

# Technology could be "aggravating" factor in sentencing

July 23 2013

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Existing criminal offences which feature the use of computers could be treated in the same way as offences involving driving suggest researchers.

Like the car or gun, technology enables existing crimes to be committed more easily.

The report Understanding [cyber criminals](#) and measuring their future activity is by Claire Hargreaves and Dr Daniel Prince of Security Lancaster, an EPSRC-GCHQ Academic Centre of Excellence in Cyber Security Research at Lancaster University.

They suggest distinguishing between two types of cybercrime: computer enabled and computer dependent.

Computer enabled crime is a traditional crime facilitated by technology – like online fraud.

Computer dependent crime is a crime which could not exist without new technology - like [phishing](#), which attempts to acquire bank details through email by purporting to be from a legitimate organisation.

The authors suggest an alternative to new legislation to handle computer enabled crime.

"Instead, new sentencing guidelines could be developed for existing

criminal offences where technology is seen as an aggravating or reducing factor in the commissioning of the [crime](#)."

They say there needs to be a "step change" in our understanding of cybercrime, with more information needed about the victims.

"Through a victim information database researchers can investigate the characteristics of the victims to develop our understanding of who they are and determine if specific groups of people are more vulnerable to cyber-attacks and if so the reasons why.

"Following this information the common characteristics of the victims can be identified. For example, it may become apparent that the majority of victims were of the age 25 to 30, if this is the case preventative methods, such as educating them on how to stay safe online, could be targeted at this group."

"Factors associated to cybercriminals can be identified allowing us to answer such questions as, do cyber criminals have common demographic characteristics? "

Security Lancaster brings together Lancaster University's research in [cyber security](#), transport and infrastructure, [security](#) futures, violence and society and investigative expertise.

Provided by Lancaster University

Citation: Technology could be "aggravating" factor in sentencing (2013, July 23) retrieved 1 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-07-technology-aggravating-factor-sentencing.html>

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