

## *Youth & the Internet: What You Need to Know*

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## *We talked to...*

- Youth Internet users, ages 10 – 17, about unwanted sexual requests & online bullying
- Police about offenders they arrested who used the Internet

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## *Questions*

- What did kids say about sexual requests on the Internet?
- What did police tell us about Internet sexual offenses?
- What did kids tell us about online bullying?

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## *Questions*

- How do family offenders and other people kids know use the Internet to commit sex offenses?
- What did police tell us about child pornography?

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### *What did kids say about sexual requests on the Internet?*

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### *Online Sexual Requests*

- 1 in 7 youth Internet users said they got unwanted sexual requests in the past year.
  - Asked for sexual information about themselves
  - Asked to do sexual things

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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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### *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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### *Requests for Sexual Photographs*

Some youth (about 4%) said people on the Internet asked them to take sexual photographs of themselves

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### *What Youth Said...*

- **Boy, 15:** A teenage girl “asked me to get naked on a webcam but I just ignored her.”
- **Girl, 16:** “This guy sent me an Instant Message 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.”

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### *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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### *Most sexual requests did not bother youth, but...*

In 1/3 of incidents youth said they were very or extremely upset or afraid

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### *Trying to make offline contact*

- Some youth (about 4%) said the solicitors tried to make contact in person
  - By telephone
  - Trying to set up a meeting

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### *Online Relationships with Older People*

- A few youth (3%) 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

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### *Most relationships with adults seemed appropriate.*

- 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."

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### Most relationships with adults seemed appropriate.

- 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

- A small number of youth reported online relationships with sexual elements, with adults 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

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### 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

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### *What did police tell us about Internet sexual offenses?*

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### *What the newspapers say...*

“Man Charged with Raping  
Girl He Met on Internet”

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### *What some people in the U.S. believe*

Offenders are pedophiles who

- Use the Internet to target quite young children
- Lie about their identities, ages & motives
- Trick children into giving their names and addresses
- Abduct children and commit violent crimes

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### *Who were the victims?*

Almost all were teenagers

– Most were 13, 14 & 15 years old

- 25% boys

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### *Almost all of the offenders were men*

They met victims in chat rooms and through profiles, via Instant Messages and e-mail.

They befriended and romanced victims.

- Online communications over a month or more
- Pictures, phone calls, gifts, money

Many victims felt love or close friendship for offenders.

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### *Offenders were much older than victims*

Three-quarters were age 26 or older.

Many offenders were open about being older men who wanted to meet a teenager for sex

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### *Most cases involved face-to-face sexual encounters*

First meetings often occurred in victims' or offenders' homes or in motels.

In **3/4** of cases where offenders and victims met face-to-face, they met each other more than once.

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### *Some cases involved violence or trickery*

Only about 5% of U.S. cases involved violence

- Forcible rape and attempted rape
- Sadistic sex

Some cases involved lies and trickery

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### *Why were young teen victims falling for much older men online?*

Internet communications promote intimacy and allow relationships to develop based on fantasy and projection.

- Physical appearance is not a factor
- Lack of social constraints – no watchful adults or peers
- Anonymity leads to self-disclosure leads to intimacy
- Sexual boundaries are crossed online
- Investment in relationship
- Gradual movement to face-to-face meeting

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### *Motivation to Molest Adolescents*

Offenders may

- Enjoy admiration from victims who are sexually responsive but naïve
- Want to relive adolescence – feel popular & desired
- Fear adult partners, feel safer with young partners
- Enjoy feeling in control of the relationship

(Nunez, J., 2003)

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### *Motivation to Molest Adolescents*

- Age of victim may not fully reflect sexual interests of offender
  - Unsuccessful in forming relationships with adults
  - Interested in younger children but no access

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### *The Internet may help to...*

#### Lower internal restraints of offenders

- Pornography
- Online validation
  - Chat rooms and other online forums
- Acceptance of sexual fantasy and role play online
  - Cybersex

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### *The Internet may help to...*

#### Lower external barriers to offending

- Adolescents are easily accessible online
  - High rates of Internet use
  - Easy to keep relationship secret
  - Enough freedom to attend face-to-face meetings

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### *The Internet may help to...*

#### Lower resistance of victims

Some youth were lonely, troubled, had poor relationships with parents, lacked close peer relationships

- Such youth may be more likely to look to Internet for forming close relationships

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### *The Internet may help to...*

#### Lower resistance of victims

- Dynamics of online relationships
- Normal developmental factors put adolescents at risk:
  - Easily aroused
  - Curious about sex
  - Vulnerable to flattery
  - Attracted to risk taking

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*What did kids tell us about online bullying?*

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### *Online Bullying*

- Threats or other mean or offensive behavior
- Sent online to the victim, or
- Posted online about the youth for others to see or sent to others

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### *Online bullying*

- Close to 10% of kids who used the Internet said they had been bullied online
  - Many were very or extremely upset by what happened

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### *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."

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### *A case from a child psychologist...*

Girl, 16

- She was stalked and harassed by a boy who was in love with her. He used the Internet to send her threats and pornography that showed sexual things he wanted to do to her.
- When she spoke up, he threatened to bring a gun to school and to commit suicide.

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### *How do family member and other people kids know use the Internet to commit sex offenses?*

In many Internet sex crimes, the offender and victim did not meet online.

- Crimes were committed by family members and acquaintances of victims

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### *These sex offenders used the Internet to...*

- Show pornography to victims
- Communicate with and seduce victims
- Send sexual pictures to victims
- Solicit child pornography from victims
- Distribute child pornography of victims

Many victims were age 12 or younger.

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### *Making Child Pornography Images*

Many of the sex offenders who used the Internet took pornographic pictures of victims

- Both offenders who knew victims and offenders who met victims online

Many offenders possessed child pornography

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### *A case from a child psychologist...*

Boy, 15

- Substance abuse, depression. He spent many hours a day online . He played violent role playing games, during which he was approached by strangers “trying to involve him in child porn.” He became fascinated by these approaches and began chatting with others on the subject.

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### *What did police tell us about child pornography?*

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### *Most offenders had hardcore images*

Most offenders had pictures that showed

- Very young children
- Graphic sexual activity
- Sexual contact with an adult
- About 1 in 5 offenders had pictures that showed sexual violence to children

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### *A police case...*

A middle school teacher & coach

- A computer tech found child pornography on the teachers computer during a security check of school computers.
- The teacher also used a digital camera to take pictures of the lower halves of students' bodies and of other teachers' backsides.

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### *A police case...*

Middle school assistant principal

- Arrested for CP on his home computer
- Personable, well-liked
- A convicted sex offender who had legally changed his name twice
- Failed to register as an offender
- Gave a cellmate as a reference on the school district application

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### *Of the offenders who possessed CP ...*

Over half (55%) committed or attempted child sexual abuse and possessed CP, with both crimes discovered in the same investigation

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### *Diversity of CP Possessors*

Most were male, white and over 25.  
Otherwise, they were quite diverse.

- Variety of personal characteristics
- Differing motives for possessing CP
- Varying levels of involvement with CP

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### *Inconsistent Link between CP Possession and Child Molesting*

CP possessors are not always pedophiles

- Attracted to adolescents
- Sexual thrill seekers
- Profit seekers
- Curious
- Accidental downloaders

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*We need to revise & expand our notions of Internet victimization*

- Understand more about adolescent victims
- Be aware of ways the Internet may be involved in conventional child sexual abuse crimes
- Understand the value of the evidence provided by computers

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*What questions to ask when the Internet is an issue?*

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*About households, find out...*

Is there Internet access?

- Where is the computer?
- Is it in a common area?
- Is there software to block pornography?
- Is there a web camera/scanner/digital camera?
- Do adults need education about Internet safety?

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*About other family members, find out...*

Are adults or other household members using computers to...

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

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*About youth, find out...*

Are youth

- 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?

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*About youth, find out...*

Are youth being

- Exposed to online pornography?
  - How?
- Sexually solicited online?
- Bullied online?
- Photographed?

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