



UNSW
Australian
Human Rights
Institute



UNSW
SYDNEY



Jesuit
Social Services
Building a Just Society

**the
men's
project**
A Jesuit Social Services initiative

STOP
It Now!
AUSTRALIA

Identifying and understanding child sexual offending behaviours and attitudes among Australian men

November 2023



Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	4
Previous studies	5
Methodology	7
Sampling	8
Statistical analyses	8
Limitations	9
Sample demographics	10
Cultural background	10
Sexual relationships	10
Employment and education	10
Age and household	11
Survey findings	12
Prevalence and demographic characteristics of child sexual abuse perpetration	12
Men who have sexual feelings towards children	12
Men who have sexually offended against children	13
Men with sexual feelings and offending	13
Comparison of perpetrator characteristics	14
Health and psychology	14
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)	16
Attitudes towards online child sexual exploitation	18
Internet use habits	19
Men who want help with their sexual feelings towards children	24
Offending behaviour	24
Demographic characteristics	25
Health and psychology	25
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)	25
Attitudes towards online child sexual exploitation	25
Internet use habits	26
Discussion	30
Men with sexual feelings towards children who have offended against children	30
Men with sexual feelings towards children who want help	32
Prevention of child sexual abuse	33
Primary prevention	33
Secondary prevention	34
Tertiary prevention	35
Conclusion	36
References	38
Supplementary materials	40

Executive summary

This project aimed to inform efforts to better detect and prevent child sexual abuse through a rigorous analysis of the prevalence and attitudinal, behavioural and demographic correlates of sexual feelings and/or offending against children amongst Australian men. The research measured the prevalence of offending and risk behaviours and attitudes amongst a weighted sample of 1,945 Australian men over 18 years of age.

Key findings of the project

Around one in six (15.1%) Australian men reports sexual feelings towards children. Approximately one third of this group reports sexually offending against children.

Around one in ten (9.4%) Australian men has sexually offended against children. Approximately half of this group (4.9%) reports sexual feelings towards children.

In total, **almost one in five (19.6%)** Australian men in the study have sexual feelings for children and/or have sexually offended against children.

The **4.9%** of men with sexual feelings who have sexually offended against children differed from men with no sexual feelings or offending against children on a number of measures:

Relationships

- They were more likely to be married and reported higher levels of social support.

Employment and wealth

- They were almost three times more likely to be working with children.
- They were more likely to earn a higher income.

Health and wellbeing

- They were more likely to report mild, moderate or severe anxiety and depression.
- They were over four times more likely to report weekly binge drinking.

Childhood abuse and neglect

- They reported approximately twice the rate of adverse childhood experiences.
- They were over six times more likely to report being sexually abused as children.

Attitudes to child sexual abuse

- They were more than 25 times more likely to hold attitudes conducive to online child sex offending.

Online behaviour

- They were more likely to use the internet more frequently and intensively.
- They were much more active on social media.
- They were significantly more likely to use encrypted apps and privacy services.
- They were twice as likely to own cryptocurrency and over five times more likely to use cryptocurrency for online purchasing.

Pornography consumption

- They were over eleven times more likely to watch violent pornography and over twenty six times more likely to watch bestiality pornography.
- They were over sixteen times more likely to purchase sexual content online.

29.6% of those with sexual feelings towards children want help; this is **4.5%** of Australian men. These men were more likely to have sexually offended against children online and offline than men with sexual feelings who did not want help.

Introduction

With the launch of the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse, the Australian Commonwealth Government has committed to a public health approach to child sexual abuse. Almost one third of Australian adults were sexually abused as children (Mathews et al., 2023). This group is particularly vulnerable to mental health disorders (Scott et al., 2023), health risk behaviours and conditions including substance abuse, self-harm and suicidality (Lawrence et al., 2023) with significantly higher health care utilisation than the general population (Pacella et al., 2023). However, Australian health and social services often lack the capability and capacity to respond to the long-term impacts of child sexual abuse, including complex trauma and resultant psychosocial disabilities (Salter et al., 2020). In light of the prevalence, harms and impacts of child sexual abuse, the aim of a public health approach to child sexual abuse is to coordinate responses and encourage “upstream” initiatives that prevent sexual abuse before it occurs, reduce the harms of offending when it happens and prevent re-offending.

Reflecting this growing interest in a coordinated, multi-level and prevention orientated response, this report presents the findings of the first nationally representative Australian study of the prevalence of child sexual offending, risk behaviours and attitudes amongst Australian men aged 18 and above. This report provides important information on men in the Australian community who have sexually abused children, or are at risk of sexually abusing children, including findings on their demographics, health status and history of childhood adversity. The findings also identify patterns of technology use by offenders. More generally, the study identifies attitudes to child sexual abuse amongst men in Australia, and examines the links between offending against children and common beliefs about child sexual abuse. This information will be vital in efforts to not only better understand the men who do offend but also the risk factors related to offending, which can be used to prevent this abuse from occurring in the first place.

Previous studies

Investigations into the prevalence of child sexual abuse have generally involved large, retrospective surveys asking adults questions about sexual victimisation in childhood. These surveys tell us how many adults have been sexually abused as children and their life outcomes and needs, however they do not provide information on the prevalence of perpetration. Research with child sex offenders has focused on forensic samples (that is, offenders who have been caught), however, it is generally agreed that those offenders who are arrested are a minority of offenders in the community (Seto et al., 2015). Child sexual offenders who are detected are not representative of child sex offenders as a group (Seto, 2008), and so it is unlikely that research findings based on forensic samples can be generalised to all child sexual abusers. Furthermore, research with forensic samples does not tell us how many offenders are in the community and the characteristics of the offenders who are going undetected.

Accordingly, researchers have used anonymous surveys to ask people in the community about their sexual interest in children and related offending. Briere and Runtz (1989) surveyed 193 male undergraduates at a US college about their sexual interests in children, with 21% reporting sexual attraction to children, and 7% stating that they would have sexual contact with a child if they would not be punished. In that study, sexual interest in children was correlated with rape-supportive attitudes towards women. A 1991 survey of 582 males from US colleges found that 3% reported being a perpetrator of CSA. These men were more likely to have been a victim of CSA themselves compared to other participants and were also more likely to support rape myths (Fromuth et al., 1991). A correlation between victimisation and offending was also found in a study on the childhood sexual victimisation of 750 males aged 18 to 27 in Canada (Bagley et al., 1994). 15.6% of the sample were victims of CSA and they were more likely to have a sexual interest in children. One per cent of the victimised group admitting sexual contact with a child.

These surveys indicate, firstly, that sexual interest and offending against children are fairly common amongst men in the community, and, secondly, that people will answer questions about child sex offending honestly if they know that the survey is anonymous. However, these studies are not representative of men in the community and are generally focused on psychological variables and characteristics. They do not provide detailed demographic or other contextual or biographical data to inform public health efforts to identify and reduce the social determinants of child sexual abuse. More recent research with men in the community has used larger samples to examine the prevalence of sexual interest and abuse of children, with a focus on technology-facilitated child sexual abuse, such as viewing child sexual abuse material. A study by Seto et al. (2015) analysed data from a 2003 survey of 1978 male third-year high school students (aged 17 – 20) from Sweden, including questions about their sexual interest in children and sexually abusive behaviours. The study by Seto et al. (2015) found that 4.2% of the young men surveyed had viewed child sexual abuse material. Dombert et al. (2016) conducted a representative online survey of 8718 German men and found that 4.1% reported sexual fantasies with children, 1.7 per cent reported CSAM use (but no sexual contact with children), 0.8 per cent reported sexual contact with children (but no CSAM), and 0.7 per cent affirming both offence categories. A number of other studies using smaller and/or non-representative online community samples have found that between 1.7% – 23.1% of men report some degree of sexual interest in children (Bártová et al. 2021, O’Ciardha et al., 2022; Wurtele et al. 2014).

In light of the evidence that anonymous online surveys elicit honest responses from child sex offenders about perpetrating behaviour, and the need for robust research on the prevalence and characteristics of offenders in the community, this project has used a nationally representative online survey methodology to examine behaviours and attitudes relating to child sex offending amongst Australian men.



Methodology

This study builds upon the previous survey research on child sex offending in community samples. While previous studies have focused on psychological correlates and risk factors, our survey gathered data on demographics, health status, social support, childhood exposure to adversity, and technology and internet habits, as well as attitudes and behaviours relating to online and offline child sexual offending. The project focused on men because men are the majority of child sex offenders. Patterns of female sexual offending against children have similarities but also key differences from male offending patterns, including differences in risk factors, contexts, motives and strategies amongst female offenders (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017). Such gendered differences in perpetration may be better measured in surveys that are developed with a specific focus on female perpetration.

The research team used a variety of validated survey measures and developed their own measures, which have subsequently been validated in UK and US surveys. The survey design used the following measures for the survey:

- › Correlates of Admission of Sexual Interest in Children (Seto et al., 2017)
- › Interest in Sex with Children (Seto et al., 2015)
- › Offense-Supportive Attitudes and Beliefs (Seto et al., 2015)
- › Peer Influences (Seto et al., 2015)
- › Pornography Viewing (Seto et al., 2015)
- › Age of attraction (AoA) (Ó Ciardha et al., 2021)
- › Sexual attraction to children (Ó Ciardha et al., 2021)
- › Proclivity to sexually offend (Ó Ciardha et al., 2021)
- › Sexual offending (Ó Ciardha et al., 2021)
- › Honesty and debriefing (Ó Ciardha et al., 2021)
- › PHQ-4: The Four-item Patient Health Questionnaire for Anxiety and Depression (Kroenke et al., 2011.)
- › NIDA Quick Screen V1.0 (Saitz et al.)
- › National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's screening question on heavy drinking days
- › Brief Disability Questionnaire (Von Korff et al., 1996)
- › The multidimensional scale of perceived social support (Dahlem et al. 1991)
- › Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (Felitti et al., 1998)

The survey also developed an Adapted Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) Myth Scale that was drawn from Collings (1997). An example of the survey and the scales used can be found in Appendix I. The research team includes academic and practice experts in child sexual abuse, public health and secondary prevention who provided input into the survey. The survey received thorough feedback from the Project Advisory Group (which includes representatives from law enforcement, financial intelligence units, government departments and mental health support services). The survey received ethics approval (HC220317) from the University of New South Wales in September 2022.

Sampling

Data were provided by [CloudResearch](#), an online recruitment and survey company with access to an international pool of over 1.5 million participants. Online panels are well suited for sensitive research topics where participants would traditionally be reluctant to participate due to the lack of anonymity, such as using telephone or in person methods (Porter et al, 2019). Evidence indicates that data provided by CloudResearch is more likely to be of a higher quality than that from other online survey platforms or undergraduate students (Douglas, Ewell, & Brauer, 2023).

Stratified random sampling was conducted to obtain a cross-sectional representative sample of 1,500 Australian adult men according to the Australian 2021 census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021) in terms of age, residential region, annual household income, and educational attainment. Data collection spanned from November 2022 to January 2023. Originally, data for 2,697 Australian participants were provided. One-quarter (n = 732) of participants indicated that they were either female at birth, did not identify as male, failed the mid-survey attention check, or reported that they had not answered the questions honestly. These participants were removed, resulting in an analytical sample of 1,965 men.

The sample was somewhat concordant with the broader population based on the sampling stratification characteristics, with the average prevalence deviating by 3.25% (see [Supplementary table S1](#)). However, comparison to the Australian 2021 census indicated that the sample was over representative of participants who indicated that they were Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander (15.4% vs. 3.4%), born in Australia (82.3% vs. 64.4%), married or living with their partner (67.2% vs. 58.1%), and participated in the workforce (77.4% vs. 71.3%), deviating by an average of 11.36%. The average difference (absolute bias) between the sample and the Australian adult male population was 5.85%, exceeding the recommended threshold of 2.5% for a representative sample (Dal Grande et al., 2015).

The representativeness of the sample was improved by iteratively adjusting the weight of each participant until the sample distribution was concordant with the population distribution according to seven benchmark demographic characteristics from the Australian 2021 census (Speed, 2005). These were age, annual household income, Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander identity, born in Australia, educational attainment, marital status, and workforce participation. Weighted data were available for 1,945 participants.

Statistical analyses

Descriptive statistics and bivariate associations were calculated to distinguish men who have sexual feelings and/or sexually offend against children from those who have no sexual feelings or offending against children. First presented are the descriptive profiles of men who have sexual feelings towards children, followed by men who have sexually offended against children. Next, descriptive statistics and bivariate associations were calculated distinguishing unique categories of men who had (i) no sexual feelings or offending towards children, (ii) had sexual feelings but not sexual offending towards children, (iii) had no sexual feelings but had sexual offended towards children, and (iv) had sexual feelings and offending towards children. Finally, we compare the factors differentiating men who want help for their sexual feelings towards children to those who have sexual feelings towards children but do not want help. Odds Ratios (OR) and 95% confidence intervals (95% CIs) are presented as measures of effect size and precision of the association between variables. These were calculated by conducting weighted logistic regression. The results presented in this report are for descriptive purposes only. Associations were not adjusted for covariates and should not be interpreted as causal or free of confounding. Analyses were conducted using SAS v9.4 and IBM SPSS 24 software.

Limitations

The online panel survey recruitment method used in our study relied on convenience sampling and was a nonprobability strategy, which means that we could not ensure that every member of specific populations had an equal chance of being invited to participate. This limitation could impact the generalizability of our findings.

Criticisms of crowdsourcing samples include the risk of “cheaters” (who lie to ensure inclusion in the study) or “speeders” (who progress quickly through a survey without reading questions and directions). CloudResearch uses behavioural assessment and technological checks to identify and remove low-quality participants (such as “cheaters” and “speeders”). Our survey included multiple attention checks to catch “speeders”, and we removed any participant who failed those checks. In addition, we asked an honesty question at the end of the survey (as used in previous research on child sex offending), which asked participants to rate their level of honesty in their survey answers. “Cheaters” who stated they were not honest were removed from the survey.

This report is part of an international survey that included men in Australia, the US and the UK, where the age of consent varies from 16 – 18 depending on the region and the offense. Accordingly, we used 18 as the age of consent for all sexual offences, although the age of consent for sexual activity is 16 in Australia. Therefore, some of what is noted as sexual contact with a child in our findings may be consensual activity (for instance, a 19 year old having sex with a 17 year old), which is a limitation of the survey. However, it is unlikely that our contact offense findings were significantly impacted by this limitation due to the following factors:

- **Contact offenders in our study were more likely to be older, not younger:** 95% of men who answered yes to the question “Have you had sex or sexual contact with a person below the age of 18 while over the age of 18?” were over 24 years of age, and almost half (48.4%) were over 54 years of age. The odds of having had sexual contact with someone under 18 years was 4.80 (95% CI = 2.29 – 10.06) times greater for men aged 65 years or older than those aged 18-34 years.
- **The majority of men who reported sexual contact with a child had other indicators of sexual feelings or offending:** Of men who reported sexual contact with a child, 70.0% had also engaged in online child sex offending and/or had sexual feelings towards children. Most of the remaining men indicated that they may have sexual feelings towards children or may have engaged sexually with a child online. It is most likely that these men were not in consenting relationships with someone under the age of 18.
- **The rate of contact offending in our study is supported by other research:** Our finding of 3.2% of men who have had sexual contact with a child is also in line with other community studies of men’s sexual interest in children and, therefore, provides further evidence that our survey has most likely captured sexual offending rather than consensual activity with someone under 18 years of age. A representative study by Dombert et al. (2015) showed that 3.2% of men reported sexual offending against prepubescent children, and a non-representative study by Ó Ciardha et al. (2021) showed 2.9% of men reported having had sexual contact with someone younger than the age of consent since the age of 18.

Our survey included a question on whether participants had intentionally viewed “pornographic material” containing people under the age of 18 (that is, child sexual abuse material). Participants could answer whether they had never done so, had done so when they were under 18, or had done so when they were over 18. Since this was a forced option, those who accessed child sexual abuse material as a child, but continued offending as adults, may not have been included in the adult offending analysis. As a result, our data on child sexual abuse material offending may be an under-estimation.

Sample demographics

Cultural background

Most participants did not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (Figure 1), and around two-thirds of participants indicated they were of a white ethnic background (Figure 2), with a similar proportion born in Australia (Figure 3).

Figure 1. Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander ■ Yes ■ No



Figure 2. White ethnic background ■ Yes ■ No



Figure 3. Born in Australia ■ Yes ■ No



Sexual relationships

Only 7.2% of participants identified as gay or bisexual (Figure 4). However, 10.5% of participants indicated that they had only had sex with men, and 5.5% indicate that they had had sex with both men and women (Figure 5). Around one-in-twenty participants indicated that they had never had sex.

Figure 4. Sexual orientation ■ Heterosexual ■ Gay/Bisexual

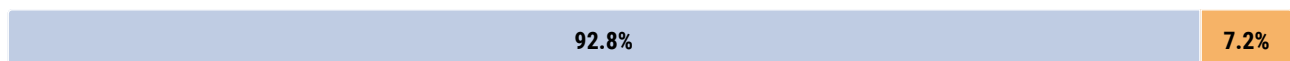


Figure 5. Gender of sexual partners ■ Never had sex ■ Women only ■ Men only ■ Women and men



Employment and education

Almost three-quarters of participants indicated that they had either full-time, part-time, or casual participation in the workforce over the last three months (Figure 6). Note that among those who did not participate in the workforce, half (56.2%) were retired, one-in-five (19.2%) were unemployed and looking for work, and one in four (25.6%) were either students or stay-at-home parents. The highest level of educational attainment for the greatest proportion of participants was a university degree, while the lowest proportion of participants indicated that they had not finished high school (Figure 7). Finally, around one-in-six participants indicated that their work involved contact with children (Figure 8).

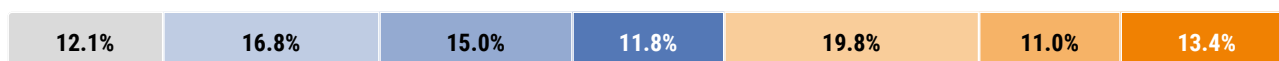
Figure 6. Workforce participation Participating Not participating**Figure 7. Educational attainment** Below high school High school Vocational qualification University degree**Figure 8. Works with children** Yes No

Age and household

Age was relatively evenly distributed across the sample, with a slightly greater proportion of participants aged 65 years or older (Figure 9). Annual household income was also relatively evenly distributed, with a slightly greater proportion of participants indicating that their household brought in between \$100,000 to \$149,999 annually (Figure 10). Slightly more than half of the participants were married or living with their partner (Figure 11). One-in-three participants had at least one child in their household, and 4.3% had 3 or more (Figure 12). Half of all participants reported that they resided in a suburb, while one-third lived in a city (Figure 13).

Figure 9. Participant age 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+ years**Figure 10. Annual household income**

< \$30K \$30K – \$49K \$50K – \$79K \$80K – \$99K \$100K – \$149K \$150K – \$199K > \$200K

**Figure 11. Relationship status** Married or de facto Single**Figure 12. Children in household** None One Two Three or more**Figure 13. Residential location** City Suburb Regional/rural

Survey findings

Prevalence and demographic characteristics of child sexual abuse perpetration

Men who have sexual feelings towards children

Six survey items were used to determine if men had any sexual feelings towards people below the age of 18 years. These were:

- › Has sexual feelings towards people below the age of 18 years (3.4%);
- › Would have sexual contact with a child between 12 to 14 years if no one would find out (5.7%);
- › Would have sexual contact with a child between 10 to 12 years if no one would find out (4.6%);
- › Would have sexual contact with a child younger than 10 years if no one would find out (4.0%);
- › Has concerns about sexual feelings towards people below the age of 18 years (4.5%);
- › The lowest age they typically find attractive is under 18 years (5.7%).

Around one-in-six (15.1%) men endorsed at least one of these items and were indicated as having sexual feelings towards children. The prevalence of demographic characteristics between men who do and do not have sexual feelings towards children are presented in [Supplementary table S2](#).

Most men who had sexual feelings towards children were heterosexual (91.9%), did not work with children (81.6%), participated in the workforce (73.4%), only ever had sex with women (64.9%), were born in Australia (62.9%), had no children in their household (62.8%), were married or living with their partner (60.5%), white (57.2%), and lived in the city (50.5%). The greatest proportion of these men were aged 18 to 34 years (47.8%), had a university degree (39.8%), and had an annual household income of less than AUD \$80,000 (36.5%).

Men who have sexually offended against children

Five survey items were used to determine if men over the age of 18 had sexually offended with people below the age of 18 years. These were:

- Knowingly and deliberately viewed pornographic material containing people below the age of 18 (2.5%). Participants could also indicate if they had knowingly and deliberately viewed pornographic material containing people below the age of 18 *when they were also under 18*. This percentage was 4.2%.
- Have flirted or had sexual conversations with a person below the age of 18 online (4.3%);
- Have webcammed in a sexual way with a person below the age of 18 (1.8%);
- Have paid for online sexual interactions, images or videos involving a person below the age of 18 (1.7%);
- Have had sex or sexual contact with a person below the age of 18 while over the age of 18 (3.2%).

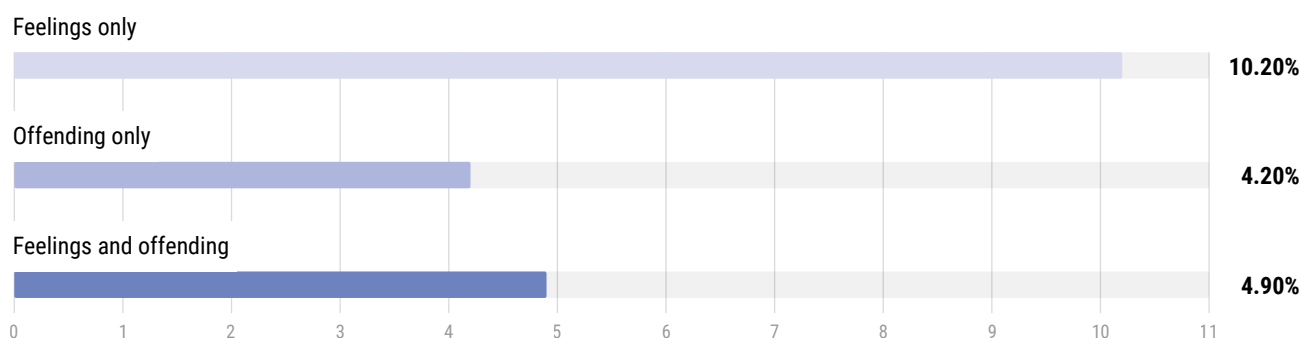
Around one-in-ten (9.4%) men endorsed at least one of these items and were indicated as sexual offended against children. The prevalence of demographic characteristics between men who have and have not had sexual offended against children are presented in [Supplementary table S3](#).

Most men who had sexually offended against children were heterosexual (94.5%), did not work with children (74.3%), only ever had sex with women (74.3%), were born in Australia (71.0%), participated in the workforce (68.7%), were married or living with their partner (64.5%), had no children in their household (61.0%), and white (59.0%). The greatest proportion of these men lived in the city (45.9%), were aged 55 years or older (41.2%), had a university degree (35.7%), and had an annual household income of less than AUD \$80,000 (42.1%).

Men with sexual feelings and offending.

A composite variable was created indicating if participants had (i) no sexual feelings or offending with young people (80.4%), (ii) had sexual feelings but not sexual offending with young people (10.2%), (iii) had no sexual feelings but had sexual offended with young people (4.5%), and (iv) had sexual feelings and offending with young people (4.9%).

Figure 14. Comparison of sexual feelings and offending against children amongst Australian men



Comparison of perpetrator characteristics

Health and psychology

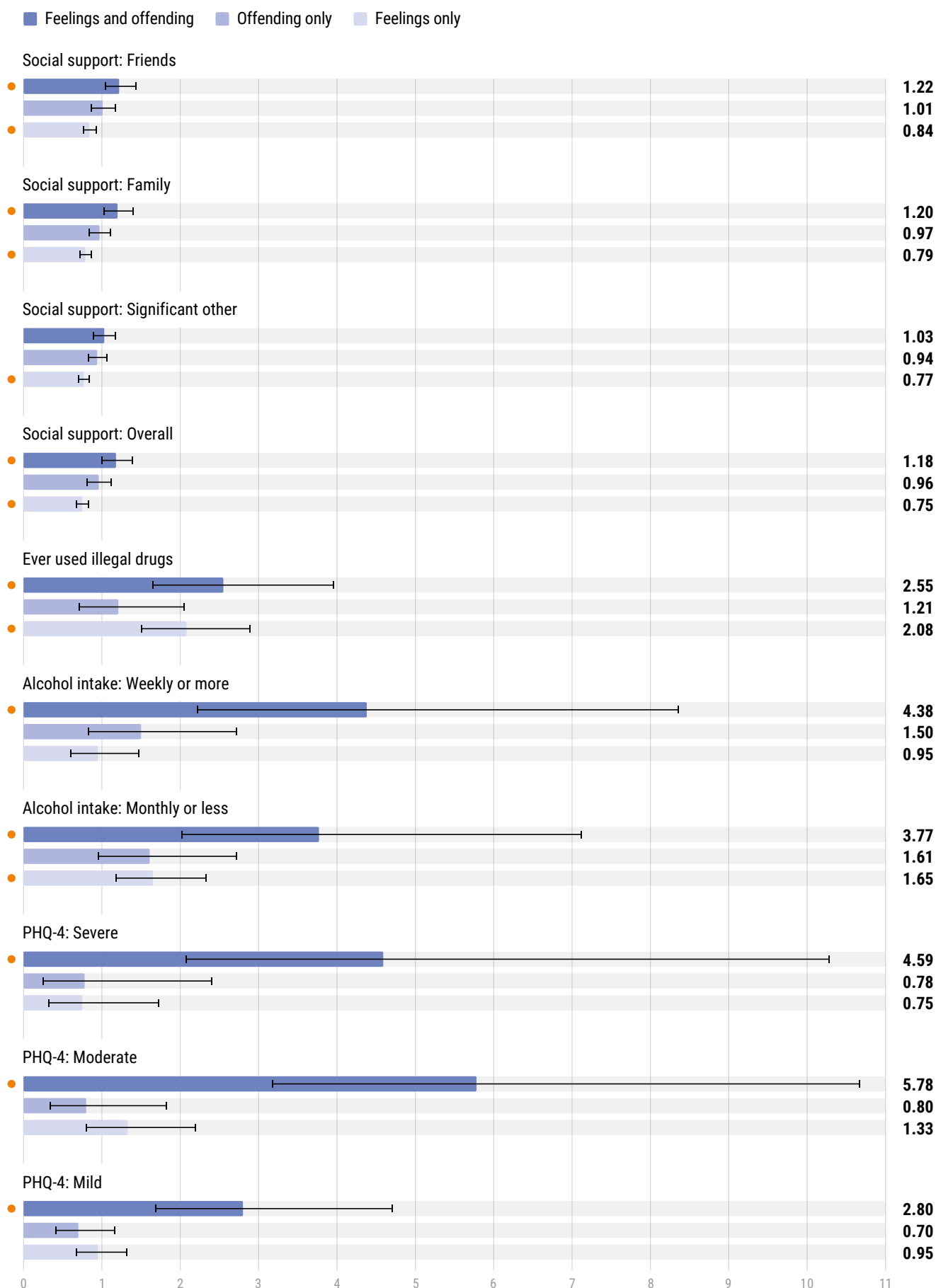
Mental health. The Patient Health Questionnaire 4 (PHQ-4) is a validated screening tool for anxiety and depression (Löwe et al., 2010). Scores range from 0 to 12, and are categorised as normal (0-2), mild (3-5), moderate (6-8), and severe (9-12) (see [Supplementary table S5](#)). Men who had sexual feelings and offending with children were 2.80 (95% CI = 1.68 – 4.67) times more likely to have mild, 5.78 (95% CI = 3.16 – 10.57) times more likely to have moderate, and 4.59 (95% CI = 2.07 – 10.19) times more likely to have severe anxiety and depression, compared to men who did not have sexual feelings or offending with children and relative to those who scored in the normal range. Anxiety and depression problems were not significantly associated with men who had sexual feelings only or sexual offending only with children.

Participants were asked how frequently they drank five or more alcoholic drinks on any given day. Responses were categorised as never, monthly or less, and weekly or more. Binge drinking weekly or more was 4.28 (95% CI = 2.21 – 8.28) times more likely to occur among men who had sexual feelings and offending with children, compared to men who did not have sexual feelings or offending with children and relative to those who never consumed alcohol. Consuming five or more alcoholic drinks monthly or less was 3.77 (95% CI = 2.01 – 7.06) times more likely to occur among men who had sexual feelings and offending with children, and 1.65 (95% CI = 1.18 – 2.32) times more likely to occur among men who had sexual feelings only. Participants were also asked if they had ever used illegal drugs, the odds of which were 2.08 (95% CI = 1.51 – 2.87) times greater for men who had sexual feelings only, and 2.55 (95% CI = 1.65 – 3.93) times greater for men who had sexual feelings and offending, compared to men who did not have sexual feelings or offending with children and relative to those who never used illicit drugs.

Social support. The availability of social supports was assessed using the validated Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet et al., 1990) (see [Supplementary table S5](#)). The MSPSS includes 12 questions responded to a 7-point Likert scale ranging from very strongly disagree to very strongly agree. Scores are summed to quantify overall social support, support from significant others, support from family, and support from friends. Men who only had sexual feelings towards children had 1.33 (OR = 0.75 [95% CI = 0.68 – 0.83]) times lower overall social supports scores, while men who had sexual feelings and offending with children had 1.18 (95% CI = 1.00 – 1.39) times greater overall social support scores, than men who did not have sexual feelings or offending with children. Scores for social support from significant others was 1.30 (OR = 0.77 [95% CI = 0.71 – 0.84]) times lower for men who had sexual feelings only. Scores for social support from family was 1.27 (OR = 0.79 [95% CI = 0.72 – 0.87]) times lower for men who had sexual feelings only, and 1.20 (95% CI = 1.03 – 1.40) times higher for men who had sexual feelings and offending with children. Finally, social support scores from friends was 1.19 (OR = 0.84 [95% CI = 0.77 – 0.93]) times lower for men who had sexual feelings only, and 1.22 (95% CI = 1.05 – 1.43) times greater for men who had sexual feelings and offending with children.

Disability. Participants were asked if they were ever diagnosed with a disability (see [Supplementary table S5](#)). This was not significantly associated with having sexual feelings or offending with children.

Figure 15. Odds (95% CI) of mental health factors and categories of men with sexual feelings and contact with children compared to men with no sexual feelings and contact (orange dots ● indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).

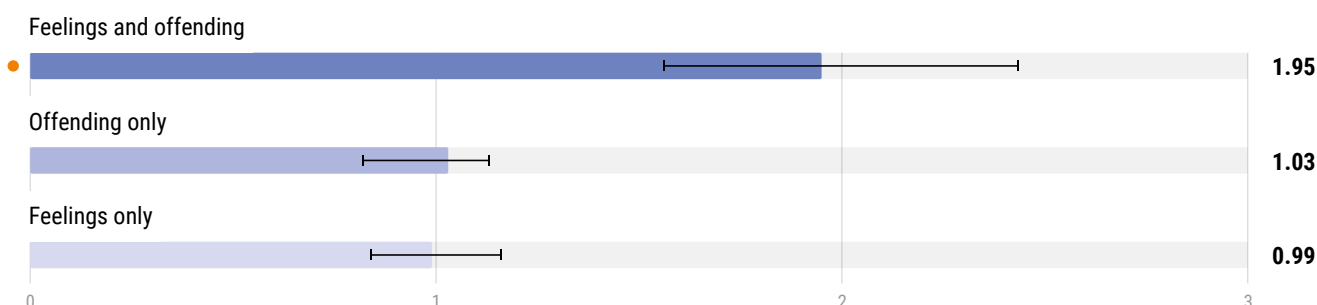


Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

An empirically validated ten-item scale of ACEs were used in the current study (Felitti et al., 1998) (see [Supplementary table S6](#)). Participants were asked if, any time prior to the age of 18 years, they experienced abuse (emotional, physical, and sexual), low family support, neglect, parental divorce, domestic violence, household substance abuse, household mental illness, and household member incarcerated. Items are responded to as yes (1) or no (0) and can be summed (range 0 – 10) to provide an overall measure of childhood adversity.

Overall ACE scores. Men who had sexual feelings and offending with children had 1.95 (95% CI = 1.56 – 2.43) times higher overall ACE scores than men who did not have sexual feelings or offending with children. Overall ACE scores were not significantly associated with men who had sexual feelings or sexual offending only.

Figure 16. Odds (95% CI) of overall ACE scores and categories of men with sexual feelings and contact with children compared to men with no sexual feelings and contact (orange dot ● indicates statistically significant at $p < .05$).



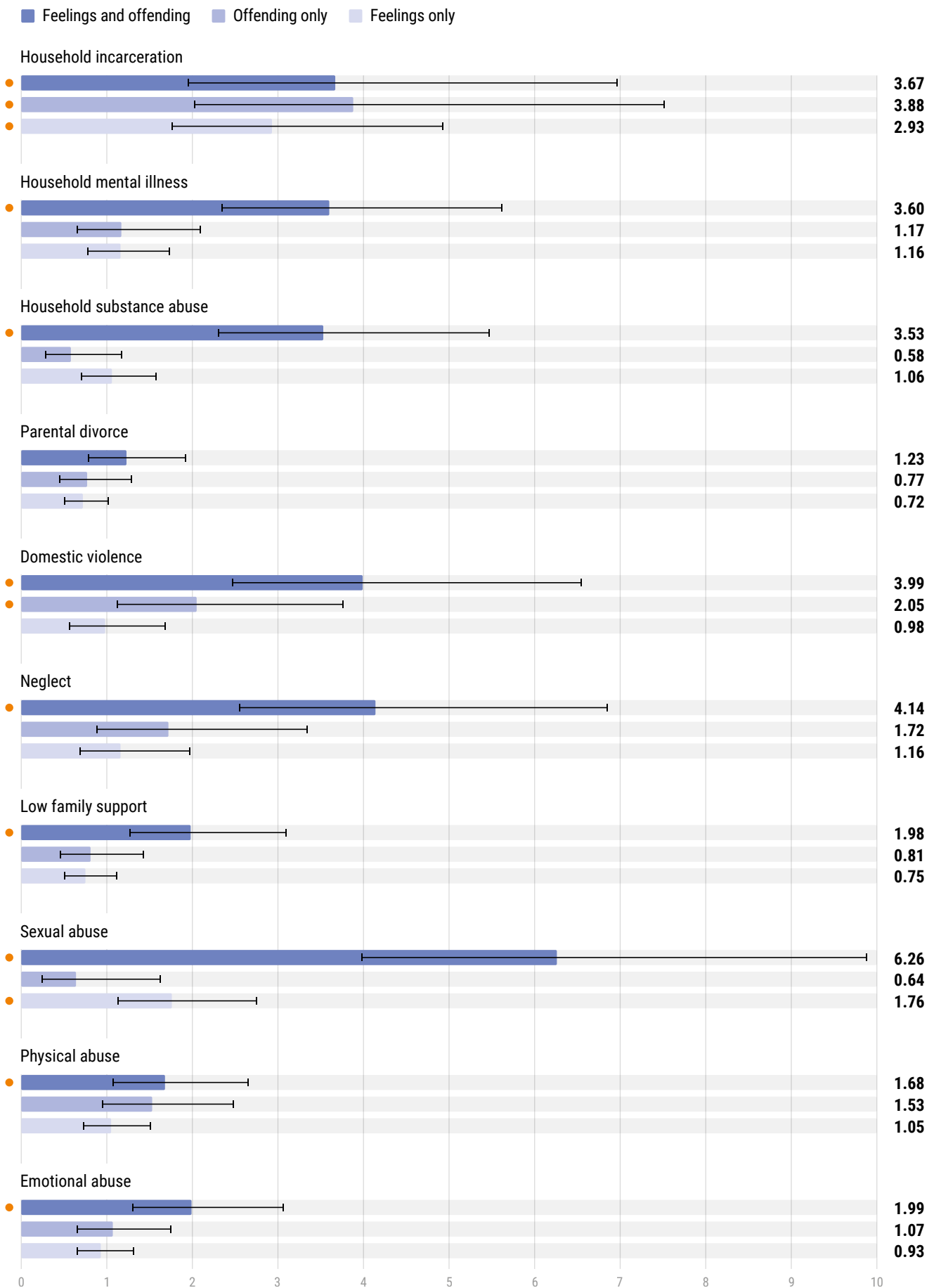
Individual ACEs. Men who had sexual feelings and offending with children were 1.99 (95% CI = 1.30 – 3.04), 1.68 (95% CI = 1.07 – 2.63), and 6.26 (95% CI = 3.98 – 9.86) times more likely to have experienced emotional, physical, or sexual abuse during childhood, respectively, than men who did not have sexual feelings or offending with children. Men who had sexual feelings only were 1.76 (95% CI = 1.13 – 2.73) times more likely to have experienced childhood sexual abuse only. Childhood abuse was not significantly associated with men who only had sexual offending with children.

Compared to men who did not have sexual feelings or offending with children, men who had sexual feelings and offending with children were:

- 1.98 (95% CI = 1.27 – 3.07) times more likely to experience low family support,
- 4.14 (95% CI = 2.53 – 6.78) times more likely to experience neglect,
- 3.99 (95% CI = 2.45 – 6.48) times more likely to experience domestic violence as children.
- 3.53 (95% CI = 2.29 – 5.42) times more likely to have been exposed as a child to substance abuse by a household member
- 3.60 (95% CI = 2.33 – 5.56) times more likely to have a household member with a mental illness
- 3.67 (95% CI = 1.94 – 6.96) times more likely to have an incarcerated household member as a child

Men who only had sexual offending with children were 2.05 (95% CI = 1.12 – 3.73) times more likely to experience domestic violence in their household as children. There was no significant association between men who had sexual feelings only and low family support, neglect, and domestic violence. Parental divorce was not associated with any category of men who had sexual feelings or offending with children.

Figure 17. Odds (95% CI) of individual ACEs and categories of men with sexual feelings and contact with children compared to men with no sexual feelings and contact (orange dots • indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).



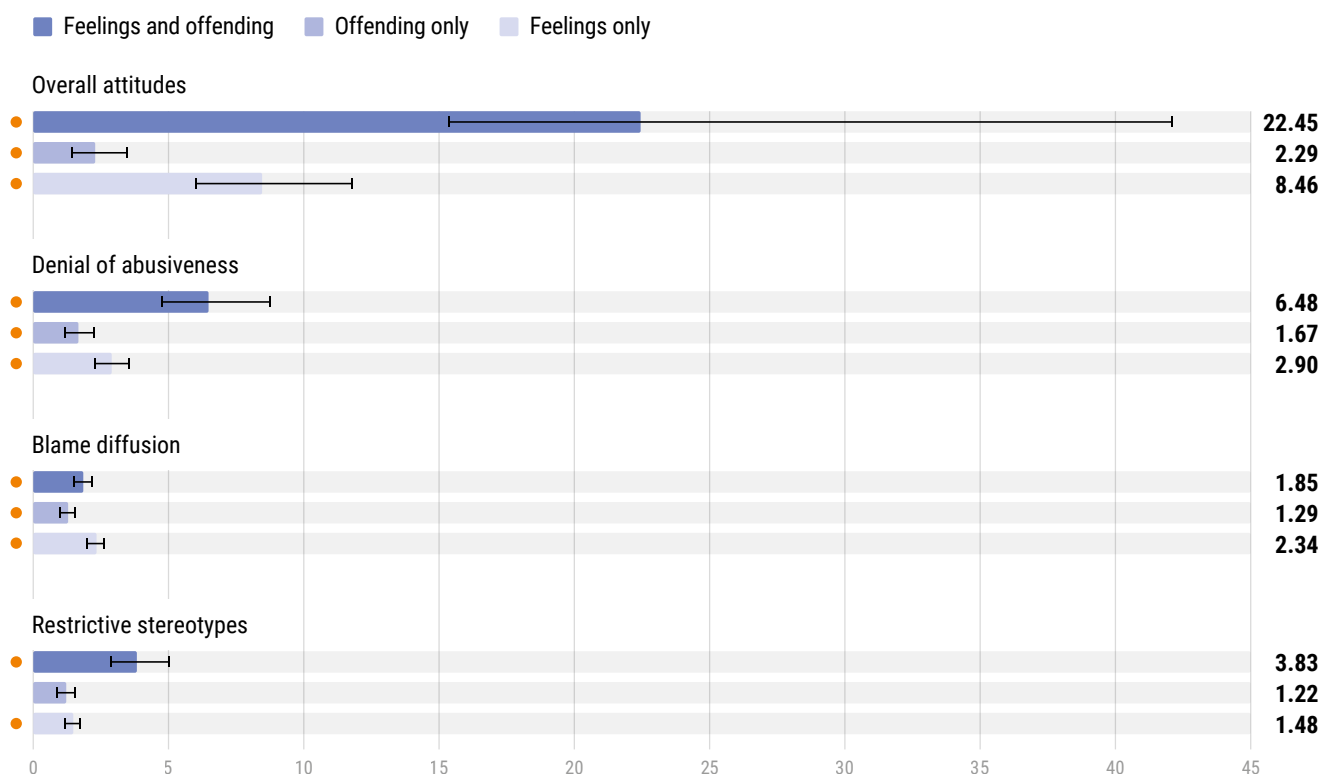
Attitudes towards online child sexual exploitation

25 items adapted from the Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale were used to measure men's attitudes towards online child sexual exploitation. The scores for each item ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The scores on several items were reverse coded so that higher scores for all items indicated greater endorsement of attitudes conducive to online child sexual exploitation.

Attitude subscales. Principal components analysis was conducted to reduce the 25 items into multiple subscales reflecting different underlying dimensions of the scale (see [Supplementary table S7](#)). Four components were identified, one of which, component 4, only comprised of two items ($\alpha = .73$, IIC = .57) and was not retained for further analysis. The three remaining components were designated "denial of abusiveness" (14 items, $\alpha = .92$, IIC = .46), "blame diffusion" (5 items, $\alpha = .87$, IIC = .57), and "restrictive stereotypes" (4 items, $\alpha = .81$, IIC = .51). The average score for all items, and those within each subscale, were calculated.

The odds of endorsing overall attitudes to online child sexual exploitation were 2.29 (95% CI = 1.49 – 3.52) times greater for men who had sexual offending only, 8.46 (95% CI = 6.07 – 11.81) times greater for men who had sexual feelings only, and 25.45 (95% CI = 15.39 – 42.08) times greater for men who had sexual feelings and offending with children, compared to men who did not have sexual feelings or offending with children. The odds of having attitudes denying the abusiveness of online child sexual exploitation was 1.67 (95% CI = 1.22 – 2.28) times greater for men who had sexual offending only, 2.90 (95% CI = 2.35 – 3.59) times greater for men who had sexual feelings only, and 6.48 (95% CI = 4.79 – 8.79) times greater for men who had sexual feelings and offending with children. Blame diffusion attitudes were 1.29 (95% CI = 1.04 – 1.60) times higher for men who had sexual offending only, 1.85 (95% CI = 1.55 – 2.22) times higher for men who had sexual feelings and offending, and 2.34 (95% CI = 2.04 – 2.67) times higher for men with sexual feelings only. Finally, the odds of having attitudes endorsing restrictive stereotypes were 1.48 (95% CI = 1.24 – 1.77) times greater for men with sexual feelings only and 3.83 (95% CI = 2.90 – 5.04) times greater for men who had sexual feelings and offending with children; there was no significant association for men who only had sexual offending with children (OR = 1.22 [95% CI = 0.94 – 1.59]) (see [Supplementary table S8](#)).

Figure 18. Odds (95% CI) of higher scores on the modified Child Sexual Abuse Myth scale and categories of men with sexual feelings and contact with children compared to men with no sexual feelings (orange dots ● indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).



Internet use habits

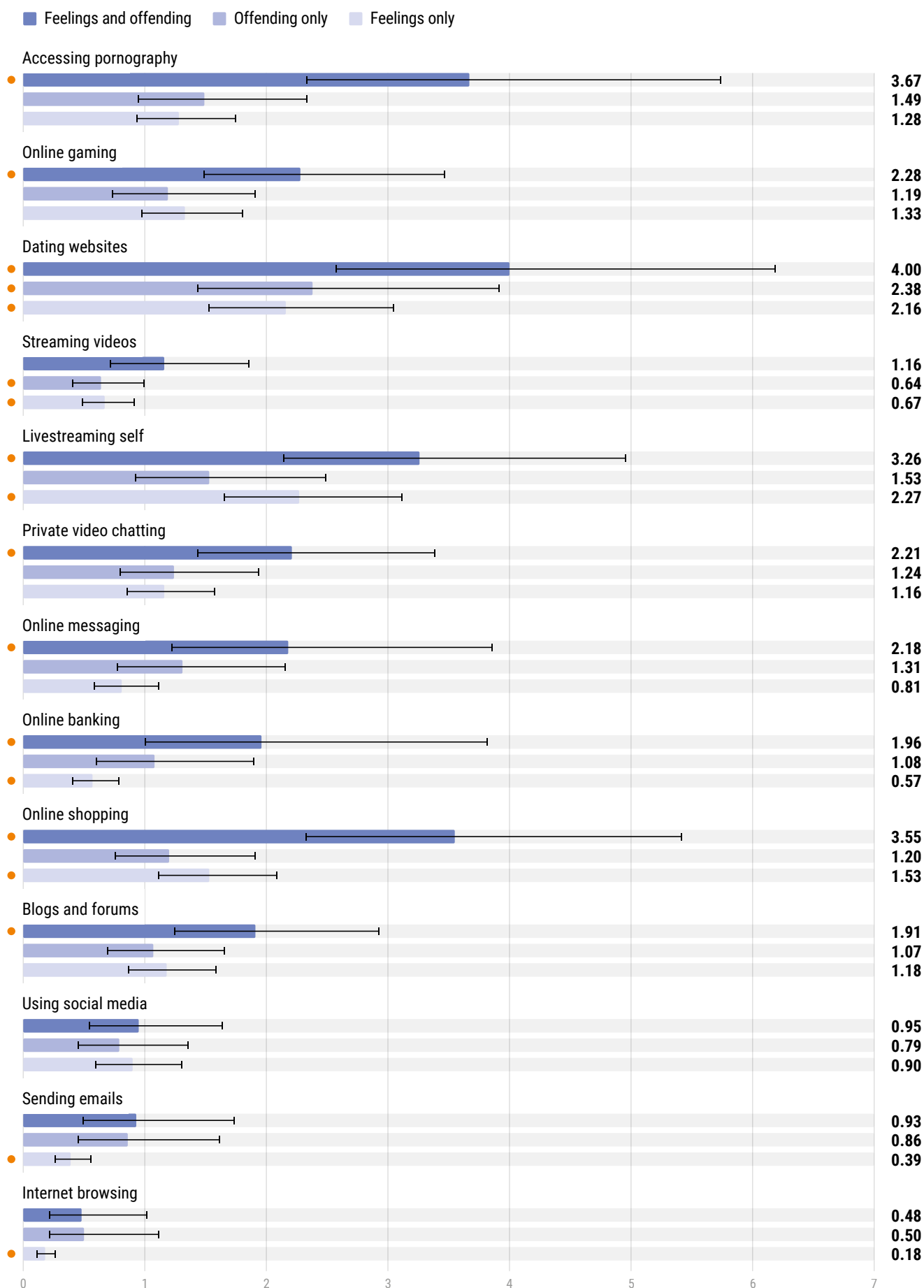
Frequency of internet use. Participants were asked how often they used the internet to perform specific tasks, and responded either never, less than monthly, monthly, weekly, or daily (see [Supplementary table S9](#)). Responses were dichotomised to indicate daily or weekly use, relative to monthly or less (including never).

Compared to men who had no sexual feelings or offending with children, men who had sexual feelings only were significantly *less* likely to daily or weekly browse the internet (OR = 0.18 [95% CI = 0.12–0.27]), send emails (OR = 0.39 [95% CI = 0.27–0.56]), do online banking (OR = 0.57 [95% CI = 0.41 – 0.79]), and stream videos to their devices (OR = 0.67 [95% CI = 0.49 – 0.92]). However, they were significantly *more* likely to daily or weekly engage in online shopping (OR = 1.53 [95% CI = 1.12 – 2.09]), livestream themselves (OR = 2.27 [95% CI = 1.66 – 3.12]), and use dating/romance websites (OR = 2.16 [95% CI = 1.53 – 3.05]).

There were few differences in the internet use habits between men who had no sexual feelings or offending with children and men who only had sexual offending with children, although the latter were significantly *less* likely to daily or weekly stream videos to their devices (OR = 0.64 [95% CI = 0.41 – 1.00]), and were significantly *more* likely to use dating/romance websites (OR = 2.38 [95% CI = 1.44 – 3.91]).

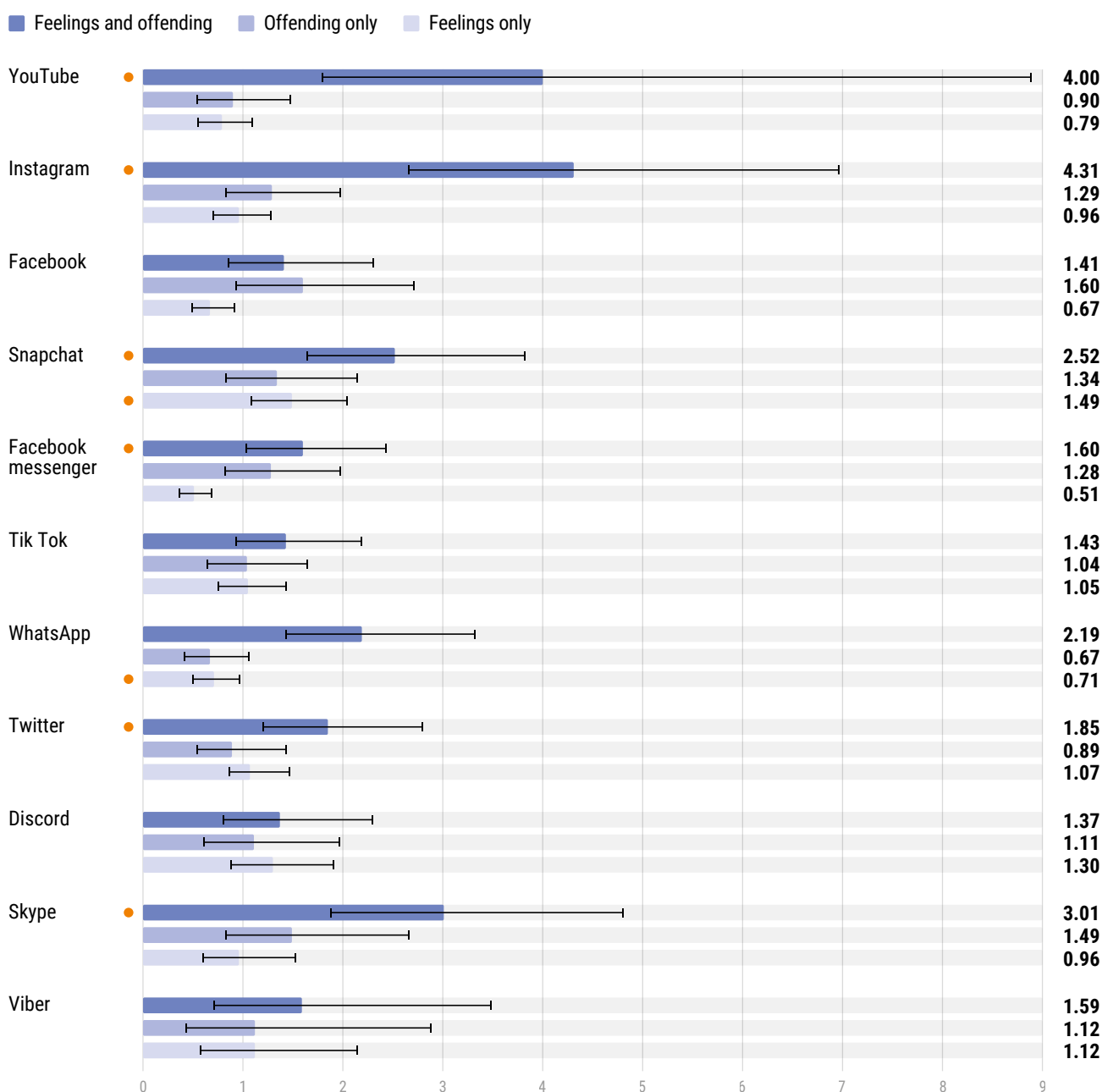
Men who had sexual feelings and offending with children were significantly *more* likely to use the internet for numerous purposes than men who had no sexual feelings or offending with children. Specifically, they were more likely to daily or weekly engage with blogs and forums (OR = 1.91 [95% CI = 1.25 – 2.93]), online shopping (OR = 3.55 [95% CI = 2.33 – 5.42]), online banking (OR = 1.96 [95% CI = 1.01 – 3.82]), online messaging (OR = 2.18 [95% CI = 1.23 – 3.86]), private video chatting (OR = 2.21 [95% CI = 1.44 – 3.39]), livestream themselves (OR = 3.26 [95% CI = 2.15 – 4.96]), engage in dating/romance websites (OR = 4.00 [95% CI = 2.58 – 6.19]), online gaming (OR = 2.28 [95% CI = 1.49 – 3.47]), and access pornographic websites (OR = 3.67 [95% CI = 2.34 – 5.74]).

Figure 19. Odds (95% CI) of internet use habits and categories of men with sexual feelings and contact with children compared to men with no sexual feelings and contact (orange dots ● indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).



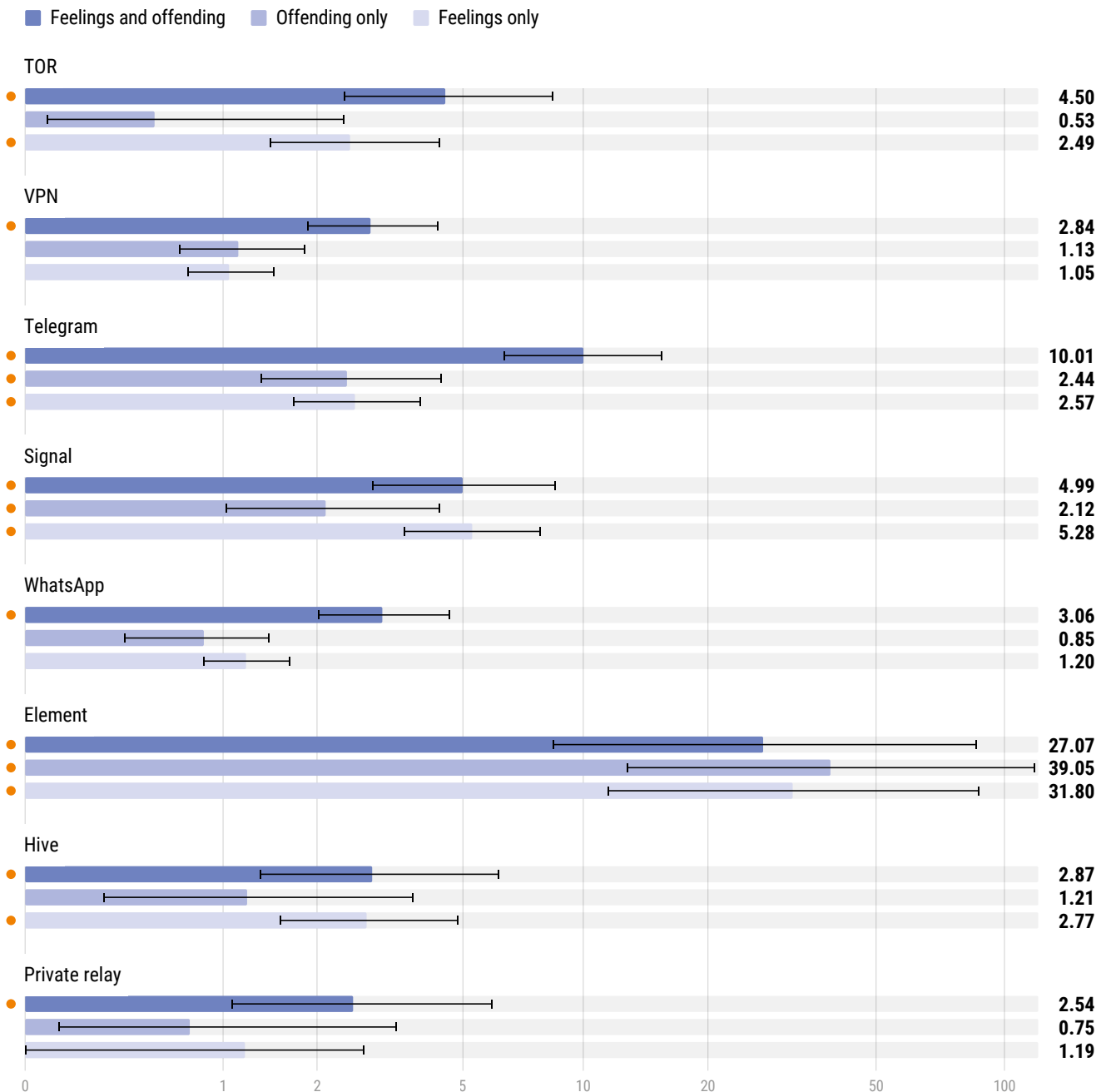
Social media. Participants were asked which social media platforms they currently used. Men who had sexual feelings only were significantly less likely to use WhatsApp (95% CI = 0.71 [95% CI = 0.51 – 0.97]) and significantly more likely to use Snapchat (OR = 1.49 [95% CI = 1.09 – 2.05]) than men who had no sexual feelings or offending with children. Men who had sexual feelings and offending with children were 4.00 (95% CI = 1.80 – 8.89) times more likely to use YouTube, 4.31 (95% CI = 2.67 – 6.97) times more likely to use Instagram, 2.52 (95% CI = 1.65 – 3.83) times more likely to use Snapchat, 1.60 (95% CI = 1.04 – 2.44) times more likely to use Facebook messenger, 2.19 (95% CI = 1.44 – 3.33) times more likely to use WhatsApp, 1.85 (95% CI = 1.21 – 2.80) times more likely to use Twitter, and 3.01 (95% CI = 1.89 – 4.81) times more likely to use Skype, and 1.28 (95% CI = 1.18 – 1.39) times more likely to use more social media platforms, compared to men who had no sexual feelings or offending with children. There were no significant differences in the social media platforms used between men who had no sexual feelings or offending with children and men who only had sexual offending with children.

Figure 20. Odds (95% CI) of social media platform use and categories of men with sexual feelings and contact with children compared to men with no sexual feelings and contact (orange dots ● indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).



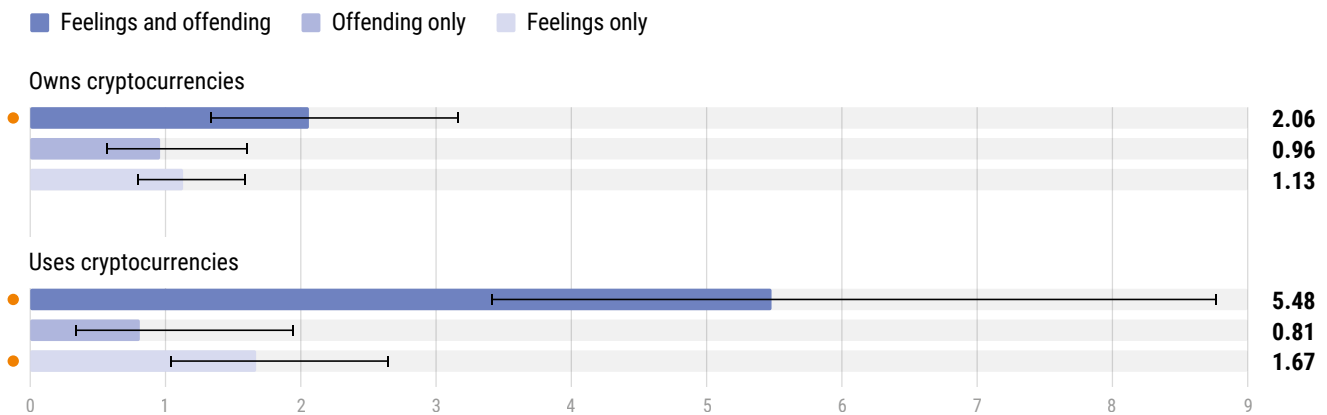
Privacy services. Participants indicated which privacy services they currently used. Compared to men who had no sexual feelings or offending with children, those who had sexual feelings and offending with children were significantly more likely to use any of the eight privacy services included, while those who had sexual feelings only were significantly more likely to use five out of the eight services, and those who had sexual offending only were significantly more likely to use three out of the eight services.

Figure 21. Odds (95% CI) of privacy service use and categories of men with sexual feelings and contact with children compared to men with no sexual feelings and contact (orange dots • indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).



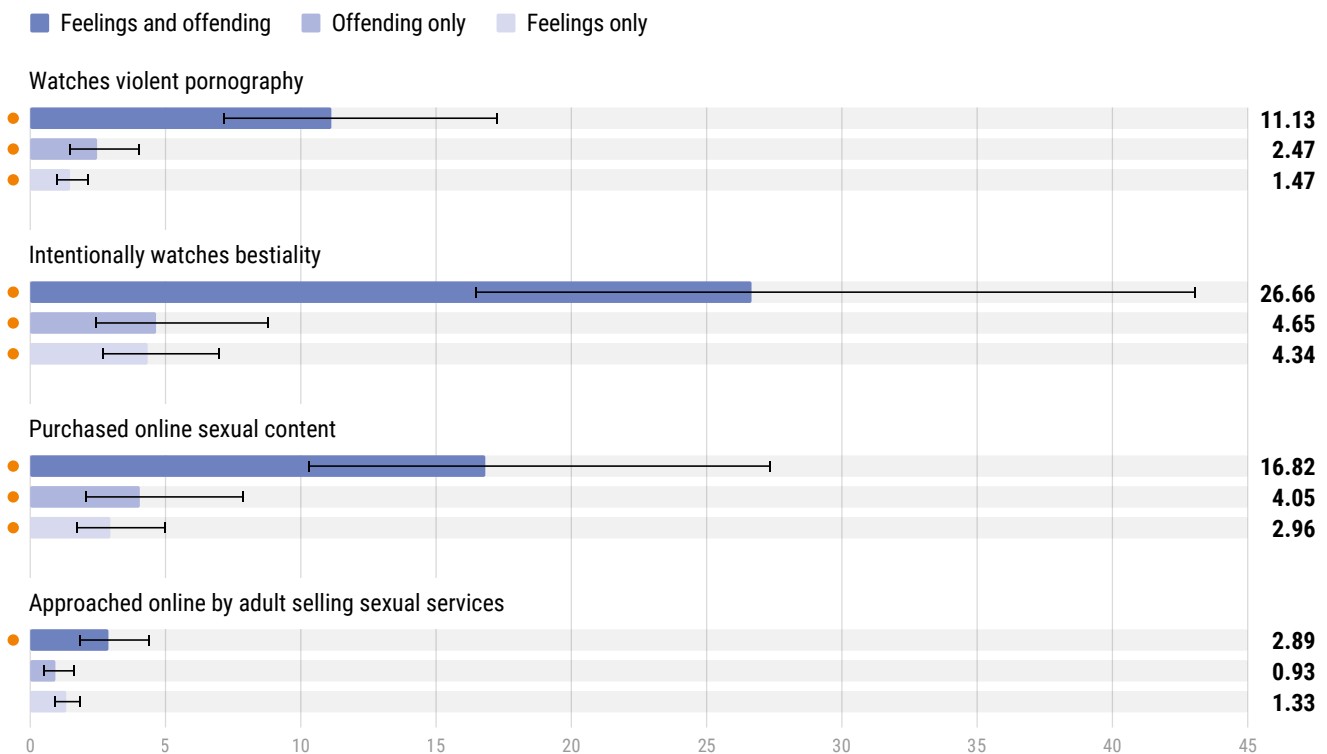
Cryptocurrency. Men who had sexual feelings and offending with children were 2.06 (95% CI = 1.34 – 3.17) times more likely to own cryptocurrency, and 5.48 (95% CI = 3.42 – 8.77) times more likely to use cryptocurrency for purchasing goods online, than men who had no sexual feelings or offending with children. Men who had sexual feelings only were 1.67 (95% CI = 1.05 – 2.65) times more likely to use cryptocurrency purchasing goods online than men who had no sexual feelings or offending with children.

Figure 22. Odds (95% CI) of cryptocurrency ownership and use and categories of men with sexual feelings and contact with children compared to men with no sexual feelings and contact (orange dots ● indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).



Pornography. All categories of men who had sexual feelings and/or offending with children were significantly more likely to watch violent pornography, bestiality, and purchase online sexual content from adults, than men who had no sexual feelings or offending with children. The greatest effect sizes were for men who had sexual feelings and offending with children: they were 11.13 (95% CI = 7.17 – 17.28) times more likely to watch violent porn, 16.82 (95% CI = 10.34 – 27.38) times more likely to purchase online sexual content, and 26.66 (95% CI = 16.50 – 43.08) times more likely to intentionally watch bestiality. Men who had sexual feelings or offending only had much smaller and similar effect sizes. Moreover, only men who had sexual feelings and offending with children were significantly more likely to be approached online by adults selling sexual services (OR = 2.89 [95% CI = 1.89 – 4.43]).

Figure 23. Odds (95% CI) of online pornography use and categories of men with sexual feelings and contact with children compared to men with no sexual feelings and contact (orange dots ● indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).



Men who want help with their sexual feelings towards children

Of the 294 men who had sexual feelings towards children, 87 (29.6%) indicated that they had concerns about their sexual feelings towards people below the age of 18 years and would like more information and support. The demographic characteristics of these men are presented in [Supplementary table S11](#). Few identified as gay or bisexual (3.4%) and three-quarters only had sex with women (72.4%). Most were married or living with their partner (66.9%), were participating in the workforce (73.0%) and had no children in their household (64.4%). Almost half of the men were aged 55 years or older (43.7%) and lived in the city (47.7%). Around one-in-four men had an annual household income of more than \$150,000 (28.7%), and one-in-three had a university degree (34.5%). The following series of analyses differentiate between men who do and do not want help with their sexual feelings towards children.

Offending behaviour

Men who wanted help for their sexual feelings towards children were generally more likely to have offended online and offline than men who did not want help for their sexual feelings towards children (see [Supplementary table S10](#)). Specifically, these men were 4.20 (95% CI = 2.07 – 8.54) times more likely to have deliberately viewed online pornography of people under 18 years, 3.99 (95% CI = 1.62 – 9.85) times more likely to have engaged in a sexually explicit webcam with a person under 18 years, 2.85 (95% CI = 1.24 – 6.56) times more likely to have paid for online sexual interaction or content of person under 18 years, and 2.39 (95% CI = 1.12 – 5.12) times more likely to have had sex or sexual offending with a person under 18 years while they were over 18 years. There was no significant association with flirting or having sexual conversation online with a person under 18 years.

Figure 24. Odds (95% CI) of wanting help for sexual feelings towards children by offending characteristics (orange dots • indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).



Demographic characteristics

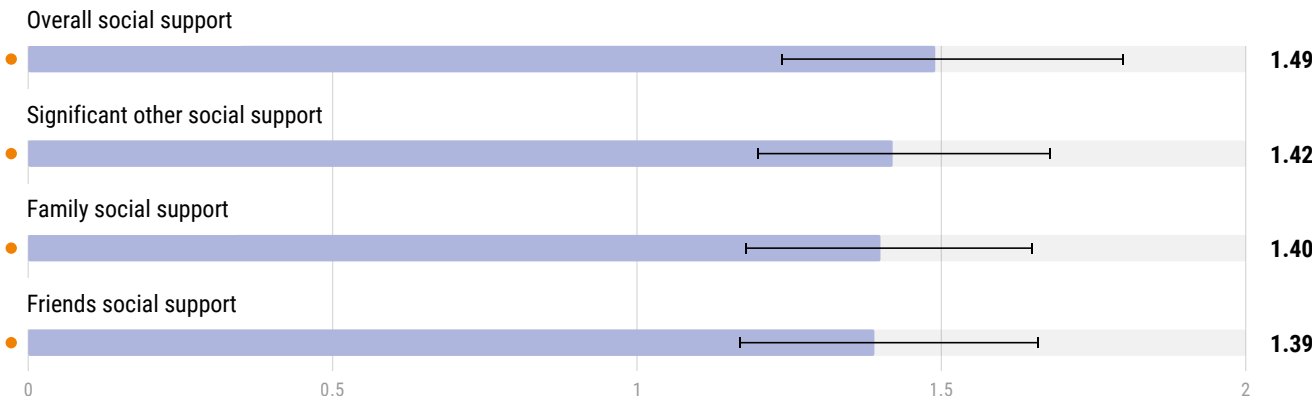
Employment and education. Men who wanted help for their sexual feelings towards children were 2.65 (95% CI = 1.44 – 4.86) times more likely to work with children, compared to men who did not want help with their sexual feelings towards children.

Age and household. Men who wanted help for their sexual feelings towards children were more likely to be older compared to other men. They were 2.56 (95% CI = 1.29 – 5.06) times more likely to be aged 35 to 54 years, and 2.52 (95% CI = 1.41 – 4.49) times more likely to be aged 55 years or older, compared to men who did not want help with their sexual feelings towards children, and relative to those aged 18 to 34 years.

Health and psychology

Men who wanted help for their sexual feelings towards children were 1.49 (95% CI = 1.24 – 1.80) times more likely to have higher overall social support, 1.42 (95% CI = 1.20 – 1.68) times more likely to have higher social support from significant others, 1.40 (95% CI = 1.18 – 1.65) times more likely to have higher social support from family, and 1.39 (95% CI = 1.17 – 1.66) times more likely to have higher social support from friends, compared to men who did not want help for their feelings towards children (see [Supplementary table S12](#)).

Figure 25. Odds (95% CI) of wanting help for sexual feelings towards children by social support (orange dots indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).



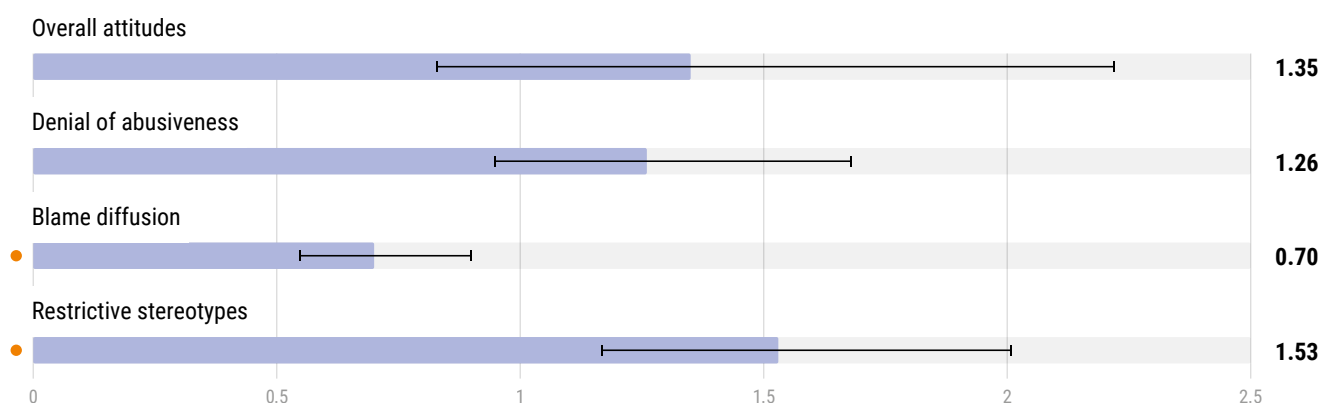
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

Men who wanted help for their sexual feelings towards children were 2.39 (95% CI = 1.23 – 4.64) times more likely to experience neglect and 2.08 (95% CI = 1.01 – 4.29) times more likely to have a household member incarcerated during childhood compared to men who did not want help for their feelings towards children (see [Supplementary table S13](#)).

Attitudes towards online child sexual exploitation

Men who did not want help for their sexual feelings towards children were 1.43 (OR = 0.70 [95% CI = 0.55 – 0.90]) times more likely to have higher scores endorsing blame diffusion attitudes, whereas men who did want help for their sexual feelings towards children were 1.53 (95% CI = 1.17 – 2.01) times more likely to have higher scores for attitudes endorsing restrictive stereotypes (see [Supplementary table S14](#)).

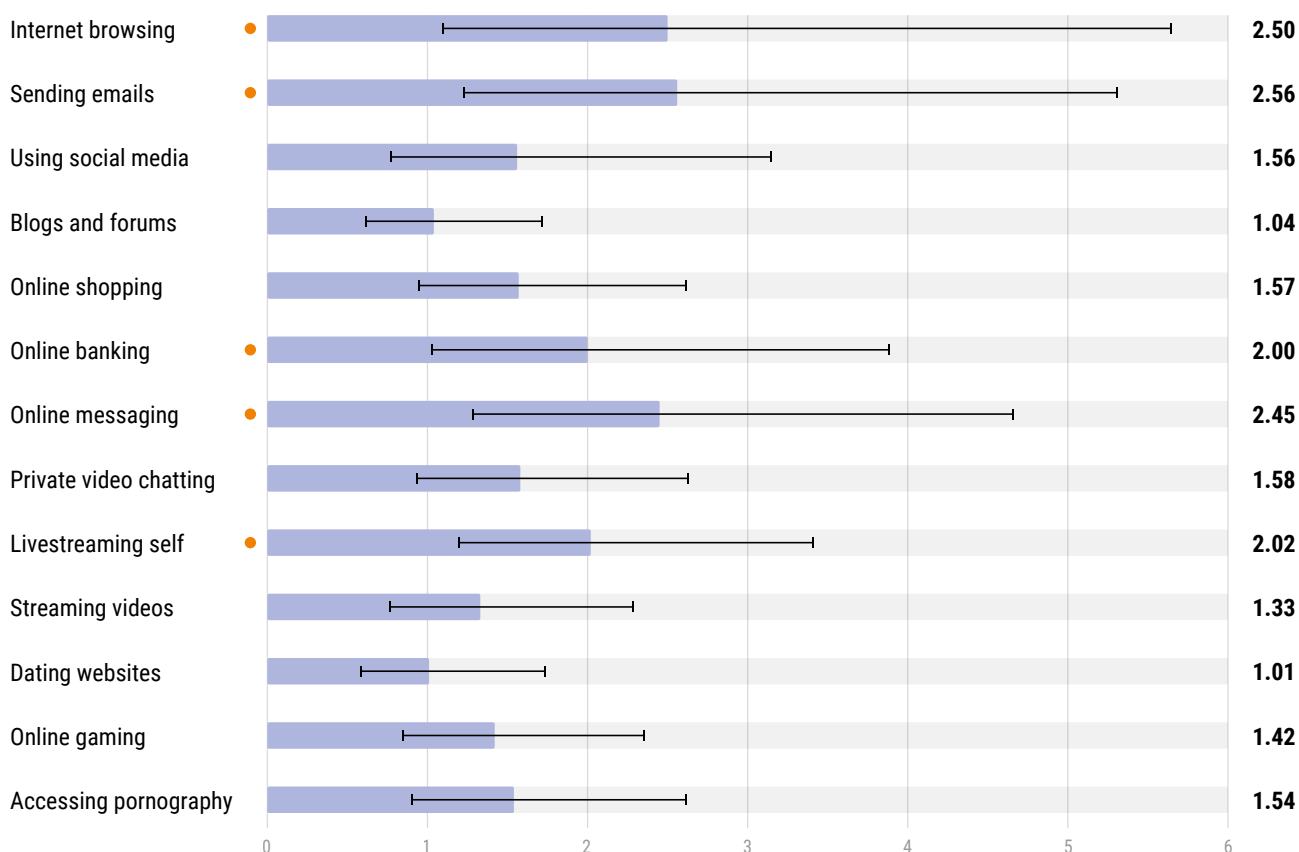
Figure 26. Odds (95% CI) of wanting help for sexual feelings towards children by scores from the modified Child Sexual Abuse Myth scale (orange dots ● indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).



Internet use habits

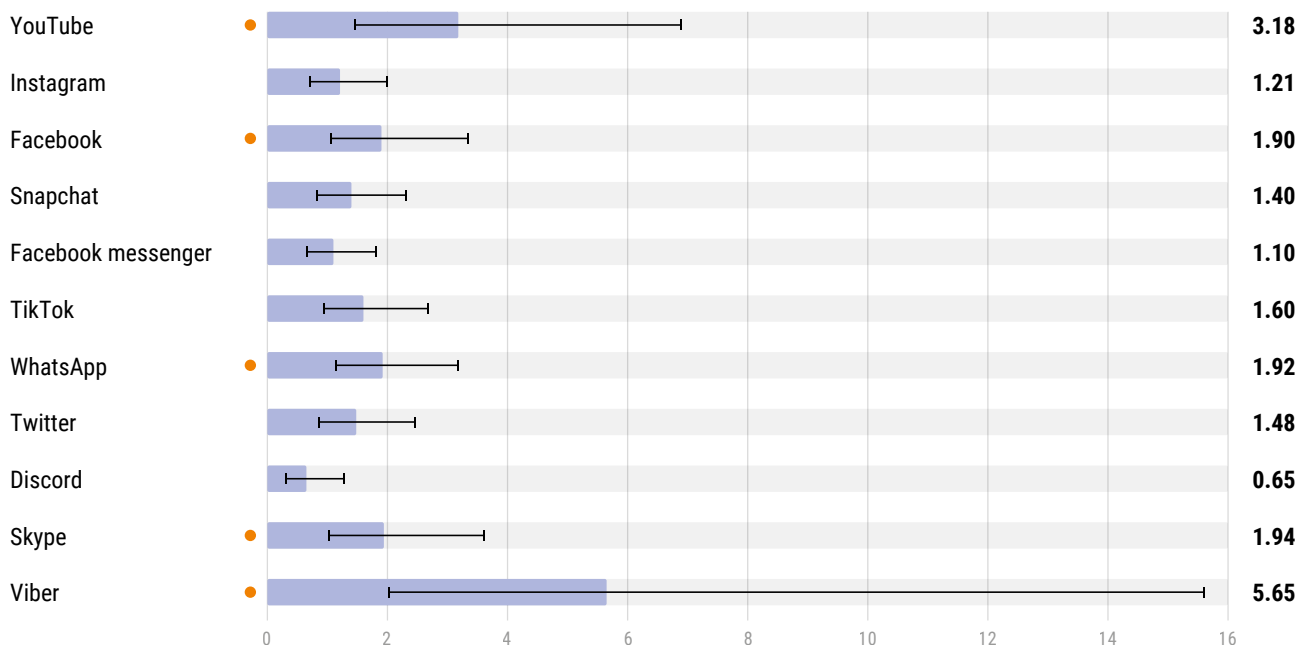
Frequency of internet use. Compared to men who did not want help for their sexual feelings towards children, men who did want help for their sexual feelings towards children were two to two-and-a-half times *more* likely to daily or weekly browse the internet (OR = 2.50 [95% CI = 1.10-5.65]), send emails (OR = 2.56 [95% CI = 1.23-5.31]), do online banking (OR = 2.00 [95% CI = 0.41 – 0.79]), message online (OR = 2.45 [95% CI = 1.29 – 4.66]), and livestream themselves (OR = 2.02 [95% CI = 1.20 – 3.41]) (see [Supplementary table S15](#)).

Figure 27. Odds (95% CI) of wanting help for sexual feelings towards children by internet use habits (orange dots ● indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).



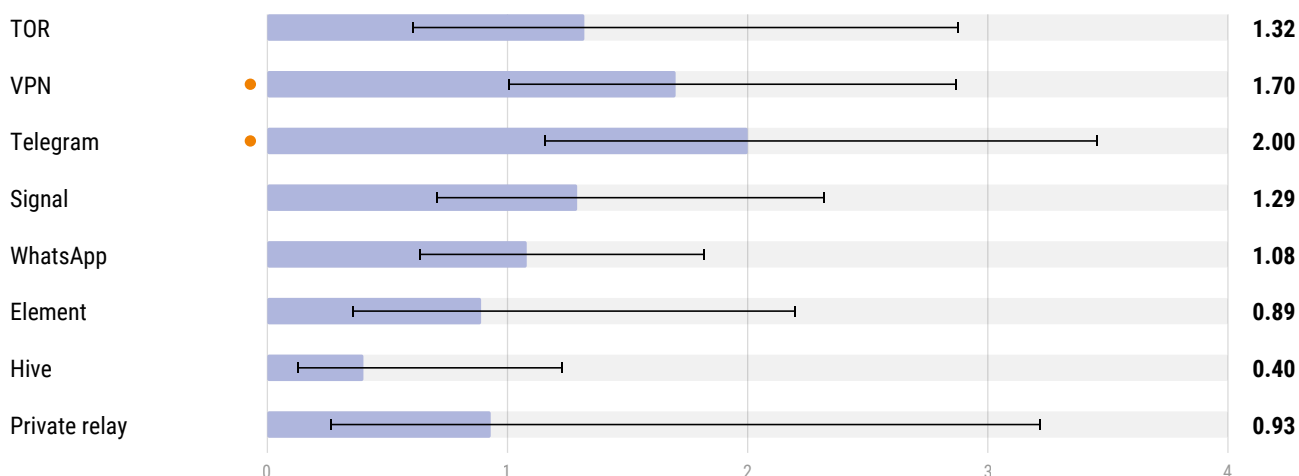
Social media. Men who wanted help for their sexual feelings towards children were 3.18 (95% CI = 1.47 – 6.90) times more likely to use YouTube, 1.90 (95% CI = 1.07 – 3.36) times more likely to use Facebook, 1.92 (95% CI = 1.15 – 3.18) times more likely to use WhatsApp, 1.94 (95% CI = 1.04 – 3.62) times more likely to use Skype, and 5.65 (95% CI = 2.04 – 15.61) times more likely to use Viber, compared to men who did not want help for their sexual feelings towards children. Furthermore, men who wanted help were significantly more likely to use more social media platforms than men who did not want help (OR = 1.13 [95% CI = 1.03 – 1.24]).

Figure 28. Odds (95% CI) of wanting help for sexual feelings towards children by social media platform use (orange dots ● indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).



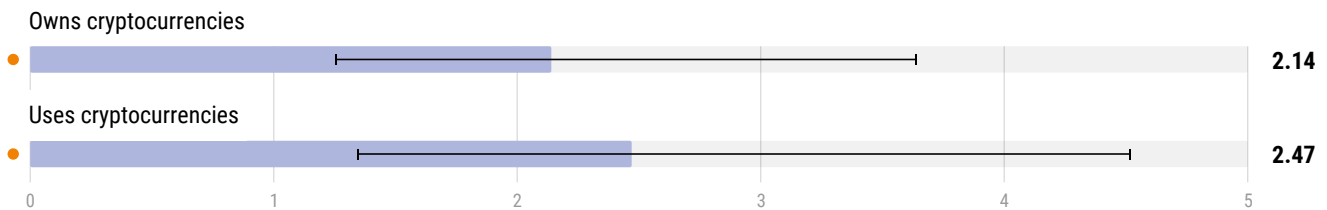
Privacy services. Men who wanted help for their sexual feelings towards children were 1.70 (95% CI = 1.01 – 2.87) times more likely to use a VPN and 2.00 (95% CI = 1.16 – 3.46) times more likely to use Telegram than men who did not want help for their sexual feelings towards children. No other significant differences were observed.

Figure 29. Odds (95% CI) of wanting help for sexual feelings towards children by privacy service use (orange dots ● indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).



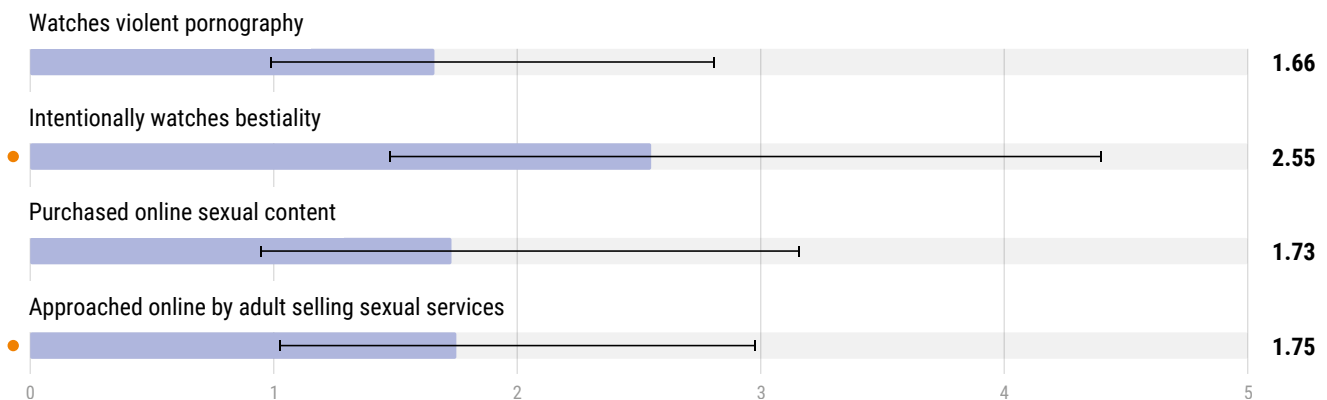
Cryptocurrency. Men who wanted help for their sexual feelings towards children were more than twice as likely to own cryptocurrency (OR = 2.14 [95% CI = 1.26 – 3.64]) and use cryptocurrency to buy things online (OR = 2.47 [95% CI = 1.35 – 4.52]).

Figure 30. Odds (95% CI) of sexual feelings and contact with children by cryptocurrency ownership and use (orange dots ● indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).



Pornography. Men who wanted help for their sexual feelings towards children were 2.55 (95% CI = 1.48 – 4.40) times more likely to intentionally watch bestiality, and 1.75 (95% CI = 1.03 – 2.98) times more likely to have been approached online by an adult selling sexual services, compared to men who did not want help for their sexual feelings towards children. They were also almost significantly more likely to intentionally watch violent and forceful pornography (OR = 1.66 [95% CI = 0.99 – 2.81]).

Figure 31. Odds (95% CI) of sexual feelings and contact with children by online pornography use (orange dots ● indicate statistically significant at $p < .05$).





Discussion

The results of the first Australian study on the prevalence of child sexual offending and associated factors among men finds that the majority (80.4%) of Australian men surveyed state that they do not have sexual feelings towards, and have not sexually offended against, children. However, 10.2% of men report having sexual feelings towards children, 4.5% have no sexual feelings but have sexually offended against young people and 4.9% admit to both experiencing sexual feelings and engaging in sexual offending against children. In total, almost one in five (19.6%) Australian men in the study have sexual feelings and/or sexual offended with children.

The number of men who knowingly and deliberately viewed sexually abusive material containing people below the age of 18, when they were over the age of 18, was 2.5%. 4.2% of men reported that they first intentionally viewed child sexual abuse material when they were under 18. In total, 6.7% of Australian men have ever knowingly viewed child sexual abuse material.

The percentage of men who committed any online offence against a child while over the age of 18 (including viewing pornographic material of people under the age of 18, online sexual conversations, webcamming in a sexual way or paying for online sexual interactions, images or videos involving a person below the age of 18) was 7.5%. 3.2% of participants stated they had had sex or sexual contact with a person below the age of 18 while over the age of 18.

Men with sexual feelings towards children who have offended against children

This discussion focuses on a particular group of men: men with sexual feelings towards children who had sexually offended against children. These men are almost one in twenty men in the Australian community. Our research found that this group is:

Well connected and relatively wealthy

- › They had better on average social supports and relationships. They were 1.63 times more likely to be married and had 1.18 times greater overall social support scores, than men who did not have sexual feelings or offending with children.
- › They are more likely to be high income, Men who had sexual feelings and offending with children are two times more likely to have an annual household income greater than \$150,000.

More likely to be working with children

- › This group had 2.73 greater odds of working with children compared to men who did not have sexual feelings or offending with children.

Traumatised in childhood with a history of alcohol and drug use

- They were more likely to have been sexually, physically and emotionally abused as children: Men who had sexual feelings and offending with children had 1.95 times higher overall ACE scores than men who did not have sexual feelings or offending with children. More specifically, men who had sexual feelings and offending with children were 1.99 times more likely to have experienced emotional abuse, 1.68 times more likely to have experienced physical abuse and 6.26 times more likely to have experienced sexual abuse during childhood.
- They had higher rates of alcohol and drug use: Men who had sexual feelings and offending with children were 4.28 times more likely to binge drink weekly or more. They were also more likely to have used illegal drugs, at 2.55 times more likely than men who did not have sexual feelings or offending with children.

Highly active online with a preference for encrypted and secure services

- Were more likely to use the internet, including for romance/dating sites and pornography: Men who had sexual feelings and offending with children were significantly more likely to use the internet for numerous purposes than men who had no sexual feelings or offending with children. Specifically, they were more likely to engage in dating/romance websites (4 times more likely) and access pornographic websites (3.67 times more likely).
- Preferred encrypted, secure or private apps and services: Men who had sexual feelings and sexual offending toward children were more likely to use privacy services and apps.
- Were more likely to own and use cryptocurrency: Men who had sexual feelings and offending with children were 2.06 times more likely to own cryptocurrency, and 5.48 times more likely to use cryptocurrency for purchasing goods online, compared to men who had no sexual feelings or offending with children.

They watched more pornography and the pornography was deviant and violent

- Watched violent and deviant pornography: The use of pornography emerged as a key risk factor in our study. Men who had sexual feelings and offending against children were 11 times more likely to watch violent pornography, 16.82 times more likely to purchase online sexual content, and 26.66 times more likely to intentionally watch bestiality.

They believe that sexually abusing children is not harmful.

- They held attitudes supportive of abusing children: Men who have sexual feelings and offending towards children were 25.45 times more likely to endorse attitudes that supported child sexual abuse compared to men who did not have sexual feelings or offending with children. These men were 6.48 times more likely to deny the abusiveness of online child sexual, 1.85 times more likely to diffuse blame, and 3.83 times more likely to endorse restrictive stereotypes.

These findings align with emerging research into undetected abusers or abusers who have offended over a prolonged period of time without coming to the attention of authorities. This group has been theorised as “specialist” offenders since they are ostensibly pro-social, well liked and trusted, emotionally regulated with strong impulse control, and highly premeditated in their grooming and targeting of child victims (Nicol, Harris, et al., 2022; Nicol, Ogilvie, et al., 2022).

Men with sexual feelings towards children who want help

There has been growing international interest in targeting men with sexual feelings towards children with preventative services to intervene earlier to prevent harm to children. In the data, 10.2 % of men had sexual feelings towards children and had not offended against a child. Early intervention services have an important role in supporting this group not to offend in the future.

One in three of those with sexual thoughts towards children acknowledged that they wanted help for those feelings. Our analysis examined the characteristics of men who wanted help for their sexual feelings towards children. These men were predominantly heterosexual, married, employed and more likely to be older and living in cities. These men were:

Already offending

- › Compared to men with sexual feelings who didn't want help, this group was approximately four times more likely to have viewed CSAM, four times more likely to have viewed a sexual webcam of a child, almost three times more likely to have paid for an online sexual interaction with a child, and more than twice as likely to have had sexually abusive contact with a child.

Highly active online with a preference for privacy and encrypted apps

- › They were highly active online and regular users of social media and other services compared to men with sexual feelings who didn't want help. They were 1.7 times more likely to use a VPN, twice as likely to use Telegram and twice as likely to own and use cryptocurrencies compared to men with sexual feelings who didn't want help, which suggests a preference for privacy and encrypted services that might facilitate their online sexual offending against children.

Viewing violent and deviant pornography

- › Men who wanted help for their sexual feelings towards children were 2.55 times more likely to intentionally watch bestiality. They were also 1.66 times more likely to intentionally watch violent and forceful pornography.

More likely be working with children

- › Men with sexual feelings who wanted help were more than twice as likely to work with children compared to men with sexual feelings who didn't want help

These findings affirm the limited existing evaluations of programs that aim to engage people concerned about their sexual feelings or behaviours towards children. Evaluation data finds that many or most of the people who approach such services are already offending against children, online and/or offline (Austin and Salter, 2023), although often undetected and therefore requiring intervention to prevent further harm to children. Similarly, men who wanted help for their sexual feelings in our study were also more likely to be offending compared to men with sexual feelings who didn't want help. This finding underscores the challenge faced by prevention or early intervention services to intervene as early as possible, and actively target those who have sexual feeling and have not offended, as well as those who have offended but are undetected.

Our survey found that men with sexual feelings who wanted help were more likely to be older, which raises questions about the potential to engage these men with services when they were younger and prior to the onset of offending. It is notable that this group is more likely to be working with children and therefore posing a risk to children, and also using privacy services and encrypted apps and payment services. Engaging with this group earlier may disrupt the establishment of these offence-facilitating behaviours.

Prevention of child sexual abuse

This section draws on survey findings to make recommendations for the primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of child sexual abuse. The primary prevention section focuses on the social determinants of child sexual abuse: those macro-level factors that may be increasing the prevalence of child sexual abuse at the population or systemic level. The secondary prevention section focuses on groups at risk of sexual offending against children. The tertiary prevention section focuses on deterrence and the prevention of reoffending. Future publications based on survey data will examine the findings and their implications in more depth. However, based on the evidence we have presented in this report, we make a number of recommendations for the prevention of child sexual abuse.

Primary prevention

The findings of this research point to several areas which could inform primary prevention work:

- **Child maltreatment and violence against women are social determinants of child sexual abuse.** Adverse childhood experiences such as child sexual abuse, domestic violence and neglect correlate with sexual feelings and offending against children. Efforts to prevent the abuse and neglect of children could have a flow on effect on the levels of men's sexual abuse of children. Support programs for children who have been abused, neglected and subjected to domestic violence may have a role in the prevention of child sexual abuse.
- **Improving community attitudes and understandings of the harm of child sexual abuse may reduce the prevalence of child sexual abuse.** Interventions that target beliefs and attitudes that support child sexual abuse are important to the prevention of child sexual abuse. In our research, offenders were more likely to believe that child sexual abuse is not harmful and that children are to blame for sexual abuse. Sexual abuse myths not only impact the actions of the offender, but also play a part in how the victim understands their abuse and the support they receive from the community. Social marketing campaigns that focus on the harms of child sexual abuse, and myths that are prevalent amongst men who abuse children may reduce child sexual abuse.
- **Unsafe online services and products are part of the commercial determinants of child sexual abuse.** Men with sexual feelings who were sexually offending against children were highly active online. Our data indicated that they had a clear preference for encrypted platforms as well as privacy services. Ensuring that online services and products are safe for children and are not facilitating offending would likely reduce the prevalence of online offending against children.
- **Building safety into online romance and dating sites reduces offender access to single parents.** Men with sexual feelings and offending are highly active on romance and dating sites, which reinforces the need for safety measures to protect single parents and their children. A recent Australian survey of dating app users found that single parents are being routinely asked for sexual images of their children (Teunissen et al., 2022).
- **The regulation of pornography, particularly violent and deviant content, is important in the prevention of child sexual abuse.** Our research shows men with sexual feelings and offending against children are frequent users of pornography. A recent analysis of over 150,000 pornography videos on the most popular sites in the UK found that the most commonly used search term for pornography on the websites is "teen" and that incest is the most frequently depicted form of sexual violence (Vera-Gray et al., 2021). A public health approach to the primary prevention of child sexual abuse must grapple with the influence of pornography on normalising the sexual abuse of children and shaping abuse-supportive attitudes. Furthermore, our research found that the majority of Australian men who have viewed child sexual abuse material began such behaviour when they were children. This finding is congruent with a recent, large-scale

survey of child sexual abuse material offenders in the “dark web”, which found that 70% first viewed illegal content of children when they were under the age of 18 (Insoll et al., 2021). The early initiation of child sexual abuse material offending clearly illustrates the widespread availability of this material and the need for stricter regulation of explicit content online.

- › **Men with a sexual interest in children are more likely to work with children so prevention requires the promotion and maintenance of child-safe institutions.** Our findings highlight the importance of the safeguarding of children in child-focused institutions and activities, including schools, day-care, social groups, clubs and any other activity in which children are present. The men who have sexual feelings and are offending against children were more likely to work with children compared to other men.

Secondary prevention

This research provides insights into offending trajectories where evidence-based secondary prevention initiatives could be aimed.

- › **Sexually abused and traumatised boys need early therapeutic support.** The evidence from our survey was clear that early childhood abuse and trauma (particularly sexual victimisation) are more prevalent for those who have sexual feelings and offending against children. The provision of therapeutic support to traumatised, abused and neglected boys is therefore an important secondary prevention initiative.
- › **There is a demand for early intervention services such as Stop It Now! for men with sexual feelings towards children who have not offended, and undetected offenders who want help to stop harming children.** One in six men in the community have sexual feelings towards children. One in three of those with sexual feelings towards children, and one in twenty men in the Australian community, wanted help for those sexual feelings. Men who wanted help for their sexual feelings are more likely to be offending and a risk to children. It is critically important to engage this group of men in services that can reduce their risk and change their behaviours in order to prevent future harm to children.
- › **There is a need for innovative strategies to engage earlier with men and boys with sexual feelings towards children.** Men with sexual feelings towards children, but who have not yet offended, were, on average, younger than men with sexual feelings who had offended. This provides evidence of a prevention window prior to offending onset. These men were less likely to want help for their feelings, therefore interventions could focus on younger men and encouraging help-seeking for their sexual feelings.
- › **Social media and online services may provide an opportunity to encourage men with sexual feelings to engage with prevention services.** They are more likely to use live streaming and dating websites. Social campaigns could utilise this knowledge and target these specific forms of technology for prevention messaging.
- › **Men with sexual feelings towards children are consuming more pornography, and more violent and deviant pornography.** At the moment, some pornography sites are directing men who search for child content to early intervention services. Our findings suggest that these messages could be broadened to include men searching for violent and bestiality content.
- › **Supporting family and friends to identify problematic behaviours may also be a form of early intervention.** Non-offending partners of CSAM offenders have noted that their concern about their partners’ use of pornography in general can be dismissed by support service, therefore it is important that this behaviour be recognised as a risk for offending (Salter et al. 2022).

Tertiary prevention

This survey has provided an unusual level of insight into men in the community who have sexually offended against children. Approximately one in ten men had committed a sexual offence against a child, including having sexual conversations with a child online, webcamming sexually with a child, paying for a sexual interaction online with a child, viewing child sexual abuse material or having sexual contact with a child.

Half of these men indicated sexual interest in children, and half did not. This information suggests two distinct cohorts of child sex offenders, one which is motivated by sexual interest in children, and a second group who may be offending for situational or opportunistic reasons. This observation is broadly in line with the forensic scholarship that has identified a cohort of offenders whose abuse of children does not appear to be motivated by sexual interest but rather opportunism (Wortley & Smallbone, 2006). Further analysis of this data is necessary to explicate the differences between these two groups of offenders in our survey.

Our recommendations here focus specifically on men with sexual feelings towards children who have sexually offended against children.

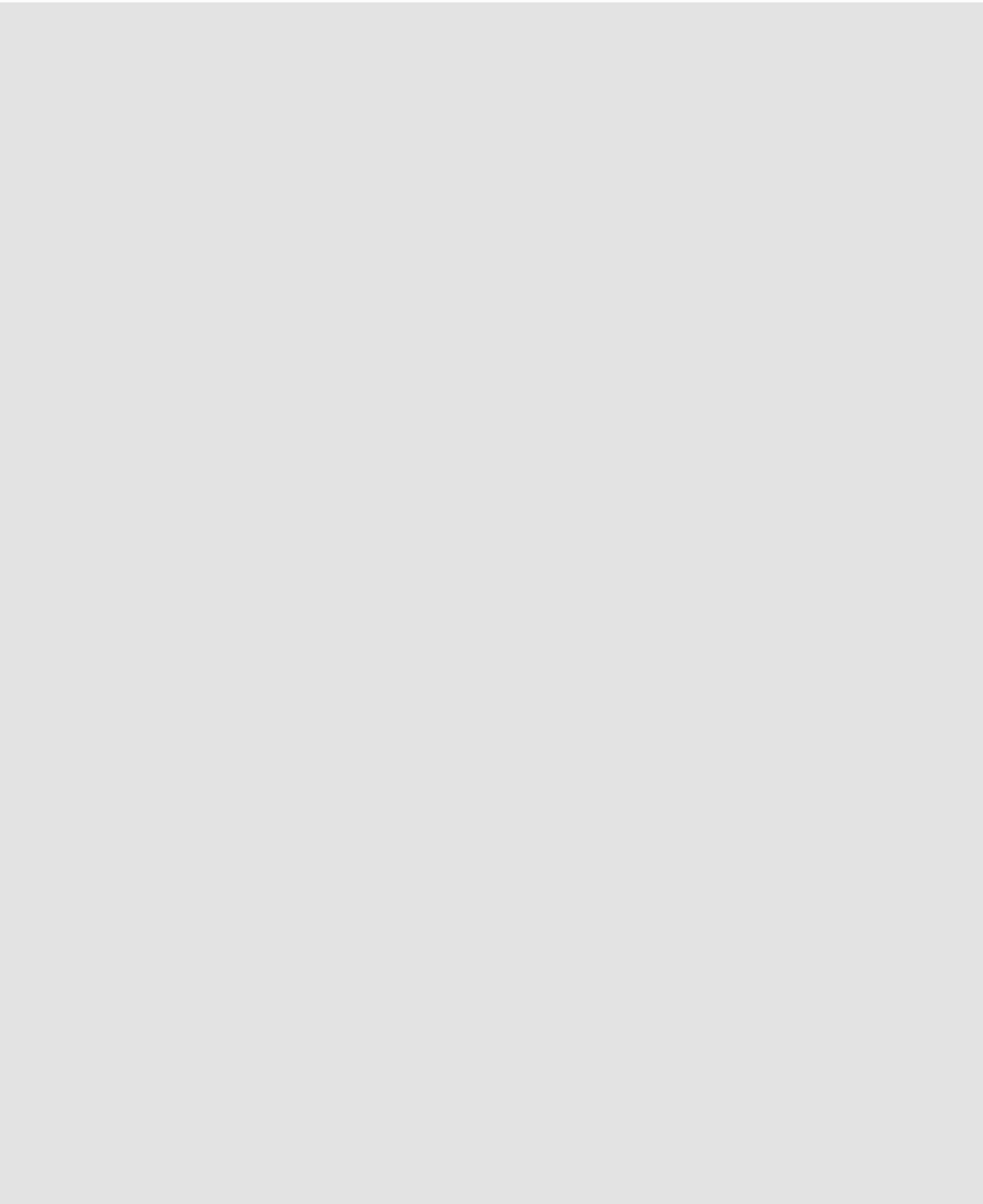
- **We need policies and procedures that target “specialist”, undetected child sex offenders.** Men with sexual feelings who had sexually offended against children in our sample were more likely to be older, wealthier, married with good social supports. These men have the skills, networks and resources to avoid suspicion and evade detection. These findings raise questions about how child protection, law enforcement and the criminal justice system can better target a cohort of men who are a chronic risk to children but are adaptive in their efforts to avoid detection and prosecution.
- **Men with sexual feelings who are offending engage in a range of online and economic activities that may be detectable by financial institutions.** Men with sexual feelings and offending had a high use of online banking, dating websites, live streaming, buying cryptocurrencies, purchasing online sexual content, accessing pornography sites, using privacy services and online gaming. These activities could leave a financial footprint which may indicate a risk for offending. Banking detection algorithms could flag these patterns of financial behaviour.
- **Child sexual abuse prevention education and awareness could be bolstered with these findings.** While it is not the responsibility of children to protect themselves from sexual abuse, age-appropriate curriculum has a well recognised place in efforts to prevent child sexual abuse. Grooming is one of the main offending pathways taken by undetected, specialist child sex offenders, who leverage their social and professional status to access and exploit children. Educating children, and protective adults on the phases and strategies of grooming could be a means of interrupting such offence pathways.

Conclusion

This is the first nationally representative child sexual abuse perpetration prevalence study undertaken in Australia to date, and the largest ever undertaken globally. It has identified the prevalence and characteristics of male child sexual abusers in the Australian community, as well as broader patterns of social attitudes and technological behaviours that facilitate child sexual abuse. In doing so, the study has brought unprecedented visibility to men who sexually harm children who would otherwise go undetected and overlooked.

The report has validated the observations of countless survivors that the men who abused them are well respected members of the community who enjoy high esteem and the confidence of those around them. Our report affirms that the prevention of child sexual abuse is possible and that a range of stakeholders, including policy makers, the private sector and others, have the means to reduce sexual violence against children. We have made a range of recommendations based on our findings.

Importantly, our study establishes a methodology by which the prevalence and risk factors for child sexual abuse can be measured and tracked over time across Australia and other jurisdictions. Subsequent publications from this study will provide comparative data between Australia, the US and the UK. Repeated perpetration prevalence studies could be an important mechanism by which progress in sexual abuse prevention can be measured and assessed.



References

- Austin, K. M., & Salter, M. A. (2023). [Policy barriers to child sexual abuse secondary prevention programs in Australia](#). *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 1–15.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). [Population: Census](#). ABS.
- Bagley, C., Wood, M., & Young, L. (1994). [Victim to abuser: Mental health and behavioral sequels of child sexual abuse in a community survey of young adult males](#). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 18(8), 683–697.
- Bártová, K., Androvičová, R., Krejčová, L., Weiss, P., & Klapilová, K. (2021). The prevalence of paraphilic interests in the Czech population: Preference, arousal, the use of pornography, fantasy, and behavior. *Journal of Sex Research*, 58(1), 86–96.
- Battaglia, M. P., Hoaglin, D. C., & Frankel, M. R. (2009). [Practical considerations in raking survey data](#). *Survey Practice*, 2(5), 1–10.
- Briere, J., & Runtz, M. (1989). University males' sexual interest in children: Predicting potential indices of "pedophilia" in a nonforensic sample. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 13(1), 65–75.
- Burgess-Proctor, A., Comartin, E. B., & Kubiak, S. P. (2017). Comparing female-and male-perpetrated child sexual abuse: A mixed-methods analysis. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 26(6), 657–676.
- Collings, S. (1997). [Development, reliability, and validity of the child sexual abuse myth scale](#). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 12(5), 665–674.
- Dal Grande, E., Chittleborough, C. R., Campostrini, S., Tucker, G., & Taylor, A. W. (2015). Health estimates using survey raked-weighting techniques in an Australian population health surveillance system. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 182(6), 544–556.
- Dombert, B., Schmidt, A. F., Banse, R., Briken, P., Hoyer, J., Neutze, J., & Osterheider, M. (2016). How common is men's self-reported sexual interest in prepubescent children?. *Journal of Sex Research*, 53(2), 214–223.
- Douglas, B. D., Ewell, P. J., & Brauer, M. (2023). [Data quality in online human-subjects research: Comparisons between mturk, prolific, cloudresearch, qualtrics, and SONA](#). *PLOS ONE*, 18(3), e0279720.
- Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), 245–258.
- Fromuth, M., Burkhart, B., & Jones, C. (1991). [Hidden child molestation](#). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 6(3), 376–384.
- Insoll, T., Ovaska, A., & Vaaranen-Valkonen, N. (2021). [CSAM Users in the Dark Web: Redirection Survey Report](#). Suojellaan Lapsia/Protect Children.
- Lawrence, D. M., Hunt, A., Mathews, B., Haslam, D. M., Malacova, E., Dunne, M. P., Erskine, H. E., Higgins, D. J., Finkelhor, D., Pacella, R., Meinck, F., Thomas, H. J., & Scott, J. G. (2023). [The association between child maltreatment and health risk behaviours and conditions throughout life in the Australian Child Maltreatment Study](#). *Medical Journal of Australia*, 218(S6), S34–S39.
- Löwe, B., Wahl, I., Rose, M., Spitzer, C., Glaesmer, H., Wingenfeld, K., ... & Brähler, E. (2010). A 4-item measure of depression and anxiety: validation and standardization of the Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) in the general population. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 122(1-2), 86–95.
- Mathews, B., Pacella, R., Scott, J., Finkelhor, D., Meinck, F., Higgins, D., Erskine, H., Thomas, H., Lawrence, D., & Haslam, D. (2023). The prevalence of child maltreatment in Australia: Findings from a national survey. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 218(6), S1–S51.

- Nicol, S. J., Harris, D. A., Ogilvie, J., Kebbell, M. R., Craig, C., & Knight, R. (2022). Evading detection: what do we know about men charged with extrafamilial child sexual abuse following delayed detection? *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 31(3), 333-352.
- Nicol, S. J., Ogilvie, J., Harris, D. A., Kebbell, M. R., & Christie, T. B. (2022). Evading detection: characteristics of individuals with extrafamilial child sexual offences and long detection lags. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 0306624X221106320.
- Ó Ciardha, C., Ildeniz, G., & Karoğlu, N. (2021). The prevalence of sexual interest in children and sexually harmful behavior self-reported by men recruited through an online crowdsourcing platform. *Sexual Abuse*, 10790632211013811.
- Pacella, R., Nation, A., Mathews, B., Scott, J. G., Higgins, D. J., Haslam, D. M., Dunne, M. P., Finkelhor, D., Meinck, F., Erskine, H. E., Thomas, H. J., Malacova, E., Lawrence, D. M., & Monks, C. (2023). [Child maltreatment and health service use: findings of the Australian Child Maltreatment Study](#). *Medical Journal of Australia*, 218(S6), S40-S46.
- Porter, C. O. L. H., Outlaw, R., Gale, J. P., & Cho, T. S. (2018). [The use of online panel data in management research: A review and recommendations](#). *Journal of Management*, 45(1), 319–344.
- Salter, M., Conroy, E., Dragiewicz, M., Burke, J., Ussher, J., Middleton, W., Vilenica, S., Martin Monzon, B., & Noack-Lundber, K. (2020). [“A Deep Wound Under My Heart”: Constructions of Complex Trauma and Implications for Women’s Wellbeing and Safety From Violence](#). ANROWS.
- Salter, M., Woodlock, D., & Dubler, N. (2022). [Secrecy, control and violence in women’s intimate relationships with child sexual abuse material offenders](#). *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*. 661.
- Scott, J. G., Malacova, E., Mathews, B., Haslam, D. M., Pacella, R., Higgins, D. J., Meinck, F., Dunne, M. P., Finkelhor, D., Erskine, H. E., Lawrence, D. M., & Thomas, H. J. (2023). [The association between child maltreatment and mental disorders in the Australian Child Maltreatment Study](#). *Medical Journal of Australia*, 218(S6), S26-S33.
- Seale, P., Boltri, J. M., Shellenberger, S., Velasquez, M. M., Cornelius, M. E., Guyinn, M., & Okosun, I. S. (2006). [Primary care validation of a single screening question for drinkers](#). *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 67(5), 778–784.
- Seto, M. C. (2008). *Pedophilia and sexual offending against children*. American Psychological Association (APA).
- Seto, M. C., Hermann, C. A., Kjellgren, C., Priebe, G., Svedin, C. G., & Långström, N. (2015). Viewing child pornography: Prevalence and correlates in a representative community sample of young Swedish men. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 44(1), 67-79.
- Smith, P. C., Schmidt, S. M., Allensworth-Davies, D., & Saitz, R. (2010). [A single-question screening test for drug use in primary care](#). *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 170(13).
- Speed, T. P. (2005). Iterative proportional fitting. In Armitage, P. and Colton, T. (Eds). *Encyclopedia of Biostatistics*, John Wiley & Sons.
- Teunissen, C., Boxall, H., Napier, S., & Brown, R. (2022). [The sexual exploitation of Australian children on dating apps and websites](#). *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*. 658.
- Vera-Gray, F., McGlynn, C., Kureshi, I., & Butterby, K. (2021). [Sexual violence as a sexual script in mainstream online pornography](#). *British Journal of Criminology*, 61(5), 1243 – 1260.
- Von Korff, M., Ustun, T., Bedirhan., Ormel, J., Kaplan, I., & Simon, G. E. (1996). [Self-report disability in an international primary care study of psychological illness](#). *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 49(3), 297–303.
- Wortley, R., & Smallbone, S. (2006). Applying situational principles to sexual offenses against children. *Crime Prevention Studies*, 19, 7-35.
- Wurtele, S. K., Simons, D. A., & Moreno, T. (2014). Sexual interest in children among an online sample of men and women: Prevalence and correlates. *Sexual Abuse*, 26(6), 546-568.
- Zimet, G. D., Powell, S. S., Farley, G. K., Werkman, S., & Berkoff, K. A. (1990). Psychometric characteristics of the multidimensional scale of perceived social support. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 55(3-4), 610-617.

Supplementary materials

Supplementary table S1. Comparison of demographic benchmark characteristics between original sample, Australian census, and weighted sample.

Demographic characteristics	Original sample (n = 1,965)	Australian census	Weighted sample (n = 1,945)
Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander			
Yes	303 (15.4%)	3.4%	3.4%
No	1,651 (84.0%)	96.6%	96.6%
Country of birth			
Australia	1,617 (82.3%)	64.4%	64.6%
Outside Australia	348 (17.7%)	35.6%	35.4%
Marital status			
Single	645 (32.8%)	41.9%	41.7%
Married or living together	1,320 (67.2%)	58.1%	58.3%
Employment status			
Participating in workforce	1,520 (77.4%)	71.3%	71.3%
Not participating in workforce	443 (22.5%)	28.7%	28.7%
Age			
18-24 years	275 (14.0%)	15.3%	15.2%
25-34 years	420 (21.4%)	17.6%	17.7%
35-44 years	358 (18.2%)	16.9%	17.0%
45-54 years	231 (11.8%)	15.6%	15.6%
55-64 years	219 (11.1%)	14.4%	14.4%
65+ years	462 (23.5%)	20.1%	20.1%
Annual household income			
Less than \$30,000	156 (7.9%)	12.2%	12.1%
\$30,000 - \$49,999	212 (10.8%)	16.9%	16.8%
\$50,000 - \$79,999	364 (18.5%)	15.0%	15.0%
\$80,000 - \$99,999	229 (11.7%)	11.8%	11.8%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	421 (21.4%)	19.8%	19.8%
\$150,00 - \$199,999	324 (16.5%)	11.0%	11.0%
More than \$200,000	259 (13.2%)	13.4%	13.4%
Educational attainment			
Did not complete secondary school	188 (9.6%)	15.7%	15.8%
Completed secondary school	587 (29.9%)	23.0%	23.6%
Vocational/trade qualification	388 (19.7%)	21.2%	21.7%
University degree	795 (40.5%)	37.9%	38.9%

Supplementary table S2. Comparison of demographic characteristics between men who do and do not have sexual feelings towards children.

Demographic characteristics	No sexual feelings (n = 1646)	Sexual feelings (n = 294)	OR (95% CI)
Country of birth			
Australia	1,068 (64.9%)	185 (62.9%)	0.92 (0.71-1.19)
Outside Australia	578 (35.1%)	109 (37.1%)	1.00 (reference)
Sexual orientation			
Heterosexual	1,521 (93.0%)	262 (91.9%)	0.88 (0.55-1.42)
Gay/bisexual	115 (7.0%)	23 (8.1%)	1.00 (reference)
Sexual partners			
Men, women, and other genders	84 (5.1%)	22 (7.6%)	1.85 (1.13-3.03)
Never had sex	102 (6.2%)	16 (5.5%)	1.09 (0.63-1.89)
Only men	139 (8.5%)	64 (22.0%)	3.21 (2.30-4.48)
Only women	1,317 (80.2%)	189 (64.9%)	1.00 (reference)
Residential location			
City	456 (27.7%)	148 (50.5%)	2.23 (1.54-3.24)
Suburban	901 (54.7%)	103 (35.2%)	0.79 (0.54-1.15)
Regional or rural	289 (17.6%)	42 (14.3%)	1.00 (reference)
Children in household			
3 or more	72 (4.4%)	11 (3.8%)	0.94 (0.49-1.79)
2	172 (10.5%)	26 (8.9%)	0.91 (0.59-1.41)
1	303 (18.4%)	72 (24.6%)	1.41 (1.05-1.91)
None	1098 (66.7%)	184 (62.8%)	1.00 (reference)
Works with children			
Yes	262 (15.9%)	54 (18.4%)	1.19 (0.86-1.65)
No	1,384 (84.1%)	240 (81.6%)	1.00 (reference)
Marital status			
Married or living together	952 (57.8%)	178 (60.5%)	1.12 (0.87-1.45)
Single	694 (42.2%)	116 (39.5%)	1.00 (reference)
Employment status			
Participating in workforce	1,168 (71.0%)	215 (73.4%)	1.13 (0.85-1.49)
Not participating in workforce	478 (29.0%)	78 (26.6%)	1.00 (reference)
Age			
18-34 years	498 (30.3%)	140 (47.8%)	2.95 (2.11-4.12)
35-54 years	576 (35.0%)	55 (18.8%)	1.00 (reference)
55 years or older	572 (34.8%)	98 (33.4%)	1.80 (1.27-2.55)
Annual household income			
More than \$150,000	377 (22.9%)	97 (33.1%)	1.79 (1.33-2.42)
\$80,000 - \$150,000	525 (31.9%)	89 (30.4%)	1.18 (0.87-1.60)
Less than \$80,000	744 (45.2%)	107 (36.5%)	1.00 (reference)
Educational attainment			
Did not complete secondary school	251 (15.2%)	56 (19.0%)	1.22 (0.86-1.73)
Completed secondary school	377 (22.9%)	80 (27.2%)	1.16 (0.85-1.59)
Vocational/trade qualification	381 (23.1%)	41 (13.9%)	0.58 (0.40-0.85)
University degree	637 (38.7%)	117 (39.8%)	1.00 (reference)

Supplementary table S3. Comparison of demographic characteristics between men who have and have not sexually offended against children.

Demographic characteristics	No sexual offending (n = 1646)	Sexual offending (n = 294)	OR (95% CI)
Country of birth			
Australia	1122 (63.9%)	130 (71.0%)	1.40 (1.00-1.96)
Outside Australia	634 (36.1%)	53 (29.0%)	1.00 (reference)
Sexual orientation			
Heterosexual	1611 (92.6%)	172 (94.5%)	1.33 (0.69-2.56)
Gay/bisexual	128 (7.4%)	10 (5.5%)	1.00 (reference)
Sexual partners			
Men, women, and other genders	92 (5.3%)	14 (7.7%)	1.48 (0.82-2.69)
Never had sex	109 (6.2%)	9 (4.9%)	0.79 (0.39-1.62)
Only men	179 (10.2%)	24 (13.1%)	1.36 (0.86-2.15)
Only women	1370 (78.3%)	136 (74.3%)	1.00 (reference)
Residential location			
City	520 (29.6%)	84 (45.9%)	2.31 (1.64-3.25)
Suburban	939 (53.5%)	65 (35.5%)	1.00 (reference)
Regional or rural	297 (16.9%)	34 (18.6%)	1.63 (1.05-2.51)
Children in household			
3 or more	76 (4.3%)	7 (3.8%)	1.01 (0.46-2.22)
2	179 (10.2%)	20 (11.0%)	1.19 (0.72-1.97)
1	331 (18.8%)	44 (24.2%)	1.42 (0.98-2.05)
None	1172 (66.7%)	111 (61.0%)	1.00 (reference)
Works with children			
Yes	269 (15.3%)	47 (25.7%)	1.89 (1.33-2.71)
No	1488 (84.7%)	136 (74.3%)	1.00 (reference)
Marital status			
Married or living together	1012 (57.6%)	118 (64.5%)	1.35 (0.98-1.85)
Single	745 (42.4%)	65 (35.5%)	1.00 (reference)
Employment status			
Participating in workforce	1257 (71.6%)	125 (68.7%)	0.87 (0.62-1.21)
Not participating in workforce	499 (28.4%)	57 (31.3%)	1.00 (reference)
Age			
18-34 years	581 (33.1%)	57 (31.3%)	1.14 (0.76-1.69)
35-54 years	581 (33.1%)	50 (27.5%)	1.00 (reference)
55 years or older	595 (33.9%)	75 (41.2%)	1.46 (1.01-2.13)
Annual household income			
More than \$150,000	418 (23.8%)	56 (30.6%)	1.52 (1.02-2.27)
\$80,000 - \$150,000	564 (32.1%)	50 (27.3%)	1.00 (reference)
Less than \$80,000	775 (44.1%)	77 (42.1%)	1.11 (0.77-1.62)
Educational attainment			
Did not complete secondary school	288 (16.4%)	19 (10.4%)	0.69 (0.41-1.18)
Completed secondary school	402 (22.9%)	55 (30.2%)	1.44 (0.99-2.10)
Vocational/trade qualification	378 (21.5%)	43 (23.6%)	1.20 (0.80-1.80)
University degree	688 (39.2%)	65 (35.7%)	1.00 (reference)

Supplementary table S4. Comparison of demographic characteristics between men who have had (i) no sexual feelings or offending with young people (reference group), (ii) sexual feelings but not sexual offending with young people, (iii) no sexual feelings but had sexual offending with young people, and (iv) sexual feelings and offending with young people.

Demographic characteristics	No feelings or offending (n=1558) (reference)	Feelings only (n = 198) (OR [95% CI])	Offending only (n = 87) (OR [95% CI])	Feelings and offending (n = 95) (OR [95% CI])
Country of birth				
Australia	1008 (64.7%)	114 (57.6%)	60 (68.2%)	71 (74.0%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.74 (0.55-0.99)	1.17 (0.74-1.86)	1.56 (0.97-2.49)
Outside Australia (reference)	550 (35.3%)	84 (42.4%)	28 (31.8%)	25 (26.0%)
Sexual orientation				
Gay/bisexual	112 (7.2%)	15 (7.9%)	3 (3.4%)	7 (7.4%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.89 (0.51-1.55)	2.15 (0.68-6.82)	0.96 (0.44-2.09)
Heterosexual (reference)	1436 (92.8%)	174 (92.1%)	84 (96.6%)	88 (92.6%)
Sexual partners				
Men, women, and other genders	80 (5.1%)	12 (6.1%)	3 (3.4%)	10 (10.5%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.50 (0.80-2.83)	1.37 (0.69-2.72)	2.43 (1.21-4.89)
Never had sex	99 (6.4%)	10 (5.1%)	3 (3.4%)	6 (6.3%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.03 (0.53-2.02)	0.49 (0.14-1.66)	1.12 (0.47-2.69)
Only men	129 (8.3%)	50 (25.5%)	10 (11.5%)	14 (14.7%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	3.90 (2.68-5.67)	0.74 (0.24-2.24)	2.09 (1.14-3.83)
Only women (reference)	1246 (80.2%)	124 (63.3%)	71 (81.6%)	65 (68.4%)
Residential location				
City	427 (27.4%)	93 (47.0%)	29 (33.0%)	55 (57.9%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	2.39 (1.73-3.29)	1.41 (0.86-2.30)	4.54 (2.78-7.41)
Suburban (reference)	860 (55.2%)	79 (39.9%)	41 (46.6%)	24 (25.3%)
Regional or rural	271 (17.4%)	26 (13.1%)	18 (20.5%)	16 (16.8%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.05 (0.66-1.67)	1.37 (0.77-2.43)	2.08 (1.09-3.97)
Children in household				
3 or more	70 (4.5%)	5 (2.5%)	1 (1.1%)	6 (6.3%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.64 (0.26-1.56)	0.40 (0.08-2.13)	1.50 (0.62-3.64)
2	167 (10.7%)	12 (6.1%)	6 (6.9%)	14 (14.6%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.60 (0.32-1.10)	0.70 (0.29-1.65)	1.55 (0.85-2.84)
1	276 (17.7%)	54 (27.3%)	27 (31.0%)	18 (18.8%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.61 (1.14-2.28)	1.88 (1.16-3.05)	1.17 (0.68-2.02)
None (reference)	1045 (67.1%)	127 (64.1%)	53 (60.9%)	58 (60.4%)
Works with children				
Yes	248 (15.9%)	21 (10.6%)	14 (16.1%)	32 (33.7%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.64 (0.40-1.03)	1.02 (0.57-1.84)	2.73 (1.75-4.27)
No (reference)	1311 (84.1%)	177 (89.4%)	73 (83.9%)	63 (66.3%)

Demographic characteristics	No feelings or offending (n=1558) (reference)	Feelings only (n = 198) (OR [95% CI])	Offending only (n = 87) (OR [95% CI])	Feelings and offending (n = 95) (OR [95% CI])
Marital status				
Married or living together	900 (57.7%)	112 (56.6%)	52 (59.8%)	66 (68.8%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.95 (0.71-1.28)	1.09 (0.70-1.69)	1.63 (1.05-2.55)
Single (reference)	659 (42.3%)	86 (43.4%)	35 (40.2%)	30 (31.3%)
Employment status				
Participating in workforce	1109 (71.1%)	149 (75.3%)	59 (67.8%)	66 (69.5%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.23 (0.87-1.72)	0.84 (0.53-1.34)	0.93 (0.59-1.46)
Not participating in workforce (reference)	450 (28.9%)	49 (24.7%)	28 (32.2%)	29 (30.5%)
Age				
18-34 years	475 (30.5%)	106 (53.5%)	23 (26.4%)	34 (35.8%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	3.99 (2.62-6.07)	1.03 (0.58-1.82)	1.63 (0.95-2.78)
35-54 years (reference)	550 (35.3%)	31 (15.7%)	26 (29.9%)	24 (25.3%)
55 years or older	534 (34.3%)	61 (30.8%)	38 (43.7%)	37 (38.9%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	2.04 (1.30-3.20)	1.51 (0.91-2.52)	1.58 (0.94-2.68)
Annual household income				
More than \$150,000	354 (22.7%)	63 (31.8%)	22 (25.3%)	34 (35.4%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.70 (1.19-2.44)	1.03 (0.61-1.74)	2.00 (1.22-3.28)
\$80,000 - \$150,000	503 (32.3%)	61 (30.8%)	22 (25.3%)	28 (29.2%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.16 (0.81-1.66)	0.72 (0.42-1.21)	1.16 (0.70-1.95)
Less than \$80,000 (reference)	701 (45.0%)	74 (37.4%)	43 (49.4%)	34 (35.4%)
Educational attainment				
Did not complete secondary school	242 (15.5%)	46 (23.1%)	9 (10.3%)	10 (10.5%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.38 (0.94-2.05)	0.70 (0.32-1.50)	0.75 (0.37-1.53)
Completed secondary school	355 (22.8%)	48 (24.1%)	22 (25.3%)	33 (34.7%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.99 (0.67-1.44)	1.23 (0.70-2.15)	1.63 (0.99-2.67)
Vocational/trade qualification	356 (22.8%)	23 (11.6%)	25 (28.7%)	18 (18.9%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.47 (0.29-0.76)	1.38 (0.80-2.37)	0.89 (0.50-1.60)
University degree (reference)	606 (38.9%)	82 (41.2%)	31 (35.6%)	34 (35.8%)

Supplementary table S5. Comparison of health and psychology scales between men who have had (i) no sexual feelings or offending with young people (reference group), (ii) sexual feelings but not sexual offending with young people, (iii) no sexual feelings but had sexual offending with young people, and (iv) sexual feelings and offending with young people.

Health and psychology scales	No feelings or offending (n=1558) (reference)	Feelings only (n = 198) (OR [95% CI])	Offending only (n = 87) (OR [95% CI])	Feelings and offending (n = 95) (OR [95% CI])
Anxiety & depression (PHQ-4)				
Severe (9-12)	69 (4.4%)	7 (3.5%)	3 (3.4%)	9 (9.4%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.75 (0.33-1.72)	0.78 (0.26-2.39)	4.59 (2.07-10.19)
Moderate (6-8)	130 (8.3%)	22 (11.1%)	7 (8.0%)	22 (22.9%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.33 (0.81-2.18)	0.80 (0.35-1.82)	5.78 (3.16-10.57)
Mild (3-5)	492 (31.6%)	59 (29.8%)	22 (25.3%)	40 (41.7%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.95 (0.68-1.32)	0.70 (0.42-1.16)	2.80 (1.68-4.67)
Normal (0-2) (reference)	868 (55.7%)	110 (55.6%)	55 (63.2%)	25 (26.0%)
Five or more alcoholic drinks per day				
Weekly or more	362 (23.2%)	35 (17.7%)	22 (25.3%)	33 (34.4%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.95 (0.61-1.47)	1.50 (0.83-2.70)	4.28 (2.21-8.28)
Monthly or less	611 (39.2%)	103 (52.0%)	41 (47.1%)	50 (52.1%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.65 (1.18-2.32)	1.61 (0.96-2.70)	3.77 (2.01-7.06)
Never (reference)	586 (37.6%)	60 (30.3%)	24 (27.6%)	13 (13.5%)
Ever used illegal drugs				
Yes	295 (18.9%)	65 (32.8%)	19 (21.8%)	36 (37.5%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	2.08 (1.51-2.87)	1.21 (0.72-2.04)	2.55 (1.65-3.93)
No (reference)	1263 (81.1%)	133 (67.2%)	68 (78.2%)	60 (62.5%)
Perceived social support (MSPSS)				
Overall score mean (sd)	4.94 (1.34)	4.34 (1.60)	4.86 (1.39)	5.21 (1.21)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.75 (0.68-0.83)	0.96 (0.82-1.12)	1.18 (1.00-1.39)
Significant other score mean (sd)	5.11 (1.62)	4.34 (1.81)	4.94 (1.64)	5.18 (1.34)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.77 (0.71-0.84)	0.94 (0.83-1.07)	1.03 (0.90-1.17)
Family score mean (sd)	4.93 (1.50)	4.31 (1.78)	4.84 (1.68)	5.29 (1.24)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.79 (0.72-0.87)	0.97 (0.84-1.11)	1.20 (1.03-1.40)
Friend score mean (sd)	4.77 (1.46)	4.37 (1.62)	4.79 (1.43)	5.17 (1.39)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.84 (0.77-0.93)	1.01 (0.87-1.17)	1.22 (1.05-1.43)
Diagnosed disability				
Yes	369 (23.7%)	40 (20.2%)	19 (21.8%)	22 (22.9%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.82 (0.57-1.18)	0.91 (0.54-1.53)	0.95 (0.58-1.56)
No (reference)	1190 (76.3%)	158 (79.8%)	68 (78.2%)	74 (77.1%)

Supplementary table S6. Comparison of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) between men who have had (i) no sexual feelings or offending with young people (reference group), (ii) sexual feelings but not sexual offending with young people, (iii) no sexual feelings but had sexual offending with young people, and (iv) sexual feelings and offending with young people.

ACEs	No feelings or offending (n=1558) (reference)	Feelings only (n = 198) (OR [95% CI])	Offending only (n = 87) (OR [95% CI])	Feelings and offending (n = 95) (OR [95% CI])
Overall ACE score mean (sd)	1.57 (2.08)	1.61 (2.29)	1.73 (2.28)	3.22 (3.10)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.99 (0.84-1.16)	1.03 (0.82-1.30)	1.95 (1.56-2.43)
Emotional abuse	400 (25.7%)	48 (24.2%)	24 (27.3%)	39 (40.6%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.93 (0.66-1.31)	1.07 (0.66-1.74)	1.99 (1.30-3.04)
Physical abuse	334 (21.4%)	44 (22.2%)	26 (29.5%)	30 (31.6%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.05 (0.73-1.50)	1.53 (0.95-2.46)	1.68 (1.07-2.63)
Sexual abuse	130 (8.3%)	27 (13.6%)	5 (5.7%)	35 (36.5%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.76 (1.13-2.73)	0.64 (0.25-1.62)	6.26 (3.98-9.86)
Low family support	324 (20.8%)	33 (16.7%)	15 (17.2%)	33 (34.4%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.75 (0.51-1.11)	0.81 (0.46-1.42)	1.98 (1.27-3.07)
Neglect	122 (7.8%)	18 (9.1%)	11 (12.6%)	25 (26.0%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.16 (0.69-1.96)	1.72 (0.89-3.31)	4.14 (2.53-6.78)
Parental divorce	444 (28.5%)	44 (22.2%)	21 (23.9%)	31 (32.6%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.72 (0.51-1.02)	0.77 (0.46-1.28)	1.23 (0.79-1.91)
Domestic violence	132 (8.5%)	16 (8.1%)	14 (16.1%)	26 (27.1%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.98 (0.57-1.67)	2.05 (1.12-3.73)	3.99 (2.45-6.48)
Household substance abuse	256 (16.4%)	34 (17.2%)	9 (10.3%)	39 (41.1%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.06 (0.71-1.57)	0.58 (0.29-1.17)	3.53 (2.29-5.42)
Household mental illness	233 (15.0%)	33 (16.7%)	15 (17.2%)	37 (38.9%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.16 (0.78-1.72)	1.17 (0.66-2.08)	3.60 (2.33-5.56)
Household member incarcerated	63 (4.0%)	22 (11.1%)	12 (13.8%)	13 (13.5%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	2.93 (1.76-4.89)	3.88 (2.02-7.46)	3.67 (1.94-6.96)

Supplementary table S7. Principal Components Analysis Varimax Rotated Factor Loading from the “Adapted child sexual abuse myth scale”.

Item	COMPONENT			
	1	2	3	4
1. Sexual images of a person under 18 online where they seem to be happy and enjoying the activity can not really be described as ‘abusive’.	.666	.089	.089	-.107
2. Girls under 18 who share images of themselves nude or in revealing clothing are not to be blamed if an adult responds to them in a sexual way (reverse coded).	-.223	.160	-.060	.800
3. It’s not harmful to look at nude images of someone under 18 if they took the photo of themselves.	.729	.108	.119	-.115
4. Drawn, cartoon or computer-generated sexual imagery of children is wrong (reverse coded).	-.063	.776	-.032	-.051
5. There is nothing wrong with sex dolls that look like children.	.652	.167	.187	-.202
6. Viewing a nude or sexual image of a person under 18 is a victimless crime if the person doesn’t know that the image was taken.	.635	.028	.062	-.010
7. I would still be friends with someone who I knew looked at nude or sexual images of people under 18.	.688	.118	.237	-.131
8. People under 18 who act in sexual ways online are not to blame if an adult responds to them in a sexual way (reverse coded).	-.191	.181	-.129	.818
9. Boys under 18 are sexually experimental and are not harmed when they interact sexually with an adult online.	.731	.118	.183	-.231
10. It’s OK to flirt with people under 18 online if you don’t intend to take it further.	.732	.144	.179	-.128
11. If a 14 or 15-year-old teenager is on a dating app and contacting adults, they are at least partly responsible if an adult has a sexual interaction with them.	.578	-.280	.107	.259
12. People under 18 cannot consent to online sexual interactions with adults (reverse coded).	.039	.740	-.029	.127
13. I would not be friends with someone who I knew had sexually interacted online with a person under 18 (reverse coded)	.141	.791	.020	.032
14. Online sexual contact with a person under 18 that does not involve actual physical sexual contact or force is unlikely to harm that person psychologically.	.718	.035	.151	-.020
15. People under 18 on webcams usually come from poor backgrounds and providing them with money for sexual or nude services is helpful.	.605	-.019	.223	-.084
16. People under 18 can make their own decisions about how much of their bodies they display on webcam.	.628	-.077	.224	.028
17. People under 18 who offer nude or sexual activity on livestream are exploring their sexuality and should not be censored.	.724	.125	.254	-.112
18. It is always wrong to pay to view sexual activity with a child on a webcam, even if the child comes from a poor family and their parents need the money (reverse coded)	.140	.826	-.083	.059
19. I would still be friends with someone who I knew had webcammed or livestreamed sexually with a person under 18.	.675	.176	.340	-.102
20. If someone looks at online sexual images of people under 18 while under the influence of drugs and alcohol, they are still responsible for their actions (reverse coded).	.089	.819	-.076	.028
21. Sometimes people look at sexual images or videos of children because they are bored with normal adult pornography.	.351	-.052	.758	.030
22. Sometimes people look at sexual images or videos of children because they are very stressed.	.379	.055	.756	-.022
23. Some people look at sexual images or videos of children online to prevent themselves from sexually abusing children offline.	.348	-.028	.731	-.146
24. Viewing sexual images or videos of children is bad only because society says it is.	.577	.164	.416	-.017
25. Some people look at sexual images or videos of children because they were abused when they were children.	.153	-.351	.612	-.158
Percentage of variance	34.1%	14.8%	5.5%	4.7%

Note: Principal Component Analysis, varimax with Kaiser Normalization. 4 components had Eigenvalues greater than 1, and collectively explained 59.19% of the variance. KMO = 0.944, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity $\chi^2=23,733.699$ (df=3), $p<.001$.

Items with bolded component value were included in scale.

Supplementary table S8. Comparison of attitudes from the Adapted child sexual abuse myth scale and men who have had (i) no sexual feelings or offending with young people (reference group), (ii) sexual feelings but not sexual offending with young people, (iii) no sexual feelings but had sexual offending with young people, and (iv) sexual feelings and offending with young people.

Attitudes	No feelings or offending (n=1558) (reference)	Feelings only (n = 198) (OR [95% CI])	Offending only (n = 87) (OR [95% CI])	Feelings and offending (n = 95) (OR [95% CI])
Principle components analysis				
Overall attitudes mean (sd)	2.05 (0.49)	2.59 (0.47)	2.26 (0.52)	2.85 (0.54)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	8.46 (6.07-11.81)	2.29 (1.49-3.52)	25.45 (15.39-42.08)
Denial of abusiveness mean (sd)	1.82 (0.61)	2.33 (0.83)	2.04 (0.68)	2.83 (0.88)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	2.90 (2.35-3.59)	1.67 (1.22-2.28)	6.48 (4.79-8.78)
Blame diffusion mean (sd)	1.93 (0.92)	2.94 (1.16)	2.15 (0.79)	2.59 (0.80)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	2.34 (2.04-2.67)	1.29 (1.04-1.60)	1.85 (1.55-2.22)
Restrictive stereotypes mean (sd)	2.28 (0.80)	2.54 (0.94)	2.41 (0.88)	3.18 (0.87)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.48 (1.24-1.77)	1.22 (0.94-1.59)	3.83 (2.90-5.04)

Supplementary table S9. Comparison of internet use habits between men who have had (i) no sexual feelings or offending with young people (reference group), (ii) sexual feelings but not sexual offending with young people, (iii) no sexual feelings but had sexual offending with young people, and (iv) sexual feelings and offending with young people.

Internet use	No feelings or offending (n=1558) (reference)	Feelings only (n = 198) (OR [95% CI])	Offending only (n = 87) (OR [95% CI])	Feelings and offending (n = 95) (OR [95% CI])
Daily/weekly use of internet				
Browse	1488 (95.7%)	155 (79.9%)	80 (92.0%)	86 (91.5%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.18 (0.12-0.27)	0.50 (0.22-1.12)	0.48 (0.22-1.02)
Send emails	1365 (87.8%)	142 (73.6%)	73 (85.9%)	80 (87.0%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.39 (0.27-0.56)	0.86 (0.46-1.62)	0.93 (0.50-1.74)
Use social media	1293 (83.3%)	158 (81.4%)	70 (79.5%)	79 (82.3%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.90 (0.60-1.31)	0.79 (0.46-1.36)	0.95 (0.55-1.64)
Use online blogs, forums, etc.	720 (46.7%)	98 (50.8%)	42 (48.3%)	60 (62.5%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.18 (0.87-1.59)	1.07 (0.70-1.66)	1.91 (1.25-2.93)
Online shopping	451 (29.0%)	74 (38.5%)	29 (33.0%)	57 (59.4%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.53 (1.12-2.09)	1.20 (0.76-1.91)	3.55 (2.33-5.42)
Online banking	1262 (81.3%)	140 (71.1%)	72 (82.8%)	85 (89.5%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.57 (0.41-0.79)	1.08 (0.61-1.90)	1.96 (1.01-3.82)
Messaging online	1092 (70.6%)	127 (66.1%)	63 (75.9%)	76 (84.4%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.81 (0.59-1.12)	1.31 (0.78-2.19)	2.18 (1.23-3.86)
Private video chatting	606 (39.8%)	81 (43.5%)	37 (45.1%)	55 (59.1%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.16 (0.86-1.58)	1.24 (0.80-1.94)	2.21 (1.44-3.39)
Livestream self	362 (24.2%)	78 (42.2%)	25 (32.5%)	49 (51.0%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	2.27 (1.66-3.12)	1.53 (0.93-2.49)	3.26 (2.15-4.96)
Stream videos	1090 (71.1%)	121 (62.4%)	52 (61.2%)	69 (74.2%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.67 (0.49-0.92)	0.64 (0.41-1.00)	1.16 (0.72-1.86)
Dating/romance websites	238 (16.4%)	55 (29.7%)	24 (31.6%)	40 (44.0%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	2.16 (1.53-3.05)	2.38 (1.44-3.92)	4.00 (2.58-6.19)
Online gaming	503 (34.0%)	76 (40.6%)	29 (37.7%)	50 (53.8%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.33 (0.98-1.81)	1.19 (0.74-1.91)	2.28 (1.49-3.47)
Access online pornography	520 (35.8%)	77 (41.6%)	37 (45.7%)	62 (67.4%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.28 (0.94-1.75)	1.49 (0.95-2.34)	3.67 (2.34-5.74)
Social media platforms currently used				
YouTube	1200 (77.0%)	144 (72.4%)	66 (75.0%)	89 (92.7%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.79 (0.56-1.10)	0.90 (0.55-1.48)	4.00 (1.80-8.89)
Instagram	658 (42.2%)	81 (40.9%)	42 (48.3%)	72 (75.8%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.96 (0.71-1.29)	1.29 (0.84-1.98)	4.31 (2.67-6.97)
Facebook	1110 (71.2%)	124 (62.6%)	70 (79.5%)	74 (77.9%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.67 (0.50-0.92)	1.60 (0.94-2.72)	1.41 (0.86-2.31)
Snapchat	383 (24.6%)	65 (32.8%)	27 (30.7%)	43 (45.3%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.49 (1.09-2.05)	1.34 (0.84-2.15)	2.52 (1.65-3.83)
Facebook Messenger	783 (50.2%)	67 (33.8%)	49 (56.3%)	59 (61.5%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.51 (0.37-0.69)	1.28 (0.83-1.98)	1.60 (1.04-2.44)
Tik Tok	480 (30.8%)	63 (31.8%)	28 (31.8%)	37 (38.9%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.05 (0.76-1.44)	1.04 (0.65-1.65)	1.43 (0.94-2.19)
WhatsApp	600 (38.5%)	61 (30.8%)	26 (29.5%)	55 (57.9%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.71 (0.51-0.97)	0.67 (0.42-1.07)	2.19 (1.44-3.33)
Twitter	470 (30.2%)	63 (31.8%)	24 (27.6%)	42 (44.2%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.07 (0.78-1.47)	0.89 (0.55-1.44)	1.85 (1.21-2.80)

Internet use	No feelings or offending (n=1558) (reference)	Feelings only (n = 198) (OR [95% CI])	Offending only (n = 87) (OR [95% CI])	Feelings and offending (n = 95) (OR [95% CI])
Discord	240 (15.4%)	38 (19.2%)	15 (17.0%)	19 (20.0%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.30 (0.89-1.91)	1.11 (0.62-1.97)	1.37 (0.81-2.30)
Skype	187 (12.0%)	23 (11.6%)	15 (17.0%)	28 (29.2%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.96 (0.61-1.53)	1.49 (0.84-2.67)	3.01 (1.89-4.81)
Viber	77 (4.9%)	11 (5.6%)	5 (5.7%)	7 (7.4%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.12 (0.58-2.15)	1.12 (0.44-2.89)	1.59 (0.72-3.49)
None	92 (5.9%)	4 (2.0%)	6 (6.8%)	1 (1.1%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.35 (0.13-0.93)	1.13 (0.48-2.70)	0.16 (0.02-1.22)
Number platforms mean (sd)	3.97 (2.39)	3.73 (2.57)	4.18 (2.45)	5.51 (2.71)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.96 (0.90-1.02)	1.04 (0.95-1.13)	1.28 (1.18-1.39)
Privacy services currently used				
TOR browser	58 (3.7%)	17 (8.6%)	2 (2.3%)	14 (14.7%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	2.49 (1.43-4.35)	0.53 (0.11-2.42)	4.50 (2.41-8.39)
VPN	368 (23.6%)	49 (24.6%)	23 (26.1%)	45 (46.9%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.05 (0.74-1.48)	1.13 (0.69-1.85)	2.84 (1.87-4.31)
Telegram	117 (7.5%)	34 (17.2%)	14 (16.1%)	43 (44.8%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	2.57 (1.70-3.89)	2.44 (1.35-4.42)	10.01 (6.41-15.62)
Signal	80 (5.1%)	44 (22.2%)	9 (10.3%)	20 (21.1%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	5.28 (3.53-7.90)	2.12 (1.03-4.38)	4.99 (2.91-8.56)
WhatsApp	377 (24.2%)	55 (27.8%)	19 (21.6%)	47 (49.5%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.20 (0.86-1.67)	0.85 (0.50-1.44)	3.06 (2.02-4.65)
Element	5 (0.3%)	18 (9.1%)	10 (11.4%)	7 (7.4%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	31.80 (11.56-87.48)	39.05 (12.82-118.94)	27.07 (8.48-86.37)
Hive	50 (3.2%)	17 (8.6%)	3 (3.4%)	8 (8.4%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	2.77 (1.56-4.92)	1.21 (0.40-3.73)	2.87 (1.34-6.18)
Private relay (Safari)	43 (2.8%)	6 (3.0%)	2 (2.3%)	6 (6.3%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.19 (0.51-2.75)	0.75 (0.17-3.36)	2.54 (1.08-5.98)
None	840 (53.9%)	94 (47.5%)	46 (52.3%)	25 (26.0%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	0.77 (0.57-1.04)	0.94 (0.61-1.45)	0.30 (0.19-0.47)
Number services mean (sd)	0.70 (0.94)	1.21 (1.55)	0.93 (1.33)	2.00 (1.72)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.47 (1.31-1.66)	1.22 (1.01-1.48)	2.03 (1.76-2.33)
Cryptocurrency use				
Owns cryptocurrency	358 (23.0%)	50 (25.3%)	19 (21.8%)	36 (37.9%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.13 (0.80-1.59)	0.96 (0.57-1.61)	2.06 (1.34-3.17)
Uses crypto online shopping	121 (7.8%)	24 (12.1%)	6 (6.8%)	30 (31.6%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.67 (1.05-2.65)	0.81 (0.34-1.95)	5.48 (3.42-8.77)
Pornography viewership				
Watch violent pornography	201 (13.0%)	36 (18.2%)	24 (27.3%)	60 (62.5%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.47 (1.00-2.18)	2.47 (1.50-4.05)	11.13 (7.17-17.28)
Intentionally watch bestiality	178 (11.5%)	39 (19.7%)	17 (19.5%)	53 (55.2%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.89 (1.29-2.77)	1.91 (1.10-3.30)	9.54 (6.19-14.71)
Purchased online sexual content	58 (3.7%)	20 (10.1%)	12 (13.6%)	38 (39.6%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	2.96 (1.75-5.02)	4.05 (2.08-7.88)	16.82 (10.34-27.38)
Approached online by adult selling sexual services	300 (19.4%)	48 (24.2%)	16 (18.4%)	39 (41.1%)
OR (95% CI)	1.00 (reference)	1.33 (0.94-1.88)	0.93 (0.53-1.63)	2.89 (1.89-4.43)

Supplementary table S10. Comparison of offending characteristics between men have sexual feelings towards children and do or do not want help (n = 294).

Offending characteristics	Wants help (n = 87)	Does not want help (n = 206)	OR (95% CI)
Deliberately viewed pornography of people under 18 years.	22 (25.3%)	15 (7.3%)	4.20 (2.07-8.54)
Flirted/had sexual conversation online with person under 18 years.	16 (18.4%)	26 (12.7%)	1.60 (0.81-3.15)
Sexually explicit webcam with person under 18 years.	13 (14.9%)	9 (4.4%)	3.99 (1.62-9.85)
Paid for online sexual interaction or content of person under 18 years.	13 (14.9%)	12 (5.8%)	2.85 (1.24-6.56)
Had sex or sexual contact with person under 18 years.	15 (17.0%)	16 (7.8%)	2.39 (1.12-5.12)

Supplementary table S11. Comparison of demographic characteristics between men have sexual feelings towards children and do or do not want help (n = 294).

Demographic characteristics	Wants help (n = 87)	Does not want help (n = 206)	OR (95% CI)
Country of birth			
Australia	57 (64.8%)	128 (62.1%)	1.14 (0.68-1.92)
Outside Australia	31 (35.2%)	78 (37.9%)	1.00 (reference)
Sexual orientation			
Heterosexual	84 (96.6%)	178 (89.9%)	3.22 (0.91-11.35)
Gay/bisexual	3 (3.4%)	20 (10.1%)	1.00 (reference)
Sexual partners			
Men, women, and other genders	5 (5.7%)	18 (8.8%)	0.51 (0.18-1.50)
Never had sex	5 (5.7%)	11 (5.4%)	1.02 (0.35-3.01)
Only men	14 (16.1%)	50 (24.4%)	0.58 (0.30-1.12)
Only women	63 (72.4%)	126 (61.5%)	1.00 (reference)
Residential location			
City	42 (47.7%)	106 (51.5%)	0.67 (0.33-1.38)
Suburban	30 (34.1%)	73 (35.4%)	0.70 (0.33-1.49)
Regional or rural	16 (18.2%)	27 (13.1%)	1.00 (reference)
Children in household			
3 or more	5 (5.7%)	6 (2.9%)	0.84 (0.46-1.55)
2	7 (8.0%)	19 (9.2%)	0.88 (0.35-1.18)
1	19 (21.8%)	53 (25.7%)	1.72 (0.51-5.83)
None	56 (64.4%)	128 (62.1%)	1.00 (reference)
Works with children			
Yes	26 (29.5%)	28 (13.6%)	2.65 (1.44-4.86)
No	62 (70.5%)	178 (86.4%)	1.00 (reference)
Marital status			
Married or living together	58 (66.7%)	120 (58.0%)	1.46 (0.87-2.47)
Single	29 (33.3%)	87 (42.0%)	1.00 (reference)
Employment status			
Participating in workforce	64 (72.7%)	152 (73.4%)	0.97 (0.55-1.71)
Not participating in workforce	24 (27.3%)	55 (26.6%)	1.00 (reference)
Age			
18-34 years	28 (32.2%)	112 (54.4%)	1.00 (reference)
35-54 years	21 (24.1%)	34 (16.5%)	2.56 (1.29-5.06)
55 years or older	38 (43.7%)	60 (29.1%)	2.52 (1.41-4.49)
Annual household income			
More than \$150,000	25 (28.7%)	72 (35.0%)	1.15 (0.63-2.11)
\$80,000 - \$150,000	30 (34.5%)	59 (28.6%)	0.82 (0.44-1.51)
Less than \$80,000	32 (36.8%)	75 (36.4%)	1.00 (reference)
Educational attainment			
Did not complete secondary school	16 (18.4%)	40 (19.3%)	1.17 (0.57-2.39)
Completed secondary school	26 (29.9%)	54 (26.1%)	1.42 (0.77-2.67)
Vocational/trade qualification	15 (17.2%)	26 (12.6%)	1.66 (0.78-3.56)
University degree	30 (34.5%)	87 (42.0%)	1.00 (reference)

Supplementary table S12. Comparison of health and psychology scales between men have sexual feelings towards children and do or do not want help (n = 294).

Health and psychology scales	Wants help (n = 87)	Does not want help (n = 206)	OR (95% CI)
Anxiety & depression (PHQ-4)			
Severe (9-12)	5 (5.7%)	11 (5.3%)	1.02 (0.33-3.19)
Moderate (6-8)	13 (14.8%)	31 (15.0%)	0.95 (0.45-2.02)
Mild (3-5)	29 (33.0%)	70 (33.8%)	0.98 (0.55-1.72)
Normal (0-2)	41 (46.6%)	95 (45.9%)	1.00 (reference)
Five or more alcoholic drinks per day			
Weekly or more	27 (30.7%)	42 (20.3%)	1.61 (0.79-3.26)
Monthly or less	40 (45.5%)	113 (54.6%)	0.90 (0.48-1.68)
Never	21 (23.9%)	52 (25.1%)	1.00 (reference)
Ever used illegal drugs			
Yes	27 (31.0%)	73 (35.4%)	0.81 (0.47-1.38)
No	60 (69.0%)	133 (64.6%)	1.00 (reference)
Perceived social support (MSPSS)			
Overall score mean (sd)	5.22 (1.34)	4.37 (1.55)	1.49 (1.24-1.80)
Significant other score mean (sd)	5.24 (1.35)	4.34 (1.78)	1.42 (1.20-1.68)
Family score mean (sd)	5.23 (1.50)	4.38 (1.70)	1.40 (1.18-1.65)
Friend score mean (sd)	5.17 (1.47)	4.41 (1.60)	1.39 (1.17-1.66)
Diagnosed disability			
Yes	18 (20.7%)	44 (21.3%)	0.99 (0.53-1.83)
No	69 (79.3%)	163 (78.7%)	1.00 (reference)

Supplementary table S13. Comparison of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) between men have sexual feelings towards children and do or do not want help (n = 294).

ACEs	Wants help (n = 87)	Does not want help (n = 206)	OR (95% CI)
Overall ACE score mean (sd)	2.46 (2.88)	2.00 (2.59)	1.07 (0.97-1.17)
Emotional abuse	23 (26.1%)	64 (31.1%)	0.78 (0.44-1.37)
Physical abuse	18 (20.7%)	56 (27.2%)	0.69 (0.38-1.26)
Sexual abuse	23 (26.4%)	39 (18.9%)	1.57 (0.87-2.83)
Low family support	22 (25.3%)	43 (20.9%)	1.30 (0.72-2.33)
Neglect	20 (23.0%)	23 (11.1%)	2.39 (1.23-4.64)
Parental divorce	26 (29.9%)	49 (23.8%)	1.38 (0.79-2.41)
Domestic violence	18 (20.5%)	24 (11.7%)	1.90 (0.97-3.71)
Household substance abuse	27 (31.0%)	46 (22.2%)	1.61 (0.92-2.81)
Household mental illness	22 (25.3%)	48 (23.3%)	1.12 (0.63-1.99)
Household member incarcerated	15 (17.2%)	19 (9.2%)	2.08 (1.01-4.29)

Supplementary table S14. Comparison of attitudes from the Adapted child sexual abuse myth scale between men have sexual feelings towards children and do or do not want help (n = 294).

Attitudes	Wants help (n = 87)	Does not want help (n = 206)	OR (95% CI)
Overall attitudes mean (sd)	2.73 (0.60)	2.65 (0.47)	1.35 (0.83-2.22)
Denial of abusiveness mean (sd)	2.62 (0.95)	2.44 (0.84)	1.26 (0.95-1.68)
Blame diffusion mean (sd)	2.56 (0.89)	2.94 (1.12)	0.70 (0.55-0.90)
Restrictive stereotypes mean (sd)	3.02 (0.91)	2.64 (0.97)	1.53 (1.17-2.01)

Supplementary table S15. Comparison of internet use habits between men have sexual feelings towards children and do or do not want help (n = 294).

Demographic characteristics	Wants help (n = 87)	Does not want help (n = 206)	OR (95% CI)
Daily/weekly use of internet			
Browse	79 (90.8%)	162 (80.6%)	2.50 (1.10-5.65)
Send emails	73 (88.0%)	149 (73.8%)	2.56 (1.23-5.31)
Use social media	75 (86.2%)	162 (80.2%)	1.56 (0.78-3.15)
Use online blogs, forums, etc	47 (55.3%)	111 (54.4%)	1.04 (0.62-1.72)
Online shopping	45 (52.9%)	85 (42.1%)	1.57 (0.95-2.62)
Online banking	74 (85.1%)	151 (74.0%)	2.00 (1.03-3.89)
Messaging online	71 (83.5%)	133 (67.2%)	2.45 (1.29-4.66)
Private video chatting	48 (56.5%)	88 (45.4%)	1.58 (0.94-2.63)
Livestream self	47 (57.3%)	79 (39.9%)	2.02 (1.20-3.41)
Stream videos	61 (70.1%)	128 (64.3%)	1.33 (0.77-2.29)
Dating/romance websites	28 (34.6%)	67 (34.5%)	1.01 (0.59-1.74)
Online gaming	43 (51.2%)	83 (42.3%)	1.42 (0.85-2.36)
Access online pornography	45 (57.7%)	94 (47.2%)	1.54 (0.91-2.62)
Social media platforms currently used			
YouTube	79 (90.8%)	154 (74.4%)	3.18 (1.47-6.90)
Instagram	49 (55.7%)	105 (51.0%)	1.21 (0.73-2.00)
Facebook	67 (77.0%)	131 (63.6%)	1.90 (1.07-3.36)
Snapchat	37 (42.5%)	71 (34.5%)	1.40 (0.84-2.33)
Facebook Messenger	39 (44.8%)	87 (42.2%)	1.10 (0.67-1.83)
Tik Tok	36 (41.4%)	64 (31.1%)	1.60 (0.96-2.69)
WhatsApp	44 (50.6%)	72 (35.0%)	1.92 (1.15-3.18)
Twitter	37 (42.5%)	68 (33.0%)	1.48 (0.88-2.47)
Discord	13 (14.9%)	44 (21.4%)	0.65 (0.33-1.29)
Skype	21 (24.1%)	29 (14.1%)	1.94 (1.04-3.62)
Viber	12 (13.8%)	6 (2.9%)	5.65 (2.04-15.61)
Number platforms mean (sd)	4.98 (2.86)	4.03 (2.65)	1.13 (1.03-1.24)
Privacy services currently used			
TOR browser	11 (12.6%)	20 (9.7%)	1.32 (0.61-2.88)
VPN	35 (40.2%)	58 (28.2%)	1.70 (1.01-2.87)
Telegram	32 (36.4%)	46 (22.2%)	2.00 (1.16-3.46)
Signal	22 (25.3%)	43 (20.8%)	1.29 (0.71-2.32)
WhatsApp	31 (35.6%)	71 (34.3%)	1.08 (0.64-1.82)
Element	7 (8.0%)	18 (8.7%)	0.89 (0.36-2.20)
Hive	4 (4.6%)	21 (10.2%)	0.40 (0.13-1.23)
Private relay (Safari)	4 (4.5%)	9 (4.4%)	0.93 (0.27-3.22)
None	34 (39.1%)	84 (40.8%)	0.92 (0.55-1.53)
Number services mean (sd)	1.67 (1.69)	1.39 (1.62)	1.11 (0.95-1.28)
Cryptocurrency use			
Owns cryptocurrency	36 (40.9%)	50 (24.3%)	2.14 (1.26-3.64)
Uses crypto online shopping	25 (28.7%)	29 (14.1%)	2.47 (1.35-4.52)
Pornography viewership			
Watch violent pornography	35 (40.2%)	60 (29.1%)	1.66 (0.99-2.81)
Intentionally watch bestiality	35 (39.8%)	42 (20.4%)	2.55 (1.48-4.40)
Purchased online sexual content	23 (26.4%)	35 (17.0%)	1.73 (0.95-3.16)
Approached online by adult selling sexual services	33 (37.9%)	54 (26.2%)	1.75 (1.03-2.98)

About us: This public report is issued as part of *Identifying and understanding child sexual offending behaviours and attitudes among Australian men*, a collaborative research project between academics and civil society.

Authors:

- **Scientia Associate Professor Michael Salter**, School of Social Sciences, UNSW Sydney
- **Dr Delanie Woodlock**, Research Fellow, Australian Centre for Justice Innovation, Monash University
- **Dr Tyson Whitten**, Lecturer in Criminal Justice, Charles Sturt University
- **Matt Tyler**, Executive Director, The Men's Project, Jesuit Social Services
- **Georgia Naldrett**, Manager, Stop it Now, Jesuit Social Services
- **Professor Jan Breckenridge**, Head of the School of Social Sciences and the Co-Convener of the UNSW Gendered Violence Research Network, UNSW Sydney
- **Professor Justine Nolan**, Director, Australian Human Rights Institute, UNSW Sydney
- **Dr Noam Peleg**, Senior Lecturer, Law & Justice, UNSW Sydney

We would also like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their important contributions to this research:

- **Gerry Banks**, National Office for Child Safety, Attorney-General's Department
- **Detective Superintendent Denzil Clark**, Crime & Intelligence Command, Queensland Police
- **Mark Dickson**, Financial Intelligence Unit, Westpac
- **Megan Mitchell**, Former National Children's Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission
- **Dr Sarah Napier**, Online Sexual Exploitation of Children Research Program, Australian Institute of Criminology
- **Carol Ronken**, Bravehearts
- **Jane Welsh**, Commander, Victoria Police
- **Beth Woolridge**, National Office for Child Safety, Attorney-General's Department
- **Attorney-General's Department**
- **Australian Federal Police (AFP)** led **Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE)**
- **National Office for Child Safety**
- **Office of the eSafety Commissioner**

This work was possible thanks to the generous support of Westpac.

Acknowledgement of Country: We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay respect to elders and acknowledge the Traditional Owners who have cared for Country since time immemorial. Sovereignty over this land was never ceded – it always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.