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Internet Child Pornography: Who Is at the Keyboard?

Posted: 1/9/2014

You may be tempted to think that no one you know could ever be viewing child pornography, but unfortunately, that is probably not the case. Alarming, it is among the fastest growing businesses online. Internet child pornography offenses occur when someone downloads, collects and circulates child pornography. It's also child abuse. My last [blog](#) on this subject painted the tragic broad picture of this crime against children. All child pornography offenses, including possession, are extremely serious because they result in perpetual harm to the child and validate and normalize the sexual exploitation of children.

There is quite a bit of research done on sex offenders who have physical contact with their victims, but, research on Internet child pornography offenders and what type of danger they pose to children is still relatively new. One way to learn more about these perpetrators is through their arrest records.

According to the [National Crimes Against Children Research Center](#), an excellent resource for this topic, arrests for crimes involving child pornography grew significantly between 2000 and 2006 and again in 2009. In 2009, there were 4,901 arrests compared to 3,672 in 2006 and 1,713 in 2000. Interestingly, those who were arrested in 2009 were more diverse ethnically and racially, but the great majority of those arrested were non-Hispanic white men. They weren't concentrated in any specific geographic location, and their levels of income and education varied widely. Two-thirds were single, about one-quarter lived with children under the age of 18 and about one-quarter had problems with drugs and alcohol. In 2009, similar to 2006, about 20 percent of the offenders were between the ages of 18 to 25; while the majority of men who viewed child pornography were 26 or older. In 2009, more offenders had

child pornography videos in their possession. The entire report on trends in arrests can be accessed at this [link](#).

So, it seems that those that possess child pornography are a diverse group. A report that analyzed the findings from the National Juvenile Online Victimization Study found that men (less than 1 percent were women) who view child pornography include those who are:

- Sexually interested in prepubescent children (pedophiles) or young adolescents (hebephiles), who use child pornography images for sexual fantasy and gratification
- Sexually "indiscriminate" meaning they are constantly searching for new and different sexual stimuli
- Sexually curious, downloading a few images to satisfy that curiosity
- Interested in profiting financially by selling images or setting up websites requiring payment for access

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

Another issue of concern is whether there is a correlation between Internet child pornography offenders and child molesters. In December 2012, The United States Sentencing Commission issued a report to Congress regarding Federal Child Pornography Offenses. This report, a multi-year undertaking, examined many aspects of child pornography, including prior criminal sexually dangerous behavior (CSDB). Among those prosecuted for possession (not production) of child pornography, they found that approximately one in three offenders had a known history of one or more types of CSDB predating their prosecutions for child pornography charges. The vast majority of the offenders acts (94.7 percent) involved victims who were minors. The most common type of CSDB was sexual molestation of a female prepubescent minor who knew the perpetrator, such as a family member or family friend. The offender was typically at least 20 years older than the victim. The average age of the perpetrator was 31 and the average age of the victim was 10.

The report also indicated that child pornography offenders engage in a variety of behaviors reflecting different degrees of culpability and sexual dangerousness. Approximately half of child pornography offenders in the United States possess one or more images depicting the sexual abuse of a child under six years old. And 25 percent possess images depicting the sexual abuse of children 2 years old or younger. The full report can be accessed at this [link](#).

Child pornography must be stopped. It's a very difficult battle, but those investigating and prosecuting offenders are making inroads. If you know of anyone producing, promoting or possessing child pornography, please report them through the Cyber [Tipline](#).

Please stay tuned for my future blogs describing the plight of the children who are victimized and the law enforcement efforts to save these children from this vicious and dangerous crime.

For more information on keeping your child safe visit The [New](#) York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.