
Advertisements on dating apps	10%	10%	9%	9%	11%	9%
Public transport advertising	9%	9%	9%	8%	8%	11%
Promotional products (e.g. condoms)	8%	8%	8%	7%	7%	10%
Brand partnerships (e.g. Durex, Gillette, Speedo)	7%	6%	7%	7%	9%	4%
Billboards	6%	7%	6%	7%	5%	7%
Festivals (e.g. music festivals)	6%	6%	5%	7%	4%	7%
Via a sports star, celebrity or influencer on social media	6%	5%	6%	5%	5%	7%
Sports clubs	5%	7%	4%	6%	5%	6%
Posters at venues (e.g. pubs)	5%	5%	4%	5%	5%	6%
Other	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%

Source: A54. If the government were to communicate the message you have just seen, where would you expect them to see it?

Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1,508. Male, n=718; Female, n=776; Referenced child aged 6-10, n=565; Referenced child aged 11-14, n=460; Referenced child aged 15-17, n=483.



Children's Perspective

Young people consider their parents as a good direct source to hear about the topic of pornography

When it comes to young people discussing the topic of pornography, parents are the most frequently cited (36%) as a good source to hear directly from. While not a majority, parents are often considered to be good people to hear directly from, with more young people mentioning parents than a mate/someone their age (27%), GPs/health practitioners (26%), or teachers (25%). Younger children are significantly more likely than older teenagers to consider personal authority figures as a good source for this information:

- 40% of Victorians aged 12-13 and 41% of Victorians aged 14-15 say a parent is a good person to hear from about pornography, compared to 30% of Victorians aged 16-17.
- 28% of Victorians aged 12-13 and 30% of Victorians aged 14-15 say a teacher is a good person to hear from about pornography, compared to 18% of Victorians aged 16-17.

Figure 44: Preferred spokesperson for pornography messaging

	If you were to hear directly from someone about porn, who do you think would be a good spokesperson?	Child gender		Child age		
		Boys	Girls	12-13	14-15	16-17
A parent	36%	38%	35%	40%	41%	30%
A mate / someone my age	27%	30%	23%	24%	30%	27%
A GP / health practitioner	26%	24%	27%	22%	24%	31%
A teacher	25%	27%	23%	28%	30%	18%
An older sibling	12%	13%	10%	12%	14%	9%
A peer mentor / youth group leader	10%	11%	9%	9%	11%	10%
A current / ex porn performer	10%	10%	9%	9%	11%	9%
A social media influencer	9%	10%	8%	10%	9%	8%
A school nurse	9%	7%	11%	11%	7%	9%
A celebrity	8%	8%	8%	9%	9%	6%
A boyfriend / girlfriend	6%	6%	7%	5%	6%	7%
A comedian	3%	5%	2%	4%	2%	4%
A faith leader	3%	4%	2%	2%	3%	4%
Prefer not to answer	3%	2%	4%	3%	2%	4%
A sports coach	2%	3%	1%	1%	4%	1%
Other	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%
None of the above	5%	5%	6%	6%	4%	6%

Source: B32. If you were to hear directly from someone about porn, who do you think would be a good spokesperson?
 Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, n=818; Male, n=461; Female, n=343; 12-13, n=251; 14-15, n=256; 16-17, n=303.

In addition to health professionals and experts, young people see family members and their parents as trustworthy to educate them about pornography

Young people will trust a number of sources when it comes to being educated about the impacts of pornography:

Experts and health professionals are most trustworthy: Young people trust health professionals and experts the most when it comes to being educated about the impacts of pornography. More than half of Victorians aged 12–17 (51%) trust health professionals, and 50% have trust in experts on the topic.

Parents and family members are highly trustworthy: Following experts and health professionals, young Victorians aged 12–17 place significant trust in family members (45%) and parents (44%). This result is encouraging for the potential for conversations between parents and children, especially given that only 8% say they do not trust their parents at all. During qualitative research, those who have lower trust in their parents to discuss matters related to pornography indicate that their parents either know very little about pornography or that their parents' views on the inappropriateness of pornography would hinder the quality or truthfulness of their insights about sexual relationships and responsible consumption.



*I know more about
pornography than my parents.
My mum has never seen it
and I doubt she would be
comfortable to talk about it
– Young Victorian*

Young people have lower trust in schools:

While the majority of young people (86%) have at least slight trust in schools, only 30% of Victorians 12-17 trust schools "a lot" to educate them on pornography. Qualitative findings from this report suggest that many feel that sex education in school is of poor quality, failing to adequately prepare students for managing sexual relationships.



Our sex ed was pathetic. They put a condom on a banana, and I feel like we didn't really learn anything. We kept making a joke of it, the teachers were uncomfortable... they didn't teach us anything we didn't know

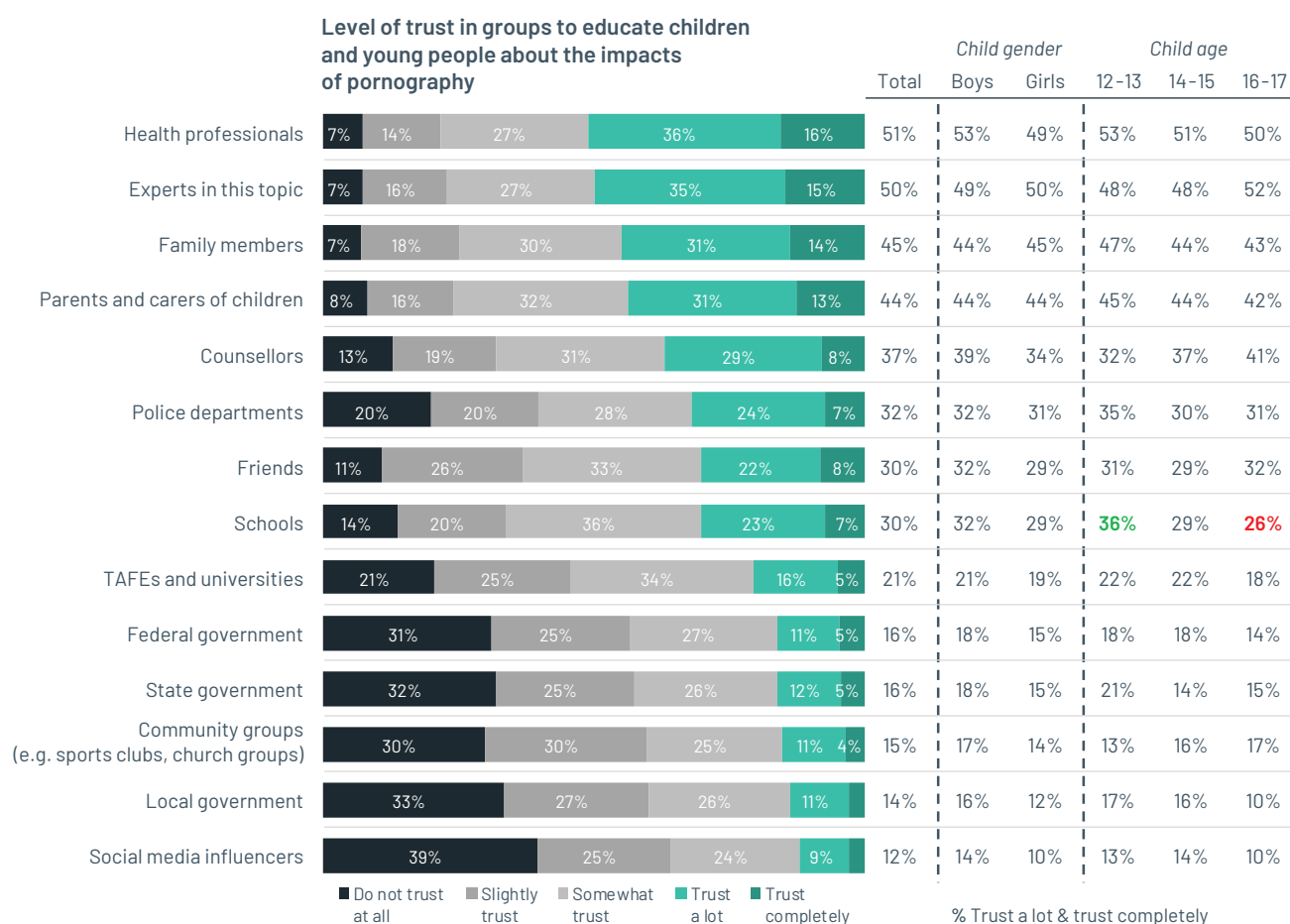
- Young Victorian

Yeah, you could tell the teachers didn't want to be there. Felt like they were just trying to get through what they needed to so we could finish up. Was hilarious but we didn't learn anything

- Young Victorian

Some young people believe that schools provide only basic, surface-level information focused on pitfalls, harms, and dangers rather than offering useful insights on how to achieve healthy sexual relationships. Older teenagers, in particular, are less trusting than younger children, with only 26% of Victorians aged 16-17 trusting schools a lot compared to 36% of Victorians aged 12-13.

Figure 45: Level of trust in different groups to educate young people about the impacts of pornography (young people)



Source: B29. To what extent do you trust each of the following groups to educate young people (including yourself) about the impacts of pornography?

Base: Victorian young people aged 12-17, unweighted, n=818; Male, n=461; Female, n=343; 12-13, n=251; 14-15, n=256; 16-17, n=303.

Note: Labels less than 4% have been removed for clarity.

3.0 Communications Recommendations

3.1 Is a campaign required?

The research indicates that while parents are aware that pornography can be harmful and have some concerns about it, they often do not think about these concerns unless prompted and may not fully grasp the severity of the problem. Pornography is broadly on their radar, but other, more emergent concerns that present a more immediate danger to their child's health, wellbeing, and safety take precedence. Despite acknowledging the increased accessibility of pornography, parents may underestimate the likelihood of their child encountering it at a young age – only 40% of parents of children who have seen pornography know their child has viewed it.

While parents admit they are not currently talking about pornography with their children, they also tell us that they plan to in the future. Since they are often not made aware that their child has viewed it, they typically react rather than engage in proactive conversations. With that stated, parents agree that it is very important to talk to their children about pornography, especially after being made aware of the accessibility and rate of harm.

Communications objective

While a significant number of parents recognise that pornography is harmful, it is not always a top-of-mind concern, and many may not fully understand the extent of the harms. As such, they are not consistently engaging in proactive conversations on the topic. To overcome this, we propose developing an awareness campaign or initiative that encourages more parents to engage in these essential discussions about pornography.

They also feel that it is their job to educate over anyone else. Children, too, are aware of the harms of pornography, are open to discussing it, and want to hear about it from their parents over anyone else.

The research findings point to significant awareness gaps around the rates of accessibility to pornography, as well as the severity and nature of its harms, suggesting that a communications campaign or other awareness raising initiative would be required to effectively address these gaps. However, there is a range of different audiences, each with their own underlying beliefs on the topic. As with any campaign, it is critical to identify the priority audiences, their current attitudes and behaviours, and the desired outcome.

Based on the findings of this research, we recommend an above-the-line communications campaign, or similar education program or awareness raising initiative with compelling messages aimed at the relevant audience segments outlined below.

In order to create a need for a conversation, parents must be convinced of two key points;

1. Their child is likely to be exposed to pornography and,
2. That the harms of pornography are severe and can impact their child's safety and wellbeing.

If parents do not believe both of these things to be true, then they are unlikely to believe that they need to have a conversation about pornography, right now.

Therefore, the campaign objective is to elevate the importance of parents knowing the prevalence and harms of pornography, thereby increasing the urgency to act. The goal is to raise awareness that pornography is another critical concern for parents to tackle alongside other concerns related to their child's health and wellbeing, and that these conversations need to happen at a younger age than they might expect.

It is important to note that this campaign should focus on convincing parents that they need to engage in proactive conversations, rather than focusing on how the conversation should be had. Whilst parents appreciate that there are resources available to them and find these helpful, there is a need for this campaign or initiative to ensure that parents recognise the need to have a conversation and increase the urgency to act.

An above-the-line campaign strategically leverages mass media channels like television, outdoor advertising, and online platforms to target identified audiences. This approach would aim to raise awareness and visibility of the issue among parents, ensuring the communications objective is effectively achieved.

Alternatively, awareness can be effectively raised through targeted initiatives and education programs that complement mass media efforts. This approach offers the significant benefit of tailoring content and delivery to specific audience segments and community groups. Targeted activities such as community workshops, school-based programs, or more specialised awareness raising initiatives can address the distinct barriers, knowledge gaps, and sensitivities of priority cohorts. This allows for greater awareness and potentially a deeper level of engagement to drive proactive conversations.

Communications objective:

To elevate the importance of parents knowing the prevalence and harms of pornography, thereby increasing the urgency to act.

How do we know we can influence parents?

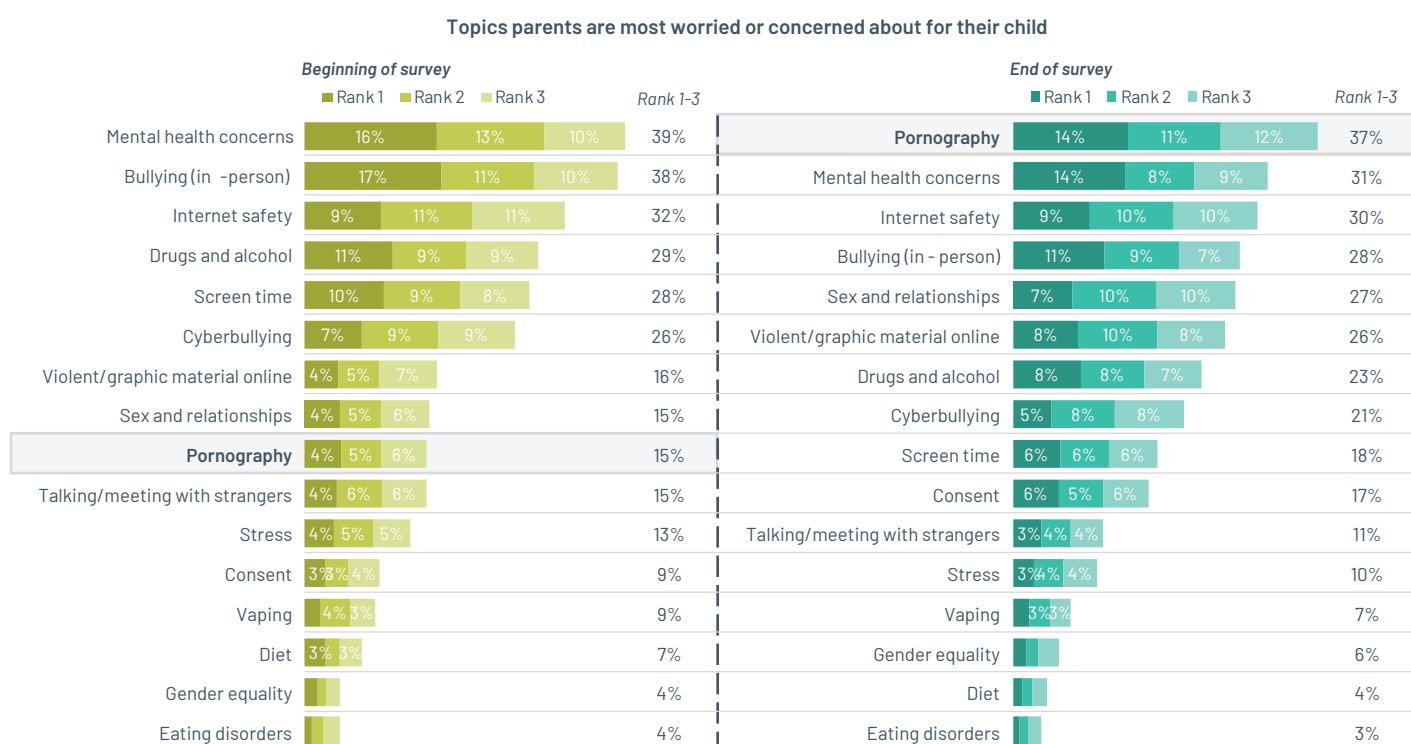
After being made aware of the prevalence and impact of pornography, it is expected that pornography and a number of other related concerns jump to the top of the concerns list. Once parents are sufficiently aware of how pornography might impact their child, they become significantly more open to discussing the topic. In doing so, pornography goes from something that is unlikely to immediately impact their child's health and wellbeing, to something that could harm them now (or already be causing them harm).

In the quantitative survey, Victorian parents were asked what they are concerned about when it comes to their children at the start of the survey and again at the end to see how their views had changed once they were made aware of the prevalence and harms of pornography.

As anticipated, parents became significantly more concerned about it, further highlighting their openness to be educated and influenced on the importance of talking to their children about the topic. Parents also became more concerned about issues related to sex and relationships, violent or graphic materials online, and consent.

It is worth noting that the research was conducted with a focus on pornography. Parents have a list of concerns about their children and whilst this research shows that once parents are aware of the issues it becomes a priority to have a conversation, the effectiveness of a campaign or initiative could somewhat be impacted by potential messages about these other concerns.

Figure 46: Topics that parents are most concerned about for their child



Source: A13. As a parent there are a lot of things that we worry about for our children. Which of the following topics are you most worried or concerned about when it comes to your child/children? A53. After seeing this recording, which of the following topics are you most worried or concerned about when it comes to your child/children?
 Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1508.
 Note: Labels less than 3% have been removed for clarity.

3.2 Segmenting the audience

A segmentation approach to identify key audiences

While there is a need for almost all parents to be more proactive in speaking with their children about pornography, there are a range of drivers and barriers that work differently for parents of varying attitudes and beliefs. These need to be taken into account when developing any communications activities to encourage more parents to engage in healthy conversations about pornography.

A segmentation model has been developed for Victorian parents aged 18-64, based on their attitudes and behaviours regarding conversations about pornography. This model will guide the identification of target audiences where a campaign would have the most impact on raising awareness and influencing attitudes. Latent class analysis was used to develop segments of the Victorian population, with a number of variables used to develop the segmentation.

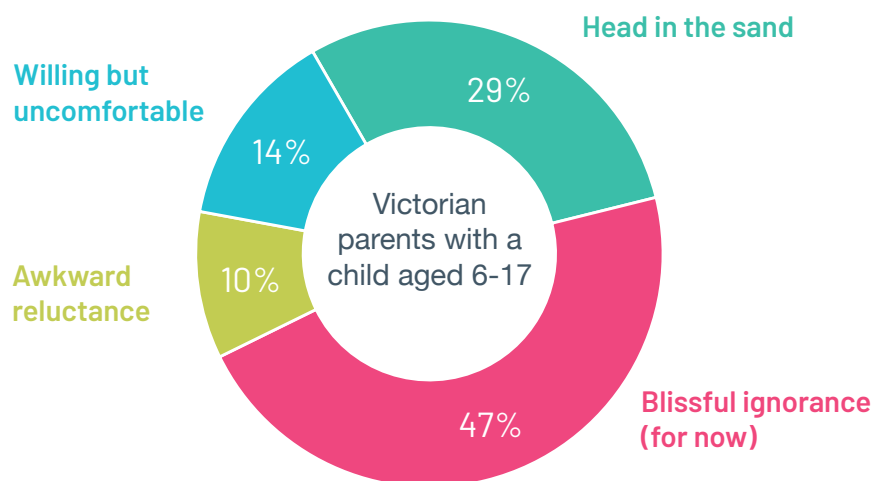
Four key segments were identified, each with descriptive names allocated to differentiate their key attitudinal dispositions. They are:

Head in the sand (29% of Victorian parents with a child aged 6-17),

- **Blissful ignorance (for now)** (47% of Victorian parents with a child aged 6-17),
- **Awkward reluctance** (10% of Victorian parents with a child aged 6-17), and
- **Willing but uncomfortable** (14% of Victorian parents with a child aged 6-17).

Each segment is described below, outlining their core drivers and beliefs, followed by their detailed characteristics. Full demographic and attitudinal profiles of each segment are provided on the following pages. It is important to note that while there are some demographic differences between the segments, they are largely differentiated by the attitudes and behaviours that define each group.

Figure 47: Segmentation



Segment 1: Head in the sand



Underlying belief: *It's normal that kids might want to watch pornography, and what's the harm? Pornography just shows sex and it's a part of growing up and being curious. Sure, there may be some things that are problematic, but the issues are overblown and conversations between parents and children aren't necessary.*



Segment size: 29% of Victorian parents with a child aged 6-17.



Key demographics: 72% men, 28% women.

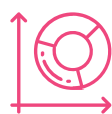


Description: The Head in the sand segment is the least likely to perceive any harms, including serious harms, from watching pornography. They are most likely to view pornography themselves and believe that consuming pornography can be done responsibly and safely, making conversations about pornography unnecessary. They consider issues about pornography to be overblown. While this segment is less likely to feel awkward about having conversations about pornography, they are not likely to initiate them because they do not believe the harms warrant a discussion.

Segment 2: Blissful ignorance (for now)



Underlying belief: *Nothing to worry about yet, my child hasn't seen pornography so I'm not ready to talk to them about it. They can't even access it. I'm fine to talk to them about it when the time comes, but that time isn't now.*



Segment size: 47% of Victorian parents with a child aged 6-17.



Key demographics: 21% men, 78% women.

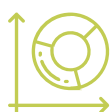


Description: The Blissful ignorance (for now) segment does not feel the need to worry about pornography yet, as they feel confident their child has not seen it and does not have access to it. They feel confident they will be able to have the conversation when the time comes, but do not need to worry about it right now. They do not think that watching pornography is part of a healthy relationship for adults but feel that their child is too young to see or talk about it yet. Out of all the segments, they feel the most comfortable responding to questions their child has about pornography.

Segment 3: Awkward reluctance



Underlying belief: Pornography is really awkward, and I don't know how to talk to my kids about it. I'm just not confident I'll know what to say, so it'll be really awkward. I hope that I never have to talk to them about it.



Segment size: 10% of Victorian parents with a child aged 6-17.



Key demographics: 51% men, 47% women.

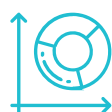


Description: The Awkward reluctance segment all agree that it is an awkward topic to talk with their children about. One in five parents in this group do not know how to have these conversations. They do not see themselves talking to other people about pornography and hope they never have to talk to their child about it either. They feel very awkward about the possibility of talking to their child about pornography and are the least likely to feel comfortable initiating a conversation.

Segment 4: Willing but uncomfortable



Underlying belief: Pornography is a big problem, and we really need to talk to young people about it more. But it's so awkward I just don't know how to tackle the conversation.



Segment size: 14% of Victorian parents with a child aged 6-17



Key demographics: 32% men, 66% women.

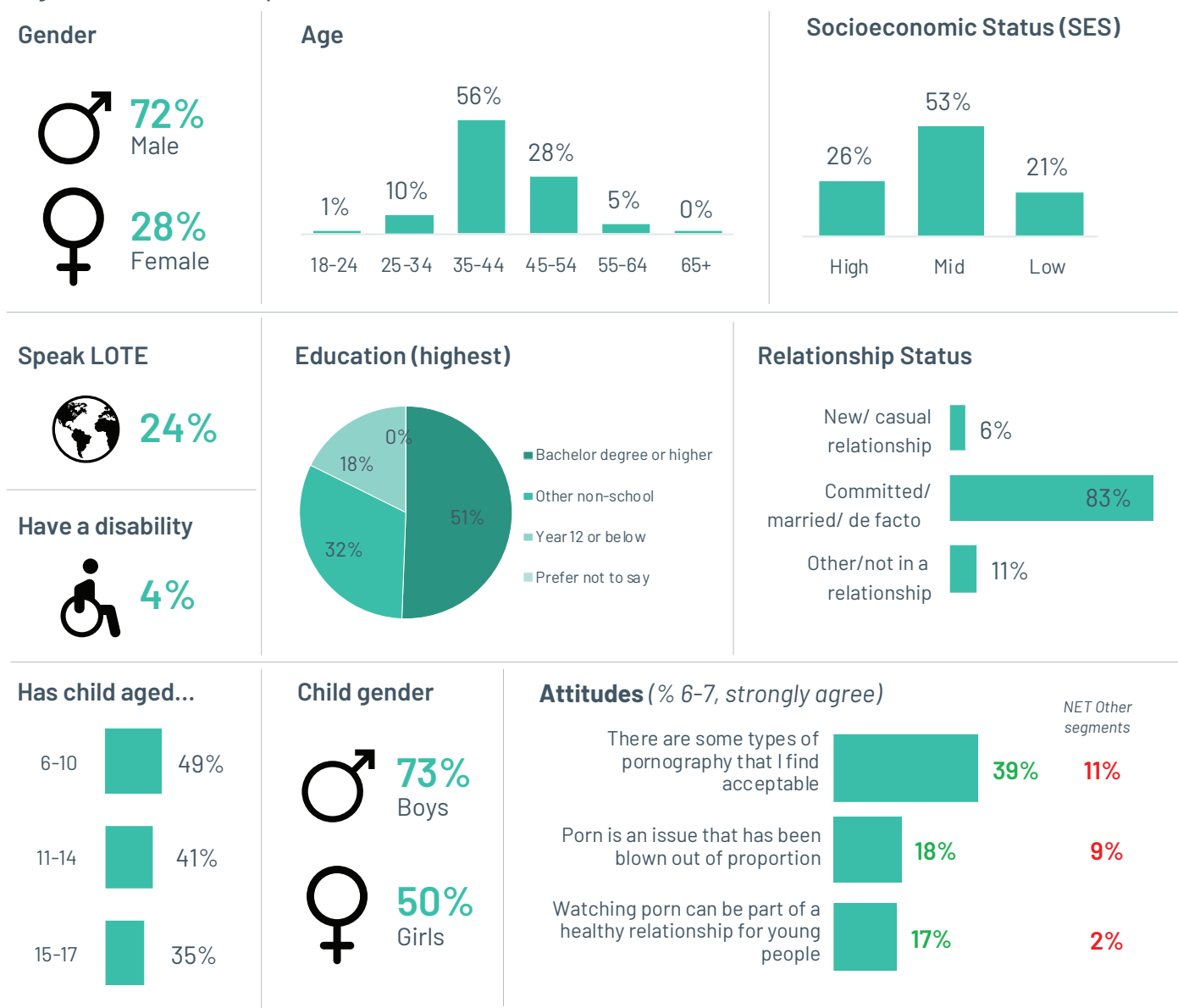


Description: The Willing but uncomfortable segment is very aware that adults should be talking to young people about pornography – they have the highest levels of concern about pornography. They recognise the content in pornography is problematic and more impactful than it was in the past. However, they lack the confidence to have conversations about pornography and would feel awkward talking to their child about it. They also want to be guided in how to tackle the conversation.

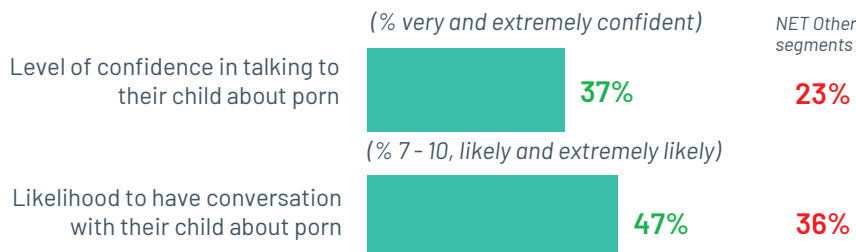
Segment profiles

Head in the sand – 29% of Victorians parents with a child aged 6-17

Figure 48: Head in the sand profile



Confidence and likelihood to have a conversation with child



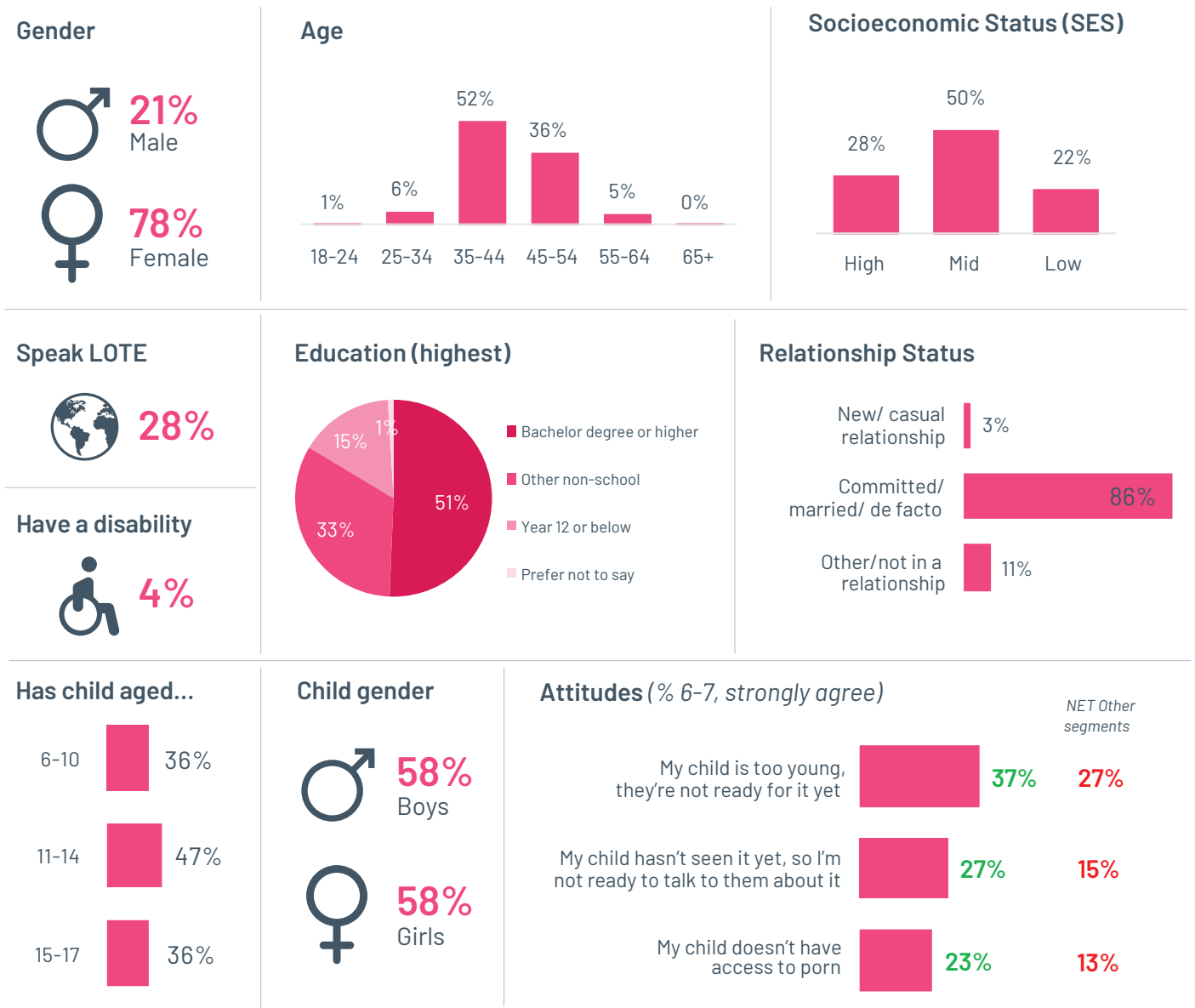
Source: Gender, Age, SES, CALD, Disability, Education, Relationship status, Attitudes, Confidence talking to child about porn, Likelihood to talk to child about porn. Child age. Child gender.

Base: Head in the sand segment, unweighted, n=582.

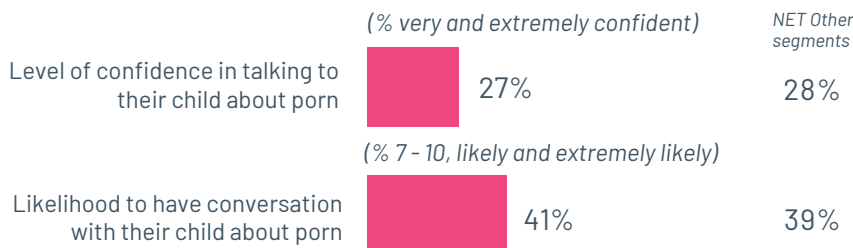
Note: Figures for gender do not add to 100% due to <2% preferring not to identify their gender. Figures for child age and gender do not add to 100% as a parent may have more than one child between 6-17.

Blissful Ignorance (For Now) – 47% of Victorians parents with a child aged 6-17

Figure 49: Blissful ignorance (for now) profile



Confidence and likelihood to have a conversation with child

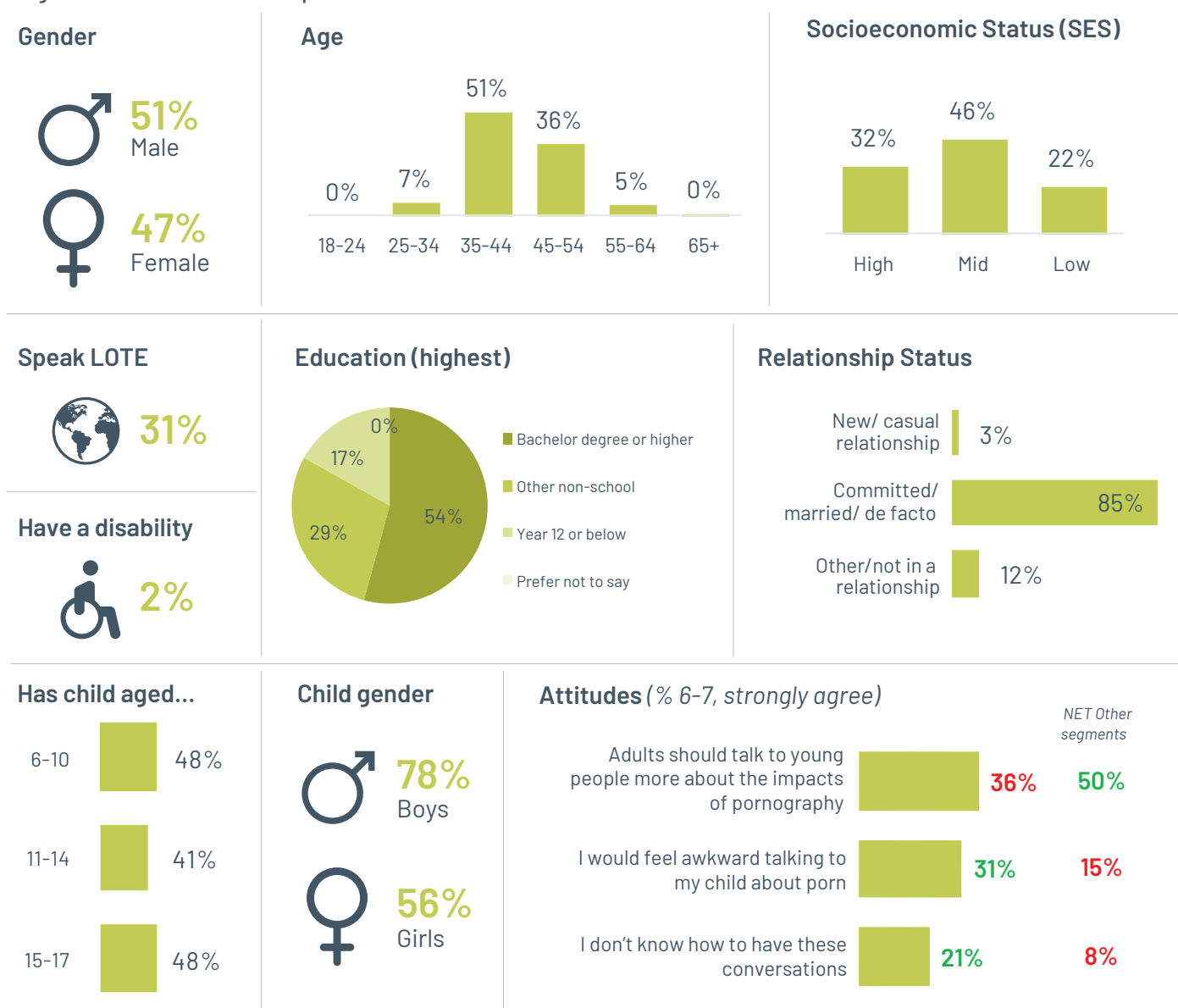


Source: Gender, Age, SES, CALD, Disability, Education, Relationship status, Attitudes, Confidence talking to child about porn, Likelihood to talk to child about porn. Child age. Child gender.
 Base: Blissful Ignorance (For Now), unweighted, n=921.

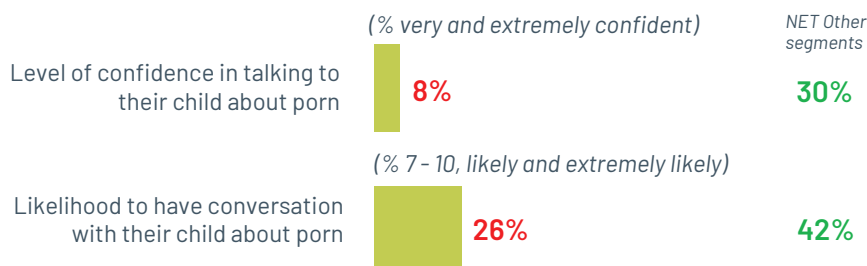
Note: Figures for gender do not add to 100% due to <2% preferring not to identify their gender. Figures for child age and gender do not add to 100% as a parent may have more than one child between 6-17.

Awkward Reluctance – 10% of Victorians parents with a child aged 6-17

Figure 50: Awkward reluctance profile



Confidence and likelihood to have a conversation with child



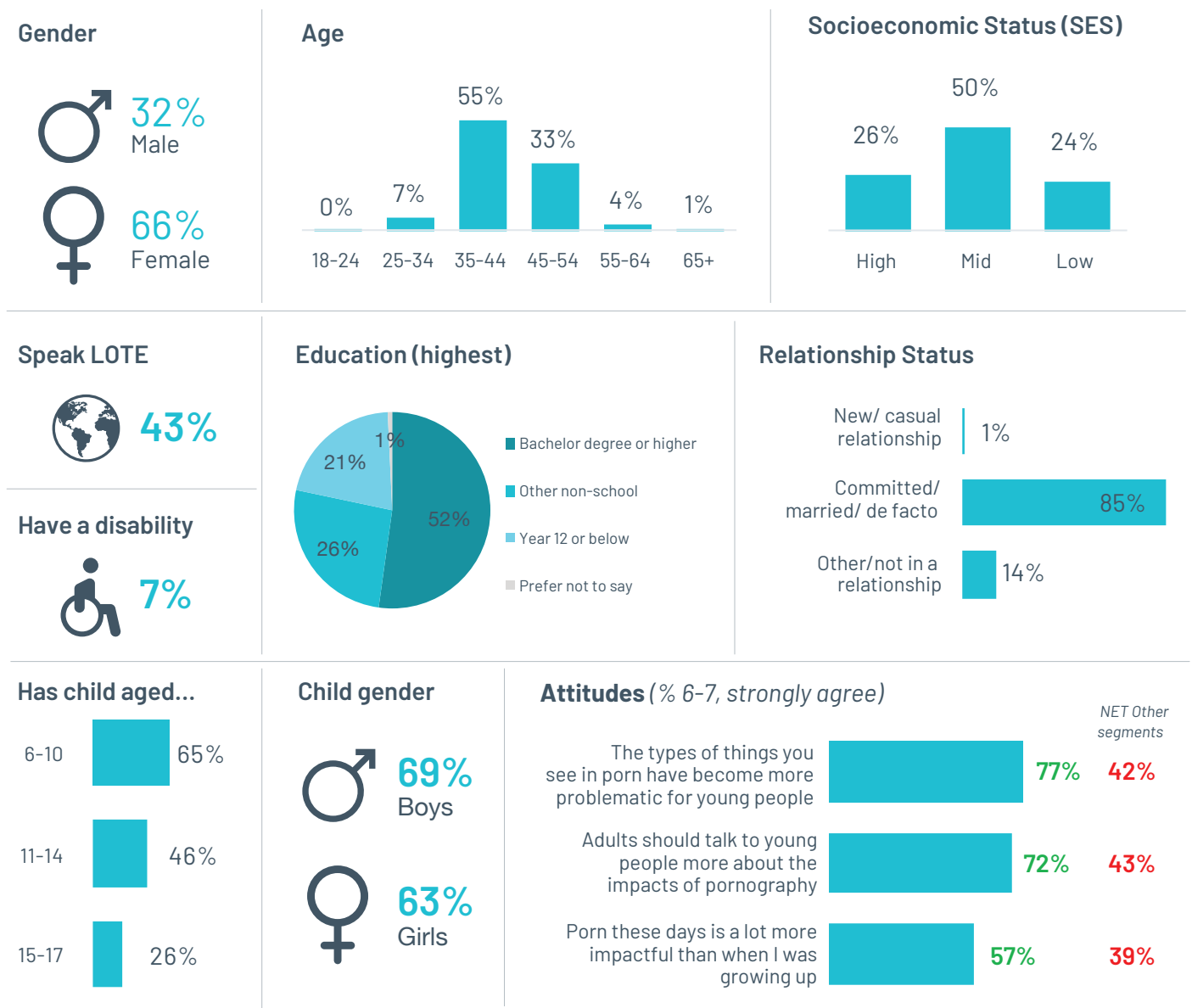
Source: Gender, Age, SES, CALD, Disability, Education, Relationship status, Attitudes, Confidence talking to child about porn, Likelihood to talk to child about porn. Child age. Child gender.

Base: Awkward Reluctance segment, unweighted, n=201.

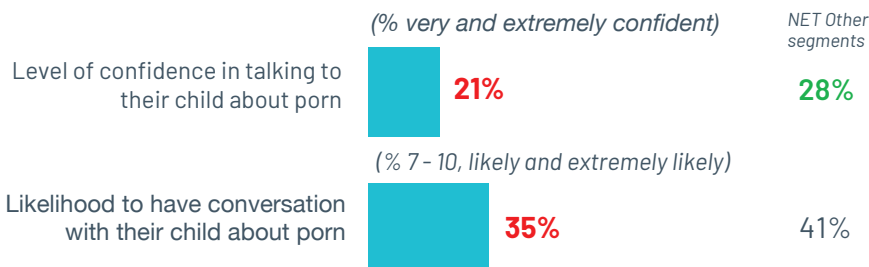
Note: Figures for gender do not add to 100% due to <2% preferring not to identify their gender. Figures for child age and gender do not add to 100% as a parent may have more than one child between 6-17.

Willing but uncomfortable – 14% of Victorians parents with a child aged 6-17

Figure 51: Willing but uncomfortable



Confidence and likelihood to have a conversation with child



Source: Gender, Age, SES, CALD, Disability, Education, Relationship status, Attitudes, Confidence talking to child about porn, Likelihood to talk to child about porn. Child age. Child gender.

Base: Willing but uncomfortable segment, unweighted, n=272.

Note: Figures for gender do not add to 100% due to <2% preferring not to identify their gender. Figures for child age and gender do not add to 100% as a parent may have more than one child between 6-17.

3.3 Framing the message

During the quantitative phase of this research, several communication frames were tested amongst parents. These communication frames were developed to explore how best to frame various messages and determine what resonates most with the key audiences. They are not intended to be used as scripts for an advertising campaign or other awareness raising activity – rather, they act as stimuli (prompts) in the research process, and as a way of communicating about pornography to understand how each of the priority cohorts might respond.

Four frames were tested in total, each exploring a different angle on the issues related to pornography and the need for conversations. Each parent surveyed was shown one of the following frame recordings that focused on:

- Frame 1: Unintentional viewing,
- Frame 2: Unrealistic expectations,
- Frame 3: Safety concerns, and,
- Frame 4: Pornography can be addictive.

The frames were presented as recordings, with the full script appearing on the screen and a voice over reading the message. The script for each frame assessed can be found in Appendix A.

Frame diagnostics



Parent's Perspective

Overall, each frame has a positive impact on parents' perceptions about the issues of pornography, with the overwhelming majority finding the frames believable and realistic. This suggests that each of the frames would have a high level of support if there were to be a campaign that used a similar idea, and the majority of parents feel that these messages are important for young people to hear.

While all of the frames perform relatively well, frames 1, 2 and 3 have the strongest positive impact for most parents.

- Roughly seven in ten Victorian parents felt that the recording made them more aware of issues around pornography (68%, 68%, 73% respectively).

- More than half of Victorian parents exposed to these frames said that the recording made them think about their attitudes to pornography, and that it would change how they think and act when it comes to conversations about pornography.
- Notably, more than half also feel empowered to have conversations about pornography with their child.

Frame 4 struggled in some of the key areas that would be required from a campaign – it failed to tell many parents anything they did not already know, it struggled to make parents more aware of some of the issues around pornography, and it did not encourage them to change how they think and act when it comes to having a conversation about pornography.

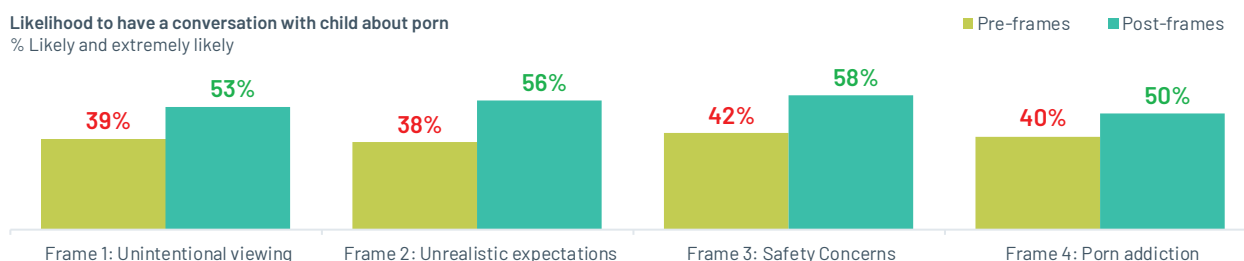
Figure 52: Frame diagnostics (overall)

% TOP 2 (agree and strongly agree)	Frame 1: Unintentional viewing	Frame 2: Unrealistic expectations	Frame 3: Safety Concerns	Frame 4: Porn addiction
The recording was aimed at people like me	66%	55%	56%	54%
The recording made me think about my attitudes towards pornography	56%	54%	53%	47%
The recording told me something I did not already know about pornography	51%	45%	48%	26%
The words made me more aware of some of the issues around pornography	68%	68%	73%	55%
The recording was believable	81%	84%	88%	74%
The recording was realistic	77%	79%	83%	72%
This recording is not a good idea	16%	17%	19%	18%
I would support a campaign that used a similar idea to this	73%	82%	79%	72%
This gave me new perspectives on pornography	48%	43%	49%	37%
This recording makes it seem that accessing and watching pornography is normal	33%	32%	35%	34%
This recording would change how I think and act when it comes to having a conversation about pornography	52%	53%	52%	40%
I wouldn't talk about this recording with other parents	24%	26%	23%	28%
This recording is important for young people to hear	72%	78%	80%	68%
After watching this recording, I feel empowered to have a conversation about pornography with my child/children	51%	52%	54%	39%
This recording makes me reflect on my own beliefs and opinions about pornography	50%	49%	46%	42%

Source: A49. Thinking about what you have just seen, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the statements below.
Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1508. Shown Frame 1, n=376; Shown Frame 2, n=375; Shown Frame 3, n=377; Shown Frame 4, n=380.

While some of the frames showed more promise than others, each of them was effective in encouraging more parents to have a conversation with their child about pornography.

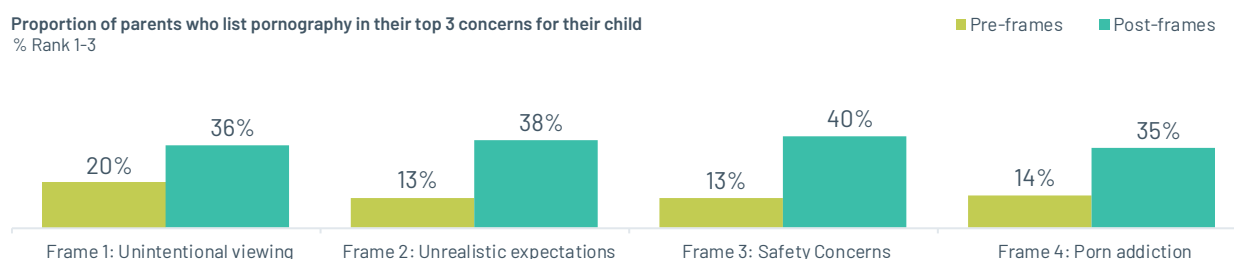
Figure 53: Likelihood to have a conversation with their child about pornography (by frame)



Source: A32. How likely would you be to have a conversation with your child about porn? A51. After seeing this recording, how likely would you be to have a conversation with your child about porn?
Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1508. Shown Frame 1, n=376; Shown Frame 2, n=375; Shown Frame 3, n=377; Shown Frame 4, n=380.

Further, each frame was effective in raising pornography as an area of concern for their children. Frames 2 and 3 saw the greatest increase in the proportion of parents who rank pornography in their top 3 concerns (+25pp for frame 2 and +27pp for frame 3).

Figure 54: Pornography listed as top 3 concern for their child (by frame)



Source: A13. As a parent there are a lot of things that we worry about for our children. Which of the following topics are you most worried or concerned about when it comes to your child/children?
A53. After seeing this recording, which of the following topics are you most worried or concerned about when it comes to your child/children?
Base: Victorian parents with child aged 6-17, unweighted, n=1508. Shown Frame 1, n=376; Shown Frame 2, n=375; Shown Frame 3, n=377; Shown Frame 4, n=380.

Which message should we focus on?

It is evident that most of the frames tested have merit and could potentially be a viable way to encourage more parents to proactively engage in healthy conversations about pornography with their children. It is important to also consider the frames with reference to each audience segment identified. Each of these cohorts faces different barriers and may therefore require different messages to influence their attitudes and behaviours.

Frames 1, 2 and 3 performed well at a total level, however there are some variations by segment. In understanding each of the segments and what motivates them, it is evident that messages about safety concerns (frame 3) will have the greatest impact for a large proportion of parents.

The campaign or initiative will also benefit from introducing additional messages about unintentional viewing and unrealistic expectations. For the “Head in the sand” segment, messaging about unintentional viewing (frame 1) can help this group recognise that there is an issue with pornography. For the “Blissful ignorance” and “Willing but uncomfortable” segments, messages about unrealistic expectations could also leave them feeling empowered to have a conversation with their child on the topic. The full frame diagnostics by segment can be found in Appendix A.

3.4 Communications framework

Communications framework overview

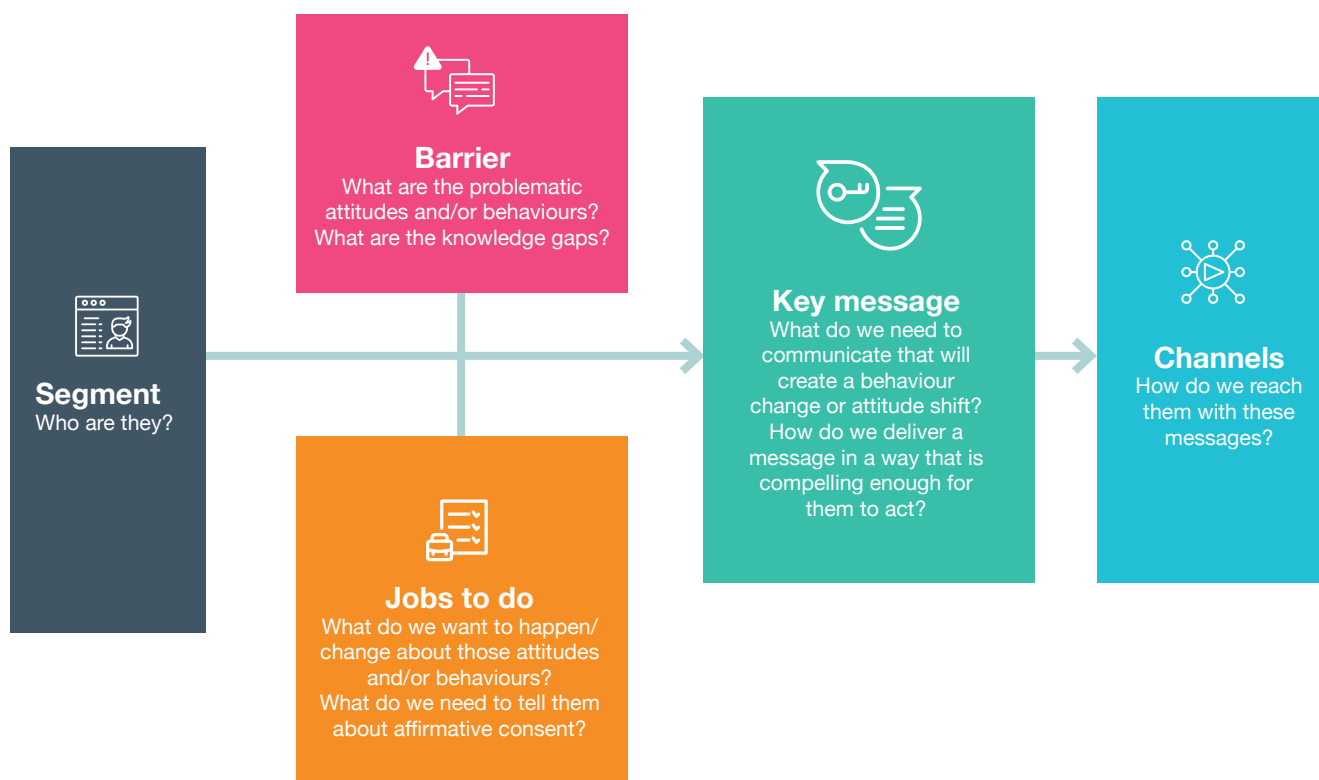
As highlighted, it is clear that there is a need for a communications campaign or other education program or awareness raising initiative to elevate the importance of parents knowing the prevalence and harms of pornography, thereby increasing the urgency to act. There are a number of segments of parents whose motivators and barriers differ, and these need to be taken into account when developing such a campaign.






We use a communications framework to explore each segment, including their current beliefs, the barriers they are facing, the objectives for each segment, and the key messages and channels to most effectively reach each cohort.

The framework has been applied to the four key cohorts of parents identified in this report:

- Head in the sand,
- Blissful ignorance (for now),
- Awkward reluctance, and,
- Willing but uncomfortable.

Figure 55: Communications framework



	HEAD IN THE SAND (29%)	BLISSFUL IGNORANCE (FOR NOW) (47%)	AWKWARD RELUCTANCE (10%)	WILLING BUT UNCOMFORTABLE (14%)
 PROFILE	<p>Underlying belief: It's normal that kids might want to watch pornography and what's the harm? Pornography just shows sex and it's a part of growing up and being curious. Sure, there may be some things that are problematic, but the issues are overblown and conversations between parents and children aren't necessary.</p>	<p>Underlying belief: Nothing to worry about yet, my child hasn't seen pornography so I'm not ready to talk to them about it. They can't even access it. I'm fine to talk to them about it when the time comes, but that time isn't now.</p>	<p>Underlying belief: Pornography is really awkward, and I don't know how to talk to my kids about it. I'm just not confident I'll know what to say so and it'll be really awkward. I hope that I never have to talk to them about it.</p>	<p>Underlying belief: Pornography is a big problem, and we really need to talk to young people about it more. But it's so awkward I just don't know how to tackle the conversation.</p>
 BARRIERS	<p>These parents don't believe that pornography is harmful and therefore don't need to talk about it.</p>	<p>These parents don't believe their child is accessing pornography so there isn't a need to talk about it, yet.</p>	<p>These parents really don't know how to talk to their kids about pornography – they lack the confidence to know what to say.</p>	<p>These parents recognise that adults need to talk to young people about pornography, but it is so awkward and they don't know how to do it.</p>
 JOB TO DO	<p>Highlight the need: Remind parents of the need to talk to their children about the problematic elements of pornography that they might be exposed to (in a judgement free way for those currently consuming pornography).</p>	<p>Highlight the need: Create a need for parents to talk to their children about pornography now (age appropriately) rather than waiting until later.</p>	<p>Overcome the awkwardness: Give parents confidence to talk to their children about pornography and overcome the awkwardness.</p>	<p>Overcome the awkwardness: Give parents the support to have the conversation – they recognise the issue, but the awkwardness outweighs the drive to engage with their children about it.</p>
 KEY MESSAGES	<p>Unintentional viewing (frame 1) messaging tells this segment something new and is the most likely to get them to have a conversation with their child about pornography.</p>	<p>A focus on safety (frame 3) – this is enough of a reason for parents to talk to their children, even if they don't believe or know that they are watching pornography yet. This cohort will also respond well to messages about unrealistic expectations. This messaging helps them feel empowered to talk to their children about pornography.</p>	<p>A focus on safety (frame 3) – this message creates enough of a reason for parents to overcome the awkwardness and talk to their children about pornography.</p>	<p>A focus on safety (frame 3) – similar to the "Awkward Reluctance" segment, this message creates enough of a reason for parents to talk to their children about pornography even if it is an awkward conversation. This cohort will also respond to messages about unrealistic expectations. These messages help them feel empowered and also tell them something new that they didn't know.</p>
 CHANNELS	<p>This segment will benefit from the above-the-line awareness building campaign, or similar initiative as well as additional messaging on unintentional viewing.</p>	<p>Above the line awareness building campaign or similar initiative that focuses on safety – via mass media channels.</p>		

Conclusion and recommendations

4.0 Conclusion and recommendations

4.1 Key contextual findings

Pornography is not at the top of the list of concerns

It is clear from this research that parents have a long list of concerns about their children, and while pornography is a concerning issue, it is not a top priority. Without prompting, few parents would mention that pornography is a concern they have for their child. Instead, they tend to focus on issues that present a more immediate danger to their child's health, wellbeing, and safety.

However, this does not mean that pornography is not concerning, but rather that there are other more pressing issues, and they might not perceive the risk as obvious or immediate. Parents recognise that pornography is still something they need to think about in their parenting. They acknowledge that it has changed – in terms of both accessibility and content – and they are able to identify a number of potential harms that could impact their child.

Multiple barriers prevent parents from engaging proactively in conversations

Numerous barriers prevent parents from discussing pornography with their children, and most parents (83%) feel they face at least one such barrier. While parents cite various reasons for why they do not have conversations, the primary and most significant barrier is discomfort in discussing the topic. Many of the barriers are underpinned by their reluctance to participate in a highly uncomfortable conversation. However, some parents genuinely misunderstand the harms of pornography and the likelihood of their children viewing pornography, and therefore fail to see the need for a conversation.

The key barriers for parents to engage in conversations about pornography include:

- Feeling awkward/uncomfortable,
- Not accepting their child has or will watch pornography,
- They have otherwise addressed it,
- Their child is not ready for it,
- Pornography is not that harmful,
- It hasn't come up yet,
- Not knowing how to have the conversations, and,
- Past parental trauma.

Most parents do not believe their child has ever viewed pornography

Despite acknowledging the increased accessibility of pornography, many parents still underestimate the likelihood of their child encountering it at a young age. Only 17% of Victorian parents (with children aged 6-17) think their child has viewed pornography.

To create a need for a conversation, parents must think pornography is both sufficiently harmful and that their child is likely to be exposed to it

If parents believe their child will not be exposed to pornography, they do not see a need for the conversation since the harms would not affect their child. Conversely, if they think their child will be exposed but that there are no significant harms, they also do not feel a conversation is necessary. Therefore, to prompt discussions among parents who currently see no need for one, it is crucial to emphasise both the high likelihood of exposure and the potential harms of pornography.

Parents also need help overcoming the barriers to engage in proactive conversations. Firstly, parents are more likely to start these conversations earlier if they believe their child is increasingly likely to be exposed to pornography, particularly at a younger age when parents do not anticipate their child viewing it.

However, data reveals a significant gap between parents' perceptions and reality. Only 40% of Victorian parents of children who have seen pornography know their child has viewed it.

Secondly, if they perceive the harms of pornography as more severe than they currently understand them to be, particularly if parents perceive significant risks to their child's health and wellbeing, they are more inclined to engage in these discussions. Thirdly, providing parents with tools, training, and resources to facilitate more comfortable and confident conversations can increase the likelihood of proactive discussions about pornography. Statistics about the harms of pornography are most likely to encourage parents to have a conversation.

4.2 Recommended approach

Communications recommendations

These research findings point to significant awareness gaps around accessibility to pornography, as well as the severity and nature of the harms, suggesting a communications campaign or other awareness raising initiative would be required to effectively address these gaps. However, there is a range of different audiences, each with their own underlying beliefs on the topic. There is a need to consider these differences when determining the most effective approach to communications.

Communications objective

Parents can often identify that pornography is harmful, but it is not top-of-mind, and they do not know the extent of the harms. As such, they are not engaging in proactive conversations on the topic. To overcome this, we must look to develop an awareness campaign or initiative that encourages more parents to engage in proactive discussions about pornography.

A real opportunity to influence parents

After being made aware of the prevalence and impact of pornography, it is unsurprising that pornography and a number of other relevant concerns jump to the top of the concerns list. Once parents are sufficiently aware of how pornography might impact their child, they become more open to discussing the topic with their child.

As with any campaign, it is critical to identify the priority audiences, their current attitudes and behaviours, and the desired outcomes.

Based on the findings of this research, we recommend the need for an above-the-line communications campaign, or similar education program or awareness raising initiative with key compelling messages aimed at relevant audience segments outlined below.

Therefore, the campaign objective should be to **elevate the importance of parents knowing the prevalence and harms of pornography, thereby increasing the urgency to act**. We need to raise awareness that pornography is another critical concern for parents to tackle alongside other concerns related to their child's health and wellbeing, and that these conversations need to happen at a younger age than they might expect.

Pornography goes from something that is unlikely to immediately impact their child's health and wellbeing, to something that could harm them now (or already be causing them harm).

Segmenting the audience

After being made aware of the prevalence and impact of pornography, it is unsurprising that pornography and a number of other relevant concerns jump to the top of the concerns list. Once parents are sufficiently aware of how pornography might impact their child, they become more open to discussing the topic with their child.

Framing the message

A number of communications framing messages were tested in the quantitative phase, and it is evident that each of the frames tested has merit and could potentially be a viable way to encourage more parents to proactively engage in healthy conversations about pornography with their children. However, in understanding each of the segments and what motivates them, it becomes evident that messages about safety concerns (frame 3) will have the greatest impact for a large proportion of parents.

Pornography goes from something that is unlikely to immediately impact their child's health and wellbeing, to something that could harm them now (or already be causing them harm).

The campaign or initiative will also benefit from introducing additional messages about unintentional viewing and unrealistic expectations. For the "Head in the sand" segment, messaging about unintentional viewing (frame 1) will help create an understanding of the issue for this cohort, who often fail to see that there is an issue with pornography. For the "Blissful ignorance" and "Willing but uncomfortable" segments, messages about unrealistic expectations will also leave them feeling empowered to have a conversation with their child on the topic.

5.0 Appendices

- Appendix A: Communications frames tested,
- Appendix B: Frame diagnostics by segment.

Appendix A: Communications frames tested

Frame 1: Unintentional viewing

I don't need to worry about porn, my kids are too young to know what it is, let alone to have seen it. They're not going to be sexually active for years. I don't need to talk to them about it yet...

Well actually, you need to have age-appropriate conversations as early as possible. Did you know nearly half of young men have seen pornography by the age of 13 (48%), and nearly half of young women have seen it by the age of 15 (48%)?

Nearly half of young people exposed to pornography weren't searching for it – it was unintentional exposure.

It's easier than ever before for young people to access pornography (whether intentionally or not). They've got phones, tablets, and laptops. They've got internet access just about everywhere they go.

But you have an important job, you can help them understand it, put it into context and keep them safe from harm.

Frame 2: Unrealistic expectations

We all know that pornography is unrealistic, don't we? And it creates unrealistic expectations about sex and how we should look or perform.

But do your children know that? They might know it is fake, but do they REALLY understand how harmful it might be? Do they know that unlike in most porn, they need to ask for consent from a sexual partner? Or that just because it looks like someone is enjoying something in porn, they might not enjoy it in real life.

Did you know that young men see pornography for the first time three years before their first partnered sexual experience, and young women two years before? Meaning what they see in pornography is setting unrealistic expectations, about what a healthy intimate relationship looks like well before they have sex for the first time.

As parents we need to support our children to form healthy relationships that are not influenced by these unrealistic expectations they see on porn. We need to talk to them about how it might be harmful and make sure they know it isn't real too.

Frame 3: Safety concerns

It's normal that our kids have seen porn, after all it is more accessible than ever before. But do you (and your children) know about the harmful behaviours that are often shown in porn?

Contemporary pornography conveys a whole range of harmful behaviours. Mainstream pornography depicts high levels of aggression, including

88% contains physical aggression such as hitting/slapping and gagging

48% contains verbal aggression such as name calling

35% includes non-consensual behaviour.

What if your child thinks this is what normal sex is like and feels pressure to go along with it even if they don't want to? What if they unintentionally hurt someone else?

We need to talk to them about porn. We need to educate them on the potentially harmful behaviours they might see in porn.

Frame 4: Pornography can be addictive

We're all aware of the widespread consumption of pornography. It's only natural to be curious and the internet has made it more accessible than ever before.

Just like social media, pornography is easy to access with content designed for maximum attention. This can make pornography difficult to resist, especially for young children and teenagers.

Addiction to pornography is a real thing and it works just like any other addiction. You can become dependent on it. This can make intimacy more difficult when it's time for physical relationships and can also affect a kid's overall wellbeing.

As parents, we all want our kids to be happy and healthy. It's essential to support our children in developing healthy attitudes and behaviours towards pornography, starting with open conversations from a young age to create a healthy foundation.

Appendix B: Frame diagnostics by parent segment

Segment 1: Head in the sand

Frames 1, 2 and 3 resonate most with the Head in the sand segment. However, Frame 1 (Unintentional viewing) performs best at creating a sense of understanding of the issues of pornography which is critical for this cohort who are least likely to see issues with pornography:

- More than half (53%) believe Frame 1 told them something they did not already know.
- 70% believe the words made them more aware of the some of the issues of pornography.
- 54% believe that the recording gave them a new perspective on pornography.

Frame 1's message about the increased exposure to pornography performs best as a message that is important for young people to hear (76%) for this segment. However, when it comes to empowering parents to have a conversation with their child, Frame 2 performs best (58%).

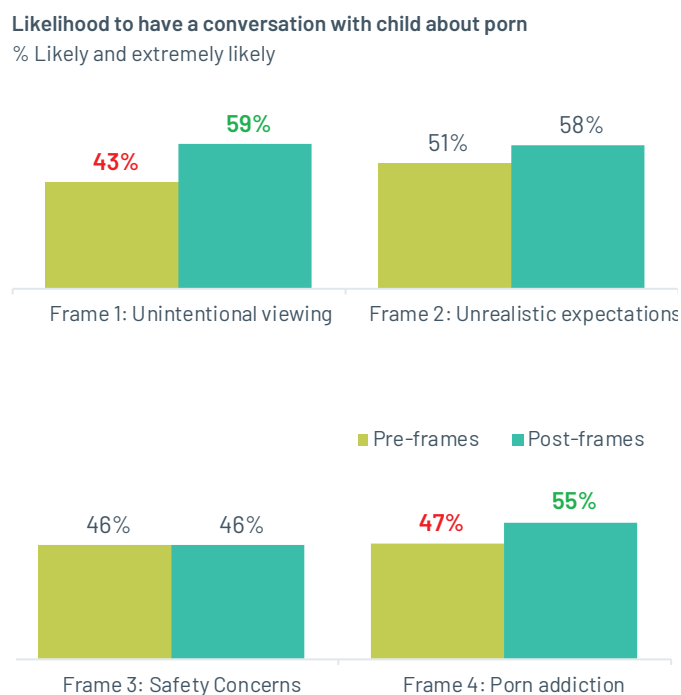
Figure 56: Frame diagnostics (Head in the sand)

% TOP 2 (agree and strongly agree)	Frame 1: Unintentional viewing	Frame 2: Unrealistic expectations	Frame 3: Safety Concerns	Frame 4: Porn addiction
The recording was aimed at people like me	63%	52%	52%	54%
The recording made me think about my attitudes towards pornography	55%	48%	46%	42%
The recording told me something I did not already know about pornography	53%	48%	40%	31%
The words made me more aware of some of the issues around pornography	70%	65%	70%	49%
The recording was believable	82%	79%	78%	70%
The recording was realistic	70%	69%	76%	67%
This recording is not a good idea	21%	21%	34%	23%
I would support a campaign that used a similar idea to this	72%	73%	76%	71%
This gave me new perspectives on pornography	54%	40%	39%	35%
This recording makes it seem that accessing and watching pornography is normal	39%	39%	43%	40%
This recording would change how I think and act when it comes to having a conversation about pornography	49%	51%	45%	40%
I wouldn't talk about this recording with other parents	29%	27%	33%	34%
This recording is important for young people to hear	76%	69%	73%	68%
After watching this recording, I feel empowered to have a conversation about pornography with my child/children	45%	58%	48%	42%
This recording makes me reflect on my own beliefs and opinions about pornography	50%	50%	45%	44%

Source: A49. Thinking about what you have just seen, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the statements below.
Base: Head in the sand segment, unweighted, n=498. Shown Frame 1, n=133; Shown Frame 2, n=124; Shown Frame 3, n=102; Shown Frame 4, n=139.

Frame 1 performs well above other frames when comparing the impact on the likelihood to have a conversation with one's child. Frame 1 saw a significant increase of 16 percentage points in likelihood to have a conversation, with 59% agreeing.

Figure 57: Frame diagnostics (Head in the sand)



Source: A32. How likely would you be to have a conversation with your child about porn? A51. After seeing this recording, how likely would you be to have a conversation with your child about porn?
Base: Head in the sand segment, unweighted, n=498. Shown Frame 1, n=133; Shown Frame 2, n=124; Shown Frame 3, n=102; Shown Frame 4, n=139.

Segment 2: Blissful ignorance (for now)

For this cohort, who don't believe their child will access or has accessed pornography, Frame 1, which highlights the increased risk of exposure to pornography, is the most likely to teach them something they did not know (50%). However, metrics related to awareness of the harms of pornography and metrics about increasing the need for conversations reveal that the safety concerns raised in Frame 3 are most effective for this cohort in encouraging more conversations.

Almost three quarters (74%) believe Frame 3 makes them more aware of the issues around pornography, 84% believe the recording is important for young people to hear, and 58% feel empowered to have a conversation about pornography with their child.

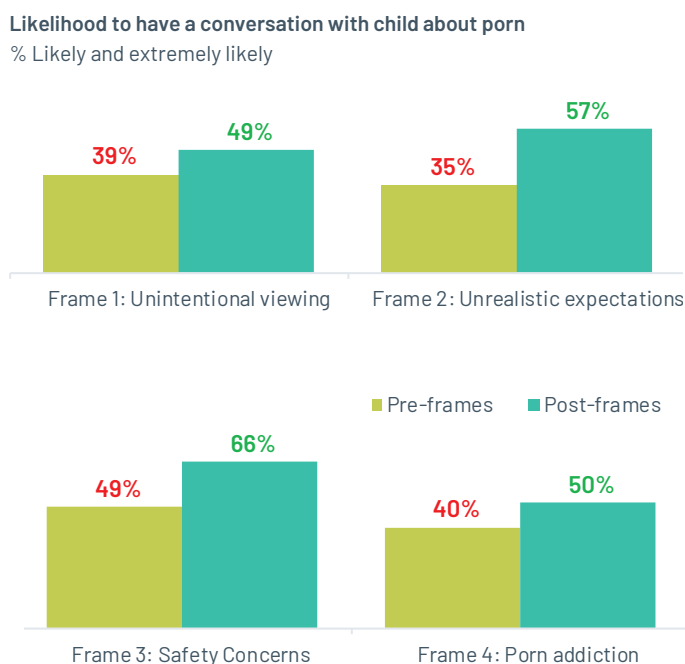
Figure 58: Frame diagnostics (Blissful ignorance (for now))

% TOP 2 (agree and strongly agree)	Frame 1: Unintentional viewing	Frame 2: Unrealistic expectations	Frame 3: Safety Concerns	Frame 4: Porn addiction
The recording was aimed at people like me	66%	55%	56%	54%
The recording made me think about my attitudes towards pornography	61%	54%	52%	54%
The recording told me something I did not already know about pornography	50%	38%	44%	19%
The words made me more aware of some of the issues around pornography	70%	65%	74%	60%
The recording was believable	81%	84%	93%	76%
The recording was realistic	81%	86%	85%	75%
This recording is not a good idea	13%	15%	11%	13%
I would support a campaign that used a similar idea to this	76%	87%	84%	75%
This gave me new perspectives on pornography	49%	43%	51%	40%
This recording makes it seem that accessing and watching pornography is normal	31%	26%	22%	34%
This recording would change how I think and act when it comes to having a conversation about pornography	53%	51%	55%	43%
I wouldn't talk about this recording with other parents	15%	17%	14%	25%
This recording is important for young people to hear	66%	83%	84%	71%
After watching this recording, I feel empowered to have a conversation about pornography with my child/children	51%	49%	58%	40%
This recording makes me reflect on my own beliefs and opinions about pornography	49%	45%	44%	37%

Source: A49. Thinking about what you have just seen, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the statements below.
Base: Blissful Ignorance (For Now) segment, unweighted, n=537. Shown Frame 1, n=125; Shown Frame 2, n=138; Shown Frame 3, n=140; Shown Frame 4, n=134.

While exposure to all frames increases the likelihood of a conversation for this cohort, Frame 3 and Frame 2 were the most effective. Notably, Frame 2 saw an increase of 22 percentage points and Frame 3 saw an increase of 17 percentage points. However, Frame 3 ultimately resulted in the greatest proportion who say they feel likely to have a conversation (66%).

Figure 59: Likelihood to have a conversation with child about pornography (Blissful ignorance (for now))



Source: A32. How likely would you be to have a conversation with your child about porn? A51. After seeing this recording, how likely would you be to have a conversation with your child about porn?
Base: Blissful Ignorance (For Now) segment, unweighted, n=537. Shown Frame 1, n=125; Shown Frame 2, n=138; Shown Frame 3, n=140; Shown Frame 4, n=134.

Segment 3: Awkward reluctance

For this cohort, who feel particularly held back by their feelings of discomfort to discuss pornography with their children, it is most critical to assess the frames based on the metrics related to their willingness to engage in conversation. Encouragingly, Frame 3, which emphasised the safety concerns, was successful at making 57% of this cohort feel empowered to have a conversation with their child.

Frame 3 was also most successful at making this cohort more aware of some of the issues of pornography (74%) and telling them something they did not already know (54%).

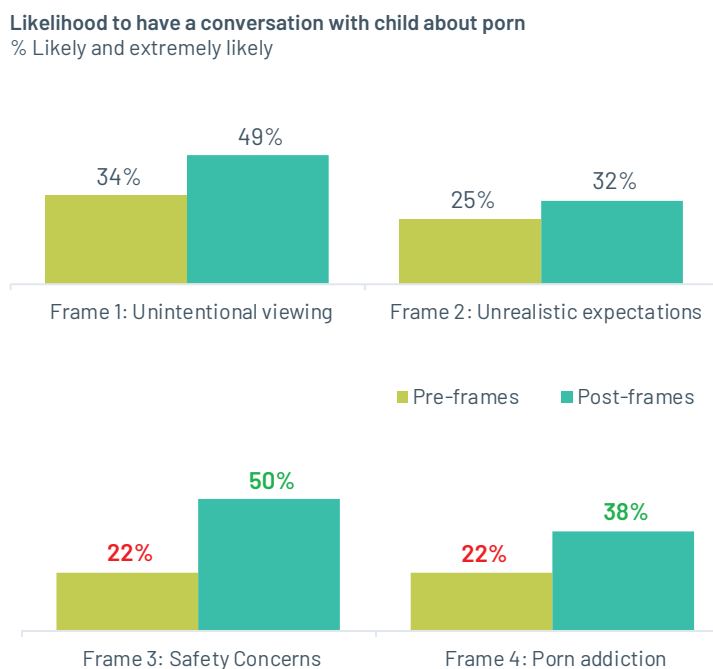
Figure 60: Frame diagnostics (Awkward reluctance)

% TOP 2 (agree and strongly agree)	Frame 1: Unintentional viewing	Frame 2: Unrealistic expectations	Frame 3: Safety Concerns	Frame 4: Porn addiction
The recording was aimed at people like me	70%	57%	72%	60%
The recording made me think about my attitudes towards pornography	57%	66%	57%	48%
The recording told me something I did not already know about pornography	42%	48%	54%	20%
The words made me more aware of some of the issues around pornography	60%	73%	74%	62%
The recording was believable	74%	86%	94%	82%
The recording was realistic	79%	73%	89%	74%
This recording is not a good idea	19%	14%	17%	18%
I would support a campaign that used a similar idea to this	75%	84%	74%	76%
This gave me new perspectives on pornography	42%	43%	54%	40%
This recording makes it seem that accessing and watching pornography is normal	34%	36%	48%	28%
This recording would change how I think and act when it comes to having a conversation about pornography	55%	57%	56%	38%
I wouldn't talk about this recording with other parents	25%	48%	24%	24%
This recording is important for young people to hear	75%	80%	78%	72%
After watching this recording, I feel empowered to have a conversation about pornography with my child/children	51%	45%	57%	28%
This recording makes me reflect on my own beliefs and opinions about pornography	51%	41%	48%	52%

Source: A49. Thinking about what you have just seen, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the statements below.
Base: Awkward Reluctance segment, unweighted, n=201. Shown Frame 1, n=53; Shown Frame 2, n=44; Shown Frame 3, n=54; Shown Frame 4, n=50.

Frame 3 is most effective in positively impacting the likelihood of having a conversation with one's child about pornography. Frame 3 resulted in a 28-percentage point increase in likelihood to have a conversation with a child about pornography, with 50% of the cohort agreeing.

Figure 61: Likelihood to have a conversation with child about pornography (Awkward reluctance)



Source: A32. How likely would you be to have a conversation with your child about porn? A51. After seeing this recording, how likely would you be to have a conversation with your child about porn?
Base: Awkward Reluctance segment, unweighted, n=201. Shown Frame 1, n=53; Shown Frame 2, n=44; Shown Frame 3, n=54; Shown Frame 4, n=50.

Segment 4: Willing but uncomfortable

Frames 1, 2 and 3 perform strongly for this segment. Despite the highest levels of concerns with pornography, more than half feel the recordings told them something they did not know about pornography, and more than three quarters who viewed Frames 2 and 3 believe the frame makes them more aware of the issues around pornography (77% and 75%, respectively).

Frames 2 (84%) and 3 (83%) also perform best when it comes to being an important message for young people to hear. Critically, this segment needs help with confidence to have conversations. Frame 1 performs best (60%) at creating a sense of empowerment to have conversations with one's child, however Frame 3 also performed well (54%).

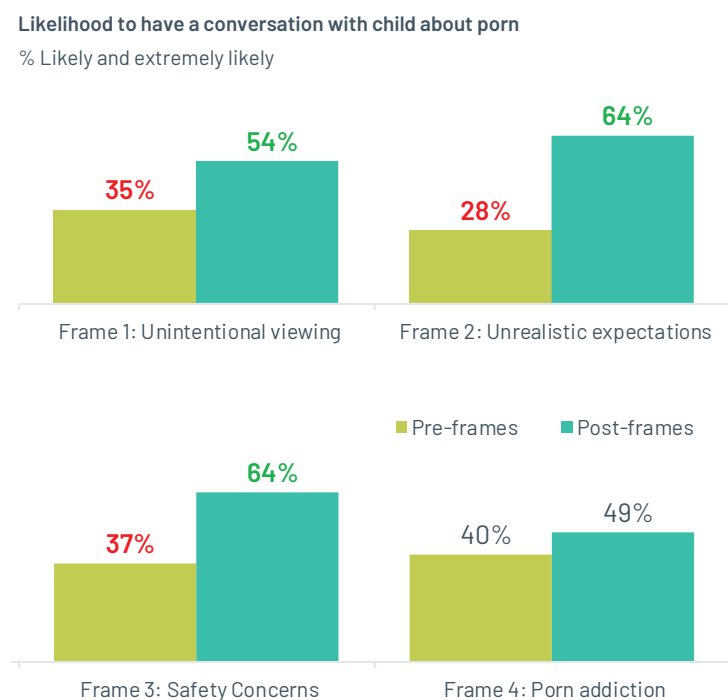
Figure 62: Frame diagnostics (Willing but uncomfortable)

% TOP 2 (agree and strongly agree)	Frame 1: Unintentional viewing	Frame 2: Unrealistic expectations	Frame 3: Safety Concerns	Frame 4: Porn addiction
The recording was aimed at people like me	69%	61%	52%	49%
The recording made me think about my attitudes towards pornography	49%	59%	60%	42%
The recording told me something I did not already know about pornography	55%	51%	59%	33%
The words made me more aware of some of the issues around pornography	63%	77%	75%	53%
The recording was believable	83%	93%	86%	70%
The recording was realistic	83%	87%	83%	72%
This recording is not a good idea	12%	17%	16%	16%
I would support a campaign that used a similar idea to this	69%	87%	77%	63%
This gave me new perspectives on pornography	42%	49%	56%	35%
This recording makes it seem that accessing and watching pornography is normal	25%	29%	37%	26%
This recording would change how I think and act when it comes to having a conversation about pornography	54%	58%	54%	37%
I wouldn't talk about this recording with other parents	29%	29%	23%	26%
This recording is important for young people to hear	71%	84%	83%	56%
After watching this recording, I feel empowered to have a conversation about pornography with my child/children	60%	49%	54%	39%
This recording makes me reflect on my own beliefs and opinions about pornography	51%	61%	48%	40%

Source: A49. Thinking about what you have just seen, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the statements below.
Base: Willing but uncomfortable segment, unweighted, n=272. Shown Frame 1, n=65; Shown Frame 2, n=69; Shown Frame 3, n=81; Shown Frame 4, n=57.

Frames 1, 2 and 3 all significantly increase the likelihood of a conversation between parents and child for the Willing but uncomfortable segment. Frame 2 performs best seeing a 36 percentage point increase to 64% who feel likely to have a conversation. Frame 3 also performs very strongly seeing a 27 percentage point increase to 64% who feel likely.

Figure 63: Likelihood to have a conversation with child about pornography (Willing but uncomfortable)



Source: A32. How likely would you be to have a conversation with your child about porn? A51. After seeing this recording, how likely would you be to have a conversation with your child about porn?
Base: Willing but uncomfortable segment, unweighted, n=272. Shown Frame 1, n=65; Shown Frame 2, n=69; Shown Frame 3, n=81; Shown Frame 4, n=57.

