

## Children 'addicted to porn by primary school' as pre-school social media use revealed



Primary school children are getting addicted to porn, a leading psychologist has warned after the shocking scale of social media use among three to five-year-olds was revealed (File Image). Picture: [Alamy](#)

By Rebecca Henrys and Aaron Goldsmith

Primary school children are getting addicted to porn, a leading psychologist has warned after the shocking scale of social media use among three to five-year-olds was revealed.

After a bombshell report warned that more than 800,000 of the small children were engaging with social media, Dr Charlotte Armitage told LBC that she is seeing an alarming rate of porn addiction in that age group.

Dr Armitage, author of *Generation Zombie*, told LBC's James Hanson: "I've got families whose children are addicted to porn and they're in primary school, children who are up till 4am in the morning and won't go to sleep.

**“Kids who are coming into school and falling asleep during exams, during the SATs exam. It’s really damaging for the child.”**



**The analysis applied the latest population data to previous research by internet and communications watchdog Ofcom which found that almost four in 10 parents of a three to five year-old reported that their child uses at least one social media app or site. Picture: [PA](#)**

**Her intervention came after former minister Lord Nash described the figures released by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) as “deeply alarming”.**

**Responding to the shocking figures, Dr Armitage said: “I’m absolutely flabbergasted and I’m really disappointed. I’ve been working in this area for a really long time and to hear that 800,000 children aged three to five on social media when we know what the risks of that are is just shocking to me.”**

**The analysis applied the latest population data to previous research by internet and communications watchdog Ofcom which found that almost four in 10 parents of a three to five year-old reported that their child uses at least one social media app or site.**

With roughly 2.2 million children in this age group as of 2024, the CSJ said this suggests there could be 814,000 users of social media between three and five years old.

Describing the risks of pre-school social media use, Dr Armitage explained: “When a child has access to short form content, the brain gets used to receiving the reward of dopamine for every new video.

“Then when we get these children into school, they struggle to focus, they struggle to sit still, they can’t read a book, their attentiveness is compromised as a result of that.”

In his response to the findings, Lord Nash said: “This research is deeply alarming. With hundreds of thousands of under-fives now on these platforms, children who haven’t yet learned to read, being fed content and algorithms designed to hook adults, should concern us all.

“We need a major public health campaign so parents better understand the damage being done, and legislation that raises the age limit for social media to 16 whilst holding tech giants to account when they fail to keep children off their platforms.”

The peer has previously pressed for action to prevent under-16s accessing social media, as part of the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

His call comes as a world-first law is due to come into effect in Australia next month.

From December 10, social media platforms will have to take reasonable steps to prevent under-16s in Australia from having a social media account.

In the UK, there have been increasing calls from campaigners for stronger policies to stop phone use in schools, but the Government maintains that schools already have the power to ban phones, and that it supports headteachers to take the steps needed to prevent disruption.

The CSJ is advocating that smartphones are banned in all schools “to break the 24-hour cycle of phone use”, and said a public health campaign is needed “to highlight the harms of social media”.

Last week Health Secretary Wes Streeting said he worries “that we abandon young people to the Wild West of the online world”, as he told of his concerns “about the mind-numbing impact of doomscrolling on social media on young minds and our neurodevelopment”.