

Sex – 4th most searched word for teens online

BY KENNY CHEE

THE next time Junior is surfing the Internet, you might want to watch if he is looking for sexually explicit content.

A global survey, conducted from February last year to last month, and which includes Singapore, showed that “sex” is the fourth-most-searched word online among tweens and teens.

More worrisome is that the word “porn” was the fourth-most-searched term by children aged seven and under. For tweens aged eight to 12, it was their 11th-most-searched term.

Psychiatrists and social workers told *my paper* that they are not surprised by the results for teens, but were puzzled by those for kids aged seven and under.

Some voiced concern that ex-

TOP KEYWORD SEARCHES OF 2009

Teen (13-18)	Tween (8-12)	7 & Under
1. Youtube	Youtube	Youtube
2. Facebook	Google	Google
3. Google	Facebook	Facebook
4. Sex	Sex	Porn
5. MySpace	Club Penguin	Club Penguin
6. Porn	Youtube.com	Yahoo
7. Yahoo	You Tube	Webkinz
8. Youtube.com	Miniclip	You Tube
9. eBay	Yahoo	Games
10. Wikipedia	eBay	Miniclip



Boys	Girls
1. Youtube	Youtube
2. Google	Google
3. Facebook	Facebook
4. Sex	Taylor Swift
5. Porn	Sex
6. eBay	Youtube.com
7. Yahoo	Party in the USA
8. Youtube.com	Miley Cyrus
9. Wikipedia	Yahoo
10. MySpace	MySpace

SOURCE: ONLINEFAMILY.NORTON

posure to sexually graphic content at such an early age could have a detrimental effect on a child’s development and perception of sex later on in life.

The study, done by American information-technology security firm Symantec for the first time and released last month, anonymously tracked

14.6 million global searches on sites such as YouTube, Google and Wikipedia submitted to the OnlineFamily.Norton

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filtering service. Psychiatrist Marcus Tan from Healthway Medical said that the danger is that some teens who are sexually curious might try out the acts they see on pornographic websites and view **promiscuity** as acceptable.

But for those aged seven years and under, his colleague, psychiatrist Thong Jiunn Yew, said that they are unlikely to search for porn online for sexual gratification.

“The children could just be curious about the term, having learnt it at school or heard it from family members without possibly knowing what it is,” he said.

Still, Dr Thong said there is reasonable fear that without parental guidance on Internet use, children who are still developing mentally could view sexually **deviant** acts seen online as the norm.

Senior social worker Yum Sin Ting, from the Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centres’ Youth Infinity, offered another reason why “porn” and “sex” ranked so high in the study. She said that teens and kids might be surfing for sex online as they could be uncomfortable speaking to parents or teachers about it.

“In the case of porn, sometimes teens and children may not be able to differentiate between fantasy and reality,” she explained.

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**SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER
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YOUTH INFINITY**

Social workers also point out that with more children accessing the Internet at a younger age these days, it is important that parents step in early to protect their kids.

According to figures available on the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore website (www.ida.gov.sg), 96 per cent of Singaporeans aged seven to 14 years used the Internet in 2008, a rise from 90 per cent in 2007.

Ms Phyllis Chew, a social worker from the Care Corner Family Service Centre in Admiralty, said that once exposed to porn or experimenting with what they see online, it is easy for teens and kids to become addicted to it.

“For extreme cases, some teenagers who are exposed to pornography online and are not counselled may run the risk of engaging in unlawful activities like molestation or rape in adult-

hood if these (issues) are not addressed when they are teenagers,” said Ms Chew.

Though he cannot provide statistics, Mr Poh Yeang Chong, a manager with Touch Cyber Wellness and Sports, said that his centre has counselled children as young as nine years old who habitually surf porn online. For very young kids, such as those under seven, he said their level of understanding limits how much parents can explain to them about sex.

Parents could thus feel handicapped and may push sex education aside, he said.

Mr Poh said his centre advocates that parents create a safe environment at an early stage for children to surf the Internet.

This includes using software to **filter** websites with mature content, putting a computer in a common area of a home, and parents being around to supervise their kids when they surf the Internet.

“Concurrently, parents need to get a child ready to explore the larger world of the Internet by talking to them about sexuality and making sense of sexual messages in the media,” said Mr Poh.

Ms Chew said that parents should not chastise their kids if the latter are caught surfing for sex and porn online but, rather, discuss it with them patiently.

This is because the kids could become scared and not talk if scolded, and will be un-

willing to communicate with their parents if they are involved in other vices in the future.

Dr Tan also pointed out that parents who peruse porn could send out the wrong signal if their children find out about their habit. “Should the parents try to counsel their children in such a scenario, the latter may feel that they have no moral authority to do so,” he said.

Mr Alex Solana, a 35-year-old harbour pilot and father of two young children, is concerned about the Symantec findings.

He has a password to prevent his four-year-old son from accessing the computer without supervision.

He intends to explain to him what sex is when he grows older and **impress** upon him the importance of responsible Internet usage.

“As a parent, I’m worried about the effects online sex and porn sites would have on my kids,” Mr Solana said.

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HELPDESK 我的字典

Promiscuity: 乱交 luàn jiāo

Deviant: 异常的人
yì cháng de rén

Filter: 过滤器 guò lǜ qì

Impress: 给印象 gěi yìn xiàng