
**FPB Investigation into the Exposure of
Children to Sexually Explicit Content
through the Internet and Cell phones**

March, 2008

We inform. You choose



Background Information

- The research was aimed at examining the extent and reaction of children to the exposure of sexually explicit content via cell phones and the Internet
- The Film and Publication Board is protecting and lobbying for the safety and the innocence of South African children by through the suggestions of regulations and the monitoring of internet sites and cell phone access and usage
- The study was aimed at children:
 - 10 - 12 year olds (Grade 5 - 7)
 - 13 - 15 year olds (Grade 8 - 9)
- The research was conducted in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town.
- The aim of the research was to explore and unpack the effects, over and above quantifying what has been proved to exist and happening amongst the children of South Africa.

We inform. You choose



Research Approach and Methodology

- A two phased approach was employed with the children in the sample, and combination of quantitative and qualitative methods
- Phase one: The initial approach was quantitative, consisting of a **self-completion questionnaire** administered on **604** learners in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. The answers given to the explanatory question served as a screener to recruit respondents for the qualitative phase. Children who gave no responses detailing material of a sexual nature were not considered for the second phase.
- Phase two: The second phase was qualitative, involving **37 in-depth interviews** conducted by specially trained moderators, with psychological expertise.
- Additionally, **4** focus groups with parents of children in the relevant age groups were conducted in Johannesburg to gain an understanding of parents' response to the topic.

We inform. You choose



Sample Demographics

		Girls	Boys	Tweens (10-12 yrs)	Teens (13-15 yrs)	Total
Johannesburg	Surveys	103	99	102	100	202
	In-depth interview	8	1	4	5	9
Cape Town	Surveys	98	103	98	103	201
	In-depth interview	8	6	8	6	14
Durban	Surveys	158	43	86	115	201
	In-depth interview	11	3	9	5	14
Total	Surveys	359	245	286	318	604
	In-depth interview	27	10	21	16	37

We inform. You choose



Main Research Findings

We inform. You choose



Internet Usage (Access and Supervision)

▪ **Access and Usage**

- The Internet is mostly accessed at home (56%) and school (50%). **34% indicated that they access the Internet using their cell phones.** Concern no monitoring at all for cell phone access!
- 40% indicated that they use the Internet less than once a week, 66% spend less than 1 hour. Don't use it so often, know what they want and go for it!

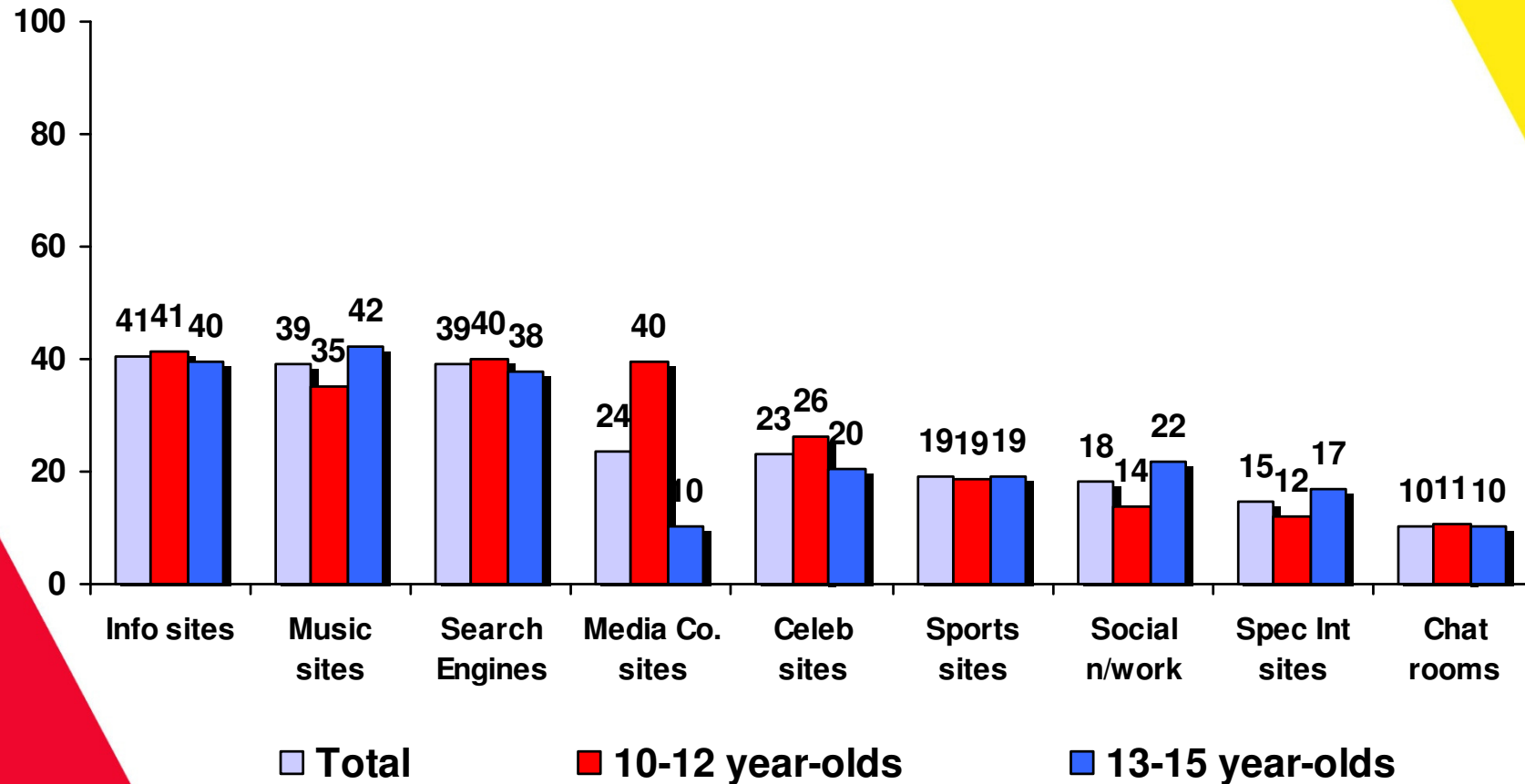
• **Accompanied vs. Unaccompanied home access**

- 49% unaccompanied access at home. Problem half are not accompanied!
- 56% parents did discuss the Internet with their children
- 49% Internet use are monitored/supervise

We inform. You choose



Internet Usage (Cont.) - Websites visited



Please note: Multiple mentions possible

We inform. You choose



Chat Room Participation

- 36% visited a chat room
- Chat room participants include, friends 78%, family members 33%, **strangers 23%**
- 28% have made a cyber friend – mostly girls!
- 22% have exchanged own personal info – girls are more adventurous than boys!
- 28% sent pictures of themselves – completely uncontrolled!
- 54% received a picture of a stranger
- 29% have been approached to meet – more girls than boys, girls are targeted by strangers!

We inform. You choose



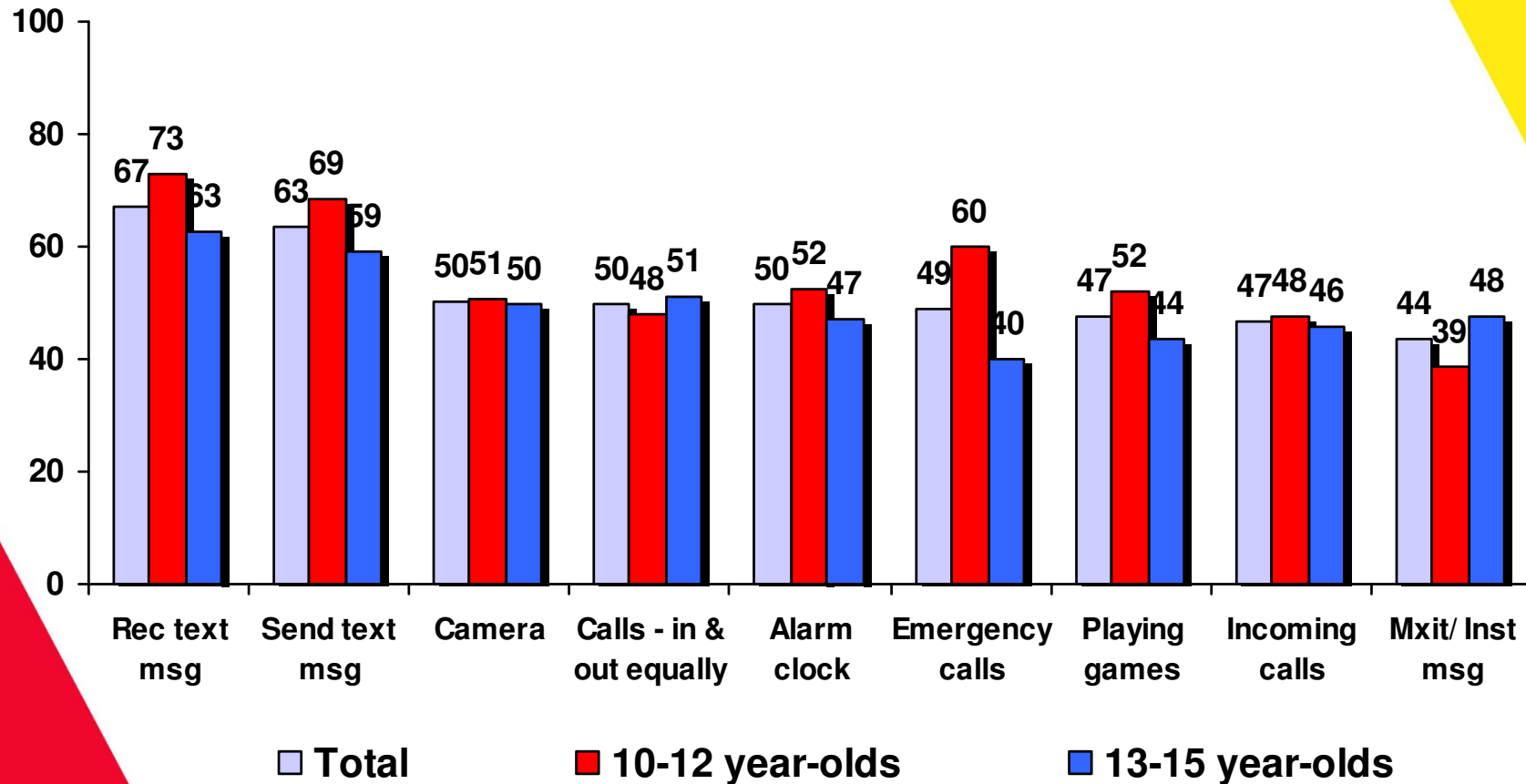
Cell phone Access

- 90% have access to a cell phone – **high access to cell phones increase exposure to potential danger and distressing content!**
- 87% have their own cell phone – most received it from their parents
- 37% cell phone usage are monitor/supervised by parents or other family members who are **mostly concerned about money spent and not the content!**
- 10% often speaks to strangers on their cell phone who they do not know!

We inform. You choose



Cell phone Usage



Please note: Multiple mentions possible

We inform. You choose



Exposure to Distressing Content

- The upsetting content viewed on the Internet/ cell phones was classified as follows:
 - **Solicit:** an approach of a sexual nature was made to the child.
 - **Nudity:** naked pictures of adults (both opposite and same sex as the respondent)
 - **Sex:** pictures of overtly sexual behaviour.
 - **Violence:** images or threats of a violent nature.
 - **Racial/Prejudice:** content that was derogatory to people of a different racial, religious or ethnic group
 - **Language:** offensive or vulgar language, mostly described as “rude” or “swearing”.
 - **Other:** animals in distress, inappropriate games, non-sexual comments on their personal appearance, etc.

We inform. You choose



Exposure to Distressing Content

- 22% have been exposed to distressing content on the Internet – mostly of a sexual nature and nudity
- 14% have been exposed to distressing content in a chat room – having had sexual advances made to them online
- 12% have been exposed to distressing content on cell phones – mostly of a sexual nature
- 7% have been exposed to distressing email content – having had sexual advances made to them, nudity

We inform. You choose



Impact of Distressing Content

- As may be expected, many negative emotions were evoked by exposure to sexual content.
 - **Discomfort** *“I’m feeling uncomfortable because a girl’s body has to be respected and not to be thrown every where, that’s how I feel” Girl, 13-15 years*
 - **Sadness** *“What makes me feel sad is that one of my cousins was in this MXIT thing, and then she took it to another level and met the guy, and she actually fell pregnant” Girl, 13-15 years*
 - **Revulsion** *“It just made me feel queasy... I was like, ‘how can they watch all this stuff? It’s just not right” Boy, 13-15 years*
 - **Fear** *“I don’t really like going on the Internet anymore, because I am scared” Girl, 10-12 years*
 - **Shock** *“It was quite shocking” Boy, 10-12 years*
 - **Anger** *“I felt like I was getting angry” Girl, 10-12 years*

We inform. You choose



Impact of Distressing Content ...effects linger and leads to worse things...

- Nightmares, dreams, repeating images – **long lasting effect!**
- Imitating behavior, practice unsafe sex
- Boys feel social pressure to approve

If you are sleeping in the bed, sometimes in the middle of the night you feel like something on the other side of the bed - but you are dreaming – and then you just look and then the porn is there

Boy, 10-12 years

They sit and they go and watch porn and stuff... they go and the practice unsafe sex – oral and they start doing it, but then they start raping

Boy, 13-15 years

I just pretend to be smiling enough and say, “ja, ja, cool” or whatever and then they’d let me go

Boy, 13-15 years

We inform. You choose

Reporting

It can help to tell someone... *“I just think that if something like that happens, you should go tell someone. I always go to my sister, because she will like comfort me. Girl, 10-12 years*

But telling someone is hard... *“I’ve already talked to my dad about stuff like that. My mom would make a scene. My dad would just explain it to me” Boy, 13-15 years*

We inform. You choose



Where to from here?

The Internet and cell phones are regarded by children in the age group 10 – 15 years as a trusted and intimate friend; therefore intrusion of inappropriate content must be viewed in the light of a violation of both their trust and personal space.

We inform. You choose



Where to from here? - Internet

- 69% indicated that the Internet can be dangerous
- **64% shared the opinion that the Internet should be regulated**

WHY?

- Potential exposure to inappropriate content
- Children not responsible
- Risk of internet addiction
- Children not knowledgeable about the Internet
- People can abuse the Internet
- Risk of viruses

WHY NOT?

- Feared lack of privacy
- Implies a lack of trust
- Know what we're doing
- We're responsible

We inform. You choose



Where to from here? - Cell Phones

- 63% indicated that cell phones can be dangerous
- **60% shared the opinion that cell phones should be regulated**

WHY?

- Potential exposure to inappropriate content
- Children not responsible
- Threat of inappropriate approach in chat room
- Children not knowledgeable about the Internet
- Parents can keep track of who child is communicating with

WHY NOT?

- Feared lack of privacy
- Implies a lack of trust
- Know what we're doing
- We're responsible

We inform. You choose



What to do?

- Banning, censorship, regulation
- Restricted/Controlled access

I think like on the internet options you should be able to put a ban or something. You should be able to close it down, the things we shouldn't see.

Girl, 10-12 years

People should go onto the sites, like maybe you should get an agency that went onto the site, and erased it from the internet existence. That would be easier than asking people or warning people, but still adding it on. .

Boy, 10-12 years

If you want porn you have got to pay a lot of money... you gonna see that the majority is going to cut down like ooh it's so expensive

Boy, 10-12 years

Make it that before you enter a porn site, to have like a password – I mean that's the only thing that would restrict children from these things - from going on.

Boy, 13-15 years

If anything – like publicity or whatever – goes onto the net, it has to be for an age restriction. And it has to be checked or seen, like you send it first to an Internet company and they will approve it, give you like consent of whether it will go on and they will put it on

Girl, 13-15 years

We inform. You choose



What to do - Parents?

- Mothers felt there was a need for someone to police the Internet and fine offenders who put pornography online.
- Other mums felt it was necessary to educate children and establish a trust-relationship with them.
- This points to a crying need for more widespread education about the dangers of communication technology, geared to both parents and children.



We inform. You choose



Thank you

Research Report available from FPB Research Unit

We inform. You choose

