

Research to Practice Summary Chris Newlin

**ARTICLE:**

Wolak, J., & Finkelhor, D. (2013). Are crimes by online predators different from crimes by sex offenders who know youth in-person? *Journal of Adolescent Health, 53*(6), 736-741.  
<http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV263.pdf>

**SUMMARY:**

Purpose: are crimes by arrested online-meeting offenders involving online sexual communications with victims different from or more dangerous than those by offenders who knew victims in-person and used similar tactics?

**Subjects/Design:**

Data collected from a national sample of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies about arrests for internet-related sex crimes in 2009 as part of the Third National Juvenile Online Victimization (NJOV-3) Study. This study looks at a subset of cases which included online sexual communications with victims:

- Online-meeting offenders (n=143)
  - First met victims “on the internet or through a cell phone”
- Know-in-person/online offenders (n=139)
  - Family members or acquaintances of victims and knew them offline before the crime

**Findings:**

1. 1,490 arrests for internet-related sex crimes against minors that included online sexual communications with victims
  - i. Estimated:
    1. Online-meeting offenders – 672
    2. Known-in-person/online offenders - 817
2. In both groups:
  - i. About half were 25 years or younger
  - ii. About half were employed full-time
  - iii. Most were unmarried
  - iv. Most did not live with partners
  - v. Few had prior arrests for sexual offenses against minors
  - vi. About 15% possessed child pornography when they were arrested
3. Online-meeting offenders were more likely to belong to a minority racial or ethnic group
4. Known-in-person/online offenders were more likely to:
  - i. Live with children
  - ii. Have histories of violent behavior
  - iii. Problems with drugs or alcohol
  - iv. Have prior arrests for nonsexual offenses

5. Victims were largely similar:
  - i. Mostly female
  - ii. Mostly between ages 13-17
6. About 75% of online-meeting offenders used both internet and cell phones to facilitate their crimes compared to only 32% of known-in-person/online offenders
7. Almost 60% of known-in-person/online offenders used cell phones only, compared to only 10% of online meeting offenders
8. About 40% of both groups engaged in sexual acts such as masturbation during online interactions
9. About 50% sent or showed sexual pictures to or solicited sexual pictures from victims
10. Online offenders were more likely to be deceptive in their online interactions

National Children's Advocacy Center (2014). Are crimes by online predators different from crimes by sex offenders who know youth in-person? Research to Practice Summary. Huntsville, AL: Author.

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