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Youth, Sex & the Internet: What Practitioners Need to Know

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* Thank you for your interest in this presentation. Please note that analyses included herein are preliminary. More recent, finalized analyses may be available by contacting the Crimes against Children Research Center or CiPHR for further information.

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How YISS-1 & YISS-2 Were Conducted

- Telephone surveys of national samples of 1,500 young people, ages 10 through 17, who were Internet users
- Short parent interviews & 30 minute youth interviews, with parental consent
- Youth participants received \$10 checks and information about Internet safety
- Care taken to preserve youth privacy and confidentiality during both surveys
- YISS-1 interviews: Autumn 1999 to February 2000
- YISS-2 interviews: March to June 2005

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Who We Interviewed

In both surveys, the 1500 youth were

- About half boys & half girls
- About one-third ages 10-13 and two-thirds ages 14-17
- Mirrored the US population in race & ethnicity, but
 - Somewhat fewer African-Americans & Hispanics

3

How Online Victimization Has Changed in the Past 5 Years

What is a change?

- Statistically significant changes

4

Sexual Solicitations & Approaches

DEFINITION:

Online requests

- To engage in sexual activities or sexual talk, or
- Give personal sexual information

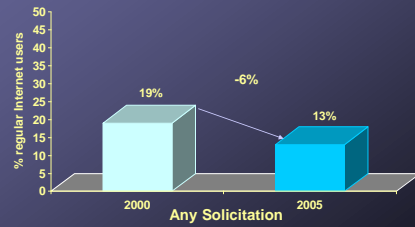
That were

- Unwanted, or
- Made by a person 5 or more years older (whether wanted or not)

5

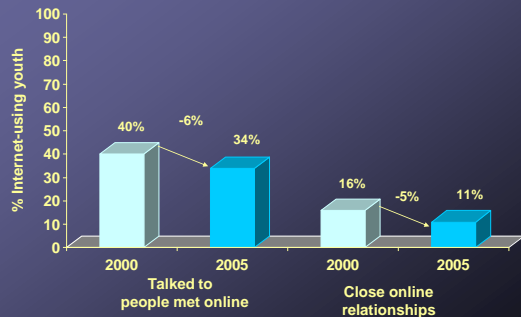
YISS-2 shows a decline in unwanted sexual solicitations and approaches.

- 1 in 7 youth Internet users (13%)
- 1 in 5 (19%) five years ago



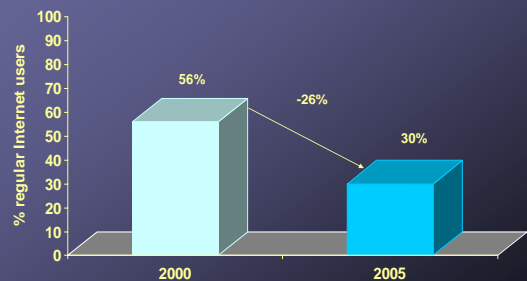
6

Why the decrease? Less Communication with People Met Online



7

Why the decrease? Less Chatroom Use



8

Why the decrease? 5 Years of Prevention Education

- Many of the youth in focus groups had absorbed prevention messages about online predators

9

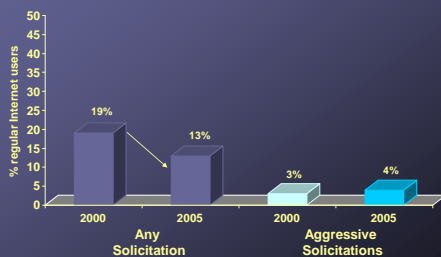
Aggressive Solicitations

- Aggressive solicitations – Offline contact with the solicitor through mail, by telephone or in person – or attempts or requests for offline contact

10

No Decline in Aggressive Solicitations

- 4% of youth Internet users in YISS-2
 - 3% five years ago



11

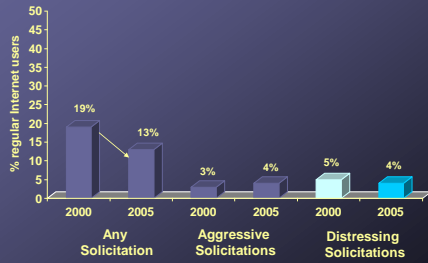
Distressing Solicitations

- Distressing solicitations – Youth rated self as very or extremely upset or afraid as a result of the incident

12

No Decline in Distressing Solicitations

- 4% of youth Internet users in YISS-2
 - 5% five years ago



13

Unwanted Exposures to Pornography

DEFINITION

Without seeking or expecting sexual material

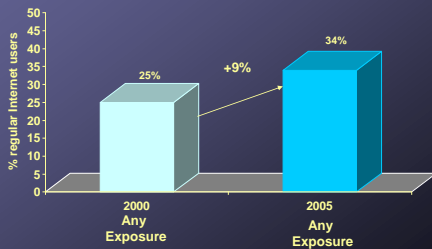
- *Being exposed to pictures of naked people or people having sex*
- *When doing online searches, surfing the web, opening e-mail, Instant Messages, or links*

Distressing exposure – youth rated self very or extremely upset as a result of the incident

14

Unwanted exposures to pornography increased.

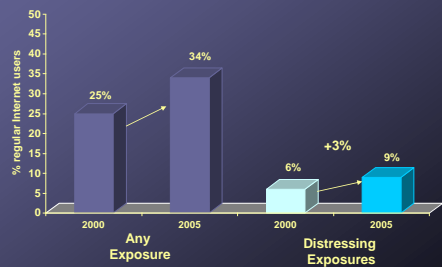
- 1/3 of youth Internet users (34%)
 - 25% five years ago



15

Distressing exposures also increased.

- 9% of youth Internet users
 - 6% five years ago



16

Why the increase? Increased Internet Use

Compared to 2000, the number of youth who used the Internet

- At home
 - Up 17%
- At School
 - Up 17%
- In 3 or more places
 - Up 23%

17

Why the increase? Increased Internet Use

Compared to 2000, the number of youth who used the Internet

- In the past week
 - Up 10%
- 2+ hours at a time
 - Up 10%
- 5 - 7 days per week
 - Up 18%

18

*But increased Internet use, alone,
is not enough...
(Solicitations declined with
increase in use.)*

19

Why the increase? Aggressive & Unethical Marketing of Pornography

- Pop-up & banner ads
- SPAM
- Malware
 - Spyware, adware, pornware
 - Malicious installers
 - Hijacking
 - Unauthorized links

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Why the increase? Technological Changes

- Increased capacity of computers to receive, store and transmit images
 - Size of hard drives, amount of memory
 - DSL lines
 - Digital photography
 - Web cams & streaming video

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Threats & Harassment

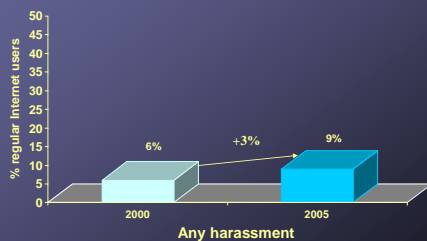
DEFINITION

- Threats or other offensive behavior (not sexual solicitation)
- Sent online to the victim, or
- Sent or posted online about the youth for others to see

22

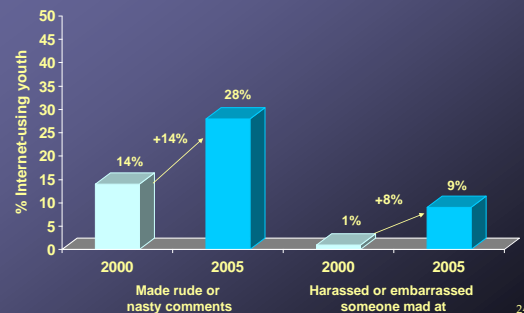
Threats and harassment also increased.

- 1 in 11 youth (9%)
- 1 in 17 five years ago (6%)



23

Why the increase? More youth admitted being rude and harassing others.



24

Why the increase?

Since 2000,

- More Internet access by youth with behavior problems?
- Deteriorating civility?
 - Online bullying and harassment becoming institutionalized among youth?
- More youth-created vehicles for online harassment?
 - "Rating" sites, blogs & online journals, etc.

Sexual Solicitations & Approaches

DEFINITION:

Online requests

- To engage in sexual activities or sexual talk, or
- Give personal sexual information

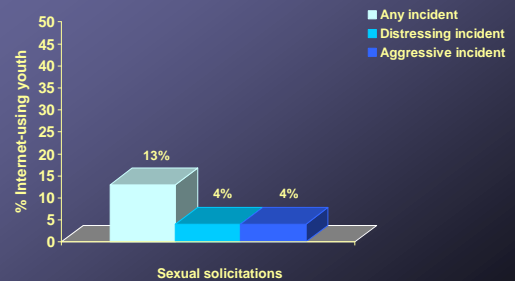
That were

- Unwanted, or
- Made by a person 5 or more years older (whether wanted or not)

Sexual Solicitations Included

- Sexual approaches
- Sexual solicitations
- Online relationships
 - People 5 or more years older with
 - Sexual element to relationship
- Solicitations to run away

1 in 7 youth (13%, n = 200) were solicited.
Aggressive solicitations – 4%
Distressing solicitations – 4%



Characteristics of Solicited Youth

- 30% were boys (34% in 2000)

Sexual solicitations remained rare among pre-teen youth

- 10-year-olds reported no solicitations
- 11 & 12 year-olds reported 10% of incidents
 - Compared to 11% in 2000

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Characteristics of Solicitors

- Male – 73% of solicitations
- More solicitors were described as adults
 - 39% in YISS-2, compared to 24% in YISS-1
 - 30% described as ages 18 to 25

30

Characteristics of Solicitors

Most youth who met solicitors online were not certain of solicitors' ages.

- Only 13% were very or extremely certain

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Characteristics of Solicitors

- Increase in % of solicitors that youth knew in person
 - Prior face-to-face acquaintances
 - 14% in YISS-2
 - 3% in YISS-1

32

What happened?

- Home computers (79%)
- **Fewer** began in chatrooms
 - About 1/3 (38%)
 - Almost 2/3 five years ago (65%)
- **More** began with Instant Messages (40%)
 - 24% five years ago

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What Youth Said

- **Girl, 14:** "I was chatting on the Internet and this guy just popped up in an Instant Message and started talking really dirty to me and saying things that I had never heard of before. He told me he was 30 years old and then he said, 'LOL' (laugh out loud)."

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What Youth Said

- **Girl, 12:** "I went into the chatroom and they asked me if I wanted to have cybersex. I was asking them what kind of music they liked and stuff."
- **Boy, 11,** who was playing an online game with a man, 20: "He asked me something personal, something about a man's privates."

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Aggressive Solicitations

- 1/3 of solicitors were aggressive
 - 23% -- asked youth to meet face-to-face
 - 11% -- called on telephone
 - 5% -- came to youths' homes
 - 4% -- gave money or gifts
 - 3% -- sent mail to youth
 - 1% -- bought travel tickets for youth

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Sexual Assaults

- 2 girls were sexually assaulted by men they met online
 - 1 stereotypical online meeting case
 - 1 attempted rape, after a friend of the victim invited a man the victim met online to a party

37

Solicitations for Sexual Photos: A New Concern

4% of youth Internet users (n = 57) said solicitors asked them to take sexual photographs of themselves and send them online to solicitors

38

What Youth Said

- **Boy, 15:** A teenage girl "asked me to get naked on 'cam' but I just ignored her."
- **Girl, 16:** "This guy IM'ed [me] and asked me to take off my shirt."

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What Youth Said

- **Girl, 16:** "I was on AOL Instant Messenger and this boy, who was a friend that I had known for a long time, asked me to finger myself in front of the web cam. I just told him that if he ever asked me that again, I would never talk to him again."

40

What Youth Said

- **Girl, 12:** A man in his 30s “asked me to describe myself and to stick in a pen in my private parts and set up a digital camera and show the parts of my body.”
- **Girl, 17:** A man in a Yahoo chat room “offered me \$1000 to expose myself to him. I recorded [what he wrote] and gave it to the police.”

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Sending Sexual Photos to Solicitors

- 1 youth admitted to sending a sexual photo to a solicitor
 - A 16-year-old boy sent his picture to a 23-year old woman

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Sexual Photos of Solicitors

In 7% of incidents (n = 14), solicitors sent sexual photos of themselves to youth

43

What Youth Said

- **Girl, 11:** A man who said he was 19 “was showing his body parts.”
- **Girl, 15:** An 18-year-old male “[had] a web cam. I wanted to see what he looked like. He was naked. Then I clicked off and blocked him. [It happened because] he was being perverted. I was tricked.”

44

What Youth Said

- **Girl, 16:** A 35-year-old man “kept taking nude pictures of himself and sending them to me. He was writing stuff like how big his cock is.”

45

How Solicitations Ended

Youth ...

- Blocked or removed solicitor from buddy list – 30%
- Logged off – 25%
- Left site – 22%
- Told solicitor to stop – 16%
- Ignored – 11%

Youth ...

- Let parent or teacher handle – < 1%
- Called police or other authority – 1%

46

Most solicitations were not distressing.

Two-thirds of incidents (66%) were neither

- Very upsetting nor
- Very frightening

47

Stress Symptoms among Solicited Youth

In 25% of the incidents, youth reported at least one of the following symptoms of stress

- Hyper-arousal
- Avoidance reactions, or
- Intrusive recollections

At a level of 3 or higher on a scale of 1 to 4

48

Online Relationships with Older People

- 3% of youth had formed close friendships with people 5 or more years older they met online
- 1% had a face-to-face meeting with an older person they met online

49

Most relationships with older people seemed benign.

- A boy, 16, became friends with a 40-year-old woman in a chatroom about psychic phenomena. They exchanged pictures and telephone calls. They met face-to-face in a public place. One of his parents and a friend went along. He said, "She's really nice."

50

Most relationships with older people seemed benign.

- An 11-year-old boy became friends with a young man, 18, in a gaming site. There was no exchange of pictures or offline contact of any sort. The boy said, "He is a nice guy. He has not done anything bad."

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Online Relationships with Sexual Elements

- 8 youth (0.5%) reported online relationships with sexual elements, with people who were 5 or more years older
- Sexual elements
 - Asking for a sexually explicit photo
 - Sending a sexually explicit photo
 - Physical sexual contact
 - Other behavior that showed sexual interest

52

Online Relationships with Sexual Elements

- A 12-year-old girl met an 18-year-old man online, through Instant Messages. She became uncomfortable when he asked her to have cybersex. She said, "I never gave him my e-mail. I would never give [out my] address, city or anything."

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Online Relationships with Sexual Elements

- A 16-year-old girl became afraid of a 32-year-old man she met online. He wanted a sexual picture of her and used the Internet to find out personal information about her. She said, "When he told me all the things that he knew about me, [it] was enough to make me stop going to that site altogether. He tried to contact me after this happened and I wouldn't send a reply back to him. He hasn't bothered me since."

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Online Relationships with Sexual Elements

- 2 girls and 1 boy, all age 17, had consensual sexual relationships with people 5 or more years older they met online
- The older people were ages 22, 23 & 24

55

Solicitations: Summary

Fewer youth Internet users reported sexual solicitations and approaches compared to 5 years ago.

However, there was no decline in aggressive or distressing solicitations

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Solicitations: Summary

Solicitors are still primarily targeting adolescents.

A surprisingly large number of youth reported being solicited for sexual photos.

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Unwanted Exposures to Pornography

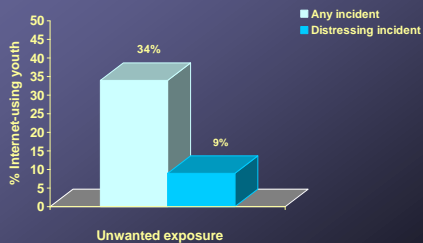
DEFINITION

Without seeking or expecting sexual material

- Being exposed to pictures of naked people or people having sex
- When doing online searches, surfing the web, opening e-mail, Instant Messages or links
- Distressing exposures– Youth rated self as very or extremely upset as a result of the incident

58

1 in 3 youth (34%, n = 512) were exposed to pornography they did not want to see.
Distressing exposures – 9%



59

Characteristics of Exposed Youth

- Girls, 46% & boys 54%
 - Compared to girls, 42% & boys 58% in 2000
- 10, 11 & 12 year-olds reported 13% of exposures
 - Compared to 7% in 2000

60

Sources of Exposures

More youth were exposed while **surfing** the Web – 83%, compared to 71% five years ago

- Online searches, 40% of incidents
- Clicking on links in websites, 17%
- Pop-up ad, 14%
- Misspelled Web addresses, 12%
- Other ways, 13%

61

Where did exposures occur?

- **More** happened on **home computers** – 79%, compared to 67% five years ago. But many incidents happened in other places
- School, 9%
- Friends' homes, 5%
- Other places including libraries, 5%

62

More Than Just Naked People

- In 43% of incidents, youth saw pictures of naked people only
- 57% involved more explicit images
 - People having sex – 37%
 - Sexual violence – 13%
 - “Animals or other strange things” – 10%

63

What Youth Said

- **Girl, 13:** “I was getting directions for my Mom ...and I was trying to click the Destination part of Mapquest and a website came up that had a web cam and a picture of a naked lady on there. It had pretty graphic words on there also.”
- **Boy, 13:** “It was a picture of Homer and Marge. [They were] naked and you can probably guess the rest.”

64

What Youth Said

- **Boy, 14:** "I opened a link. It took me to a site and there was a pop up [of] a huge orgy and there were other things. Someone sent me [the] link and I guess there was a virus on his computer because he didn't mean to send it."

65

What Youth Said

- **Boy, 15:** "I was talking to my cousin by AOL Instant Messenger when one popup with porn [came up]. Then more porn pop ups kept coming and I had to shut my computer down. It may have happened when I disabled the pop up blocker so I could listen to music and forgot to bring it back."

66

What Youth Said

- **Boy, 10:** "I was searching in Google and a link came up that I clicked on, and it was a website that had naked people on it.... I closed it right away. Then pop-up ads kept coming up that were about dirty things. This was only an accident and I told my parents."
- **Boy, 12:** "I was going to a froot loops site... It took me to this weird website. I saw people with half sex changes who looked part male and part female and who were naked. I spelled 'froot' wrong. ... I spelled it 'fruit' instead of 'froot'."

67

Two youth told about stumbling upon child pornography.

- **Boy, 11,** doing an online search. "[I saw] naked men with young boys on the screen."
- **Boy, 17,** looking for games from a computer in his bedroom: "I clicked on a link and I did not know what it was. It took me to an underage porn site, which is illegal... I know you're not allowed to go to those. It was disguised as a different link."

68

Why did exposures happen?

- "I spelled a word wrong."
- "I guess I wasn't being careful."
- "I was not clear enough doing the search."
- "I was dumb enough to click on the link."
- "I didn't read the information underneath the link."

69

Why did exposures happen?

- **Boy, 17:** "People who run porn sites purposely buy old domain web sites and they change the web sites to what [they're] not supposed to be."
- **Boy, 17:** "I go to web sites about racing dirt bikes and when I'm on there pop-up ads come up with naked pictures of girls and guys. ... Some of the sites have swimsuit calendars on them and it kind of opens the door for other pornographic images to appear."

70

Why did exposures happen?

- **Boy, 17:** "Whoever put it on there wanted someone to get interested. Someone who wanted to see those kinds of pictures would click on it and it would spark an interest."
- **Boy, 17:** "The porn market is really big. ... I think they just want young people to go there."

71

Exposures Happened During Searches for...

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Youth interests | School projects |
| • X-Men | • Romeo and Juliet |
| • Skate board tricks | • Famous poets |
| • Drum beats | • Benjamin Franklin |
| • Cheerleading stunts | • Fire prevention |
| • Cars | • DNA |
| • Song lyrics | • Liquids |
| • Hairstyles | • Squid |
| • Patches for software | • Forensic serology |

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Stress Symptoms among Exposed Youth

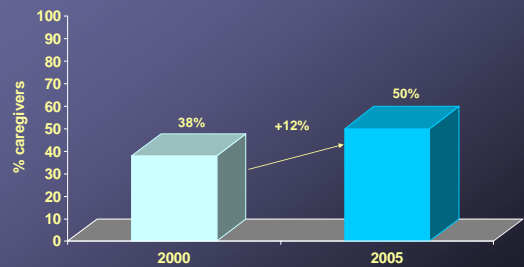
In 19% of incidents, youth reported at least one of the following symptoms of stress

- Hyper-arousal
- Avoidance reactions, or
- Intrusive recollections

At a level of 3 or higher on a scale of 1 to 4

73

Parent Reports: Use of Filtering, Blocking & Monitoring Software



74

Exposure to Pornography: Summary

The number of youth Internet users reporting unwanted exposures to pornography is very large, and it has increased substantially in the past 5 years.

75

Exposure to Pornography: Summary

- These increases in exposure happened at the same time that the use of filtering, blocking & monitoring software increased.

76

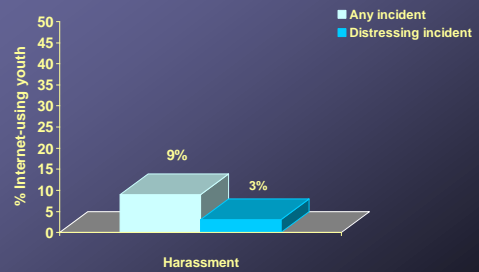
Threats & Harassment

DEFINITION

- Threats or other offensive behavior (not sexual solicitation)
- Sent online to the victim, or
- Posted online about the youth for others to see or sent to others

77

1 in 11 youth (9%, n = 130) were harassed online.
Distressing harassment – 3%



78

Characteristics of Harassed Youth

- 58% girls, 42% boys
- 72% of the episodes occurred to high school age youth (14 – 17)
 - Same as in 2000

79

Characteristics of Harassers

- 44% were offline friends or acquaintances
 - Compared to 28% five years ago
- Half (50%) male, 28% female, 21% unknown
- Most under 18 (58%)
 - 63% in 2000

80

What happened?

- Most (85%) happened on a home computer
- Instant Messages (47%)
- E-mails (13%)
- Chatrooms (11%)

81

What Youth Said...

- **Girl, 12:** "These people from school were calling me a prostitute and whore ... and saying I was raped. [It happened] because I'm an easy target. I didn't let it bother me until about a month ago and [then] I started getting physical with people."

82

What Youth Said...

- **Boy, 14:** "I have my own ... website and I have my own page on it and someone posted something bad about me on it."
- **Boy, 15:** "I was playing a first person shooter game and unintentionally offended this person who became very serious and began to threaten me by saying if this was real life he would physically harm me. [It happened because he] was unable to accept this was just a game."

83

Stress Symptoms among Harassed Youth

In 34% of the incidents, youth reported at least one of the following symptoms of stress

- Hyper-arousal
- Avoidance reactions, or
- Intrusive recollections

At a level of 3 or higher on a scale of 1 to 4

84

Threats & Harassment: Summary

Online harassment appears to be growing, particularly among youth who know each other in person.

85

Threats & Harassment: Summary

Online harassment may have more impact on youth, especially when it occurs among friends and schoolmates.

86

Have youth gotten prevention information?

87

Parents' Views on Prevention

Parents have talked to their children about:

- Giving out personal information online (90%)
- Chatting with strangers (87%)
- Responding to offensive messages (79%)
- Talking online about sex (77%)
- Dealing with x-rated SPAM or pop-ups (77%)

88

Children's Views on Prevention

Children say their parents or teachers have talked to them about how to avoid:

- X-rated pictures online (66%)
- People online who might try to talk to them about sex (58%)
- Those online who might bother, threaten or harass (65%)

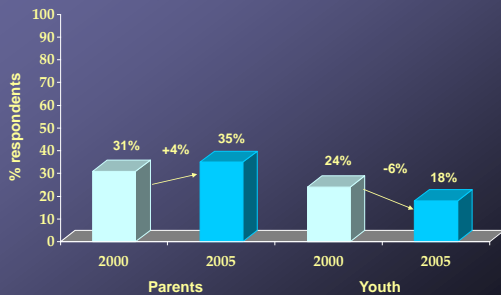
89

Law Enforcement Safety Presentations

- About 1 in 5 youth had attended a presentation about Internet safety that was put on by law enforcement
 - 21% (n = 321)

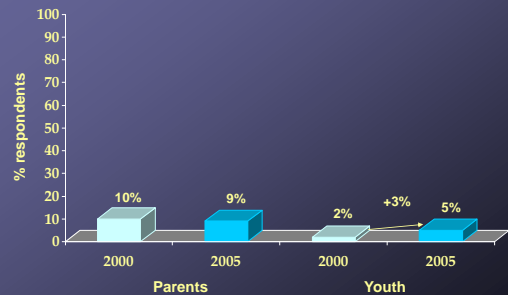
90

Did more parents or youth know about places to report incidents?



91

Did more parents or youth know about the CyberTipline?



92

Knowledge of the CyberTipline

Youth who attended law enforcement Internet safety presentations were more likely to know about reporting and the CyberTipline

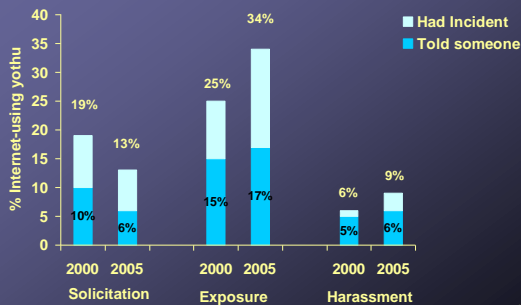
- 23% knew of places to report
 - Compared to 17% w/o LEA safety info
- 8% knew of the CyberTipline
 - Compared to 5% w/o LEA safety info

93

Youth remain reluctant to reveal unwanted solicitations, exposures and harassment.

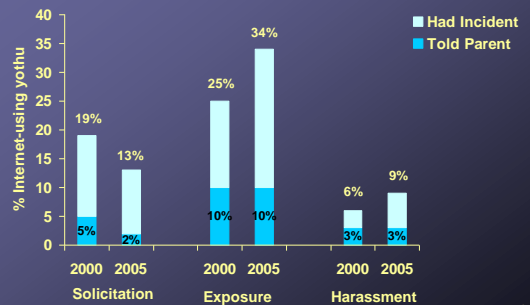
94

Overall, more harassment incidents were disclosed to someone.



95

Few youth told parents what happened.



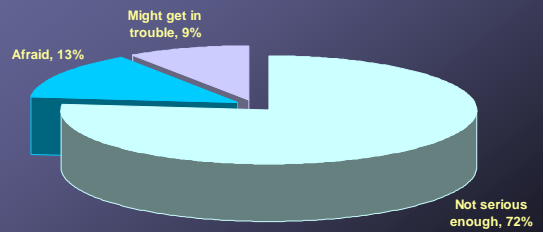
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Few incidents were reported to authorities.



97

Why didn't youth tell?



98

Prevention: Summary

Internet safety information from law enforcement seems to be having some impact.

99

Prevention: Summary

More families are using filtering and blocking software.

100

Prevention: Summary

No change in the low rates of disclosure, particularly among reports to authorities.

101

Are youth doing risky things online?

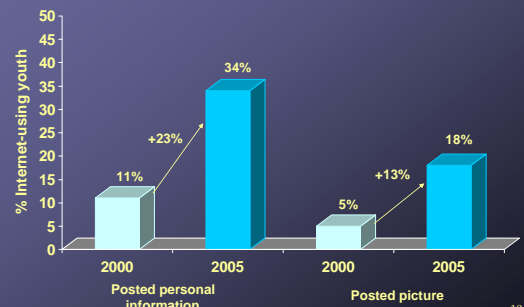
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Online Risky Behavior

- Giving out personal information or pictures online
- Engaging in sexual behaviors online
- Being rude or using the Internet to harass or embarrass

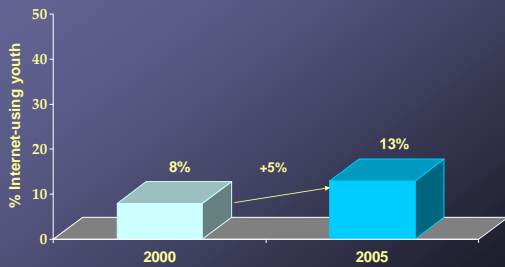
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Posting Personal Information Online



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Going to X-Rated Sites on Purpose



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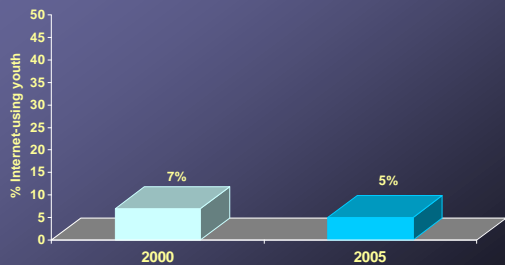
Going to X-Rated Sites on Purpose

Youth found out about sites they went to through:

- Another youth (52%)
- An online search not about sex (33%)
- A pop-up or other ad (27%)
- SPAM (14%)
- Someone they met online (1%)

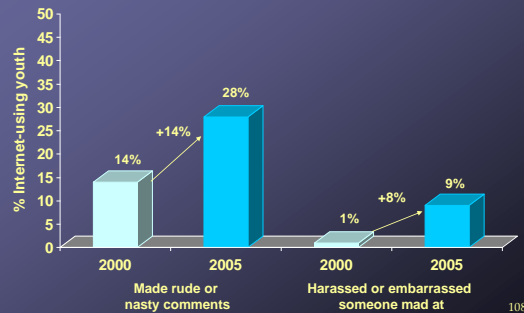
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Talking about Sex with Strangers Online



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Using the Internet to Harass



108

Risky Behavior: Summary

A lot of risky Internet use and unwanted experiences were not solitary.

109

Risky Behavior: Summary

Still relatively low levels of risky sexual behavior.

110

Risky Behavior: Summary

Particularly large increases in youth being rude, nasty, and harassing others online.

111

What should you find out about the Internet in specific cases?

112

For all youth acting out online, find out...

For households

- Is there Internet access?
 - Where is the computer?
 - Is it in the common area?
 - Does it have software to filter or block sexual material or otherwise monitor Internet use?
 - Is there a web camera/scanner/digital camera?
 - Do adults need education about Internet safety?

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For youth acting out sexually online find out...

Are adults using computers to...

- Access adult porn sites?
- Access child pornography?
- Trade child pornography?
- Visit chat rooms that discuss sex with minors?
- Troll for victims?
 - Collect profiles
 - Hang out in teen chat rooms
- Communicate with victims?
- Store produced child pornography?

114

Find out...

Are youth

- Using suggestive screen names or posting suggestive profiles?
- Visiting porn sites?
- Talking online to adults about sex?
 - Cybersex
- Using online dating sites?
- Making friends with adults online?
 - Gifts?
 - Telephone contact?
 - Face-to-face meetings?

115

Find out...

Are youth

- Being photographed in sexual positions?
- Sending or posting sexual pictures of themselves?
- Being exposed to online pornography?
 - How?
- Being sexually solicited online?

116

For youth who have been the target
of harassment, find out...
Are youth

117

RECOMMENDATIONS

118

*The decline in sexual
solicitations is good news.*

- More young people are confining their online communications to people they know in person.
- Real possibility that much of this decline can be attributed to prevention programs
- Continue prevention messages

119

Next Steps for Prevention Programs

- Prevention should be aimed at teens – Few younger kids being targeted
 - Kids in middle and high school
 - Acknowledge teen interests & independence
 - Acknowledge teen interest in sex
 - Different messages for different ages
 - Don't leave out older kids – those 16 & 17

120

Next Steps for Prevention Programs

Focus on teen desires for love and romance

- Illusions of love
- Romantic fantasy

121

Next Steps for Prevention Programs

Be frank with youth about online sexual activities

- Going to x-rated chatrooms
- Talking about sex with people they meet online
- Looking at pornography
- Cybersex

122

Prevention of Sexual Photos

- Possibly increasing youth involvement in the making and transmission of sexual photos
 - Teach what is illegal
 - Dangers of permanent dissemination of pictures
 - Understanding of voyeurism and exhibitionism as perversions
 - Educate parents about misuse of webcams and digital cameras

123

Acquaintances as Solicitors

Increasing solicitations from acquaintances

- No evidence these incidents are less harmful or disturbing
- Much sexual victimization among youth is perpetrated by peers
- Use prevention to discourage adolescent offending

124

Next Steps for Prevention Programs

Take on harassment issue

- Increase in harassment and signs of more elaborate forms

125

Harassment Prevention

- Describe problem effectively for kids, parents and officials
- Include online harassment in anti-bullying programs in schools
- Propose codes of conduct
- Urge strong sanctions by schools and youth groups for online harassment

126

The Pornography Exposure Problem

- Focus on “unwanted” part of Internet porn exposure
- Education for kids about these practices
- Inoculate kids for exposure
- Make security easier, built in, less dependent on individual initiative, technical knowledge
- Teach more sophisticated lessons about protecting privacy

127

Promote Reporting

- Reporting is low and knowledge about reporting declined
- Desensitization, cynicism, discouragement, ignorance

128

Motivate People to Report:

Teach reasons to report

129

Increase the number and visibility of reporting options.

130

Enhance Reporting Mechanisms.

131

Enhance Internet Accountability.

132

Evaluate and improve filtering and blocking software solutions.

133

Train mental health, youth service and educational professionals to recognize and respond to Internet problems.

134

Research

- Effective prevention for at risk youth
- Group dynamics of risky online behavior

135