

Examining the sexual offending patterns of registered sexual offenders in Greater Manchester: Understanding Risk and Recidivism

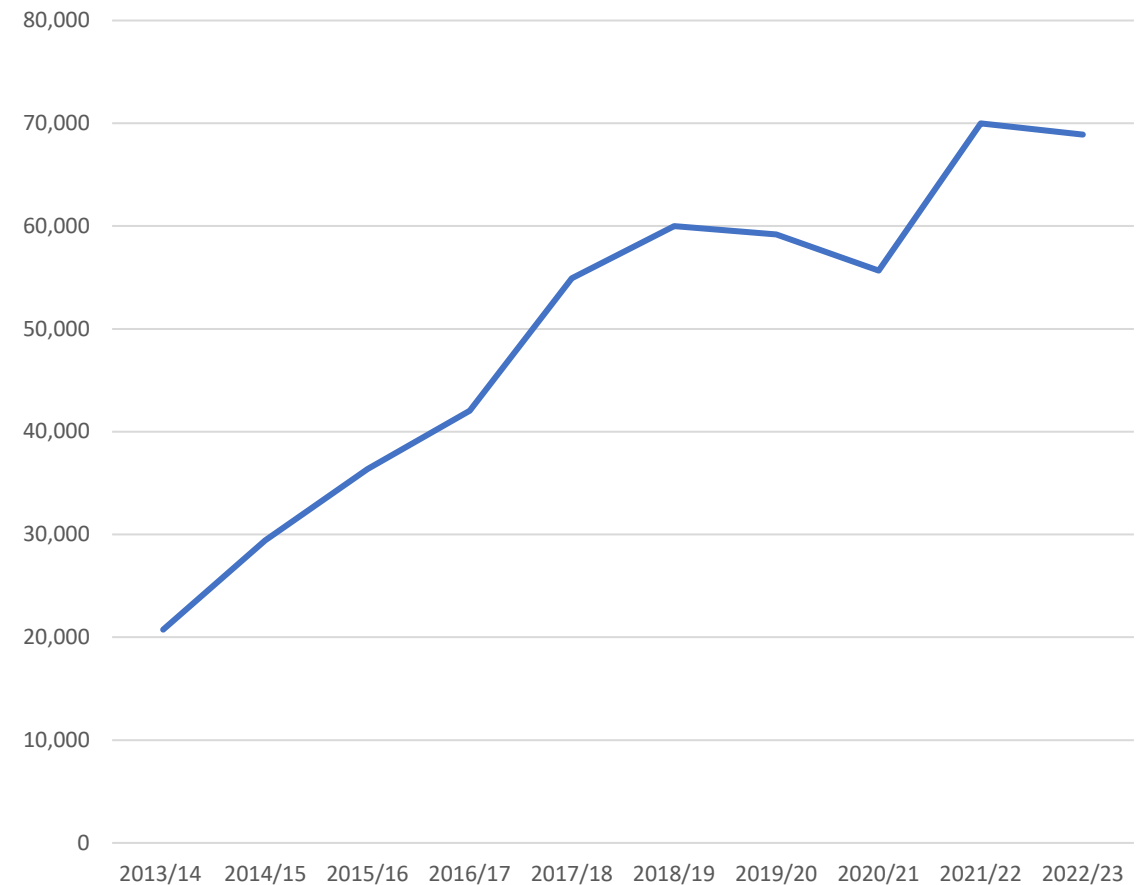
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Background

Figure 1: The number of recorded obscene publication offences in England and Wales by year

- Indecent image offences are reported under code 86 ‘obscene publications’, which include any obscene publications. Figure 1 shows a substantial rise.
- Between January 2013 and December 2022 in GMP
 - 9,265 reported crimes involved the production and distribution of Indecent Images of Children (IIOC).
 - 518 crimes involved the possession of extreme pornography.
- 5,000 Registered Sexual Offenders.
- 3,000 requiring community supervision from the Sexual Offender Management Team.



Policy Context

The recent independent review (Creedon 2023) noted MAPPA arrangements as effective in bringing partner agencies together to manage risk and commended professionals working in this area.

However noted the estimated increases in rates could mean volume and complexity could overwhelm teams and recommended that:

- The Government commission further research into escalating behaviours to identify opportunities for early intervention.
- The Government commission research into “non-judicial diversion” options for some online offenders.
- “No further cohorts of offenders be made subject to sex offender-style registration or notification requirements. Instead, where significant risk is identified and all available options have been considered, including the use of civil orders, the focus should be placed on utilising existing MAPPA processes in order to manage the risk.”

2022

Independent Review
into the Police-led
Management of
Registered Sex
Offenders in the
Community:

Executive Summary

MICK CREEDON QPM

Literature – what we know

RESEARCH

- Published research suggests low recidivism rates for IIOC offences, with studies reporting less than 5% re-offending rates over four years.
- Even fewer cases of online offenders crossing over into contact offending (Faust et al., 2015; Seto et al., 2011).

IN PRACTICE...

- Offender management teams report that reoffending is high.
- Police database figures indicate that IIOC offenders' recidivism rates differ from those reported in academic papers (Giles & Alison, 2021).
- National Crime Agency has seen a significant increase in arrests and prosecution for TA-CSA (DeMarco et al., 2018; IICSA 2020).

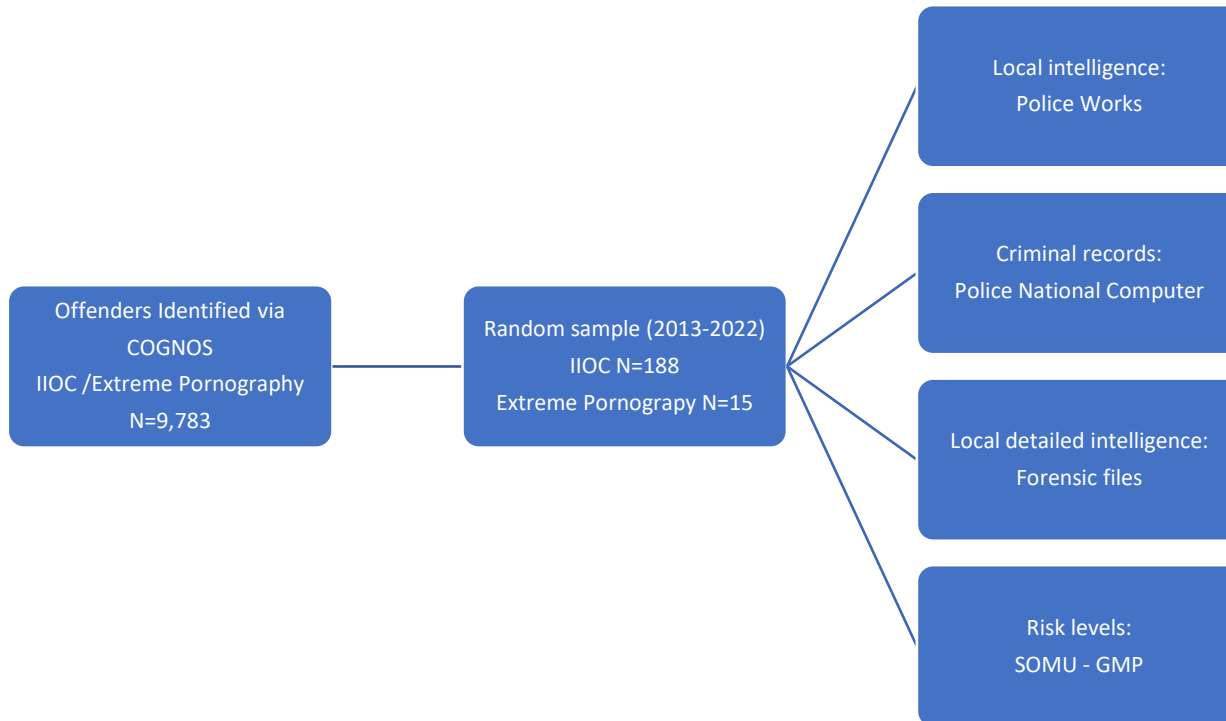


Research Aims

1. Examine the profiles of those arrested for online sexual offences in a ten-year period (i.e., to determine how many of this group are online only offenders).
2. Examine pre- and post-offending patterns of the non-contact online offender cohort.
3. Provide an initial analytical profile of the current non-contact online offender to understand the range of the crime incidents recorded.
4. Investigate the feasibility of linking this information to other data sources to inform risk management and help target resources more effectively.

Method

Data sources



Setting:

- Crimes recorded by GMP between 1st January 2013 and 31st December 2022.
- We randomly selected 210 cases for analysis:
 - 7 Removed during cleaning (duplicates, outside criteria).
 - 15 extreme pornography cases only
 - 188 IIOC & extreme pornography combined.

Results

Demographic characteristics of IIOC offenders (n=188)

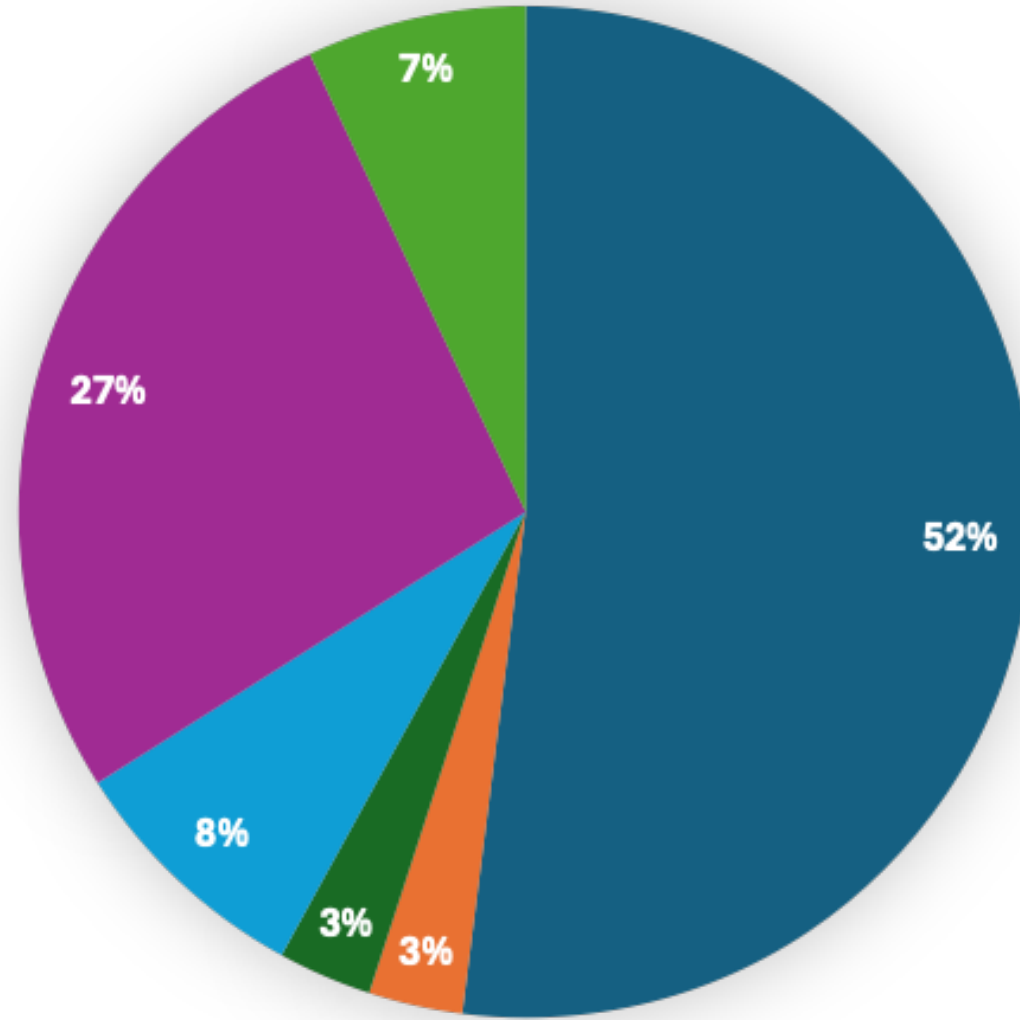
	N	%
Age (Mean)	42	SD 14.7 (range 18-80)
Gender		
Male	181	96%
Female	5	3%
UK Nationals	158	83%
Ethnicity		
White	151	80%
Asian (South & South-East)	14	8%
Black	6	3%
Arabic	4	2%
Employed	86	46%
Unemployed	48	26%
Deceased	7	3%

Offence categories (target offence)

- 126 (67%) **possessing** physical or digital indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of a child.
- 25 (13%) production of indecent images involving **taking** of a photograph or production of a video or film.
- 29 (15%) **making** indecent images which involve the viewing of an image resulting in the image being downloaded to a device or reproduced.
- 8 (4%) **distributing** images (sending or sharing of a digital file, for example by social media, email, in a chat room or file sharing programme).
- The category of imagery was unknown in 74 (39%) cases. In most cases images fell into more than one category.

*Note it may prove evidentially easier to charge with possession, which may explain higher proportion with this as the recorded offence.

Target Offence Outcome



■ Charged ■ Caution ■ Summons ■ Eliminated ■ Suspect identified insufficient evidence ■ Other

- 102 (54%) were subject to notification requirements under the Sex Offenders Act 1997 (i.e. sign on the Sex Offender Register).
 - Of these, 86 (84%) also issued with a Sexual Harm Prevention Order.

Of those on the Sex Offender Register (n=102)

- 1 very high risk
 - 24 as high
 - 38 as medium
 - 30 as low risk
 - 10 were either deceased, unassessed or archived.
-
- A third breached their conditions (37, 36%), 52% more than once.
 - 56 (56%) committed a further sexual offence.



Previous offending

Using Police National Computer (PNC), 119 (64%) had a history of offending:

- 55/119 (44%) committed at least one previous sexual offence.
 - 19/117 (16%) had previous contact sexual offences before the target offence.
 - 30/119 (25%) had previous online sexual offences before their target offence.
- 38 (20%) had no previous or post target offending.

Re-offending (post target offence)

- Of the total sample of 188 individuals, **89 (47%)** proceeded to reoffend.
- **72/89, (81%) committed a further sexual offence** (contact/non-contact or online).

Of the individuals who reoffended after the target offence:

- 65 (73%) had been required to sign on to the sexual offender register following their target offence.
- 54 (83%) had received an additional sexual harm prevention order (SHPO).

Description of offenders

	One-time N=38	Repeat online sexual offending N=75	Contact offenders (before or after) N=25
Mean age (range)	47 (19-74)	40 (19-80)	42 (18-80)
Charged with offence	10 (26%)	59 (79%)	16 (64%)
NFA: Insufficient evidence / not in the public interest	27 (71%)	15 (20%)	8 (32%)
Risk level:			
Low	3 (30%)	14 (19%)	3 (12%)
Medium	4 (40%)	23 (31%)	6 (24%)
High/Very High	-	22 (29%)	11 (44%)
Sex offender register	-	56 (76%)	17 (68%)
Prison outcome	0	24 (41%)	9 (56%)

Key messages from findings

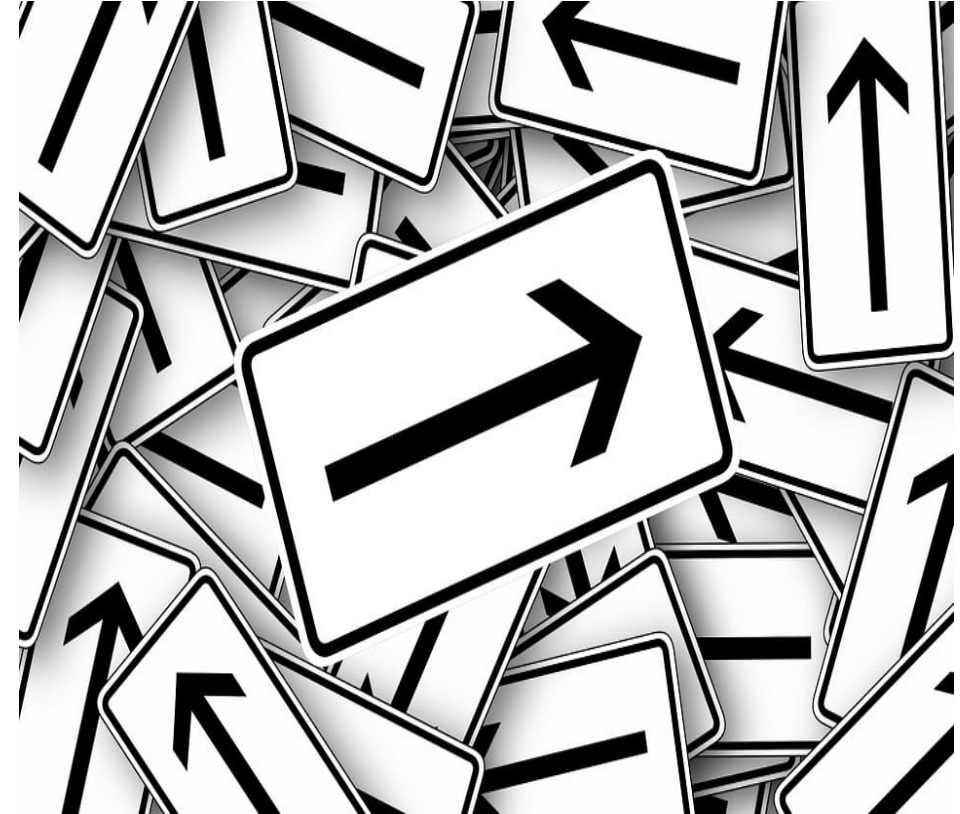
- Most recorded offences were for possession of physical or digital indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs of a child.
- Only half of those recorded were charged with an offence.
- Half were required to provide notifications via the sex offender register, and most were subject to a Sexual Harm Prevention Order.
- Of 102 on the sex offender register, 56% went on to commit further sexual offences (IIOC and/or contact offences).
- Overall, 89 (47%) reoffended after their target offence; 72 (82%) committed a further sexual offence.
- 38 (20%) had no previous or post offending history, the target offence was a 'one-time' offence.

Implications

- **Data quality** – undertaking robust research is challenging due to the amount of missing data and accessibility to information across local systems.
- **Data linkage** – access to national data such as ViSOR would provide more information to help understand motivation and individual risk factors.
- Due to the volume and diversity of offenders, managing IIOC sexual offenders is time and resource intensive, with increasing numbers annually. **Understanding different pathways** to reoffending, would help in target resources more effectively.
- **Alternatives** to current management approaches are needed.
- **Signposting / diversion** to treatment interventions may reduce re-offending.

Future research

- Pathways to desistence
- Exploring therapeutic interventions and referrals to treatment programmes
- Long-term impacts on the offender
- Mental health impact and stigma



Conclusion

- An offender was charged, summoned or cautioned in only 58% of the recoded target offences.
- Of the total sample, half re-offended, mostly for committing another sexual offence.
- Re-offending rates are substantially higher than reported in the literature.
- ‘One-size’ fits all approach to sexual offender management is not effective for reducing recidivism; IIOC offenders require a different management strategy from contact sexual offenders.
- New treatment/behavioural interventions need to be explored and trialled.