

'Sexting' Study Finds Low Rate Among Young



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This story comes from VOA Special English, Voice of America's daily news and information service for English learners. Read the story and then do the activities in the worksheet at the end.

This is the VOA Special English Technology Report.

New research shows that "sexting" is not as common among young people as earlier findings suggested.

Last week the Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire released two studies. The researchers interviewed more than one thousand five hundred Internet users between the ages of ten and seventeen. Just two and a half percent of them said they had either sent or received naked pictures over their mobile phones or the Internet.

Earlier surveys had suggested that as many as twenty percent of teens were involved in such activities. But one problem is that some of those findings included young adults -- eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds.

Dan Rauzi is senior director for technology programs for the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. He says another problem is confusion among teenagers about what exactly "sexting" means.

DAN RAUZI: "For example, the University of New Hampshire study -- what they found was that what some teens called sexting were really maybe pictures of themselves in a bathing suit."

Mr. Rauzi says these and other suggestive images have sometimes been reported as sexting.

Marian Merritt is the Internet safety advocate for the computer security company Norton. She says the New Hampshire researchers considered this confusion in the latest research.

MARIAN MERRITT: "They segmented the really most egregious or dangerous kinds of images people might be posting and sending from texts that might be more suggestive."

Ms. Merritt says very few of the images in this latest study would have been considered illegal.

MARIAN MERRITT: "The kinds of images or videos that might constitute child pornography is very low. It's only one percent. So the good news is it's a very rare phenomenon and most young people are not engaging in these kinds of behaviors."

Everyone knows young people are early adapters of technology. Dan Rauzi say their experimentation often raises concern with adults -- like the recent fears about sexting. But it also has another effect.

DAN RAUZI: "We get a new technology in and teens, they push that envelope and in some ways as a society help us see all of the possibilities with new technologies, as well."

The new study appeared in the journal Pediatrics. In a second study, the New Hampshire researchers found that very few sexting cases investigated by police led to arrests. Marian Merritt is glad about that.

MARIAN MERRITT: "The other bit of good news is that over the last several years we've seen law enforcement across the country start to take a more modulated approach, and not going for full enforcement of, you know, a mistake - a momentary lapse in judgment from young people who don't understand the power of the images they may be sharing."

Now do the worksheet ...

Level: beginner - intermediate

Time: 30 - 40 minutes

This worksheet will help you learn new vocabulary about research. You will answer questions about a new “sexting” study, and write a short paragraph about whether sexting is a problem among teens.

1. Find the word in each list that doesn't belong. Explain your answer.

- a. interviewers, researchers, behaviors
- b. teens, internet, young adults, children
- c. technology, enforcement, arrest

2. Write the opposite of each word below. You can find the answers in the text.

rare _____

certainty _____

clothes on _____

safe _____

3. Read the following sentences. Choose the sentence that is true.

- “Sexting” happens more often than researchers thought.
- “Sexting” doesn't happen as often as researchers thought.

4. The Crimes Against Children Research Center just released two studies.

Answer the following questions.

How many people were interviewed? _____

How old were they? _____

How many had sent or received naked pictures?

5. Which situation below is an example of "sexting"? Check the correct answer.

sending a picture of yourself in a bathing suit

sending a picture of yourself naked

6. What kind of company is Norton?

7. Who is Marian Merritt?

8. What journal did the new study appear in?

9. Read the sentence below. Is it *true* or *false*? If it is false, correct the sentence.
The researchers found that all "sexting" cases investigated by police led to arrest.

10. Read the last paragraph of the article. Does Marian Merritt think teens can make mistakes? Explain your answer.

OVER TO YOU

Do you think “sexting” is a problem among teenagers? Why / Why not?

Write 5 or 6 sentences to explain your answer.

ANSWER KEY

1. a. behaviors [The other words are people who ask questions.]
 b. internet [The other words are age groups]
 c. technology [The other words have to do with the law.]

2. common
 naked
 confusion
 dangerous

- 3 Sexting" doesn't happen as much as researchers thought.

4. more than 1,500 people
 between the ages of ten and seventeen
 2.5%

5. sending a picture of yourself naked.

6. computer security company

7. the Internet safety advocate for Norton

8. Pediatrics

9. False

The New Hampshire researchers found that very few sexting cases investigated by police led to arrest.

10 students' own answers; Marian Merrit says that some teens don't understand the power of the image.