Internet Safety Technical Task Force
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Crimes against Children Research Center

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Youth & Law Enforcement Surveys
by the Crimes against Children Research Center

**Two Youth Internet Safety Surveys**
- Telephone surveys of US national samples of 1,500 youth Internet users, ages 10 - 17
- YISS-1 interviews: 2000
- YISS-2 interviews: 2005

**Two National Juvenile Online Victimization Studies**
- N-JOV1: Over 600 interviews with investigators in a national sample of law enforcement agencies
  - About Internet-related sex crimes that ended in arrests between July 1, 2000 and June 30, 2001
- N-JOV2: Over 750 interviews completed, arrests in 2006, data collection still in progress
Unwanted online sexual solicitations

- 1 in 7 youth Internet users (13%) in 2005
  - 1 in 5 (19%) in 2000
Unwanted online sexual solicitations

Why the decrease? Fewer youth were

- Talking to unknown people (those they met online but did not know in person)
- Forming close online relationships with unknown people
  - People they could talk to about “things that were real important to them”
- Going to chatrooms
Unwanted online sexual solicitations

Most recipients
• Did not view solicitations as threatening
• Ended the situations easily and effectively

Unwanted contacts
• Did not necessarily come from adults
• Were not necessarily devious or intended to lure
Unwanted online sexual solicitations

More serious incidents

• Aggressive solicitations (attempted or actual offline contact): 4% of youth Internet users in 2005
  • 3% in 2000

• Solicitations for sexual pictures: 4% in 2005
  • Not asked in 2000

• Distressing solicitations: 4% in 2005
  • 5% in 2000
Sexual Assaults

- In 2005, 2 girls (ages 15 & 16) were sexually molested by men they met online
  - No molestations reported in 2000
Wanted online contacts with adults

• Close online relationships with adults
  ▪ 4% of youth in 2005
  ▪ Most relationships were benign and did not have sexual aspects

• 0.5% -- relationships with sexual aspects

• 4 youth (0.3%) had face-to-face sexual contact with an adult they met online
  ▪ These did not appear to be crimes. The youth were all 17 and the adults were in their early 20s
Wanted online sexual contacts

• Talked online about sex with unknown person
  - 5% (n=77) of youth in 2005
  - 7% in 2000

• Of these
  - 55% were girls
  - 88% were high school age (14-17)
  - 44% were with other kids
Online Meeting Crimes: Myth & Reality

MEET 10-YEAR-OLD BECKY’S 12-YEAR-OLD INTERNET FRIEND.

Your children are in danger! Do you know who your kids are talking to?

DO YOU KNOW WHO YOUR KIDS ARE TALKING TO?

A New Friend? or A Dangerous Predator?

Know who you’re talking to...

Beware of Online Predators!
Rule #7:
Don't get in the car...
Run fast and far!

If a stranger in a car or truck tries to talk to you, offer you a ride or asks you for help, stay away from them. Get away fast, running the other way so they can't follow you.

Never get into a car with a stranger. Color the picture above of the child staying away and being safe.
Online Meeting Crimes

**MYTH**

Internet predators

- Are pedophiles who target young children
- Lie about their ages & motives
- Trick children into divulging personal information or use info they have naively posted online
- Stalk, abduct and forcibly assault victims
Online Meeting Crimes

**MYTH**

- Victims are teens, not young children
- Few offenders lie about being youth
- Most are open about their sexual intentions
- Violence is rare
- Meetings and sex most often are voluntary

**REALITY**
These crimes are not a new form of sexual abuse.

About one-quarter of reports of sex crimes against minors in the US involve statutory rape (Troup-Leasure & Snyder, 2005)

- Non-forcible sex crimes
- Majority of victims ages 13 – 15
  - Underage – too young to consent to sexual activity
Statutory Rape

- Participation of youth is voluntary – but voluntary in varying degrees
- Young adolescents have
  - Little experience with romance & intimacy
  - Less ability to negotiate with partners about sexual activity
  - Higher rates of coerced intercourse
Online Victims

**MYTH**

Youth are vulnerable because they are naive and inexperienced

- About the Internet
- About sex
Online Victims

- **REALITY**

  - Teenagers
  - Sophisticated Internet users
  - Interested in sex
    - Some sexually active
    - Some quite aggressive
Online Victims

REALITY

Risky online behavior

- Interacting online with unknown people indiscriminately
- Visiting chat rooms
- Talking about sex with people met online
Online Victims

REALITY

- Boys who are gay or questioning their sexual orientation
Online Victims

**REALITY**

- Troubled teens looking for sympathetic adults
  - Lonely
  - In conflict with parents

- Youth with histories of sexual or physical abuse
Online Victims

- A 40-year-old man met a girl, 15, at a BDSM website. They met twice, for sex, where she worked – a gym in a mall.

- A man, 23, met a girl, 14, via a SNS. After they talked online for several weeks, the girl skipped school. The man picked her up; they spent the day at his place watching TV and having sex.
Online Victims

- Police investigating vandalism in a park came upon a car with steamed up windows. Inside were two girls, ages 14 & 15, and two men, ages 20 & 22. The 15-year-old had met one of the men online.
Online child molesters: Are they different from other sex offenders?
Sex offenders in general are diverse.

- Strangers to victims
  - Rare
- Family members or caretakers
- Acquaintances (coaches, priests, neighbors, etc.)
  - Online offenders are most like this group
  - Use grooming & seduction
- Other youth
Online molesters are not pedophiles.
Online molesters are rarely violent.

- Violence in 5% of online meeting cases
  - Forcible rape and attempted rape
  - Sadistic sex
- Abductions – very rare
  - Although many cases start with runaway or missing persons reports
- Stalkers – very rare
Internet “predators”?

• A 17-year-old girl contacted a local man, age 23, thru his SNS page. She invited him to party with her & her sister, 14, while their parents were away.

• A 15-year old boy was discovered having sex with a man, 23. The boy had contacted the man online. He had done this before. The police investigator described the 15-year-old victim as “unfazed.”

• A man, 23, met a 13-year-old girl, who was posing as a 16-year-old in a chat room designed for adults to “hook up” for quick sex.
Have sex crimes against children & teens increased?

51% Decline

*Source: NCANDS
The number of sex crimes has not increased.

- In the US, rates of child sexual abuse have decreased substantially in recent years, as have other related problems.
- Fewer
  - Teen pregnancies
  - Runaways
  - Sex crimes as reported by teens in other surveys
    - Youth Risk Behavior Survey
    - National Crime Victimization Survey
Online sex crimes make up a small proportion of sex crimes.

About 68,000 arrests in 2000 for sex crimes with child victims

- About 1,000 arrests involved Internet-related sex crimes
  - About 500 – online meeting cases
  - About 500 – perpetrators that victims knew
    - Family members & acquaintances
Statutory Rape

How much are Internet-initiated sex crimes contributing to statutory rape?

• Statutory rape arrests in 2000
  ▪ About 6,600

• Arrests for Internet-initiated sex crimes
  ▪ About 500

• About 7% of cases
Online dangers in perspective.

- Teens are sexually solicited frequently, in many different places.
- High rates of sexual harassment and sexual abuse among teenagers
  - By adults they know face-to-face
  - By other teens
- Teach avoidance & coping skills
- Educate about crimes
- Give resources for reporting and counseling
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