



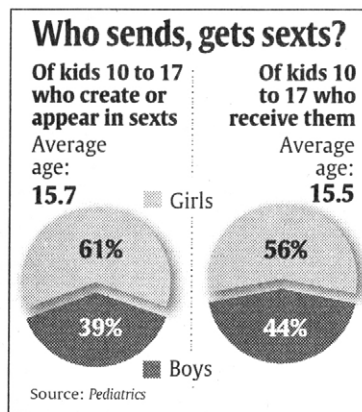
# Study: Sexting not epidemic among minors

By Kim Painter  
Special for USA TODAY

Teen sexting is a real problem, but not the pervasive scourge some reports have suggested, according to the first detailed national study on youths who share sexual images on phones and the Internet.

Just 2.5% of kids ages 10 to 17 admit to creating or appearing in such photos or videos, and even fewer produce images that amount to pornography, says the study, published today in *Pediatrics*.

"Many of these are very benign pictures" — of kids who might strike a sexual pose, but who remain clothed, often wearing bathing suits or underwear, says lead author Kimberly Mitchell, a researcher at



By Julie Snider, USA TODAY

the Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire.

Parents might worry about those

photos but should know that there's no epidemic of teens "unwittingly producing child pornography," co-author Janis Wolak says.

Researchers conducted phone interviews with 1,560 youths nationwide and asked about exchanges of "nude or nearly nude" images of minors in the past year. They found:

- ▶ 1.8% created such images of themselves; just five kids (0.3%) said they appeared in someone else's photos; and six (0.4%) said they photographed someone else.

- ▶ 1.3% said they appeared in or created images that showed naked breasts, genitals or bottoms.

- ▶ 7% said that they have received such images.

**"If their findings are true and the extent of this is less than previous**

studies have shown, it's a very good thing," says Bill Albert, chief program officer at the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

In 2008, his group released a widely cited online survey in which 20% of teens (ages 13 to 19) said they had shared "nude or semi-nude" pictures of themselves. The study was "less rigorous" and involved an older group, Albert says. But, he adds, it's possible that kids were more forthcoming online.

"I think this (2011 study) is the most credible study to date," says Larry Magid, co-director of ConnectSafely.org.

Parents should discuss the dangers of sexting with their kids, he says, but keep it in perspective: "99% of kids are not doing it."