Explaining Young People’s Involvement in Online Piracy: An Empirical Assessment Using the Offending Crime and Justice Survey in England and Wales

# Details

## Year

2016

## DOI

10.1080/15564886.2015.1121943

## Issued

2016

## Language

English

## Volume

11

## Issue

4

## Start Page

## End Page

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## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Victims Offenders

## Publisher

Informa UK Limited

## Topics

Risks and harms

## Sample

A nationally representative sample of 4,612 young people (wave 2 of the Offending Crime and Justice Survey, 2004).

## Implications For Educators About

Digital citizenship

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Other

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

Digital citizenship

# Abstract

The Internet has been widely acknowledged as facilitating many forms of youth offending. Existing research has identified important drivers of young people’s involvement in online crime, yet this has overwhelmingly relied on school or college samples. As such, it tells us little about those young people that have left the formal education system—a group who are more likely perpetrators of juvenile crime more generally. Focusing on young people’s involvement in online piracy offenses, our analysis draws on data from a nationally representative survey of England and Wales to better understand the dynamics of involvement in online crime across the population. We assess the potential overlaps between online and offline offending, the role of differential association and deviancy neutralization techniques in shaping offending behavior, as well as the protective effect of strong family support networks in reducing involvement in piracy. We find that illegal downloaders tend to be young, male, and have a higher number of delinquent friends. We also find that many of these offenders do not confine their offending to online spaces, with involvement in offline property offenses also high among this group.

# Outcome

The results point to a continuum of online and offline offending. "Those young people
who admitted committing one offline property offense in the last year have
odds over twice as high of participation in online crime, while those who had
committed two or more offenses have nearly three times higher odds of involvement in online piracy. In contrast, those involved in violent crimes offline have
around 1.4 times higher odds of involvement in online piracy, and there are no
substantial differences based on the number of offenses committed. This suggests that while there is a general tendency for offline offenders to also operate
online, there is also some evidence that this is localized to “similar” forms of
offense." (Brunton-Smith and McCarthy, 2016: 521). There is a strong link between age and involvement in online piracy “with the age polynomial indicating a general increase in involvement during early years, before declining among the oldest respondents. A strong gender gap is also evident, with young women less likely to be involved than men. Conversely, involvement is generally lower among those living in rented accommodation. No other risk factors are shown to be significantly related to piracy.” (Brunton-Smith and McCarthy, 2016: 521). “We find that many of those involved in piracy do not restrict their offending behavior to online spaces, with a particularly close alignment with offline property offending. Online piracy can be considered a form of cyber-enabled theft, albeit one which is not always clearly conceived as criminal Brunton-Smith and McCarthy, 2016: 524).