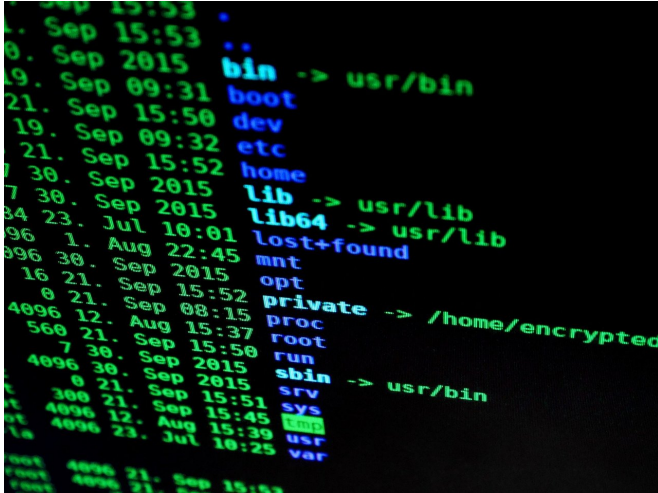


Cybercrime: Internet erodes teenage impulse controls

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Many Australian teenagers are struggling to control their impulses on the internet, in a scramble for quick thrills and a sense of power online. This potentially increases their risks of becoming cybercriminals.

A new study by Flinders Criminology analyzed existing links between legal online activities and cybercrime—for example, how viewing online pornography progresses to opening illegal content, and motivations to evolve from [online gaming](#) to hacking.

Newly published in the *European Society of Criminology*, the authors outline why illegal online activity involving adolescents from 12-19 years of age is encouraged by the idea the [internet](#) blurs normal social boundaries amongst young users tempted into wrongdoings they wouldn't contemplate in the outside world.

Flinders Criminologist Professor Andrew Goldsmith says illegal online activity is especially attractive for

adolescents already prone to curiosity and sneaky thrill seeking, but the internet encourages new levels experimentation which are easily accessible.

"The internet allows young people to limit their social involvement exclusively to particular associations or networks, as part of a trend we've termed 'digital drift.' From a regulatory perspective, we're finding this poses significant challenges as it degrades young people's impulse controls."

"It's becoming increasingly important to understand the connection between young people's emotional drivers and committing crimes, as well as human-computer interactions to establish why the internet easily tempts young users into digital piracy, pornography and hacking."

"We're using the word seduction to describe the processes and features intrinsic to the online environment that make online activity both attractive and compelling. For some young people, the Internet is like a seductive swamp, very appealing to enter, but very sticky and difficult to get out of."

Professor Goldsmith says there needs to be a deeper understanding of the influential technologies regularly used by young people, recognizing that not all motivations for transgression indicate a deep criminal pathology or criminal commitment.

"Policy should consist of interventions that take into account the lack of worldly experience amongst many young offenders. Online technologies render the challenge of weighing up potential risks and harms from actions even harder. A propensity for thrill-seeking common especially among young males encouraged by the Internet can create a form of short-sightedness towards consequences."

"Effective government responses must reflect on the range of motivations young people bring to, and find in, their online behaviors, not least of all in

order to garner support amongst [young people](#) when it comes to effective regulatory changes."

More information: Andrew Goldsmith et al. The seductions of cybercrime: Adolescence and the thrills of digital transgression, *European Journal of Criminology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1177/1477370819887305](#)

Provided by Flinders University

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