

# What Is Pedophilia

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## What Is Pedophilia

Pedophilia is defined by the American Psychological Association as an ongoing sexual attraction to prepubescent children, typically age 13 or younger, whether or not the pedophile acts, or will ever act on this attraction. Clinicians and researchers distinguish between pedophilia, a sexual attraction to minors, and child sex offenders as those who act on this attraction, either by viewing or engaging in sexual acts with minors.

## Criterion For Pedophilia

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), in order for pedophilic disorder to be diagnosed, the following criteria must be met:

- Recurrent, intense sexual fantasies, urges, or behaviors involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child (generally age 13 years or younger) for a period of at least 6 months.
- Sexual urges that have been acted on or have caused significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
- The person is at least 16 years old, and at least 5 years older than the child in the first criterion.

The distinction between a pedophile and an offender is significant to a researcher, but the public does not generally discriminate between these contrasts because by definition, pedophiles are attracted to children, and by default they desire contact and often make it in some way within the scope of their life: physically, online, in fantasy, and by viewing sexually explicit materials that depict the sexual abuse of children or sexualize them in some way. There is significant overlap, with pedophilia being a significant risk factor of offending.

## Treatment & Recidivism

Pedophilic Disorder is highly treatment resistant and rates of recidivism are high. A study of sex offenders released from state prisons in 1994, by Langan and colleagues (2003), included a large sample (N = 4,295) of child molesters. The researchers reported that 5.1 percent of the child molesters in the study were rearrested for a new sex crime within 3 years of their release, 14.1 percent were rearrested for a violent crime, and 39.4 percent were rearrested for a crime of any kind.

An assessment put together by Przybylski and colleagues, for the Department of Justice (2015) says: similar to patterns found in adult sexual offenses of rape, “child molesters with more than one prior arrest had an overall recidivism rate nearly double (44.3 percent compared to 23.3 percent) that of child molesters with only one prior arrest. As might be expected, child molesters were more likely than any other type of offender—sexual or nonsexual—to be arrested for a sex crime against a child following release from prison.” A study by Harris and Hanson (2004) demonstrates how recidivism rates of sex offenders increase as follow-up period become longer.

Treatment and relapse prevention methods for pedophilia falls within the scope of cognitive-behavior therapy and relapse prevention principles. There is a specific focus on cognitive distortions, the offense cycle, cognitive-behavioral chain, along with responsibility and empathy for victims. Recidivism rates are difficult to measure because an unknown number re-offend that do not come to the attention of law enforcement.

## Prevalance

According to the DSM-5, the actual prevalence of Pedophilic Disorder is unknown, with an estimate of 3% to 5%

## Conclusion

Pedophilia is considered a paraphilia, a perversion in which a person's sexual arousal and gratification depend on fantasizing about and engaging in sexual behavior that is atypical and extreme. Acting on pedophilia is illegal in nearly every corner of the world, and hardly anything else is considered more repulsive or reprehensible by society as the sexual abuse of children.

## References

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (2013). American Psychiatric Association.

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