



# The Social Harm of Self-Generated Indecent Images of Children – Is it a Problem for Law Enforcement?

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# What is the Problem?



- 2007 - **47** Indecent Image of Children referrals **per month.**
- 2020 - **4000+** IIOC referrals **per month**

**Viral Images** – images that self-replicate on the internet without further effort from the source. Simply sharing via social media to the point where the image can not be completely removed.

**First Generation Images** – incidents of direct contact abuse that are committed in the 'real world' and shared or viewed in the 'virtual world'

**Pseudo Images** – images that appear to be photographs of a child, including digitally generated or altered images and cartoons.

**Self Generated Images** – are images that the victim has taken themselves (use of webcams, selfies, snapchat etc).

# Self Generated Indecent Images (SGII)

Self-generated indecent images of children are indecent or sexual photos produced by someone under the age of 18 and willingly shared.

22% of teen girls and 18% of teen boys have sent nude or semi-nude images

17% of young people share the images with others & 55% of those, share them with more than 1 person

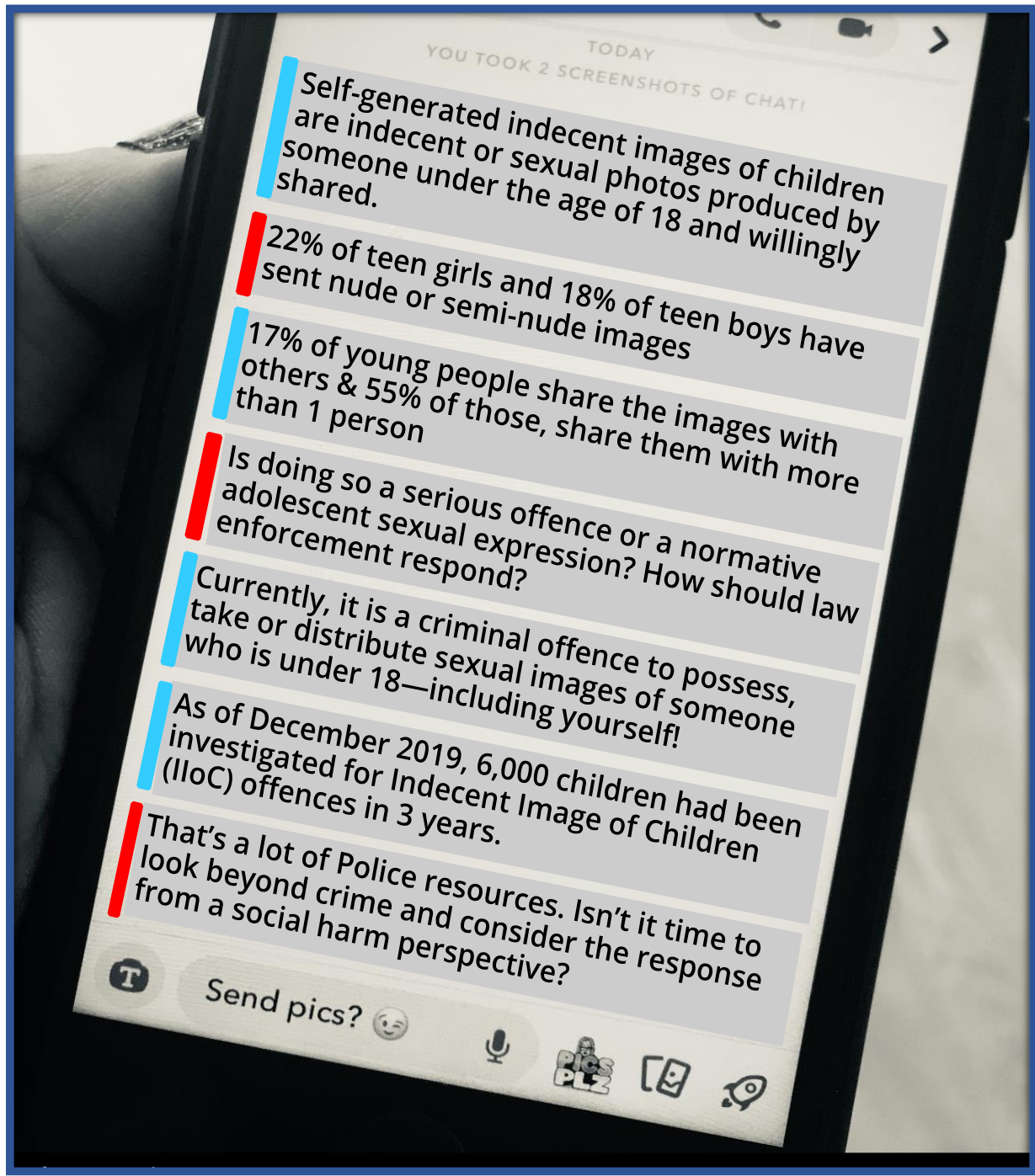
Is doing so a serious offence or a normative adolescent sexual expression? How should law enforcement respond?

Currently, it is a criminal offence to possess, take or distribute sexual images of someone who is under 18—including yourself!

As of December 2019, 6,000 children had been investigated for Indecent Image of Children (IIOC) offences in 3 years.

That's a lot of Police resources. Isn't it time to look beyond crime and consider the response from a social harm perspective?

- **Prevalence is increasing** (*Internet Watch Foundation, 2020*)
- **Access to technology at an earlier age** (Buren & Lunde, 2018)
- **Normative adolescent sexual expression** (*Bianchi et al., 2020*)
- **Acceptance of the behaviour** (*Reed et al, 2020*)





## What is the Harm?

Essential to avoid flattening the diverse experiences of harm that occur within the indecent imagery arena into a single kind (Yar, 2012).

### **Harm to society**

*i.e. Increasing sexualisation – impact on future generations*

### **Economic Harm**

*i.e. Cost of recovery, impact on future earning potential*

### **Harm to Law Enforcement**

*i.e. Resourcing the demand generated by SGII*

### **Harm to other victims of IIoC**

*i.e. Contributing to the demand for IIoC and impacting upon LE capacity*

## Research Questions



What is the social harm implicit in self generated indecent images (SGII) of children and what impact does this have on law enforcement?

- What is the current impact of SGII on law enforcement?
- Is the demand from SGII impacting upon the response to other indecent image of children (IIoC) offences?
- Are there any harms resulting from the current response to SGII that are not being met by the legislative position and criminal justice response?

# Any Questions?

