

From sexual thoughts to sexual offences

Tamara Turner-Moore, PhD, Leeds Metropolitan University, UK. Mitch Waterman, PhD, University of Leeds, UK.



What is a sexual thought?

A thought with sexual content and/or a thought about something that's sexually arousing.

The thought could be a sexual fantasy but it might not be.



Sexual thoughts and sexual offending

Theories of sexual offending argue that sexual thoughts play a role in sexual offending and reoffending.

(e.g. Abel & Blanchard, 1974; McGuire, Carlisle & Young, 1965; Ward, Polaschek & Beech, 2006).

Sexual offenders' sexual thoughts are examined during assessment and are addressed in interventions. (e.g. Brown, 2005; Thornton, 2002).

4 The Sexual Thoughts Project

- If and how are sexual thoughts related to sexual offending?
- Detailed and completely anonymous computerised survey.
- 6289 men aged 18 90 including men from the community and from prison.
- 54 to 262 open- and closed-ended questions on sexual thoughts.



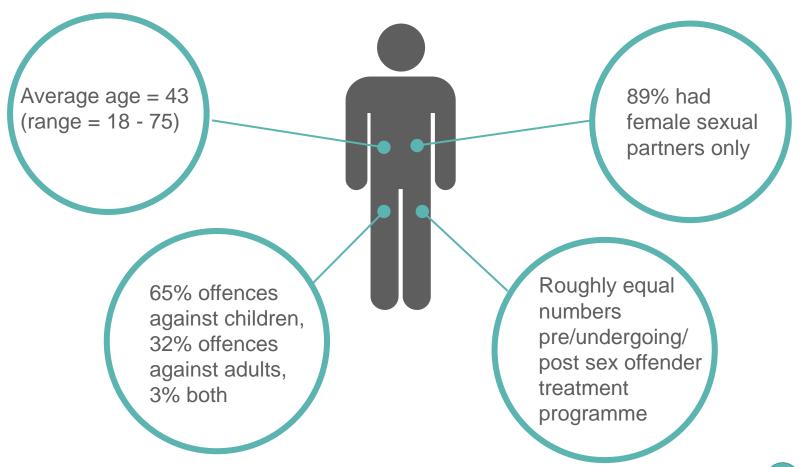


Questions for today

- Prevalence of sexual thoughts of children?
- Which offenders most likely to have these thoughts?
- Link between sexual thoughts of children and committing a sexual offence?
- Do sexual offenders and non-offenders experience different sexual thoughts of children?
- What are the implications for preventing sexual abuse?

6 Sexual offenders

93 men from a medium security prison convicted for one or more sexual offences.



Non-offenders

Selected 93 men from the UK who had not committed any offences (non-offenders).

Each non-offender matched to a sexual offender on age, education and gender of adult sexual partners.



28% of sexual offenders had sexual thoughts of children



15% of non-offenders had sexual thoughts of children



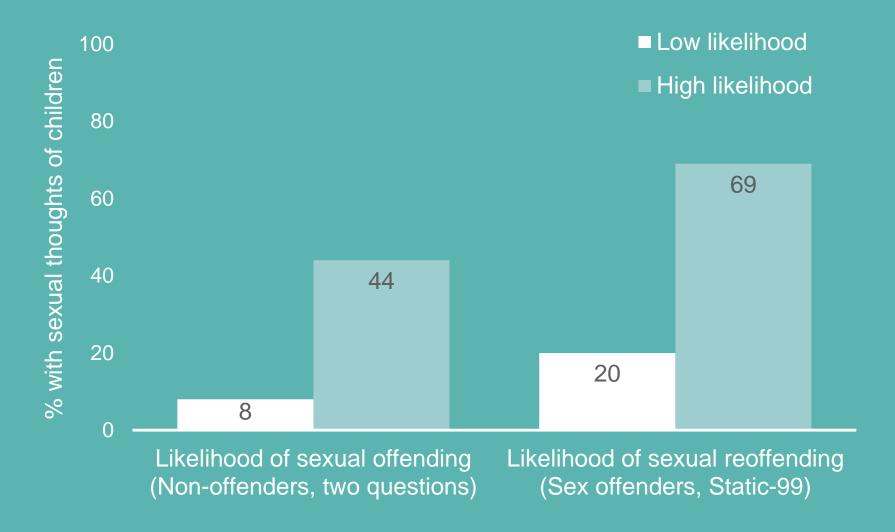
Children = Age 15 and under



Which sexual offenders experience them?

- A high sexual interest in children.
- Offended against children, or adults and children.
- A greater number of victims.
- Male victims.
- Victims who aren't related to them.

Relationship with likelihood of sexual offending and reoffending





Examining the content of the thoughts

- Open-ended description with follow-up questions.
- Coded the characteristics of the sexual thought (people, events, setting, dynamics, etc.), ignoring group membership.
- Used a statistical technique (latent class analysis) to group together codes that occurred together.





Oral and vaginal sex with an attractive pubescent school girl, occasionally with a fetishistic element. Focuses on his sexual desire and enjoyment.



A man and prepubecent child he knows take turns to engage in a range of sexual acts with each other in a home setting. Focuses on mutual desire.



Non-specific description of sexual activity with a female child he knows. Child's emotions given only when asked, often their sexual desire.



Treatment implications of the typology

Each type might indicate different treatment needs.

- Self type: Sexual interest in children and sexual objectification of children.
- Mutual type: Emotional congruence with children.



Conclusions for interventions with potential perpetrators

- Sexual thoughts of children experienced by 1 in 7 nonoffenders.
- These thoughts do appear to be a risk factor for sexual offending.
- Reports of experiencing the Mutual type of sexual thought might be particularly concerning.

Conclusions for interventions with perpetrators

- Sexual thoughts of children do appear to be a risk factor for sexual reoffending.
- These thoughts don't need to be a treatment target for all perpetrators.
 - Most common in persistent sexual offenders with a sexual interest in children and who offend against boys outside of the family.
- The interpersonal context within perpetrators' sexual thoughts might indicate different treatment needs.



Thank you

t.turner-moore@leedsmet.ac.uk

