

Significant increase in 'sextortion' across the country according to Police

Reports of so-called 'sextortion' have increased significantly across the country according to Police Scotland – with the youngest victim aged just 10.

Between January and August 2020, 283 crimes were recorded, an increase of 44% on the same period in 2019, when 196 offences were reported.



Police Scotland

Sextortion is cyber-enabled extortion which involves the threat of sharing sexual information, images or clips to extort money from people, whether images actually exist or not. Footage or images obtained through webcam recording or from footage or images provided by the victim, were used as leverage in 236 (83%) of reported incidents.

Two thirds of the extortions (189 incidents) demanded money from the victim to avoid disclosure of sexual images or footage they had unwittingly provided to criminals. Sextortion victims were aged between 10 – 85, with the majority (64% or 182) aged 25 and under.

Assistant Chief Constable Pat Campbell, Police Scotland, said: "Becoming a victim of extortion is devastating particularly if the extortion involves the threat of sexual exposure.

"Social media has become the default for communicating and meeting people during lockdown, for both adults and children.

Criminals are targeting people online and tapping into vulnerabilities.

“It is distressing to realise that actions you thought were private are now a source of threat. It is a particularly worrying trend that we are now seeing increasing numbers of children being targeted and threatened in this way.

“Criminals don’t care about the hurt or damage they cause, they only care about money. And once they identify a victim it is likely their demands will continue.

“We can’t underestimate how important online apps and platforms have been for people during lockdown but sometimes the people you meet online are not who they say they are. We want people to be aware of the risks and stay safe online.

“If you or anyone you know has been a victim of sextortion please contact the police. Every report will be treated seriously, sensitively and you will be treated with respect.”

Among children (10 – 15 years), most extortion demands were for further images or videos. However, a number included webcam extortions for money or threats of violence.

In the other age brackets, money was the main reason for targeting victims.

Most victims were male (60%). Around half of female victims were aged 10 – 17, with just over half of male victims aged between 13 – 23 years.

Girls and young women aged under 18 were most vulnerable to being targeted for images. Young men in their late teens/early twenties were the most vulnerable to being targeted for money. Over all age groups:

85% (158) of the complainers targeted to obtain money were male

94% (76) of the complainers targeted to obtain images/video were female.

Further information and advice on how to prevent being a victim and also details on what to do and how to report if you are a victim being a victim, can be found at our [sextortion page](#)