

51. A further issue was that there would need to be sufficient numbers of suitable offenders to run the pilot. In the time that consideration has been given to this pilot, the level of those receiving a community sentence, which constitutes the majority of the lower risk offenders, has reduced significantly over time from 42% to 24% of the total number of IIOC sentences per year. This level, combined with the drop-out rate (that we experienced in the Proof of Concept), would have introduced a high level of uncertainty to the success of a pilot.

IIOC sentences	2014	2015	2016	2017
Immediate custody	28%	26%	23%	23%
Suspended sentence	28%	30%	37%	46%
Community sentence	42%	42%	34%	24%
Other disposals	2%	2%	6%	7%

(Source: MoJ, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly, December 2017)

Project Arachnid

52. The Home Office has therefore taken forward a range of other initiatives to counter the volume of IIOC being viewed and shared including to reduce the ease of access to images on the internet. In 2017, the Home Office invested £600,000 to assist an expansion of Project Arachnid IS a web crawler which included:

- i. Increasing the existing capacity of the system so that twice as many WebPages per second can be searched, resulting in more images being identified and removed.
- ii. Creating an Application Programming Interface (API) for technology companies to proactively scan their networks to identify and remove images as opposed to waiting for them to be detected and reported by an external party.

- iii. Creating an API for use by law enforcement agencies, who can quickly locate detected instances of a known image, some of which may be of investigative value, allowing more suspects and victims to be identified.
 - iv. Adding hash values held by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to the Arachnid database so that Arachnid is able to identify a wider range of illegal images.
53. As of January 2019, Arachnid is processing 150,000 images per second and has detected 7.4 million suspected images of child sexual abuse. Further outcomes and learnings are set out in more detail in the project report of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection (Exhibit 14).

Self-Generated Indecent Images

54. In 2018, the NPCC evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry on Policing for the Future highlighted the important issue of self-generated indecent imagery and that offences where the suspect or offender was under the age of 18 accounted for 37.4% (n. 5,411) of the total number of IIOC offences recorded in 2016 (n. 14,476). A 2016 NSPCC/Office of the Children's Commissioner for England study found that just over one in ten boys and girls (13%) had taken topless pictures of themselves (around one in four of those were girls) and 3% had taken fully naked pictures. Of those who had taken sexual images, 55% had shared them with others. 31% of this group had also shared the image with someone that they did not know.
55. In cases of sexual imagery amongst under18s, the College of Policing Briefing Note on police action in response to youth produced sexual imagery (Exhibit 15) allows the police wide discretion as to whether criminal prosecution is appropriate, or if there are other measures, such as safeguarding or diversion to other agencies, that would be better to take (on a case-by-case basis). To support this,