

## Child Pornography & the Internet

*There are an estimated 100,000 websites which offer child pornography<sup>1</sup>, and approximately 20,000 images of child pornography are posted on the internet each week<sup>2</sup>.*

Pornography is a problematic term which is difficult to define. There is no uniform national or international definition. Understandings of child pornography are determined by differing moral, cultural, social and religious beliefs, both between and within societies. Even legal definitions of the terms 'child' and 'pornography' differ globally and may vary even within the same country.

Child Wise defines child pornography as sexually explicit reproductions of a child's image, including: sexually explicit photographs, negatives, slides, magazines, movies, videotapes and computer disks. It is the use, production and distribution of visual, digital and audio materials that use children in a sexual context. You can not produce child pornography without sexually abusing a child.

Child pornography is becoming increasingly linked to the Internet, which provides new means to produce and distribute images secretly and globally. In its 2006 annual report, the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) reported that there has been a four-fold increase in the number of images involving severe child abuse including sadistic sexual activity. Moreover, there was a 34% increase in the number of reports of child pornography. The report found that 80% of those in the abusive images were female, and 91% were estimated to be less than 12 years of age.

Other technological advances are also a factor affecting the proliferation of child pornography. Amateur videos featuring child pornography can be produced cheaply and domestically with portable camcorders, and a 'cottage industry' has developed, where child pornography is swapped rather than sold – pushing the industry further underground.

Access to an increasingly high volume of child pornography means that paedophiles can become desensitised to images, thus liable to seek further gratification through increasingly disturbing imagery. Law enforcement officials estimate that as many as 50,000 sexual predators are online at any given moment.

Exposure to child sex images is linked to an increase in child sexual abuse cases. Paedophiles frequently admit that child pornography fuels their fantasies and played an important part in leading them to commit physical sexual offences against children. The link between viewing child pornography and offending is increasing. One 2005 US study<sup>3</sup> found that 40% of arrested child pornography possessors had also sexually victimized children.

Internet pornography statistics become outdated very quickly, especially in the Internet environment where numbers change daily. However it is estimated that approximately 20% of all Internet pornography involves children<sup>4</sup> and that child pornography has become a \$3 billion annual industry<sup>5</sup>.

To report offensive or illegal sites go to the **Report & Respond** page of the [www.childwise.net](http://www.childwise.net) website to find out more. You can also learn more about safe internet use and keeping children safe online.

For more statistics on child pornography see <http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/internet-pornography-statistics.html#time> & [www.enough.org](http://www.enough.org)

<sup>1</sup> <http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/internet-pornography-statistics.html>

<sup>2</sup> National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 10 August 2003

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Child Pornography Possessors Arrested in Internet-Related Crimes: Findings from the National Juvenile Online Victimization Study. Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2005

<sup>4</sup> National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Internet Sex Crimes Against Minors: The Response of Law Enforcement. Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2003

<sup>5</sup> Ropelato, Jerry. Top Ten Reviews. Top Ten Reviews, Inc. 5 Dec. 2005