

Viewing child porn not a risk factor for future sex offenses: study

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For people without a prior conviction for a hands-on sex offense, the consumption of child pornography alone does not, in itself, seem to represent a risk factor for committing such an offense. Researchers writing in the open access journal *BMC Psychiatry* studied 231 men convicted of consuming child pornography in 2002 and found that only 1% had gone on to commit a hands-on sex offense in the following six years.

Frank Urbaniok from the Canton of Zurich Department of Justice, Switzerland, worked with a team of researchers to investigate these consumers. He said: "When investigating the prevalence of internet [child pornography](#) consumption, an important practical question is whether consumers of child pornography pose a risk for hands-on sex offenses. Our results support the assumption that these consumers, in fact, form a distinct group of sex offenders. Probably, the motivation for consuming child pornography differs from the motivation to physically assault minors. Furthermore, the recidivism rates of 1% for hands-on and 4% for hands-off sex offenses were quite low."

As has been found in other studies, Urbaniok and colleagues were able to corroborate that the offenders were well educated and that most consumed other types of illegal pornography as well, such as pornography depicting sexual acts with animals, excrement, or involving brutality.

Commenting on the findings, Urbaniok said: "Due to the widespread use

of the internet, child pornography consumers today may differ from our sample in some socio-economic aspects, such as in the level of education or level of income. Nevertheless, there are two relevant and practical findings that seem to be robust: For consumers of child pornography without a criminal history, the prognosis for hands-on sex offenses and for recidivism with child pornography is favourable."

More information: The consumption of Internet child pornography and violent and sex offending; Jérôme Endrass, Frank Urbaniok, Lea C Hammermeister, Christian Benz, Thomas Elbert, Arja Laubacher and Astrid Rossegger; *BMC Psychiatry* (in press), www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpsychiatry/

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