

Do More Teens Watch Porn Than Attend Church on Sunday?

At least 200,000 under-16-year-olds saw Internet porn in a single month last year, an online video watchdog has said.

The Authority for Television on Demand (ATVOD) has found that one in 20 U.K. visitors to adult websites during December was under 18.

ATVOD is calling for an urgent response from the government, saying children need to be protected from such content.

For the research, the watchdog used data from a panel of around 45,000 people in the U.K. who agreed to have their Internet usage analyzed.

The study revealed that one in five of all U.K. males between the ages of 12 and 17 who went online looked at an adult website.

The same age group was responsible for more than 110,000 visits to one pornographic website alone.

However, ATVOD's report points out, "It is very likely that the scale of use remains understated."

It says this is because mobile phones and tablet computers were excluded from the research for technical reasons—only desktops and laptops were considered.

ATVOD says the videos people looked at were similar to R18 videos, which can only be sold to adults who visit sex shops.

Yet the online porn sites "made equivalent (and stronger) material available to any visitor, of any age," the report says.

The regulator calls for government legislation to help stop money going to online sites that allow under-18-year-olds to access hardcore pornography.

The coalition government says it will “continue to work with industry and others to look at where further action could be taken” on the issue.

The Labor Party backs ATVOD’s call and says, “It is only by threatening to cut off the flow of money that we will force these websites to act responsibly.”

The study comes as Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, which inspects policing in England and Wales, has warned about the effect of online pornography on children.

Its report warns that “violence and sexually explicit material available to children on smartphones and other devices desensitize them and distort and confuse their perceptions of normal behavior.”