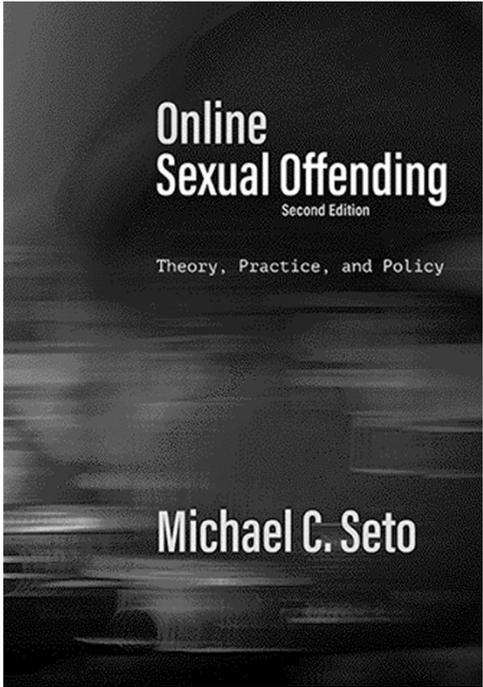# A Meta-analysis of Recidivism Rates Among Individuals Who Commit Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM) Offending

Serra Baskurt, Kelly M. Babchishin, & Michael C. Seto

February 3, 2026

People Keep Publishing Relevant Work

Feeling overwhelmed?

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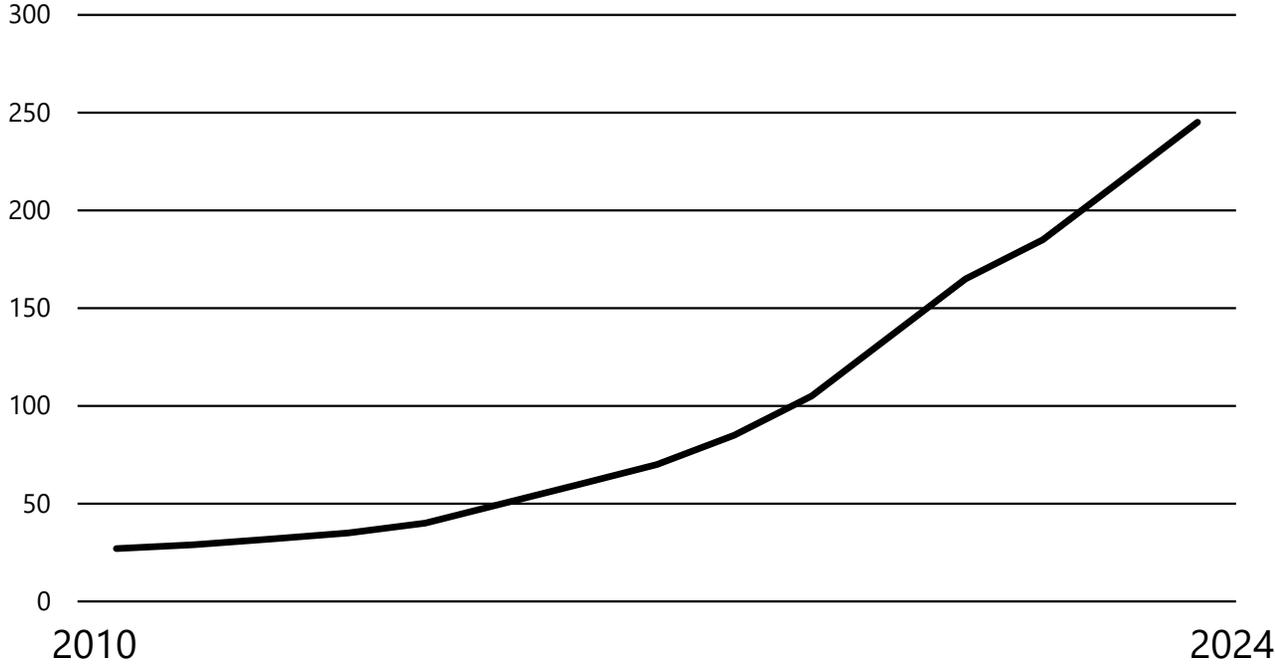
Purpose

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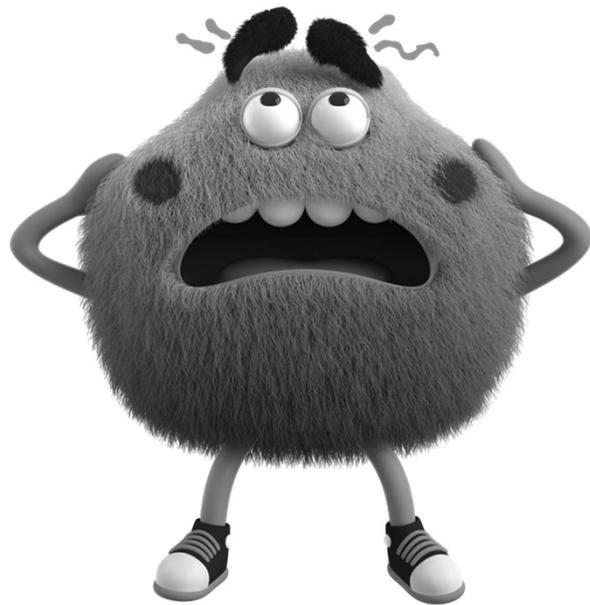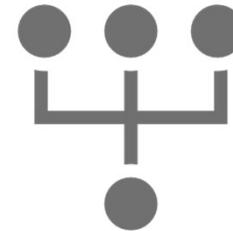A meta-analysis of recidivism rates among individuals who commit child sexual exploitation material (CSEM) offending

Serra Baskurt [a], Kelly M. Babchishin [a,*], Gabriella Hilkes [a], Michael C. Seto [b]

Summarizing recidivism rates of individuals committed CSEM offences

Examining moderators

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Quick Theory 101

Motivation

Facilitation

Sexual Offending

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CSEM-EXCLUSIVE
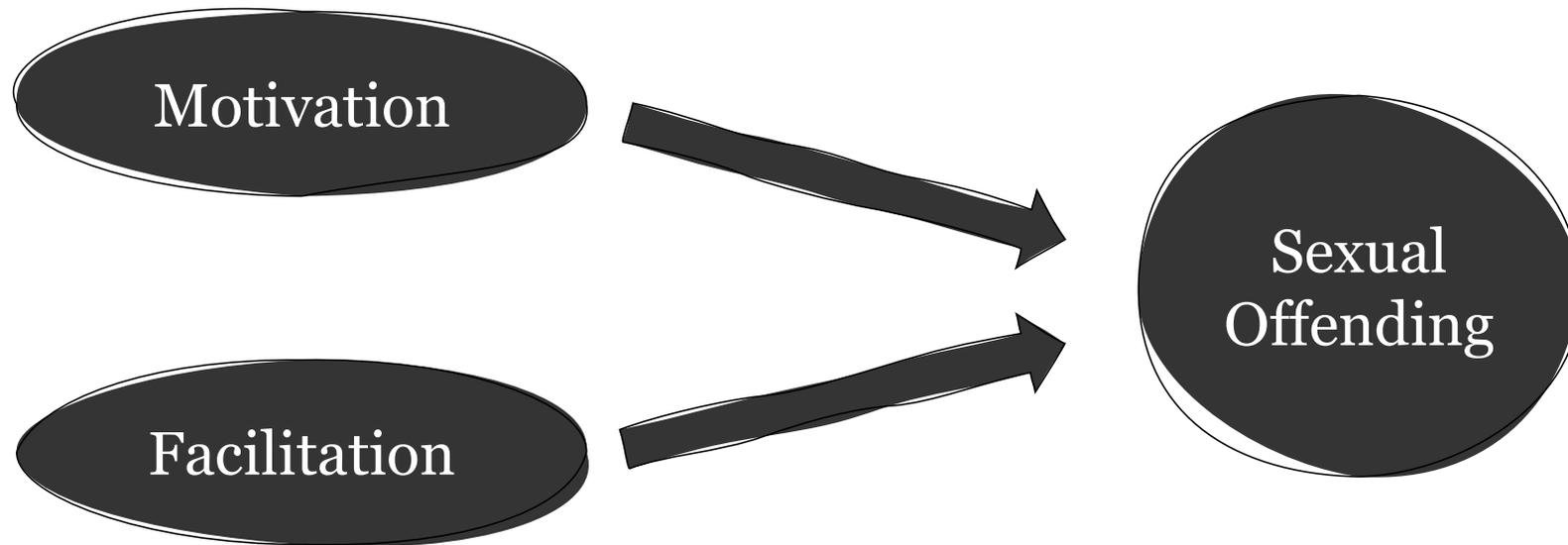
✓ Sexual interest in children
✓ Problems in sexual domains

Motivation

Facilitation

Sexual Offending
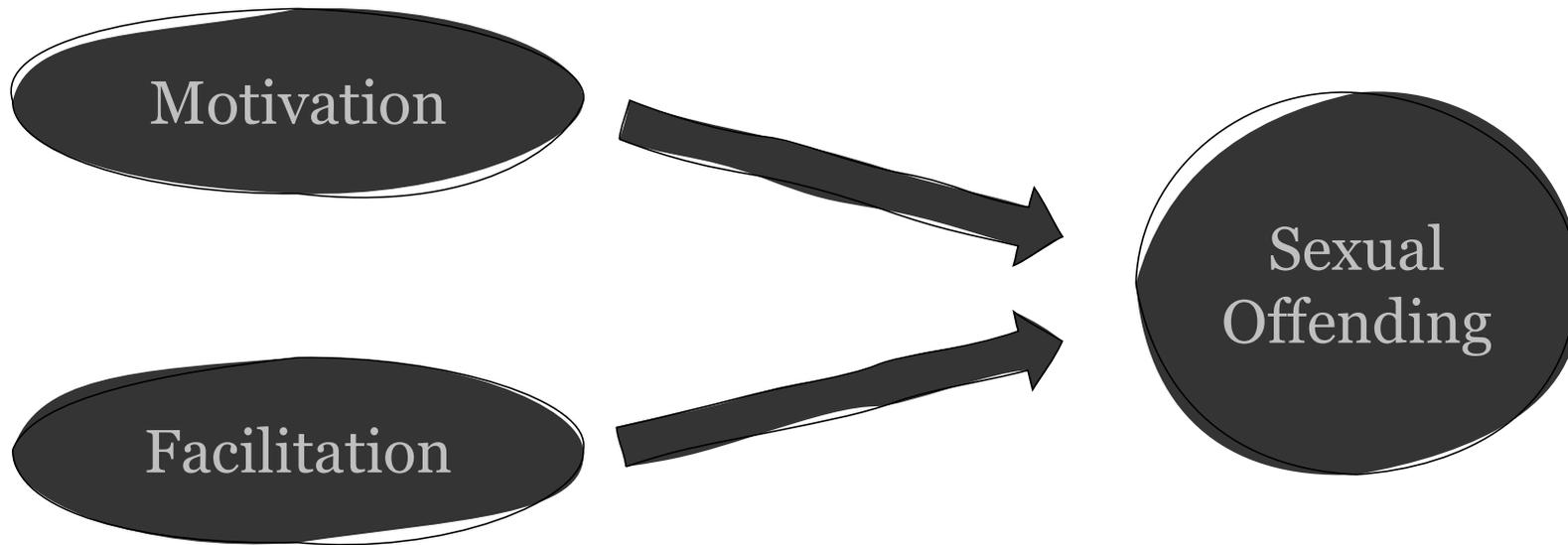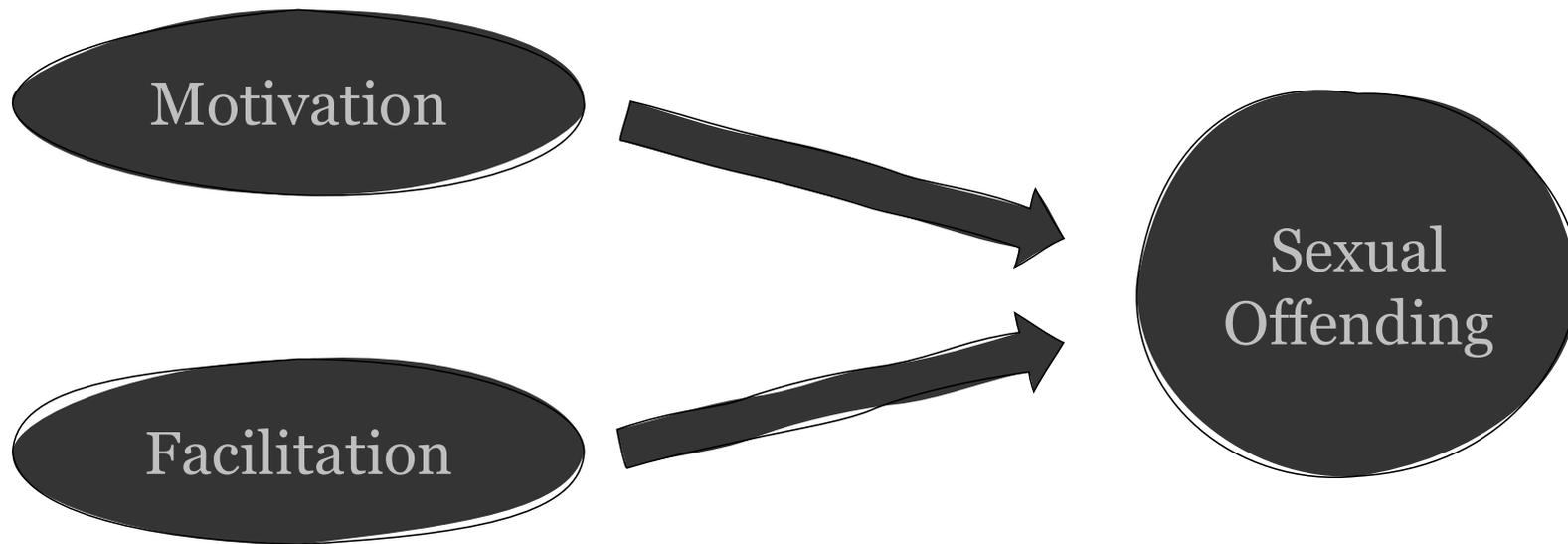
✗ Antisocial tendencies
✗ Attitudes tolerant of crime
✗ Access to children

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Source: Babchishin et al., 2015, 2018

Source: Babchishin et al., 2015, 2018

Recidivism Rates of men with CSEM offences

Past meta (Seto et al., 2011):

- Short follow-up
- Did not separate mixed from exclusively CSEM offending individuals

Time for an update

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What is a meta-analysis?

- A statistical technique for combining individual effects reported in studies addressing the same research question

- Output:
  - Produces a summary effect
  - Measures the variability between the individual studies

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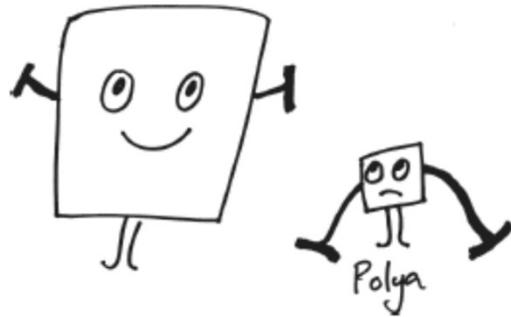
Why Should We Conduct Meta-Analyses?

Do it. Fierce. Power.

- Objective test for consistency in findings
- Provides a more objective review compared to the narrative review
- More statistical power than a study
- Can look at moderator variables
- Useful tool to influence future research as well as inform policy
- Follows iterative approach to knowledge building

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Today's talk

- Summarize:
  - What we did
  - What we found
  - General implications
  - Answer questions

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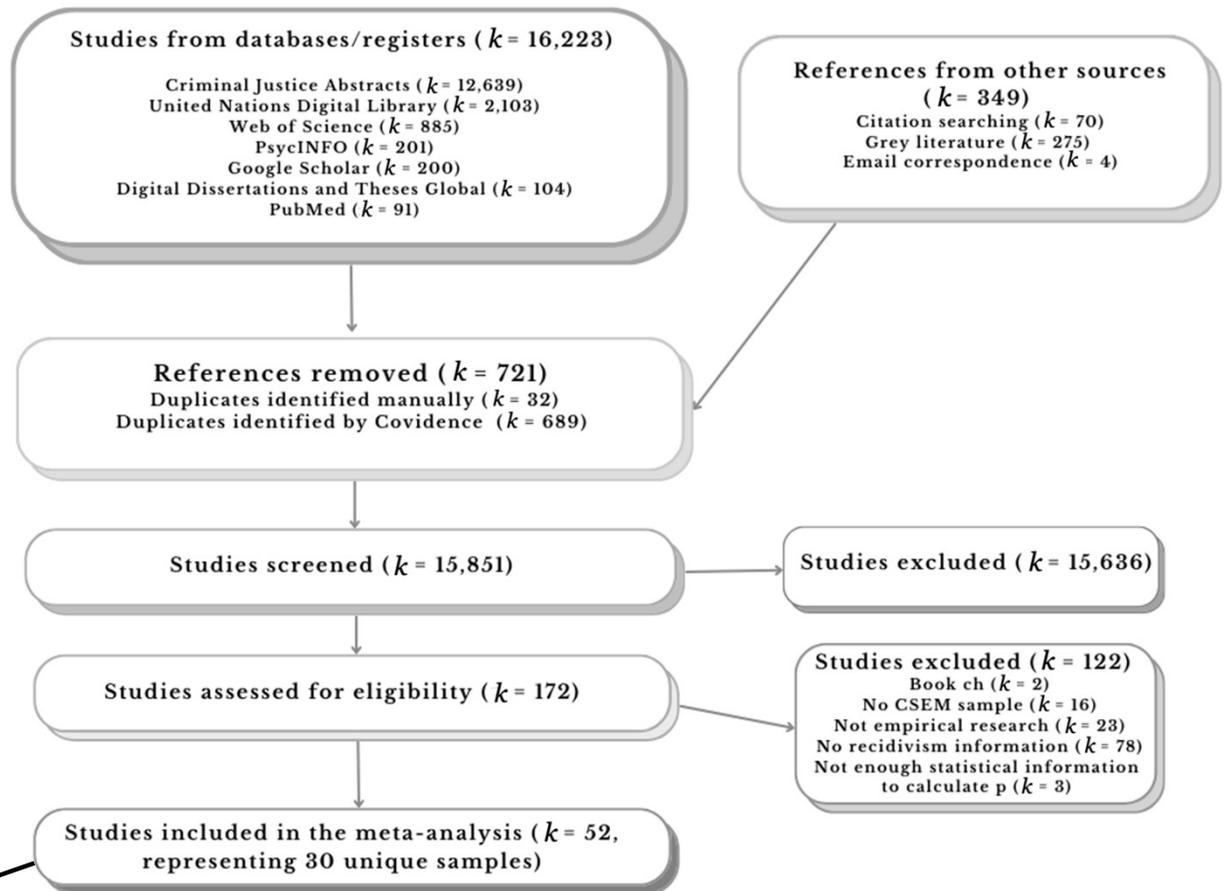## A meta-analysis of recidivism rates among individuals who commit child sexual exploitation material (CSEM) offending

Serra Baskurt [a], Kelly M. Babchishin [a,*], Gabriella Hilkes [a], Michael C. Seto [b]
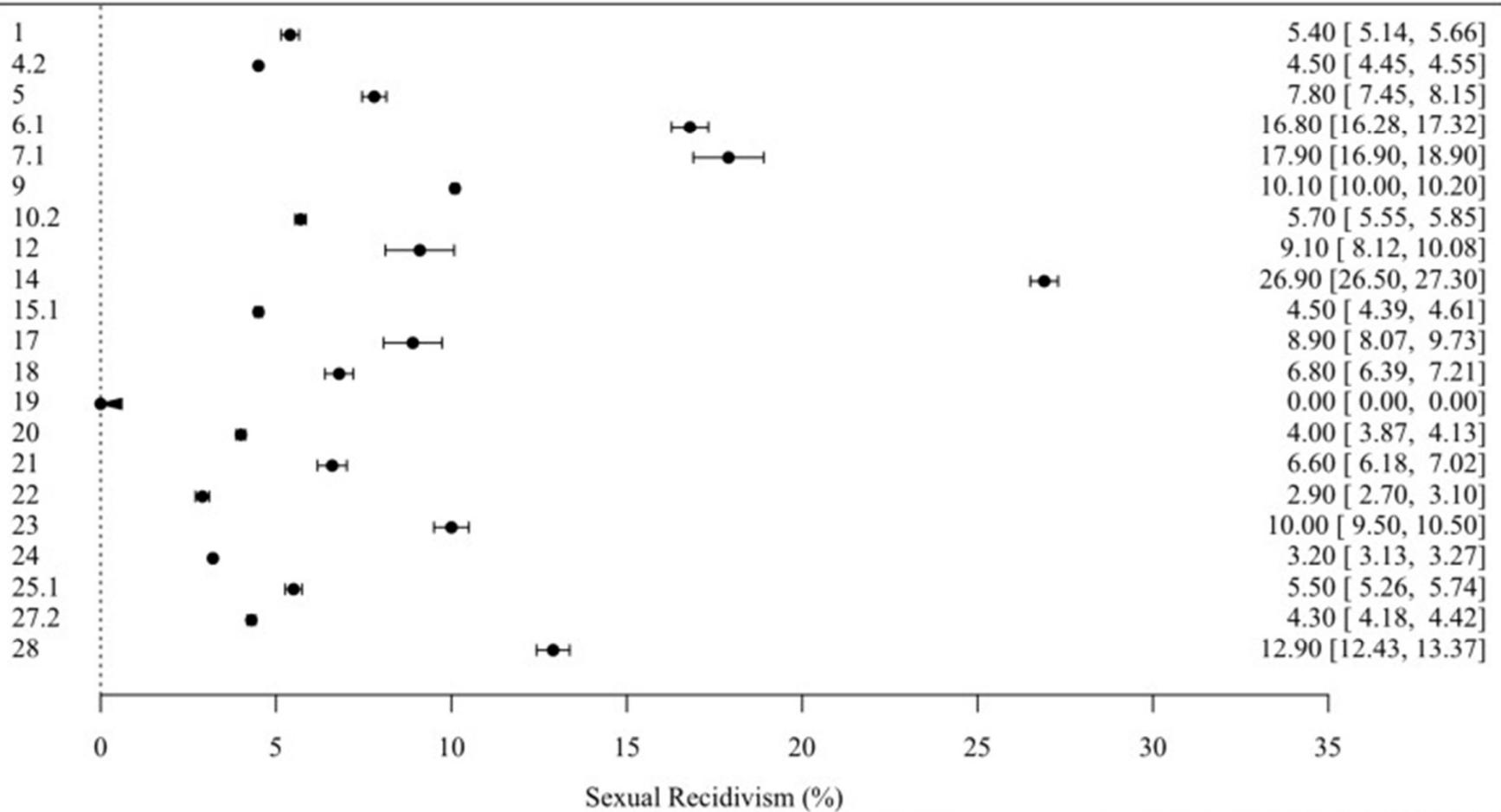
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Study Flow Chart

Studies from databases/registers (k = 16,223)

Criminal Justice Abstracts (k = 12,639)
United Nations Digital Library (k = 2,103)
Web of Science (k = 885)
PsycINFO (k = 201)
Google Scholar (k = 200)
Digital Dissertations and Theses Global (k = 104)
PubMed (k = 91)

References from other sources (k = 349)
Citation searching (k = 70)
Grey literature (k = 275)
Email correspondence (k = 4)

References removed (k = 721)
Duplicates identified manually (k = 32)
Duplicates identified by Covidence (k = 689)

Studies screened (k = 15,851)

Studies excluded (k = 15,636)

Studies assessed for eligibility (k = 172)

Studies excluded (k = 122)
Book ch (k = 2)
No CSEM sample (k = 16)
Not empirical research (k = 23)
No recidivism information (k = 78)
Not enough statistical information
to calculate p (k = 3)

Studies included in the meta-analysis (k = 52, representing 30 unique samples)

Any CSEM N = 19,112
CSEM-E N = 8,272
Mixed N = 6,267

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Forest Plot of Sexual Recidivism of Any CSEM Group

	Estimate [95% CI]
1	5.40 [5.14, 5.66]
4.2	4.50 [4.45, 4.55]
5	7.80 [7.45, 8.15]
6.1	16.80 [16.28, 17.32]
7.1	17.90 [16.90, 18.90]
9	10.10 [10.00, 10.20]
10.2	5.70 [5.55, 5.85]
12	9.10 [8.12, 10.08]
14	26.90 [26.50, 27.30]
15.1	4.50 [4.39, 4.61]
17	8.90 [8.07, 9.73]
18	6.80 [6.39, 7.21]
19	0.00 [0.00, 0.00]
20	4.00 [3.87, 4.13]
21	6.60 [6.18, 7.02]
22	2.90 [2.70, 3.10]
23	10.00 [9.50, 10.50]
24	3.20 [3.13, 3.27]
25.1	5.50 [5.26, 5.74]
27.2	4.30 [4.18, 4.42]
28	12.90 [12.43, 13.37]

Sexual Recidivism (%)

Official (i.e., criminal record) Recidivism Rates (fixed effect meta-analyses)

Each bar is a different meta-analysis!

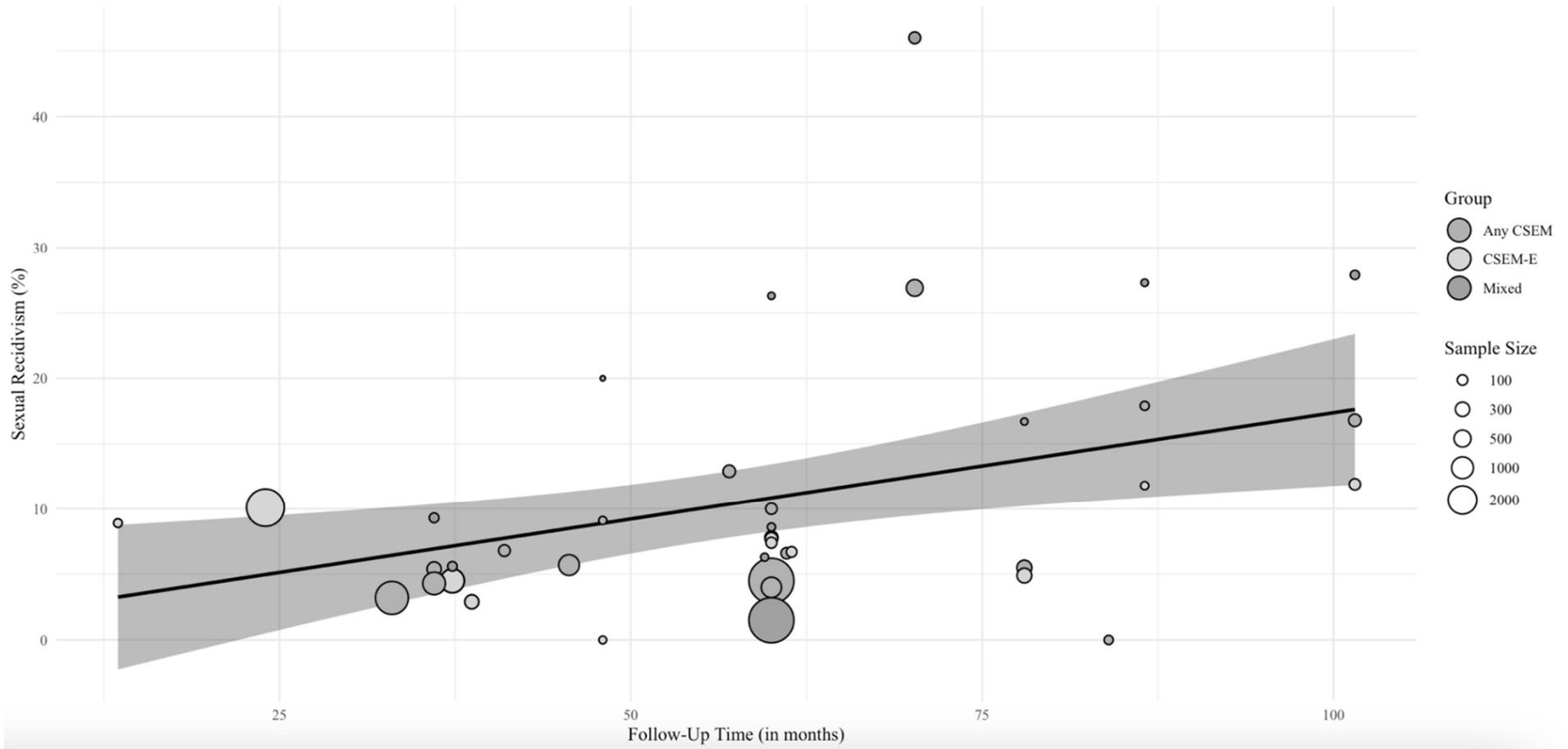# CSEM Recidivism by Source
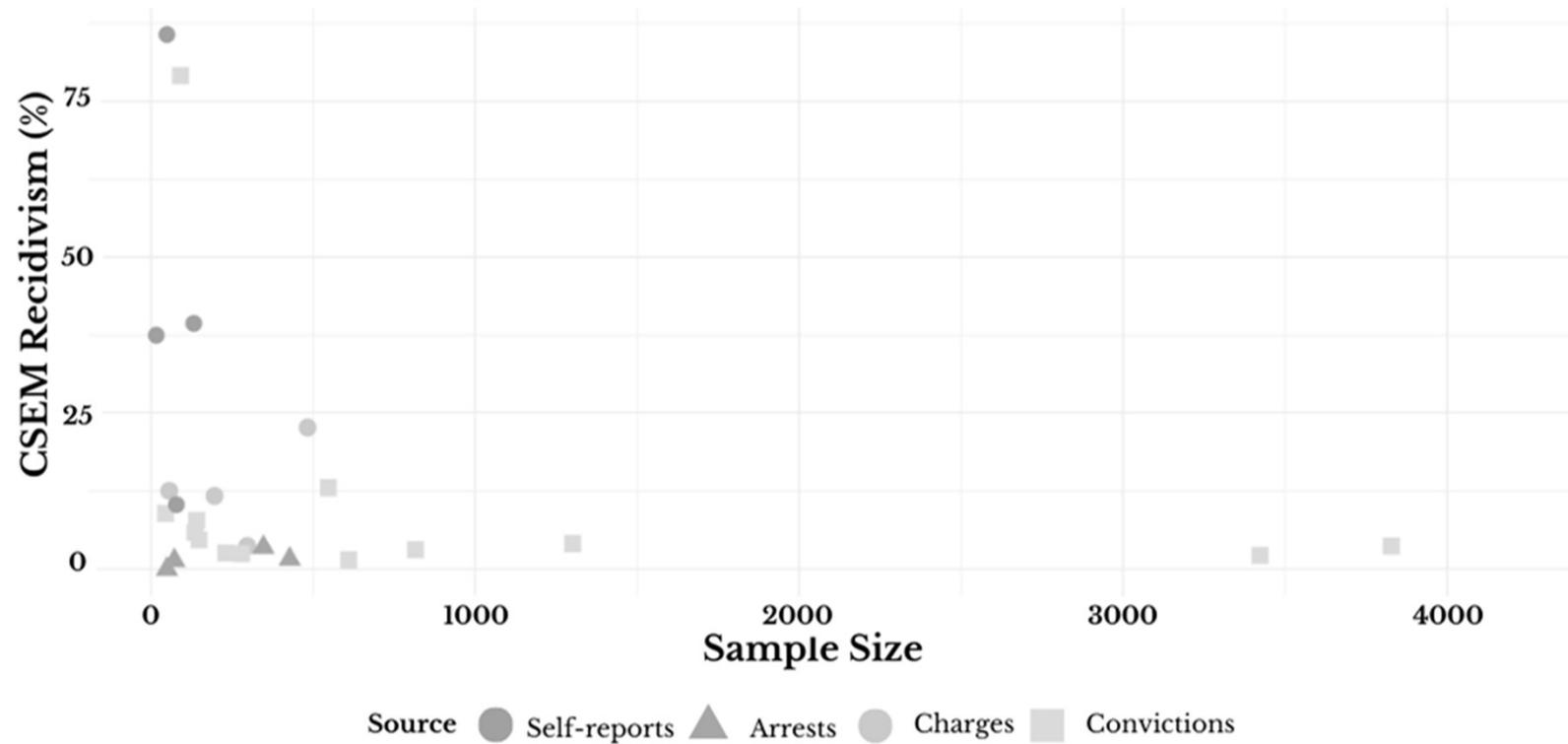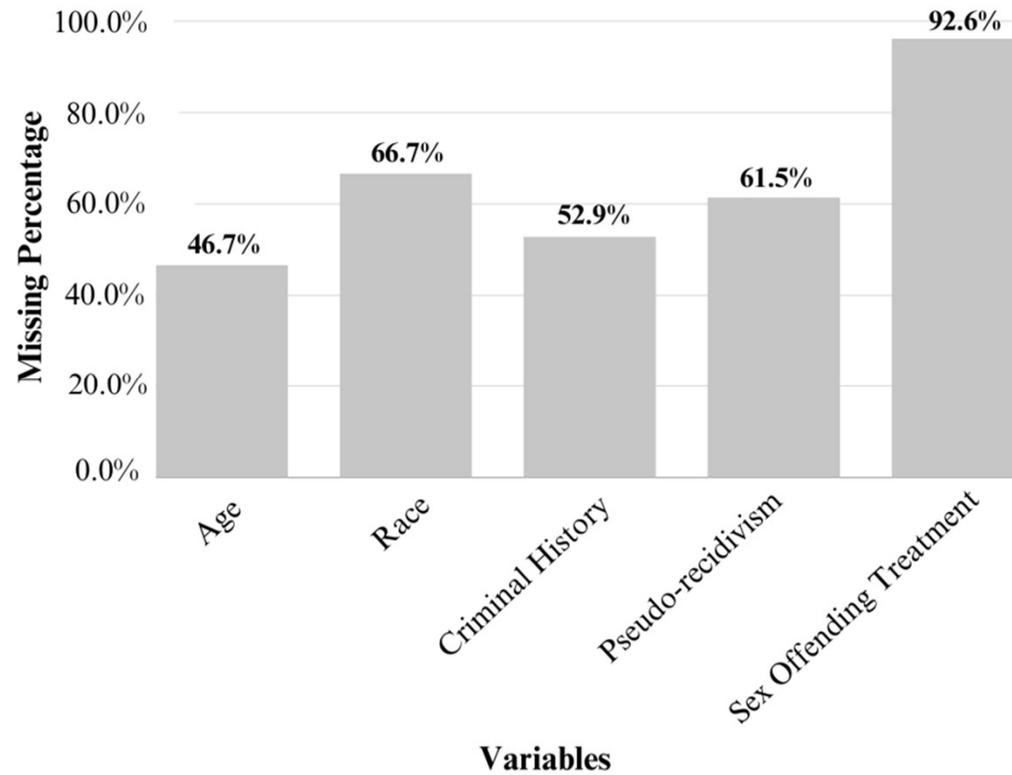

Self-report = 38.3%

$N(k)$ = 275 (4)

Self-report studies

- Are recidivism rates really 'that high'?
  - Unique treatment samples
    - No routine sample with this information

  - Likely an overestimate

Meta-Regression of Sexual Recidivism on Follow-up Time

Key Elements Missing in Recidivism Studies

Discussion

Groups

Moderators

Reporting

STROBE
Strengthening the reporting of observational studies in epidemiology

Take home message

- Cohort/routine samples: about 2/3 are CSEM-exclusive (about 1/3 mixed)

- After an average 5 years of following, individuals with contact + CSEM offenses are more likely to sexually offend than CSEM exclusive offenses

- CSEM-exclusive: most will not reoffend with a contact sexual offense (0.6%) and instead with another CSEM offense (3.1%)

- Self-report rates are higher than official rates, but the self-report samples are unique (e.g., treatment samples)

Thank you!

Questions?