

## Internet Watch Foundation: Study of Youth-Produced Sexual Content

### Aims

The study was carried out by the Internet Watch Foundation in partnership with Microsoft. It was initially designed to expand upon an earlier study carried out by the IWF in 2012<sup>i</sup> which provided a snapshot of the availability of self-generated sexual content featuring young people online, and the extent to which control over that content is lost once it has appeared online.

### Key Findings

Of the 3,803 images and videos assessed during the course of the study:

- 17.5% of content depicted children aged 15 years or younger.
- 85.9% of content depicting children aged 15 or younger was created using a webcam.
- 93.1% of the content depicting children aged 15 or younger featured girls.
- 46.9% of content depicting children aged 15 years or younger was Category A or B<sup>Error! Bookmark not defined.</sup> compared to 27.6% of content in the 16-20 years age range.
- 89.9% of the total images and videos assessed as part of the study had been harvested from the original upload location and were being redistributed on third party websites.

### Policy Context

It is intended that the results of the study be utilised by stakeholders working with children and young people to raise awareness of the risks surrounding creation and distribution of youth-produced sexual content online, and to consolidate the messages behind online child protection initiatives.

The findings of the study are based solely on analysis of the content of the images and videos assessed. **An examination of the persuasive influences or coercive measures which caused the young people to produce this sexual content is beyond the scope of the study.** It is beyond dispute that the coercion of young people to produce and share sexual content online must be considered a form of sexual abuse.

## Methodology

The study took place over a three month period between September and November 2014. It used a combination of proactively sourced content from search engines, historic IWF data and leads from public reports to locate “youth-produced sexual content” depicting “young people”.

The image or video was analysed in accordance with the IWF’s standard procedures for actioning child sexual abuse content, capturing data about each image/video. This includes image category, site type, commerciality, hosting location, as well as the assessed age and gender of the individuals depicted.

Where it was possible to identify, information was captured regarding the suspected original provenance of the content and also the type of device which had been used to create the content (e.g., webcam or mobile device).

## Background

Research into distribution of youth-produced sexual content to date typically focuses on the prevalence and likelihood of young people being coerced into creating this content, their reasons for doing so, and their attitudes to those members of their peer group who also participate. Where quantitative data exists, this is typically related to the extent to which children claim to have received sexual messages or encountered sexual content online.

There is a lack of data focusing on the online availability of the content itself, the young people depicted, the methods of production of the content, or the way in which it is being distributed. This is the current gap in knowledge which this study seeks to address.

**Research Team** Sarah Smith, Harriet Lester (Internet Watch Foundation)

**Contact information** [sarahs@iwf.org.uk](mailto:sarahs@iwf.org.uk)

**Source** The full paper can be downloaded here

**RH#78 has been produced by Sarah Smith for the UKCCIS Evidence Group**

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<sup>i</sup> Study of Self Generated Sexually Explicit Images & Videos Featuring Young People Online  
([https://www.iwf.org.uk/assets/media/resources/IWF%20study%20-%20self%20generated%20content%20online\\_Sept%202012.pdf](https://www.iwf.org.uk/assets/media/resources/IWF%20study%20-%20self%20generated%20content%20online_Sept%202012.pdf))