

# Easily accessible porn prevalent among students

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GRAPEVINE—Churches, parents and Christian colleges face the challenge of instilling moral values in a generation of students who have grown up in a “digital Babylon” of easily accessible pornography, the president of a Christian research firm said.



William Struthers (left), professor of psychology at Wheaton College, and David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group, discuss the prevalence of pornography. (Photo / Ken Camp)

David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group and author of *unChristian*, and William Struthers, psychology professor at Wheaton College, led a session on “The Prevalence of Pornography and Its Effect on the Mind” at the [Council for Christian Colleges and Universities International Forum](#) in Grapevine.

“The pornography problem is significant, and it runs deeper than we might imagine,” Kinnaman said.

# Online porn easy to find

Seven out of 10 young adults (71 percent) and half of teenagers (50 percent) encounter what they consider to be pornography at least once a month, regardless whether they are seeking it, researchers discovered.

“Human depravity hasn’t changed, but access has changed,” Kinnaman said.

[Barna researchers](#) found 85 percent of teens and young adults who viewed pornography did so using online videos.

Nearly half (46 percent) of youth ages 13-17 and four out of 10 (42 percent) of young adults ages 18-21 cite “boredom” as their reason for using pornography, he noted.

## Influences values and behavior

Each generation is exposed to pornography at an earlier age, Kinnaman observed. More than one-fourth (27 percent) of young adults ages 25-30 first viewed pornography before puberty, compared to 13 percent of Generation X and 6 percent of Baby Boomers.

The prevalence of pornography shapes overall moral attitudes and value systems, he added. Only about one-third of teens and young adults (32 percent) believe viewing pornography is “usually or always wrong,” compared to more than half (56 percent) who say that about “not recycling.”

It also influences behavior, including a proliferation of user-created images that Kinnaman calls “Porn 2.0.” Six out of 10 (62 percent) of teens and young adults have received a sexually explicit image, usually from a boyfriend or girlfriend, and four out of 10 (41 percent) have sent one, he

noted.

## **Shapes self-image and views about sex**

Three factors contribute to the prevalence of online pornography—anonymity, accessibility and affordability, Struthers said.

Frequent exposure to pornographic images contributes to an increasingly instrumental view of sexual—“physical and mechanical rather than emotional and relational,” he said.

Use of pornography contributes directly to negative self-confidence, social isolation and increased depression, Struthers said. Both men and women find their self-image suffers when they compare themselves to the images they view in pornography, he noted.

“Pornography is an equal opportunity destroyer when it comes to self-confidence,” he said.

## **Loss of empathy**



Rob Rhea

In a related workshop, “Pornography and Gaming: Moral Economics of the Digital World,” Chaplain Rob Rhea from Trinity Western University explored whether electronically mediated experiences differ in degree or kind from real experiences.

Rhea focused particularly on the daily or near-daily use of video games by teenaged and young adult males, asking what impact frequent involvement in violent and sexually graphic video games has on the way young men relate to others.

Even a video game avatar reflects, to some degree, the image of God, he observed.

“A digitized human still represents an aspect of the *imago Dei*, and thus should be respected,” Rhea asserted.

Prolonged and frequent participation in video games—where players are called upon to make choices about whether to commit violent or sexual acts to advance to the next level—may lead to a dehumanized view of life and loss of empathy, he said.

“Being human is inherently connected to the capacity to touch and feel,” he said. “Actions taken upon and with digital figures are connected to the image of God that they reference and depict.”